

**DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF THREAT AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR
SOCIAL IDENTITY IN A SAMPLE OF AFRICAN FOREIGNERS LIVING IN
PIETERMARITZBURG**

by

Prathna Singh

(205507117)

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School of Psychology
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this coursework dissertation is the result of my own work. It has not been submitted before.

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Prathna Singh

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Date

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on seventeen group interviews with African foreign nationals living in Pietermaritzburg, this thesis explores how a minority group talks about their experiences of threat and prejudice within the South African context. The main aim of this thesis is to provide a contextualised study of foreigners' understanding and experiences of threat, by studying how threat operates in a disempowered minority group's narratives and exploring the social identity work or outcomes that are so achieved.

Since threat may constitute an important dimension of the intergroup relations between foreigners and citizens, attention is paid to how threat is employed in foreigners' narratives of intergroup relations with South African citizens. The exploration of these constructions is important as this signifies a move away from understanding and studying threat in a purely quantitative way. This has meant that the rhetorical, action-oriented function of threat in narrative has been emphasised over the reduction of threat to a psychological state amenable to quantitative measurement. The study of participants' constructions reveal how threat is put together in narrative and demonstrates that constructions of threat may fulfil an important function in informing foreigners' constructions about what they can do as a disempowered minority group living in South Africa. Hence, this thesis argues for an alternate, more in-depth, way of understanding and studying intergroup relations, threat and the social identity of a minority group in a specific social context.

The study uses terms from Stephan and Stephan's (2000) Integrated Threat Theory to orient this piece of work in this field, but differs from traditional studies that have employed the theory as it focuses on discursive construction and the implications for social identity. The

findings are also linked to the various options available to minorities, as highlighted by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The study allows for the voices of a marginalised group to be heard and also shows how threat can be discursively worked up in narrative and how the social positions and strategies adopted by foreigners both constrain and are discursively constrained by narrated constructions and theories of threat and intergroup life.

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“They ought not to be treated as objects, having things done and decisions taken for them, that disempowers them...I would just hope very much that all of us who are involved in trying to find a solution would not behave in a way that disempowers or even depersonalises and turns them into statistics”

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, speaking on the treatment of African foreigners in South Africa (South African Press Association, 2008, p.1).

CHAPTER ONE: XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Xenophobia may be regarded as an intense dislike or hatred of foreigners (McKnight, 2008). It persists as a particularly troublesome form of prejudice in South Africa; so much so that it has informally been dubbed “a new pathology for a new South Africa” (Harris, 2002, p. 169). This chapter provides background information on the topic, with the content focusing on the experiences of African foreigners, who bear the brunt of such prejudice (Harris, 2002).

1.1. Xenophobia in the South African context

The end of apartheid is regarded as an important marker in understanding xenophobia, as it signalled the dawn of a ‘democratic’ South Africa and precipitated an influx of African foreigners into the country. Increased immigration was also influenced by globalisation and migration the world over, along with deterioration and political discord in impoverished and conflict-ridden African countries (Valji, 2003; Hadland, 2008).

Although African immigrants entered South Africa during the apartheid era, their numbers were substantially fewer and they were primarily confined to labour in the mining and agricultural sectors (Maharaj, 2004). These immigrants did not enjoy the same privileges as their white counterparts who, under legislation, were allowed to move freely across South African borders (Nyamnjoh, 2006). African immigrants, originating mainly from neighbouring countries, entered the country under strict conditions and settled only for restricted periods of time (Morris, 2001). Disintegration of the country’s whites-only immigration policy and increased prospects associated with the post-Apartheid project, however, culminated in more foreigners entering the country for longer periods (Bouillon,

2001). The end of apartheid also saw the arrival of African immigrants from countries which lie further north of South Africa such as Zaire, Nigeria, Somalia, Cameroon, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, amongst others (Bouillon, 2001).

Presently, it is estimated that South Africa may host hundreds of thousands of African foreigners, although exact numbers remain difficult to approximate due to the illegal and covert entrance of many (Crush & Williams, 2003 in Maharaj, 2004). The 2001 South African Census indicated that there were 345 161 non-South Africans in South Africa (Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2006). According to the Department of Home Affairs, the number of official refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2006 were respectively 125 904 and 396 715 (Amisi, 2010). The South African Migration Project has estimated the number of foreigners in South Africa, legal and illegal, to be between one to three million (Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2006). However, due to a lack of reliable measures to accurately determine numerical and demographic data pertaining to African immigration, it is difficult to know for certain how many such foreigners are indeed living in the country (Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2006).

Despite an often unwelcome reception, migrants and refugees continue to arrive in South Africa and include “long distance traders, asylum seekers, students, professionals, entrepreneurs, traditional healers and pastors” (Nyamnjoh, 2006, p. 31). Some are skilled professionals who integrate relatively well into the upper echelons of society, but the majority are poor and have to live and work with South Africa’s indigent, primarily taking up jobs in the informal sector (Maharaj, 2004). The majority of these immigrants originate from SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries and leave their homelands due to war, political unrest, unemployment and inadequate education (Crush, 2008). Many have nowhere

else to go and hope to be welcomed by their ‘African brothers’ upon arrival in South Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006).

Continued difficulties with social transition and inequality, however, mean that some South African citizens respond antagonistically to a growing foreign presence in the country (McKnight, 2008). The country’s poor are often at loggerheads with immigrants over housing, jobs and basic services, with competition constituting a significant feature of intergroup relations (Crush, 2008). Economic adversity, discontentment with ineffective service delivery, competition for scarce resources and limited informal trade opportunities all contribute towards anti-foreigner hostility (Amisi, Bond, Cele, Hinley, ka Manzi, Mwelase, Naidoo, Ngwane, Shwarer, Zvavanhu, 2010). The presence of foreigners in a strained socio-economic climate is said to exacerbate the anxieties and frustrations of the country’s impoverished primarily black populace, who as citizens, may feel more entitled to economic opportunities and resources (Landau, 2007).

Although different race groups from different social strata have been implicated in the perpetration of xenophobia, indigent black South Africans are generally regarded as the main perpetrators (Bouillon, 2001). They engage in “black on black violence” or ‘horizontal racism’ against black foreigners (Olukoju, 2008, p. 46). This is often evidenced at sites where black South Africans and foreign nationals come into contact (Crush, 2008). This “racialised prejudice” is exemplified in usage of the pejorative ‘*amakwerekwere*’ - a term commonly employed by black South Africans to describe and often derogate African foreigners (Warner & Finchilescu, 2003, p.12). Thus, unlike their white counterparts, African foreigners endure some of the worst treatment by South Africans, as they come into direct contact with the country’s destitute (Olukoju, 2008). The hostility they encounter contrasts with the ideals of

African Renaissance, Ubuntu and the concept of a united African brotherhood (Alarape, 2008). Their mistreatment is also considered unwarranted since many African countries were accommodating of South Africans during the Apartheid era (Nyamnjoh, 2006). The expectation that South Africans will reciprocate sentiments of good-will, however, often remains unfulfilled (Morris, 2001).

Expressions of xenophobia are wide ranging and involve verbal abuse, incitement, looting, stealing, physical assault and bloodshed (Harris, 2002). Attacks against foreigners include isolated and sporadic incidents which may go unreported, but also include large-scale widespread attacks where foreigners across the country come under siege (Crush, 2008). On a daily basis, foreigners may be subjected to marginalisation and extortion, as well as police brutality and threats of arrest and deportation (Nyamnjoh, 2006). South Africa's media and public officials may also have a hand to play in xenophobia through their respective roles in the perpetuation of sensationalist headlines and the issuing of provocative statements which portray foreigners in a negative light (Landau, 2007; Smith 2010).

African foreigners are considered relatively easy targets of xenophobia since they have few rights, little means of recourse and are sometimes easily distinguishable targets due to the clothes they wear, their distinctive physical features and their lack of proficiency in an indigenous language (Harris, 2002). However, they have little choice but to live and work amongst South Africa's indigent, since the conditions in South Africa are often better than those in their countries of origin (Nyamnjoh, 2006). Guidelines to protect groups such as refugees and asylum seekers are considered largely insufficient, resulting in foreigners feeling unprotected in everyday settings where they interact with South Africans at a grassroots level (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005). The range of factors influencing

the problem of anti-foreigner hostility makes xenophobia a troublesome issue to address within South Africa. This is especially so in a context affected by extensive poverty, high unemployment rates and defective service delivery (Oloyede, 2008). Political splintering and corruption in South Africa have also been cited as exacerbating intergroup tension (McKnight, 2008). Efforts to address xenophobia by means of legislation, moral appeals and public awareness campaigns such as Roll Back Xenophobia have been largely unsuccessful, as they do little to address the socio-economic nub of the problem (Crush, 2008; Misago, Monson, Polzer & Landau, 2010). Although a number of organisations and groups such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, the Refugee Pastoral Project, the Union of Refugee Women and the Siyagunda Association have emerged, they still have a long way to go in counteracting the extent of prejudice encountered in South African society (Amisi, 2010).

Looking to the field of social psychology, it appears that increasing the amount of intergroup contact between the different groups may also prove to be an unworkable solution towards reducing conflict. Seeing that xenophobia is often perpetrated by neighbours and associates, intergroup contact often produces friction and not friendship (Nyamnjoh, 2006). This contradicts the predictions of Gordon Allport's (1954) contact theory which suggests that intergroup contact may reduce prejudice if a number of optimal contact conditions are in place – conditions which include equal status, co-operation, a striving for common goals and institutional support (Allport, 1954). The current state of relations in South Africa shows that positive outcomes may be difficult to achieve because the conditions stipulated by Allport (1954) are particularly difficult to satisfy. Informal settlements and townships are prime examples of sites where intergroup contact breeds conflict, with the large-scale May 2008 attacks considered a case in point (Hadland, 2008). In many of the townships where

xenophobic violence reached heightened levels, attacks were not initiated by strangers unbeknownst to their victims, but instead by neighbours and close acquaintances (Crush, 2008). In such contexts, the relations between foreigners and citizens are highly competitive and antagonistic; making conditions such as co-operation and a striving for common goals difficult to satisfy (Laher, 2008). Equality between groups also seems unattainable in a context where one group has rights and the other is disenfranchised (McKnight, 2008). Furthermore, the country's long-standing history of inequality and intergroup conflict continues to permeate current society, often resulting in increased contact between groups being a malady rather than remedy (Valji, 2003). The reality for many foreigners is that conflict, antagonism and mistrust pervade their interactions with South Africans (Nyamnjoh, 2006; McKnight, 2008). Xenophobia is, therefore, often an "everyday occurrence" that engenders feelings of anxiety, threat and fear (Palmary, 2002, in Hadland, 2008, p. 19).

1.2. Xenophobia and threat

One of the presuppositions of Allport's (1954, in Hewstone, 2003, p. 353) contact theory is that intergroup contact decreases prejudice only when there are not "directly negative factors operating in the situation - such as high anxiety and threat". However, within the South African context, it is precisely these factors that characterise the nature of the relations between citizens and foreigners (Laher, 2008).

Threat is commonly cited as playing a major role in xenophobic attitudes (Harris, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Laher, 2008; McKnight, 2008). Foreigners are regarded as posing a considerable threat to South Africans on multiple levels. Broadly, they are said to represent a threatening 'Other', whose presence signifies unfamiliarity and encroachment in a newly

emancipated country (Morris, 2001). The nature of the relations between the groups is said to contribute towards feelings of anxiety and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of foreigners as being untrustworthy and dangerous (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Laher, 2008). At an economic level, they are regarded as a significant threat due to the strain they place on scarce resources and limited job opportunities (Alarape, 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2006). It has also been suggested that South Africans may perceive foreigners as a threat in terms of 'stealing' or plundering not only their economic resources but even their partners (Harris, 2002; Laher, 2008; Morris, 2001; Alarape, 2008, Sinclair, 1999). South African men, in particular, may feel that foreigners pose a considerable threat through the commandeering of black South African females (Morris, 2001). On a more cultural level, African foreigners' specific types of traditional dress, food, language, distinctive traditions and way of life may be considered different and incompatible with the lifestyles and worldviews of the communities within which they attempt to integrate (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Laher, 2008). Alarape (2008, p. 81) captures the threat supposedly posed by foreigners by noting that foreigners are often seen as posing "threats at the level of self-concept and social identity", as well as threats to the "political status, economic stability, health, safety, physical well-being, and the world-view" of South African citizens. Perberdy (2001, p. 24), similarly, suggests that immigrants are ultimately seen to pose a threat to "the nation" by "endangering its physical and moral health and its ability to provide services, employment and to control crime". In her study investigating South African's attitudes towards African immigrants, Laher (2008) highlights how threat influences the negative attitudes of South Africans. Laher (2008) examines threat through the social psychological lens of Integrated Threat Theory, and in turn shows the significant role that such threat may have to play in contributing towards the prejudicial attitudes of South African citizens. It is from work such as Laher's (2008), that this research

draws inspiration to look specifically at the role that threat has to play in intergroup interaction.

1.3. Threat from the perspective of foreigners

Although threat may clearly feature as an important aspect of South Africans' intergroup experiences, this study aims to veer away from the South African viewpoint and instead focus on threat from the perspective of foreigners. It has been through reading about South Africans' experiences of intergroup threat, that my interest has been sparked about how threat may be experienced by those on the other end of the intergroup encounter. South African Migration Studies (SAMP) studies such as those conducted by Crush (2008) and Mattes, Taylor, Macdonald Poore and Richmond (1999) are examples of research which have generally focused on South African attitudes towards xenophobia, immigration and immigrants in South Africa. Similarly, Laher's (2008) research explores how threat affects the attitudes of South Africans. This focus may stem from the idea that prejudice in society can be reduced if the attitudes of majority members are changed (Shelton, 2003). However, since both majority and minority members have expectations and specific interactional concerns about intergroup contact and its consequences, engagement with the minority's perspective is also important (Devine & Vasquez, 1998).

African foreigners' experiences of threat, no doubt, also warrant attention as their experiences may offer useful insights into how they anticipate and experience intergroup interaction with South Africans. Their experiences of threat may also inform their ideas about what can be done to challenge xenophobia. Thus, whereas threat impacts upon South Africans' negative attitudes, it is also likely to have important consequences for minority members, their social

identity and the options that are available or closed off to them as a minority group. By studying foreigners' perspectives of threat and how this may be related to their ideas about what they can do to counter xenophobia or alter the social status quo, this research explores a different yet equally useful perspective on xenophobia.

Part of the motivation for a focus on foreigners' experiences stems from the generally skewed nature of research exploring xenophobia in South Africa (Warner & Finchilescu, 2003). It has been noted by Warner and Finchilescu (2003) that considerably less psychological research has been conducted with African foreigners when compared to their South African counterparts. This is due to the fact that researchers tend to place more emphasis on changing the attitudes of the perpetrators of xenophobia. Warner and Finchilescu (2003) thus call for more engagement with foreigners' perspectives, and this research heeds this call by following a lineage of research that has focused on this perspective. Previous research which has explored the experiences of foreigners includes work conducted by authors such as Shindondola (1999), Sinclair, (1999), Bouillon (2001), Harris (2001), Morris (2001), Nyamnjoh (2006) and Warner and Finchilescu (2003). The aim of this study is thus to contribute to this field by acknowledging that as much as perpetrators' experiences need to be studied, those who are on the receiving end of prejudice also need to be increasingly incorporated into research. In this way, both perspectives can inform possible interventions aimed at reducing prejudice and encouraging intergroup harmony (Shelton, 2003).

While threat is primarily acknowledged as an important element of South Africans' experiences, a reading of some qualitative studies that have explored foreigners' perspectives allows one to infer that threat also features as an integral part of African foreigners' intergroup experiences, as it features as a recurring leitmotif in the research findings

(Shindondola, 1999; Sinclair, 1999; Morris, 2001; Warner & Finchilescu, 2003). Thus although threat may not always be explicitly mentioned in such studies, it may also be an important component of foreigners' experiences.

Morris' (2001) qualitative study brings to the fore the threat that Congolese and Nigerian foreigners face on a daily basis in their everyday encounters with South Africans in Johannesburg's inner city neighbourhoods. Warner and Finchilescu (2003), similarly, show how African foreign students are continually faced with threats of insults and stereotypes. Shindondola's (2008) work exploring the perspectives of international students at the Rand Afrikaans University also highlights the threat that may be faced by African foreigners in their intergroup encounters. It may also be argued that contact with South Africans in many instances not only represents a considerable threat to one's life, but also a threat to social identity options, which may in turn serve to significantly impede foreigners' ideas about whether they can do anything to change the current state of affairs (Harris, 2001). In many of these studies participants' experiences were influenced by not only by feelings of threat, but also by strong feelings of powerlessness.

From reading studies conducted by Morris (2001) and Bouillon (2001), in particular, it emerged that threat featured as a strong undertone. Morris' (2001) study involved in-depth interviews with ten Nigerian and ten Congolese participants living in a Johannesburg inner-city neighbourhood. In one part of her study, Bouillon (2001) also engaged in an analysis of in-depth interviews with francophone immigrants. Both studies investigated the problems faced by African immigrants by asking them questions about their views on South Africa and their experiences of South Africans. Although Morris (2001) and Bouillon (2001) both engage in thematic analyses of participants' experiences, their studies contain a recurring yet

understated theme of threat. Thus, although no explicit mention of participants' feelings of threat was made, it is evident that different types of threat encountered by South Africans are indeed relevant to foreigners in these studies. The findings of both Bouillon (2001) and Morris' (2001) studies suggest that just as South Africans may be particularly fearful of the physical threat imposed by foreigners, foreigners feel threatened and unsafe in their encounters with South Africans who are seen to pose an intimidating threat to their safety and health. It could also be argued that foreigners, just as South Africans do, experience threats on a more cultural level as participants in both these studies remarked on the disparities in lifestyles and views between South Africans and themselves. Like South Africans, foreigners' reactions to contact were shrouded by fears about negative stereotypes that may be elicited during interaction and they also faced much anxiety as a result. As illustrated by Nyamnjoh (2006), across both studies South Africans were negatively stereotyped as "lazy", "brutal", extremely violent", "adulterous", "shackled by colonial attitudes" , "ignorant", "narrow-minded" and "hostile" (Morris, 2001, pp.78-80; Bouillon, 2001, p. 122). From their constructions, it also appears that the foreigners in these studies see little hope in challenging the status quo, as they see themselves as being unable to alter current circumstances due to their position within South African society.

Whilst not all the studies that have explored foreigners' experiences of xenophobia can be reviewed here, the above studies do suggest that there is potential for a more focused study of threat and its consequences from the perspective of foreigners. The research is thus interested in how foreigners experience physical and cultural threats and how this in turn influences their understanding and approach to intergroup interaction. Already from a preliminary engagement with some of the literature in this field, threat stands out as an important feature of foreigners' perspectives. From these findings it also becomes evident that participants are

not merely relating their experiences but that their narratives contain self-interested concerns and constructions which appear to be action-oriented and have the potential of achieving important identity work. These studies demonstrate a potential for a more in-depth, rhetorical study of threat. As a result, this research strives to look at the threat experiences of foreigners, but takes such research further to look at how threat is constructed and rhetorically employed, engaging in a more in-depth contextualised look at how threat is constructed and put to use in narrative. By studying intergroup threat in this way, useful insights may be garnered into foreigners' experiences of xenophobia.

CHAPTER TWO: INTEGRATED THREAT THEORY – PROSPECTS, LIMITATIONS AND AN ALTERNATIVE

As threat may play an important role in the intergroup encounters between South Africans and African foreigners, this chapter reviews the main way in which intergroup threat has generally been conceptualised and studied within the field of social psychology. First the prospects and limitations of this theory are considered, followed by an attempt to build on developments in the field by offering an alternative way of studying foreigners' experiences of intergroup threat.

2.1. Integrated Threat Theory: Prospects and limitations

Terrorism, immigration, conflicting social policies, as well as religious, ethnic and cultural divisions have all been cited as contributing to increased feelings of threat, anxiety and antagonism between groups (Stephan, Renfro & Davis, 2009). Research on intergroup relations has consequently come to acknowledge the important role that threat may play in intergroup life. This growing appreciation for the importance of threat has resulted in the development of Stephan and Stephan's (2000) Integrated Threat Theory, which has emerged as a prominent theoretical lens through which social psychologists have studied threat and its impact on the relations between different groups.

The theory broadly conceptualises threat as a form of cognitive appraisal that is experienced when members of one group perceive another group as being in a position to cause them harm (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). A distinction is made between four types of threat, which are all said to play a destructive role in intergroup relations. These four types of threat are

realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes – all of which are considered to play a mediating role between a set of antecedents and outcomes in the form of negative out-group attitudes or prejudice. Realistic threats are defined as threats which serve to endanger the very existence of a particular group, and include threats to the economic and political power of the group as well as the physical and material well-being of a group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Symbolic threats are considered distinct from realistic threat and refer to “perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs and attitudes” thus representing a threat to the worldview of a group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p. 26). According to the theory, prejudice or dislike follows when one’s group values become threatened or when the outgroup is perceived as adhering to a conflicting worldview or way of life. The third type of threat mentioned by Stephan and Stephan (2000, p. 26) is intergroup anxiety, which refers to a feeling of intense discomfort occurring when individuals anticipate feeling “personally threatened in intergroup interactions” due to concerns about “negative outcomes for the self such as being embarrassed, rejected or ridiculed”. Finally, negative stereotypes are considered “implied threats to the in-group because they lead in-group members to fear that negative consequences will befall them in the course of intergroup interaction” (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p. 27). It is suggested that if the in-group perceives the out group as “aggressive, dishonest or unintelligent” then their expectations of interaction with such members are likely to be coloured by stereotypes, thus leading to the expectation of negative interaction and prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p. 27). It is proposed that the different types of threat represent separate psychological states or mechanisms, as according to the theory, “realistic and symbolic threats and intergroup anxiety are reflective of *affective, emotional reactions* to out-group members [and] negative stereotypes are reflective of a *cognitive* component of prejudicial attitudes” (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001, in Laher, 2008, p. 29, emphasis added). In addition to the above threats, Integrated Threat Theory also

stipulates a number of antecedent variables that may contribute towards increased feelings of threat. Such antecedents include strong ingroup identification or attachment, frequent negative contact, high levels of intergroup conflict, disparities in the status of groups and an ignorance of the outgroup (Stephan et al., 2009a). These antecedents are thought to play a role in eliciting the abovementioned threats, which are in turn thought to contribute to increased prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Below is a diagrammatic representation of this framework:

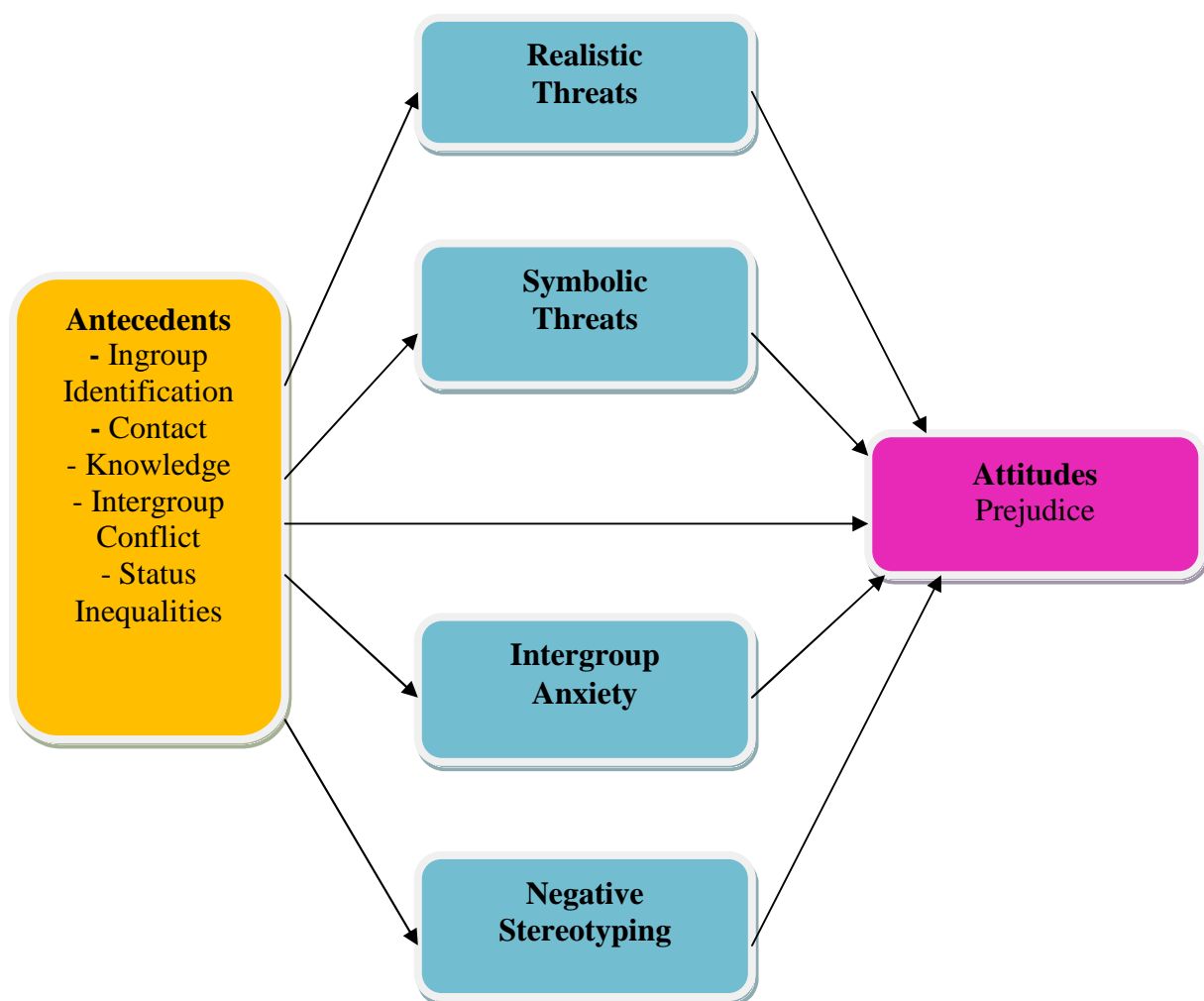


FIGURE 1
Original threat model.

Adapted from Stephan and Renfro (2002, p. 193).

The theory has generated a number of quantitative studies across different contexts and study populations (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). Such studies have required participants to assess their interactions with outgroups through the use of rating scales consisting of items representative of each type of threat and the likely outcomes of threat. Regression or structural equation models are commonly used to determine the amount of variance in prejudicial attitudes that can be accounted for by threat variables (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). Target outgroups involved in such studies have included “blacks and whites, men and women, immigrants to the United States, Canada, Israel and Europe, AIDS victims, victims of terminal cancer, obese people, gays, religious and political out-groups and beneficiaries of affirmative action” (Stephan et al., 2009a, p. 59). These studies have provided support for this theory as across these studies, it has generally been concluded that all four types of threat are predictors of prejudice, whilst the antecedents have also been found to be related to the different types of threats. The theory is strongly supported by a meta-analysis of findings across 95 samples comprising 37 000 participants, which suggests that all four of the threats are solid predictors of intergroup attitudes (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006). The meta-analysis indicates that the relationship between the different types of threat and outgroup attitudes was moderate in magnitude (realistic threat: $r = .42$, symbolic threat: $r = .45$, anxiety: $r = .46$, negative stereotypes: $r = .44$). Within the South African context, Laher (2008) has attempted to use this framework to better understand how South Africans may experience African migrants as threatening, concluding that in her sample, the various threat variables accounted for sixty-eight percent of the variance in prejudicial attitudes towards African immigrants, thus also providing strong support for the model.

In order to illustrate how different forms of threat are usually (quantitatively) measured in studies generated from this model, Laher’s (2008) research with South Africans is used as a

point of reference. In her study of a sample of 345 South African citizens, Laher (2008) explored experiences of threat through the administration of a formal questionnaire consisting of a number of different scales.

Inter-group anxiety (regarded as an emotional state) was measured by using an anxiety scale consisting of 10 items developed by Stephan and Stephan (1985). Each participant was asked about their emotional state in relation to how he/she will feel or has felt during interactions with African immigrants. Participants were required to respond on a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). High scores indicated higher levels of anxiety and low scores suggested lower levels of intergroup anxiety. Items on this measure included feelings such as being anxious, confident, irritated, uncomfortable, impatient, frustrated, stressed, happy, self-conscious and defensive (Laher, 2008). Cronbach's alpha was reported to be .86.

Symbolic threats were measured in a similar way, whereby Laher (2008) used three statements from Stephan and Stephan's (1996) symbolic/cultural threats scale. Participants were required to rate each of the statements on five point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .65. The statements read *"South Africa is losing its South African character because of the increasing amount of African immigrants that are entering the country"*, *"African immigrants contribute positively to the ethnic mix in South Africa"* and *"Cherished South African norms and traditions are threatened by the increase of African immigrants to South Africa"* (Laher, 2008, p. 105).

Realistic threats were assessed by using four items again adapted from the work of Stephan and Stephan (1996). Participants were required to rate four statements on five point Likert

scales. The statements read as follows, “*African immigrants take jobs away from South Africans*”, “*African immigrants pay their fair share for the education and housing they receive in South Africa*”, “*African immigrants are increasing the amount of crime in South Africa*”, and “*African immigrants pose a health threat to South Africans*” (Laher, 2008, p. 106). Cronbach’s alpha was .75.

Negative stereotypes were assessed using a measure developed by Stephan and Stephan (1996), where participants were required to indicate the percentage (ranging from 0 to 100 percent) of African immigrants they believe possess each of the nine traits listed. The descriptors for the traits were hardworking, arrogant, aggressive, ambitious, untrustworthy, insincere, materialistic, stick together, and greedy (Laher, 2008). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was calculated to be .81. Participants’ prejudice was measured by descriptors derived from Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern’s (2002, in Laher, 2008) prejudice scale. Participants were required to rate their feelings towards African immigrants on 6 items using a 7 point Likert scale. These feelings were limited to the descriptors warm, negatively, friendly, suspicious, respect and admiration. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the scale was .90.

Additional measures included in Laher’s (2008) study were the Social Distance Scale and the Nature of Communication Scale. Once average threat scores on each of the four scales measuring threat were established, their association with prejudicial attitudes were measured (Laher, 2008). Multiple linear regression and path analyses were carried out (Laher, 2008).

2.2. Critique of Integrated Threat theory

Despite its empirical success since inception into the field of social psychology, Integrated Threat Theory has undergone gradual reconstruction and has evolved as theorists have attempted to add and improve upon several of its components (Stephan et al., 2009a).

Revision of the theory stems from two problems that were identified with the initial model (Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison, 2009). Firstly, the four types of threat in the original model were identified as requiring greater conceptual clarity (Stephan et al., 2009a, 2009b).

Secondly, the number of antecedents and consequences of threat that were included in the first model were deemed too limited, resulting in the contextual complexity of threat being lost (Stephan et al., 2009a, 2009b).

In response to the first problem, the authors have attempted to better conceptualise the different forms of threat by refining the distinctions made between the various threats and emphasising only the distinction between realistic and symbolic threat (Stephan et al. 2009a). The revised model also stresses that a distinction should be made between those threats suffered by individual group members and those to the group as a whole (Stephan et al., 2009b). The model stipulates that negative stereotypes may be better understood as a cause of threat, rather than as a separate type of threat. There are, however, still questions about whether negative stereotypes are indeed an independent threat, a mediating variable between threat and prejudice or an antecedent of threat (Stephan et al. 2009b). In the newer model, anxiety is still considered a subtype of threat centring on fears about interacting with outgroup members (Stephan et al. 2009a). However, if stereotypes or anxiety are to be included when using the revised model, it is necessary to specify whether these threats are experienced at the individual level or the group level (Stephan et al., 2009a).

In addressing the second criticism levelled against the model, the researchers have broadened the number of antecedents and consequences of threat. In doing so, they acknowledge the importance of a range of contextual factors which may impact upon perceptions of threat. It is emphasised that threat should be understood as more complex and dynamic and as “changing across situations and over time” (Stephan et al., 2009a, p. 62). In order to better appreciate the variety of factors that impact upon intergroup threat, the revised version draws from the work of Allport (1954), who characterised the antecedents of prejudice as encompassing distal factors (e.g. historical and socio-cultural antecedents) and proximal factors (e.g. situational and personality antecedents) (Stephan et al., 2009b).

The theory’s attempt towards greater contextualisation is most apparent in its inclusion of these new antecedent variables, many of which represent features of the cultural or social milieu within which intergroup interaction occurs. These antecedents are divided into four categories labelled Intergroup relations, Individual difference variables, Cultural dimensions and Situational variables (Stephan et al., 2009a). Intergroup relations variables include factors such as intergroup conflict, status inequalities and size of the outgroup relative to the ingroup (Stephan et al., 2009a). Individual difference variables include variables such as strength of ingroup identification, negative personal contact, social dominance orientation and self-esteem (Stephan et al., 2009a). The cultural dimension includes variables such as power distance, individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Stephan et al., 2009a). The type of interaction, the setting within which interaction occurs and the prevailing social climate within which groups interact are some of the situational variables included in the model (Stephan et al., 2009a). The revised theory also acknowledges that prejudice is not always the only consequence of intergroup threat. Instead, it is noted that a number of cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences may ensue from perceptions of threat,

which may vary according to the specific situation or context within which groups find themselves (Stephan et al., 2009b). Cognitive variables may include a change in stereotypes or perceptions of homogeneity; emotional consequences include feelings such as resentment and fear whilst behavioural outcomes include actions such as retaliation, submission and negotiation, amongst others (Stephan et al., 2009a).

These changes thus move away from an understanding of prejudice as the sole outcome of perceptions of threat and recognise that many different reactions could occur depending on the contextual factors at play. As the theory has developed and more studies have been conducted, other authors have also suggested additional variables which could also be incorporated into the model. Bizman and Yinon (2001), for instance, have drawn from Tajfel and Turner's (1978) Social Identity Theory and have suggested that stronger in-group identification may moderate the relative importance of individual level versus group-level threats as predictors of prejudice. For example, it has been hypothesised that those who have a stronger identification with a social group are more likely to have greater experience thinking about threat, thus resulting in a greater association between group threats and attitudes (Bizman & Yinon, 2001). The above as well as other hypotheses related to the role of social identification as a moderating variable have been tested in a study exploring Israeli citizens' attitudes towards immigrants. Similar work has been also conducted in Northern Ireland by Tausch, Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy and Cairns (2009) who have looked at how threats may operate as mediators in the relationships between dimensions of intergroup attitudes, outgroup attitudes and trust. Therefore, studies inspired by Integrated Threat Theory do appear to be exploring more variables and their relationship to threat and its outcomes; thus increasingly acknowledging the influence that different features of the socio-cultural

milieu and group life may have on threat. The figure below shows a revised version of Integrated Threat Theory:

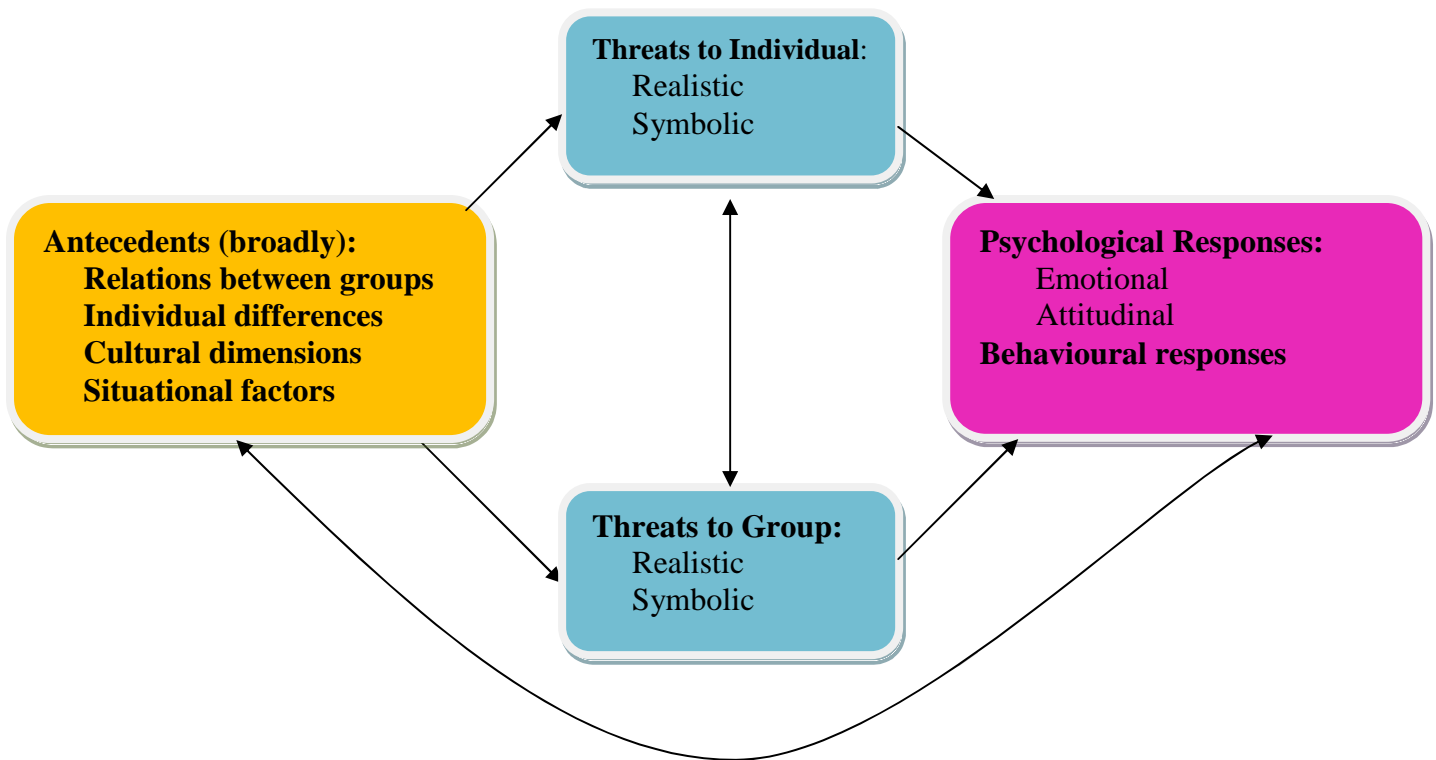


FIGURE 2
Revised threat model.

Adapted from Stephan, Renfro and Davis (2009, p. 60).

2.3. Continuing limitations of Integrated Threat Theory

Despite the above efforts to improve the model, Integrated Threat Theory may still offer limited insights into participants' own understandings and constructions of threat. Although more variables have been added and attempts have been made to better grapple with a broader contextualisation of the model, the complex contextual production of intergroup threat may still not be captured as threat is being conceptualised as a cognitive state and

studied as a quantitative variable. This focus on threat in its variable form, in turn, means that there is little engagement with participants' more open-ended narrative accounts and constructions of threat.

Although a quantitative approach may be useful in the categorisation and correlation of data, it may not be the most optimal approach in providing a detailed and contextualised understanding of intergroup relations (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). This quantitative way of studying threat almost removes or abstracts threat, anxiety and stereotypes from the social context within which they operate as it treats them as distinct elements amenable to quantitative measurement. The complexity, specificity and details of participants' experiences of threat are consequently lost by superimposing a generic framework onto the experiences of participants across different contexts (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). The Integrated Threat model thus remains limited because it is the *theorists* themselves who are developing and introducing new variables, while participants' own in-depth, contextually-embedded understandings of threat remain unexplored (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Edwards & Potter 1992). Consequently, Integrated Threat Theory warrants similar criticism to that levelled against traditional intergroup contact theory and its resultant methodology, as this framework also appears to have given rise to somewhat of an "abstracted, generalized and decontextualised" study of threat, whereby group members' detailed *narrations* of threat remain largely unexplored (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, p. 31).

Methodology such as the abovementioned rating scales used in Laher's (2008) study continue to be employed whereby participants' stereotypes, anxiety and experiences of realistic and symbolic threat are assessed by asking them to describe how they feel using a narrow set of predefined descriptions. Such an approach may, however, be too limiting or restrictive to

fully appreciate participants' specific concerns. A participant may, for example, not hold a single static attitude or view about symbolic threat statements such as "*Cherished South African norms and traditions are threatened by the increase of African immigrants to South Africa*". Similarly, it is plausible that a participant may feel that descriptors such as anxious, confident, irritated or uncomfortable, are insufficient, imprecise or perhaps too fixed in meaning to capture their experiences of intergroup anxiety. In a context of xenophobic violence, foreigners might prefer terms such as a 'terrified', 'frightened for their lives' or 'hopeless'. These index very different experiences of threat to, for example, their South African neighbours who might be 'irritated' or 'suspicious' of their presence. The experiences of African immigrants may also be less likely to reflect prejudice as an outcome of threat, as for them threat may signal altogether different responses or consequences when compared to the perpetrators of xenophobia, whose phenomenological experience of threat is likely to be very different. Likewise, the complexity of a moderating variable such as social identification may not be fully understood by asking participants to rate their experiences according to predefined categories supposedly measuring such a construct.

One group's experiences and understandings of symbolic and realistic threats may thus be very different to another group in a different setting. Participants' construction of stereotypes, anxiety and threat are likely to vary across contexts, as they are rooted in specific contexts and reflect specific contextual concerns. While different groups across diverse contexts may endorse similar items on the same scales, their lived experiences and understandings of intergroup threat are likely to be different. Participants' evaluations, stereotypes and constructions of threat are likely to be highly context-dependent and are likely to reveal variable interactional concerns (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Consequently, this thesis argues that existing measures contain somewhat restrictive measures of threat that do not always allow for an appreciation of contextual nuance and variability. Existing regression and structural equation methods appear to contain restrictive conceptualisations of the outcomes of threat, seeing prejudice as a primary outcome and hence missing the link between specific manifestations and expressions of threat as contextually specific reactions such as flight, resistance or segregation. Finally, the models seem to equate, psychologically, the threats of majority and minority members. Therefore, although the model appears to be striving to study threat in context, it is not truly contextualising threat because situational and other antecedents of threat are pre-defined by the theorists, with the same variables being studied across different settings in restrictive ways.

The present study attempts to address the above shortcomings by recognising that to fully appreciate the complexity of African foreigners' experiences of threat, an alternative approach to studying threat needs to be adopted. The research intends to do this by approaching the study of threat from a social constructionist perspective and by studying the narrated or discursive feature of participants' social context – an important yet often neglected domain which has remained largely uncharted due to a predominantly quantitative approach to the study of intergroup relations (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007). One way of studying participants' own understandings of threat is by studying how the different types of threat are constructed and used in narrative (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). This may facilitate an understanding of the meaning of such threats to participants, whilst also being attentive to the justificatory purpose of such discourse. In turn, foreigners' narrations may reveal specific interactional concerns not previously anticipated by theorists or that are unable to be captured by a purely quantitative framework (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This approach may also allow

for particular and located theories, lay understandings, contestations and identity work to come to the fore, as participants' discursive work is likely to contain constructions of groups, intergroup conditions, the nature of intergroup relations and the outcomes of intergroup interaction - all of which may assist in better understanding constructions of social identity and the role that foreigners may have to play in either maintaining or challenging prevailing social relations (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Such an approach allows for more insight into participants' experiences of threat, and facilitates a greater appreciation of the justificatory and political tasks that such constructions and accounts achieve (Connolly, 2000).

The significance of studying intergroup threat in a social constructionist way is aptly captured in Durrheim and Dixon's (2005, p. 70) assertion that "in order to understand the nature and origins of intergroup anxiety [and threat], one must recover the discursive practices through which others become constructed as threatening in the first place, practices that materialize as people 'work up' the situated meanings of desegregation and seek to classify the nature of the social groups 'in contact' ". Similar sentiments are expressed by Devine and Vasquez (1998, p. 241), who in writing about the importance of discursive work, emphasise that "to effectively address the problem of intergroup tension, the study of intergroup relations must be broadened to include analyses of how individuals think about the interactions, about themselves and their partners during these interactions, [w]e have to take seriously the practical considerations involved in negotiating the fluid, interpersonal aspects of intergroup contact". Likewise, Hopkins, Greenwood and Birchall (2007) argue that the 'messy realities' of participants require study in order to better understand the complexity of intergroup encounters.

2.4. A discursive alternative to the study of threat

In order to better appreciate participants' specific interactional concerns, lay theories and understandings of threat, the research moves away from asking participants to mark off items on Likert-type rating scales and instead explores how these different types of threat are put together in participants' discursive work. Such an approach requires moving beyond an understanding of threat as merely a psychological or cognitive state and instead calls for a focus on exploring how threat, stereotypes and anxiety are constructed and deployed in narrative (Connolly, 2000). Similarly, rather than predefining antecedents and consequences of threat, the research will allow foreigners' constructions of these intergroup features to emerge in narrative. It is recognised that it is within these narratives that identities, situational factors and consequences are attended to and discursively accomplished as foreigners describe the conditions under which threat occurs, depict threatening others and explain the ramifications of intergroup encounters (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007).

This approach towards studying how threat is discursively constructed follows a line of research which, as highlighted by Hepburn & Wiggins (2007), has explored the discursive construction of 'psychological' phenomena such as attitudes and evaluations (Potter, 1996; Puchta & Potter, 2002), cognition and emotion (Edwards, 1997; Locke & Edwards, 2003; Potter & Hepburn, 2003), memory (Edwards & Potter, 1992) as well as racism and prejudice (Buttny, 1999; Edwards, 2003; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). This research, like the studies above, aims to explore how 'psychological' concepts such as threat, stereotypes and anxiety as mentioned in Integrated Threat Theory are used as "resources for action" rather than comprising "something we have or we are" (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007, p. 8). In describing this discursive alternative to the study of mental states, Harré and Gillet (1994, p. 28) write

that “[r]ather than seeing such discursive constructions as expressions of the speaker’s underlying cognitive states, they are examined in the context of their occurrence as situated and occasioned constructions whose precise nature makes sense to participants and analysts alike in terms of the social action these descriptions accomplish”. Approaching the study from this perspective may, in turn, give rise to a “more interactionally focussed, dynamic and culturally specific” study of threat, as it centres on participants’ contextually specific narrations as a point of focus (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007, p. 8). Working from this more flexible perspective involves understanding these narratives as being composed of common sense understandings which achieve rhetorical and political tasks (Gee, 2005). It is thus argued that threat need not necessarily be thought of as a cognitive or psychological state, but instead could be understood as a discursive construction structured around social positions that are taken up in participants’ discourse. In this particular study, the social position of being a minority group in South Africa is considered particularly important. In taking up such a position when talking about their experiences of xenophobia, participants are likely to justify certain notions, contest certain practices and construct certain identities which all reflect highly situated or contextualised concerns associated with being a minority in present-day South Africa. Such discursive work would also ultimately play a role in the construction of social identity and options for social action. Although the research refers to the threats mentioned in Integrated Threat Theory in order to orientate the findings in the field, it is not concerned with the theoretical conceptualisation of these threats, but is more interested in the meaning assigned to these threats by participants. As a result, threat is prioritised as a concern of the participants, as opposed to that of theorists.

2.5. Linking constructions of threat to social identity: an appreciation of the action - orientation of discursive work

This research is also interested in exploring the wider justificatory function of foreigners' discursive constructions of threat. This has been done by exploring how participants' constructions serve as a footing for social identity and action by either justifying acceptance of the status quo or promoting social change. Indeed, for this research to be relevant outside of the micro-context of talk and for it to contribute towards a better understanding of foreigners' experiences within the South African context, the bearing that discursive constructions of threat may have on foreigners' constructions about their social position needs to be considered (Gee, 2005). Taking heed of these discursive accomplishments allows the research to explore how participants themselves construct variable outcomes of threat.

The findings are considered in relation to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work on minorities and the possible options available to them, which are found along a continuum ranging from acceptance to rejection of the status quo. Although Tajfel and Turner (1979) do not incorporate the notion of intergroup threat into their framework, their ideas about minorities may prove useful in understanding the social implications of participants' constructions, as the theory was developed with minorities specifically in mind. Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that minority group members may respond to their subordinate position in the social hierarchy through the use of a number of strategies which range from either internalising feelings of inferiority to the striving for a positive social identity through the adoption of strategies such as social mobility, social creativity, and social competition.

It is suggested that the type of strategies employed by a group are contingent on the circumstances in the context within which the minority finds itself; with the adoption of

specific strategies depending on beliefs about psychological and social factors operative in a particular context (Tajfel, 1978). The options available to minorities are, therefore, different across contexts. British Muslims, for instance, although regarded as a minority grouping in Britain, may be mobilised for social action as they are equipped with platforms where they can voice their concerns about discrimination, organise conferences, forums and rallies and strive for the enactment of legislation in their favour as they have institutions in place to protect their rights (Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins, 2006). An ability to challenge the status quo through protest and other collective forms of social action is also evidenced in France, where Muslims have in the past engaged in protest when fighting for cultural citizenship in the wake of the banning of religious symbols (Nyamnjoh, 2006). However, foreigners in a less accommodating climate such as South Africa may encounter a very different form of life where even fundamental human rights are not guaranteed and where a struggle may instead revolve around basic survival rather than striving to achieve pluralism or reach parity with higher standing groups in society. In this study, the research is interested in looking at how participants' discursive constructions of threat are oriented towards these social identity options as mentioned in Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work.

The link between minority group members' discursive constructions and their ideas about their social identity options has been demonstrated in the work of Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2006). Their research demonstrates how participants' constructions can constitute the foundation for discursive social identity work, by laying the groundwork for ideas about what can be done to challenge the subordinate position of one's group. The authors' work shows how two different strands of Muslim opinion in British society each construct intergroup life and Islamophobia in different ways, resulting in each group envisioning a different way in which their minority position could be challenged. The authors studied two

groups of Muslim opinion, each group effectively offering a different ‘common sense’ understanding of intergroup contact and the nature of threat. From their study, the researchers found that both Muslim groups constructed anti-Muslim prejudice as being illegitimate, both constructed the status quo as being open to change, and both envisioned a higher status for Muslim identity in society (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006). Both groups also conceptualised their prejudice in terms of marginalisation based on their religious identity and emphasised the importance of collective action, while opposing assimilation. However, the groups differed in terms of their theorisations about the dynamics behind Islamophobia and consequently each group had different ideas about how Muslims could achieve parity with other groups in British society. One of the groups (the Runnymede Trust) constructed outgroups as possible allies rather than hindrances in the struggle against Islamophobia. The other group included in the study, the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain (MPGB), however, constructed outgroups as threatening to the identity and solidarity of Muslims and argued that although collective action should be taken up, this should be done with minimal engagement with outgroups - who they emphasised could not be trusted as allies but instead should be seen as threatening (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006).

The Runnymede Trust emphasised that Muslims should work with other religious bodies, political parties, and public institutions in the fight against Islamophobia as members of the organisation constructed Islamophobia as being influenced by closed, stereotypical and unfounded views about Islamophobia needing to be challenged through increased dialogue and co-operation with non-Muslim groups. In their narratives, members of the Runnymede Trust constructed non-Muslims as potential partners who could assist in achieving intergroup harmony. The group emphasised, for instance, “that intergroup contact and the dialogue afforded through locally organised intercommunity projects was crucial in breaking down

monolithic representations of Islam, and Muslim participation in such projects was encouraged” (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006, p. 253).

Opinion representative of the MPGB, however, adopted a far more fundamentalist position and emphasised that Islam should remain a separate entity since the values of Islam are divergent from those espoused by authorities and religious outgroups. The MPGB thus felt that more co-operation would result in the subversion of Islamic interests and would only serve to perpetuate “a morally bankrupt ideological hegemony” (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006, p. 261). The MPGB constructed Islamophobia as an antagonism between the West and Islam (or an age-old struggle between “right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsity”) consequently constructing Western society as a hostile threat to Muslims, and intergroup contact with non-Muslims as a threat to Muslim identity (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006, p. 261). Westerners were thus constructed as posing a formidable threat not only to their safety but also to the religious identity of Muslims. By emphasising that Westerners pose an inherent and serious threat to them, this group was able to add rhetorical weight to their arguments that Muslims’ struggle against Islamophoaia should remain insular and should not involve the input of non-Muslims who represent an “assault on their identity” (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006, p. 257). Their constructions justified autonomous action on behalf of Muslims, where it was stressed that Muslims as a community should act independently in activities such as “organizing a Muslim welfare system, encouraging trade within the Muslim community, establishing Muslim educational institutions and increasing Muslims economic propensity” (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006, p. 258).

These divergent constructions of what contact signified for each group in turn placed discursive constraints on the type of collective action suggested by groups, showing how

discursive conceptions of contact, social actors and social identity (and particularly social action) are all discursively linked to one another. The work also demonstrates the action-orientation of discourse and how participants' narratives are ultimately political in nature as they serve justificatory and rhetorical purposes. It emerged that participants' concerns and fears about intergroup interaction, a part of which comprised narrated fears of cultural threat, were ultimately tied to constructions of social identity and action. The notion of threat in the above study was thus used by the latter group to advocate for non-contact. By exploring such constructions, the authors were able to gain insight into how foreigners 'reason through' and put together their arguments either for or against certain types of social action. This discursive approach contrasts with traditional structural equation models used in measuring threat, as it provides different insights into participants' experiences and also shows that the ramifications or outcomes of constructed versions of threat can extend beyond prejudice.

The present study takes heed of the above findings and acknowledges that narratives are not only culturally specific tools rooted in intergroup relations, but that such constructions can be linked to the construction and shaping of social identity and social outcomes. Drawing from the above study, the present study has thus sought to investigate how foreigners' discursive constructions may also be linked to discursive social identity work. The above study revealed that how foreigners depict themselves, their outgroup members and the status quo in their discursive constructions proves relevant in understanding how they put together or construct their social identity and the options that are available to them. However, since African foreigners live in a different social context, their discourses of threat and the link to social identity are different to those noted in the study above.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Aims

The main aim of this research has been to provide a contextualised understanding of intergroup threat from the perspective of a group of African immigrants. This has been done by looking at how the different forms of threat, as stipulated in Integrated Threat Theory, operate in African foreigners' narratives.

3.2. Research questions include:

- ❖ The first task has been to examine how threat is constructed and rhetorically employed in participants' narratives.
- ❖ Secondly, the research has explored the action-orientation of participants' constructions by looking at the discursive link between constructions of threat and social identity i.e. how constructions of threat influence foreigners' constructions of social identity and action.

3.3. Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design. This type of design was selected because discursive construction of threat was emphasised over the conceptualisation of threat as a quantitative variable. This approach allows for an exploration into African foreigners' narrations of their experiences, allowing for an analysis of how threat is put together and rhetorically deployed in narrative. Unlike a quantitative approach, which does not prioritise the narrations of participants' experiences, qualitative research acknowledges that participants may be active constructors or agents involved in meaning-making activity

through the use of narrative (Tuffin, 2005). The use of such an approach facilitates the emergence of more detailed data which can be analysed for meaning, nuance and variation (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

3.4. Data analysis

A general discursive approach has been used in the analysis of the research findings.

Discursive psychology allows for a more contextually sensitive and flexible way of studying psychological phenomena such as threat (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007). It is an approach which moves away from a purely cognitive understanding of psychological phenomena and instead focuses on how people “formulate or work up the nature of events, actions, and their own accountability through ways of talking” (Edwards & Stokoe, 2004, p. 2).

This research follows the work of authors such as Harré and Gillet (1994, in Tuffin, 2005, p. 83), who note that the aims of discursive psychology are “an identification of [linguistic and social] resources and an examination of how these resources are put to work”. In doing the analysis, the researcher has been attentive to three key features of discourse – construction, function and variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The constructive nature of threat was attended to by looking at how threat was discursively put together and rendered plausible in participants’ evaluations and arguments. A functional analysis of the findings focused on the social psychological ends actively accomplished through the use of threat in narrative (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Appreciating the functional component of discourse meant an acknowledgement of the action component of language, whereby people are said to actively “do things with their discourse” such as query certain matters, make allegations and excuses, as well as explain, rationalize and justify certain views, behaviours and identities (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 169). The rhetorical deployment of different forms of threat across

narrative and the particular positions adopted were also considered in terms of their implications for social identity. An appreciation of the variability of threat constructions signalled a move away from a quantitative understanding of threat that attempts to fasten a fixed meaning to different types of threat. A more discursive approach to studying threat acknowledges that inconsistency and contradiction occur in narrative due to the subjective, functional and self-interested nature of discourse (Tuffin, 2005). Working from this approach thus marked departure from a cognitivist, quantitative way of understanding threat towards appreciating the more socially or politically oriented significance of narrative.

3.5. Data collection

The data were collected using group interviews. A total of 17 group interviews were conducted, with each group consisting of two to four participants. This mode of data collection allowed the researcher to move towards a more in-depth understanding of experiences of intergroup threat, as it facilitated the emergence of more open-ended data in the form of narrative.

A group format was favoured over individual interviews as it allowed the researcher access to participants' naturally occurring interactional talk, rather than simply working from a question and answer format (Edwards, 2005). This technique also stimulated interaction, discussion and debate and was selected in order to allow the researcher to examine "commonly *shared* discursive practices" or co-constructed features of talk (Antaki, Edwards, Billig & Potter, 2003, p. 18, emphasis added). Conducting interviews in a group setting allowed for the emergence of multiple perspectives and viewpoints and engagement amongst participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The group interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview schedule that was developed by the researcher after reading literature

within the field of social psychology and xenophobia. The interviews lasted between forty-five to sixty minutes. The interview questions were aimed at exploring participants' descriptions, accounts and theorisations about intergroup contact and experiences of threat with South Africans. The schedule can be found in Appendix A.

3.6. Sample

The sample consisted of fifty-two English-speaking African foreigners of differing nationalities, sampled from shops and residences in the Pietermaritzburg Central Business District as well as from a non-profit church based organisation in Pietermaritzburg called Project Gateway. The interviews were conducted in situ, either in the houses or shops of participants, as well as the premises of Project Gateway; after attaining verbal permission from all parties. These participants were sampled between the period April 2009 to May 2009, approximately one year after the large scale May 2008 attacks in South Africa. All the participants resided in Pietermaritzburg, a city which had encountered some isolated xenophobic incidents but not on the same scale as some of South Africa's larger cities.

A purposive approach to sampling was used as the research was interested in studying the experiences of a particular demographic group - namely black African participants, who live and work among South Africans, and who were willing to talk about their experiences with South African citizens. Snowball sampling was employed in the recruitment of the sample, with key informants who had met the criteria for inclusion informing acquaintances about the research (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). The sample size was determined once a saturation point had been reached, whereby the size of the sample no longer contributed to new research insights (Ritchie et al., 2003). None of the participants in the sample were minors. The participants involved in the study were factory workers, traders and hawkers who regularly

interact with South Africans. By studying the experiences of such individuals, as opposed to those who interact with citizens in a context such as a university setting, the research has been able to move away from the study of contact in rarefied settings where ideal contact conditions may be more readily met. By studying the perspectives of these participants, the researcher was able to interview people who are indeed likely to experience the types of non-ideal contact that the research is interested in. The participants had different educational and occupational backgrounds, but were all able to converse in English.

| Interview number | Nationality | Gender |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | 3 Congolese participants | 2 males and 1 female |
| 2 | 2 Zimbabwean participants | 2 females |
| 3 | 2 Burundian participants | 2 males |
| 4 | 1 Malawian, 1 Kenyan and 1 Ugandan participant | 3 males |
| 5 | 3 Zimbabwean participants | 3 females |
| 6 | 2 Malawian participants | 2 males |
| 7 | 4 Congolese participants | 2 males and 2 females |
| 8 | 5 Ugandan participants | 4 males and 1 female |
| 9 | 4 Zimbabwean participants | 2 females and 2 males |
| 10 | 2 Ghanaian participants | 2 males |
| 11 | 4 Zimbabwean participants | 3 females and 1 male |
| 12 | 4 Congolese participants | 4 males |
| 13 | 3 Zimbabwean participants | 2 females and 1 male |
| 14 | 1 Ugandan and 1 Malawian participant | 2 females |
| 15 | 3 Congolese participants | 2 females and 1 male |
| 16 | 3 Zimbabwean participants | 3 females |
| 17 | 3 Congolese participants | 3 females |

Table 1: Interviews conducted

3.7. Research procedure

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, in accordance with the transcription conventions appearing in Appendix B. Verbatim transcription involved transcription not only of the narrated content, but also pauses, turn-taking, interruptions, hesitations and speech errors (Poland, 2003). Transcripts were read and re-read, as the researcher searched for themes. Although audio recordings are useful in capturing narrative work, it is acknowledged that nonverbal nuances of interpersonal interaction could not be captured by such an approach (Poland, 2003).

The findings were initially organised using the qualitative software package NVivo 8, which was used to organise emergent themes that had been linked to one another across the various transcripts. The software package thus assisted with the organisation of raw data and the linkage of early themes. The process of analysis entailed detailed reading, memoing and classification of data. The discursive tasks achieved by participants' deployment of the different types of threat were considered throughout the procedure. Recurring constructions, patterns and discourses were accordingly organised. The significance of the discursive work accomplished was then analysed with reference to the literature and theories. The coding of these emergent themes was informed by Stephan and Stephan's (2000) Integrated Threat Theory and Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory. The main discourses within the transcripts were first organised in relation to the four different types of threat mentioned in Integrated Threat Theory and then examined in relation to the different social identity strategies mentioned in Social Identity Theory.

3.8. Issues of validity, reliability and generalisability

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of these research findings, the researcher has attempted to use the qualitative research guidelines stipulated by Silverman (2005, p. 215) who emphasises the importance of being critical of findings, testing provisional hypotheses and “actively seeking out anomalies or deviant cases”. This was attended to, in part, through formulating the interview questions and analysing the findings in terms of relevant literature and theory within this field of study. The theoretical frameworks of Integrated Threat Theory and Social Identity Theory were used during data collection and analysis, as they informed the questions that were asked and how the data were organised and analysed. Although deviant narrative cases that appeared significantly incongruent with the major findings/discourses of this thesis were actively sought during the analysis, none were found due to a high degree of thematic consistency across the findings. In ensuring validity, the research moved away from looking for an objective true reality, but instead looked at other means through which the validity of discourse can be analysed.

The problem of anecdotalism, where the researcher includes only a few choice extracts for analysis, was avoided by incorporating extracts into the findings section that offer a well-rounded picture of the overall findings (Silverman, 2005). Thus, many extracts were incorporated to demonstrate to the reader how the researcher was able to draw her conclusions. The extracts included for analysis are also long extracts, most of which include the researcher’s questions and the proceeding dialogue. This allows for the reader to view the extracts in context and to determine whether the researcher’s analysis does indeed corroborate with those extracts included. Since inadequate audio recordings and transcriptions may compromise research findings, practical considerations such as ensuring

optimal functioning of recording equipment and careful, thorough transcription of interview material, were also prioritised (Silverman, 2005).

To further ensure the validity and reliability of this discursive research endeavour, the researcher has also drawn on Potter and Wetherell's (1987) recommendations for optimising the quality of discursive work. Drawing from these recommendations, the researcher has attempted to bring the participants' interpretations and understanding of research questions to the forefront of the research, by looking at how participants *themselves* construct social positions and categories rather than the researcher merely imposing a theoretical and removed understanding of the data (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Awareness of the researcher's own reflexivity was also important in this regard. Although I acknowledged that my reflexivity inevitably influenced the way in which the participants' extracts were understood, I was careful to ensure that the data were not merely analysed and presented according to my personal agendas, opinions and values (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Therefore, throughout the research, I had to be careful to ensure that the research focused on the rhetorical devices that the participants were employing to make themselves understood. While racial, gender and other social disparities between the researcher and the participants did not appear to impede the rapport that was established, it is acknowledged that participants' discourses and positioning could have been affected by such factors.

The researcher attempted to ensure coherence of the analysis by being attentive to the internal logic of discourse and understanding the *function* as opposed to only the content of participants' discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Finally, this research has attempted to move away from being merely descriptive in nature, but instead focuses on how different

accounts are actively co-constructed; thus aiming to generate new insights and ways of theorising in this field (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

While the study is qualitative in nature and cannot be deemed statistically generalisable, it does seek to address important questions about how contact and threat are put together in ordinary explanations. Although the study is focused, works in a small scale context and examines participants' constructions in a purposively selected sample, the information that is gleaned from this study could be used to inform broader psychological theorising in this field. The various discursive strategies employed by the participants in this study may, for instance, be commonly employed strategies used in everyday talk of people in similar situations and hence the findings of such research could be extrapolated to other contexts. In order to establish a foundation for transferability of the research findings to alternate contexts so that other researchers can draw upon such findings and make comparisons with their own research, it is suggested that each research report should include "an accurate description of the research process, and secondly an explication of the arguments for the different choices of the methods... and thirdly a detailed description (thick description) of the research situation and context" (Smaling, 1992, in Kelly, 2005, p. 381). In line with these criteria, a comprehensive description of each of the areas outlined has been included. In order to further ensure transferability of the findings, the degree to which these findings are related to theory and literature are included throughout data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.9. Ethical considerations

The general ethical principles of non-maleficence, justice, beneficence and autonomy have guided the research practice and procedures (Wassenaar, 2005). To ensure that participants had full knowledge of this study and its aims, each participant was supplied with an informed

consent form which was worded in simple English. The researcher recognised that not all participants would necessarily be proficient in English as a written language and therefore explained the contents of the document to all participants prior to commencement of the interviews. After reading and explaining the contents of the informed consent document to each group of participants, time was allocated for questions about the research. The informed consent document (Appendix C) provides contact details of the researcher and her supervisor so that participants would have a means of addressing any concerns regarding the research. Participants' voluntary participation was emphasised, with the researcher stressing that participants should not feel forced to attend an interview and that they would suffer no negative consequences should they choose not to participate in the research (Wassenaar, 2005). Participants were informed about all aspects of the research, with no deception having been used.

Since xenophobia can be regarded as a sensitive topic and some of the participants could be regarded as being vulnerable to prejudice, all subjects were duly forewarned about the potentially sensitive nature of the topic and were provided with the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any stage. The researcher took every precaution to ensure that participation in the research would not serve to endanger or jeopardise participants' safety or well-being in any way. Interviews were held in settings deemed comfortable and safe by the participants. To ensure that they were able to approach an organisation in the event that any participant required psychological intervention, all participants were supplied with details of the Child and Family Centre, which is a centre for psychological well-being, located on the University of KwaZulu-Natal premises. No referrals to the Child and Family Centre were, however, necessitated during the course of this research. The researcher was also careful not to word any of the questions on the questionnaire in a way that would directly elicit any

secondary victimization of those who had previously been subjected to discrimination.

Instead, questions were open-ended and allowed for participants to approach the questions as they wished.

Those who participated in the study were made aware that although their confidentiality could be ensured by researcher, the fact that group interviews were being conducted meant that it would prove difficult to guarantee confidentiality being upheld by all parties present during the interview (Wassenaar, 2005). The use of a snowball sampling technique, however, served in producing groups that consisted of members who were often closely acquainted and who shared similar experiences, assisting somewhat in minimising a breach of confidentiality. The researcher has continued to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants, by ensuring that no names or other identifying details have been included in either the transcripts or the research report. Furthermore, all information gathered throughout the research process has been safeguarded by the researcher, with audio recordings and transcriptions recorded on compact discs which have been stored in a safe and secure location by the researcher and her supervisor.

Since many participants took time off work or detracted themselves from other activities to participate in the research, payment of R 30 each was used to compensate participants. Payment of participants was intended as a compensation payment which is generally used to “compensate for time, inconvenience, discomfort and other research-related burdens (not risks)” (Koen, Slack, Barsdorf & Essack, 2008, p. 926). While many of the individuals who participated in this study were indeed poor, the amount offered is unlikely to be undue inducement, since many of the participants sacrificed their time to participate in the research, with many taking time off work to engage in a group interview whilst some had to arrange

for transport and hence incurred travel costs. However, in order to be fair to all the participants, a standard amount was paid. Since there are no definitive guidelines on how much participants should be paid for inconvenience or costs incurred, the amount paid to participants in this study was decided upon after consulting with fellow researchers and stakeholders in the community in order to determine what would constitute a fair and reasonable amount (Koen et al., 2008). Finally, although the research participants may not have accrued any immediate benefits from this research, it is the researcher's hope that this research will contribute towards better understanding the social position of this group so that further interventions can use this knowledge in the assistance of this group. This was also explained to the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the thesis first examines how realistic threat was narrated by participants in this study. Looking for constructions of realistic threat across participants' narratives did not prove difficult, as the idea that they feel intimidated and physically threatened by South Africans was a dominant and recurring theme across all the interviews. Once identified, the major task was to look at how and with what rhetorical tools these narratives were produced. Attention was also paid to the action-orientation of the narratives and the social identity work that was accomplished through their rhetorical use. The extracts included for analysis are those which aptly typify the central themes that were highlighted.

4.1. The narrative production of realistic threat

It emerged that narratives of realistic threat were produced primarily through accounts of everyday violence along with constructions of stereotypes and anxiety. This in turn showed that in a narrative context, the construction of what are usually thought to be distinct types of threat, are interrelated and reliant on one another. Participants constructed themselves as powerless victims who are targets of unwarranted discrimination, while their contact partners were constructed as violent and (illegitimately) powerful. The main discursive accomplishment of these narratives is the production of victimhood and fear of contact with South Africans. The first set of extracts serves to illustrate how realistic threat is put together in narrative.

Extract 1, Interview 12

R: Why do you say it's a mistake coming to South Africa?

I1: We never get nothing. I am telling you eighty percent of foreigners in this country (.2) are not happy being here.

I2: No, no, you can't be happy to stay here (.1) sometimes

I1: It is stress every day

I2: Stress, you know our country is not like (.3) South Africa. There I can stay with my family at home, I can't close the gates always and stay inside the house. I don't know (.1) like kill somebody, you see. In our country it's not like that. Always, every day we miss our country. I think the big barrier is on the war. If there was no war that side, maybe – I don't know if it's not difficult we can go back quickly. Only (.1) the problem is the fighting here, the fighting, you see. It is better to go home maybe have something to eat so your life...

I1: Instead of being here in South Africa and be endangering

I2: It is endangering because (.) you can't go, maybe somebody sees you talking the English language (.) they are taking the knife. The people (.2) are killing for the cell phone. It is not acceptable. Look at the news. I mean, I mean, children. They are killing everything in South Africa. There are rapes, everyday, why? We are scared.

In the first of these extracts the question posed by the researcher prompts the participants to begin a cautionary tale about life in South Africa. The first participant begins by emphasising that a large majority ("eighty percent") of foreigners living in South Africa are discontent due to intergroup hostility. The 'emotional state' of stress is worked up by the participant to describe the toll that life in South Africa is taking on the participants. Stress, a term typically associated with physiological and emotional uneasiness or tension is used in this context to convey a psychological state, but also captures the strained nature of the intergroup relations being described by the participant. In explaining the source of such stress, the second participant draws a contrast between life in South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This contrast is intended to demonstrate a very different life encountered by foreigners in their home country, where they supposedly live free from intimidation and violence. The participants' home country thus becomes idealised in the second respondent's narrative, whereas South Africa is constructed as a dangerous and threatening place where "fighting" prevails. However, closer inspection reveals that the participant's description is inherently contradictory, as although he complains about prevalent violence in South Africa,

his comparison also contains mention of the “war” in his country. Nonetheless, the participant only transiently refers to the violence in his own country as “war” but stresses the violence in South Africa, effectively glossing over the state of relations in his country of origin. In the telling of his story, the participant thus shares no details of any atrocities associated with war, but as this narrative is geared towards the portrayal of South Africans as violently threatening, he focuses primarily on the violence perpetrated by South Africans. A discussion of the war or violence in his own country may have been avoided as it could have detracted from the argument that it is South Africans who are at fault. Moreover, if the participants were to describe the violence in their own country, it could have served as an indictment on the participants and diminished the rhetorical value of the victim status that is emerging in this narrative.

As the narrative progresses, the first respondent adopts an auxiliary role, echoing and affirming the statements of the second participant whose account of violence dominates the interaction. The latter participant’s account assumes a particularly performative quality as he stresses the nature of violence encountered in South Africa. His account is geared towards constructing the violence in South Africa as pervasive, gratuitous and extremely problematic. His condemnation of “it is not acceptable”, serves in distancing himself and his fellow participants from the violence that he constructs as characteristically South African. This condemnation aids in positioning this participant as someone who is righteous and particularly perturbed by the violence in South Africa. The participant further tries to convince the researcher of this violence by encouraging her to look to the “news” for a more objective and credible confirmation of what he is saying. His talk of rampant sexual abuse in the form of “rapes everyday” as well as the harm of children (a category associated with innocence) serves in further bolstering his argument. In conveying a sense of shock and

bemusement at the endemic violence he encounters, he poses the rhetorical question of “why?”. By displaying this sense of uncertainty (evidenced in his statements of “I don’t know” and “why?”), he indirectly constructs violence as problematic by declaring to have difficulty understanding it (Korobov & Bamberg, 2007). This type of formulation has been labelled a “display of uncertainty” or “displaying a lack of understanding” and is commonly employed in prejudice talk (Edwards, 2000, in Korobov & Bamberg, 2007, p. 264). In a final bid to drive home his point, he ends his narrative with a reassertion that foreigners remain fearful in South Africa.

Thus already from the above and other similar early narratives did it become evident that although the notion of threat is itself never explicitly mentioned by any of the participants, it is put together and rhetorically utilised in narrative. Self and other categories are constructed in narrative, whereby participants construct themselves as victims who find themselves in a hostile social climate. Such construction serves in locating the problem of intergroup conflict with the violent nature of South African society. Attention is channelled towards the prejudice of South Africans and deflected away from the role that foreigners may have to play in the current relations. Such accounts are, therefore, not mere reflections of participants’ concerns but are instead self-interested and rhetorically geared towards the construction of self and other categories. Realistic threat is discursively serviced by these constructions of self and other stereotypes and the production of anxiety in narratives. The use of such stereotypes is further developed in the proceeding section, as participants continue to construct their victim status and highlight the supposedly gross violation of their innocence.

Extract 2, Interview 5

R: Okay, is there anything else that anyone wants to say about Xenophobia?

I 3: The government must do something

I 2: .hh Just to help us.

I 3: Just to help us (.) because here foreigners we are suffering (.) but we don't have to (.3) by the time when things are good in Zimbabwe we used to accept foreigners just like us no problem with them (.2) but because we are having some problems in Zimbabwe they are treating us like animals like er I don't know (.) they are giving us more names, so they have to accept us.

R: How are Zimbabweans different to South Africans?

I 3: Maybe their hearts maybe it's because of our hearts.

R: What do you others think?

I 2: I think our behaviour is different (.3) people from here they are violent they too violent, they are so scary.

Extract 3, Interview 7

R: Okay would you say there is any relation between the fact that you are a foreigner and discriminated against (.2) because you are a foreigner?...

...I1: Remember (.2) South African guys, they don't only have issues with foreigners. They have issues with themselves, they want to kill themselves. So killing the foreigner will make no difference, it could be a normal fact. Am I right?

I2: Yes!

I1: They only kill (). "Me and my brother, we came from the same womb. Why kill a foreigner. Me and my brother, we fight. I can fight with my brother". Zulu and Zulu, they fight (.2) they never stop fighting today. They fought, Shaka Zulu, they killed him by his own brother.

Extract 4, Interview 15

R: How are your relationships with them [South Africans]?...

...I2: To be their friend is no problem, we are not refusing them but they are refusing us from their reactions because we are laughing with them and we can have a glass of beer, then they pull a knife or a gun, what is that?

I3: We are afraid sometimes, I'm telling you the truth, our brothers are different from us because they can kill you just because of a radio when we playing music (.1) they don't like the music we play (.) so they come to you and say "stop you are making noise"

I1: The language in South Africa, any South African here what they say is "I'll kill you" that is the only way they know, they say "be careful before I kill you".

I2: And they're ready to do it.

R: So those South Africans that you living with, do you trust them?

I3: No trust.

I2: We cannot trust them!

I3: To me I think that all South Africans are the same because you can love with him or her, you can think that is your friend but when you have a problem they are not your friends anymore, so I think all of them are the same we can talk the way we are afraid.

I3: We can't trust any South African even if we love or sharing a bed.

I1: Another point is that we are surrounded by criminals.

Extract 5, Interview 4

R: So it seems to me like you always living in fear?

I1, I 2 & I 3: Ja

I2: Ja we are living in fear like I said I'm living in a state of fear, Ja in a state of fear.

R: Do you ever feel that one day that somebody could just snap here in Pietermaritzburg and there will be xenophobia like there was in Joburg?

I3: Ja it can it can happen.

R: So you're treading very carefully?

I3: Yes we have to be very very careful.

R: So er more in Imbali and Edendale that's more dangerous?

I3: Ja, Ja, Ja (.1) there you among the Zulus and there's no place where more foreigners staying in Imbali, who are staying in town and in two local areas still there is a difference, there is a difference. You can't find a foreigner the (.) into a black location. A black community like Imbali so most of foreigners (.1) we are in town (.) you can't find a foreigner starting up a business in Imbali so having a business in Imbali means that you are like digging your own grave.

The above extracts reveal how stereotypic versions of in and out-group members are used in servicing a realistic threat narrative and in producing anxiety as a narrated outcome. The participants describe realistic threat (in the form of violence) as a major hindrance to successful intergroup relations and emphasise that they are fearful and mistrustful during their interactions with South Africans. Collectively, the extracts serve in constructing foreigners as a benign grouping whose presence is largely unobtrusive. South Africans on the other hand are constructed as violent, aggressive and untrustworthy. These constructions are also closely tied to behavioural outcomes such as with whom foreigners may associate, where they can go and what they can do. Since contact with South Africans is constructed as a life threatening experience marred by hostility and fear, the accounts serve in justifying non-contact and segregation. Thus, while there are complaints and grievances about their treatment, the participants strongly suggest that contact inevitably leads to negative outcomes and should hence be avoided.

Extract 2 demonstrates how the participants construct their lowly status and powerlessness as a minority group. The third participant's appeal to the government "just to help" together

with his likening of foreigners' treatment by South Africans to that of animals serves in conveying a gross sense of injustice. He emphasises that Zimbabweans are different and more tolerant than South Africans and thus positions foreigners as victims or "un-justified recipients" of prejudice (Buttny & Ellis, 2007, p. 140). By engaging in such positioning and construction, the participants are able to absolve themselves of blame and defend against criticism for their stay in South Africa. When the researcher tries to find out more about the difference between the groups, the second participant offers a tentative explanation for the backlash against foreigners. His repeated use of the word "maybe" displays a sense of uncertainty or reluctance to categorise the groups and engage in any generalisation.

Nevertheless, he locates the problem of intergroup conflict within the "hearts" of South Africans suggesting that the problem is inherent within South Africans - a line of argument further pursued by the next participant who is far more forthright in his criticism of South Africans, describing their scariness and violent nature. An emphasis on the words 'scary' and 'violent' demonstrates a concerted effort to draw attention to the seriousness of the violent threat posed by South Africans, thus also displaying that threat as an emotion is also scripted.

Similar constructions appear in extract 3 where the first participant argues that South Africans are violent and brazen by nature. Although the participant describes the outgroup as homogenous in terms of the negative traits they encompass, he constructs them as being divided amongst themselves, highlighting that their antagonism is not limited to foreigners. His attempt to rally the support of his fellow participants by asking whether his statement is valid, is met with a definitive "yes!" from another of the participants showing his support for this theory. He presents an account which suggests that South Africans are not amenable to change, due to their supposedly inherently violent nature. The participant in extract 4 begins his account by proclaiming that it is South Africans who reject foreigners and not vice versa.

In doing so, he ultimately emphasises that foreigners cannot be blamed for the prevailing intergroup tension but instead it is South Africans and their violent tendencies which have led to the breakdown of relations between the groups. The participant's opening words preemptively defend against an accusation of being prejudiced. Instead, a position of magnanimity is adopted whereby he portrays himself as tolerant to the degree that he can call his aggressors "his brothers", even while relating his grievances. The participant also poses the rhetorical question of "what's that?" to demonstrate a sense of incredulity at the aggressive behaviour of outgroup members. Later when he levels harsh criticism against South Africans, he cannot be charged with the label of a bigot because he has already positioned himself as reasonable and open-minded. The participant's appeal to the researcher to believe his words and to understand that he is "telling the truth" demonstrates his attempts to persuade the researcher to regard his account or version of events as believable and objectively accurate. The participant's argument is further bolstered by his fellow participants who emphasise the intolerance of citizens. Participant 1 in particular draws on the prior respondent's construction of South Africans, stressing that the prevailing social climate is inhospitable due the fact that foreigners find themselves in a place where the "only language is killing" (Extract 4). Both participants utilise reported speech in their narratives which adds rhetorical weight to their construction of South Africans. According to Buttny (1997, p. 477), reported speech is an important rhetorical tool that can be used to "recreate what happened during an incident and to vividly convey what was said". In this narrative, the participants use reported speech to problematise the behaviour of South Africans by showing them to be intolerant and violent. Using the direct words of the prejudiced party adds rhetorical weight to their problematisation as it conveys the supposedly harsh and disrespectful nature of South Africans.

Implicit in these arguments is the idea that foreigners cannot be deemed responsible for the collapse of intergroup relations if the people they come into contact with are inherently violent and untrustworthy. This, in turn, allows these participants to engage in the activity of constructing crass stereotypes about South Africans with little concern about social accountability, since their constructions of themselves as victims permit the explicit stereotyping of foreigners (Buttny, 2004). Hence, it appears that social accountability is not critical as the stereotypers have already constructed themselves as blameless, in turn allowing for crass constructions of South Africans as “criminals” (extract 4), “violent” (extract 2), and “scary”(extract 2). Participants’ stereotypes are presented as defensive rhetoric, whereby these individuals present themselves as being justified in their stereotyping of South Africans, due to supposed unfair treatment and gross discrimination. Consequently, these stereotypes are not always presented implicitly and are not always veiled by disclaimers, justifications and excuses, but are instead presented against a backdrop where the participants have already constructed themselves as being the *aggrieved* party continually faced with realistic threat in the form of violence (Tuffin, 2005).

By constructing the root of the backlash as lying solely with South Africans, these participants in turn defend against any negative stereotypes that could be levelled against them for their role in the intergroup relations and thus emphasise that their mistreatment is by no fault of theirs. It is argued that foreigners do not give South Africans any reason to attack them but it is instead suggested that South Africans would engage in violence regardless of who is on the receiving end. The functional nature of these stereotypes is thus revealed, suggesting that such stereotypes cannot merely be reduced to “personal pictures in the head”, but instead operate functionally and rhetorically in talk, to justify foreigners’ presence in South Africa and to construct foreigners as innocents (Lippman, 1922, in Haslam, Turner,

Oakes, Reynolds & Doosje, 2002, p. 161). Thus threat narratives have built into them negative stereotypes, which serve as resources used in the production of threat. Furthermore, these narratives do not only contain stereotypes of South Africans but also contain self-stereotypes, which are relational and used in conjunction with negative stereotypes of the outgroup. By constructing such stereotypes, the speakers centre the listener's attention and sympathy with foreigners whilst encouraging disdain of citizens.

The building up of anxiety in narrative is, in turn, developed through the deployment of such stereotypes and accounts of violence. When talking about contact that occurs between foreigners and South Africans, the participants emphasise the constant fear and lack of trust that pervades their interactions - accordingly producing narrations permeated by anxiety for one's safety. The narratives construct the intergroup climate as being particularly unsafe and suggest that in order to protect their lives, contact should be avoided or restricted to being superficial or fleeting. Accusation is levelled against South Africans who are constructed as irrational, intolerant and inherently violent. In turn, as realistic threat is deployed in the narratives of participants, anxiety becomes one of the key outcomes of such narrations. Fear, according to these narratives, revolves around interaction with unpredictable South Africans. By providing examples of how seemingly trivial events may turn violent needing minimal provocation, the participants emphasise the ordinariness of violence. It is suggested that physical threat often looms close to the surface of intergroup relations and can very easily be triggered, making relations between the groups tense, unpredictable and precarious. Violence, accordingly, is constructed as an often inevitable outcome of contact with black South Africans. In describing threat in its physical form, anxiety, in turn, becomes produced and appears to be constructed in tandem with constructions of foreigners and South Africans.

In justifying why contact should remain minimal the participants highlight how easily interaction may turn sour, with even a request over switching off a radio leading to a violent end (extract 4). The participants in extract 4 also stress that very intimate forms of contact such as being friends with, loving or sharing a bed with South Africans cannot guarantee safety. These narratives emphasise that even in interpersonal encounters, group membership and identity continues to abound, placing foreigners in substantial danger every time they interact with South Africans, who are constructed as untrustworthy “criminals”.

In extract 5, the participants do the work of constructing intergroup contact as life-threatening. The participants emphasise how avoidance of intergroup contact is a key strategy employed in ensuring their safety. In this extract the participants employ repetition in their narrative, as a means of amplifying the threat that they experience. All the participants respond to the researcher’s question by answering in unison, displaying a sense of solidarity in the expression of such an opinion. The second participant goes on to reassert these feelings and emphasise the intense ‘fear’ that is encountered. Hence he emphasises that foreigners are not minimally fearful, but that their very existence is shrouded by constant concerns about safety. Similarly, respondent 3 emphasises that they have to be “very very careful” highlighting the seriousness of the fear they experience. Participant 2 emphasises this danger by remarking that by going into the territory of black South Africans dire outcomes are likely to ensue, resulting ultimately “in the digging of your own grave” (extract 5). These extracts thus demonstrate how the participants do the work of warning or cautioning through narrative.

Therefore, whilst anxiety is also not explicitly named in participants narratives, it becomes produced through constructions of stereotypes and through an emphasis on the fear and mistrust that pervades intergroup interaction. It is, therefore, discursively accomplished in

stories about realistic threat as well as in the participants' evaluations and descriptions.

Anxiety in these narratives is ultimately constructed around feelings of mistrust, hypervigilance and intense fear - fear for one's life, fear for violence and fear associated with the idea that it can be the people closest to you who could turn on you. This production of anxiety also has a particularly strong resonance as it is shown in narrative to lead to avoidance and withdrawal, as participants advocate for non-contact. By showing in their narratives how even highly personal and individual forms of contact do not guarantee any safety, the narratives suggest a strong indication for fear. Consequently, anxiety becomes constructed, sustained and justified in narrative and rather than being a mental state it is built up in narrative through the recruitment of stereotypes, evaluations and accounts.

The link to social identity

Not only do participants' narratives of realistic threat result in the working up of anxiety and fear, but when considered in terms of the social identity work being accomplished, their constructions of realistic threat fulfil an important function in informing constructions about what the participants can do as a minority group living in South Africa. More specifically, these constructions are rhetorically geared towards the justification of social inaction. By presenting themselves as powerless and unable to act, participants' threat narratives have an action-orientation and are produced in the context of explanations and accounts of what foreigners can and cannot do in countering xenophobia. From this, one is also able to understand that social status need not always be regarded as an objective phenomenon but it can also be constructed in narrative. This is in line with Tajfel's (1978, p. 3) idea that minority members' "subjective representations" of social reality also need to be considered as it is these "subjective definitions, belief systems, identifications", along with the objective

conditions, that influence the pattern of intergroup relations and the changes that can occur to them.

Extract 6, Interview 11

R: You can't hide (.1) even with the language you can't hide?

I1: You can't hide with the language because they will know you before you can speak anything.

R : Can you try to fit in with them?

I1: To fit in, ja of course we are trying (.1) we don't have options, you see (.1) we don't have options because (.) we are in their society. We have to try either way, you see. Which means we don't have to make them angry. You must always try to make them feel comfortable.

Extract 7, Interview 12

R: But I am saying to counteract xenophobia, if you were to protest and campaign, would they listen?

I3: I, that, I think is a big danger, to do that, that the foreigner guys to take their right and go and say, stop, stop. That is not for me. It's a very very dangerous thing. I think it's going to be a very very dangerous thing.

R: Why is it dangerous, because the people are going to turn back on you?

I2: We are not in our country (.) who are going to protect us (.) who?

R: As it stands I think there are a lot of boundaries still. There are a lot of boundaries between the people?

I1: There will be. A foreigner is a foreigner. You will never change your identity. You can't squash yourself, you are a foreigner. We are not trying to transform ourselves in South Africa. Boundaries are there, they will be there forever...

Extract 8, Interview 5

R: Do you ever want to fight back and shout at them and say "hey!"?

I2: No, we don't.

I3: We just ignore them

I1: We just laugh and go.

I2: Ja we are easy ...

R: But isn't it unfair?

I2 & I3: Ja it's unfair it's very unfair.

R: Then why do you accept it why don't you challenge it?

I1: How?

I2: They are violent these people, if you challenge them they will kill you or they will fight you.

R: So you can't really do anything much here?

I2 & I1: Ja

I2: We fear for our lives.

Extract 9, Interview 10

R: Do you think if you complained, if you protested, do you think they would listen?

I2: The foreigners complaining? Hah.

R: Yes.

I1: I don't think so (.3) it would, it would generate another fire, ja. It would be like you are adding the fuel to the fire, so, for protesting (.) for protest the South Africans themselves, those who are the influence groups like the churches; (.4) the government against the police. Those kinds of people they can protest against it (.) but (.2) for the foreigners to protest, it would add more fire, ja.

In the extracts above, realistic threat is rhetorically deployed as a major factor rendering foreigners powerless in the struggle against xenophobia. Constructions of violence feature frequently in participants' explanations for why they cannot change the status quo. These constructions are important as they have implications for identity and social action, with narrations of realistic threat placing discursive constraints on the actions of foreigners. Consequently, the findings are similar to those of Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2006), whose work shows a link between discursive constructions and social identity. Like the narratives of the participants in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins study (2006), these constructions can also be considered in terms of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work on minorities and the strategies available to such groups.

However, in contrast to the participants in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2006) study, the participants in the present study construct themselves as being immobilised due to fears of realistic threat. The participants in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins' (2006, p. 251) study advocate for the achievement of "parity with the majority whilst retaining their identity and distinctiveness (beliefs characterised in SIT as 'social competition' beliefs)", while rejecting options such as individual mobility strategies and passing or assimilating. In the research at hand, all of the above options are deemed unfeasible due to realistic threat. The participants in the current study construct themselves as being completely disempowered and

disenfranchised, unable to challenge or alter their circumstances. The narratives suggest that the participants see no role for themselves in the struggle against xenophobia and thus these accounts effectively serve to justify the status quo.

For example, Tajfel and Turner (1979) conceive of the options available to minority group members as ranging on a continuum from social mobility to social change. Strategies based on a **social mobility** belief system can be employed when group members are able to dissociate from their low status group of origin and pass or assimilate into the more dominant or higher standing group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This option may be feasible when one believes that he or she can become a member of a higher status group and pass or move with relative ease from the current lower status group to the higher standing group. However, these narratives strongly suggest that social mobility may not be possible due to inflexible or impenetrable intergroup boundaries. An individual strategy such as passing or assimilating is constructed as unachievable, as is demonstrated in statements such as “you can’t hide with the language because they will know you before you can speak anything” (extract 6), “we don’t have options because we are in their society” (extract 6) and “you will never change your identity” (extract 7). These participants emphasise that “boundaries are there [and] they will be there forever” (extract 7), suggesting that little can be done to eradicate entrenched divisions. Attempts to challenge the status quo are constructed as dangerous and life-endangering, with participants emphasising the ever-present threat of violence. Attempts to move up the social hierarchy are thus constructed as dangerous as the participants emphasise a need to downplay their distinctiveness, while acknowledging that they cannot socially be on par with South African citizens.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) also suggest that when social mobility strategies and assimilation are unfeasible due to beliefs that intergroup boundaries are impermeable, a **social change** belief system may exist whereby groups aim to achieve a positive sense of social identity through forms of group action. However, the type of group action adopted by the minority depends in part on whether or not there exist **cognitive alternatives**. No cognitive alternatives are said to exist when the prevailing social hierarchy (i.e. the status quo) is regarded as being stable, legitimate and secure and when an alternate social structure is difficult to envisage (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In such situations, groups may engage in **social creativity strategies** whereby they emphasise novel aspects of their group identity, positively re-define unique characteristics of their social group or alternatively compare themselves to lower standing groups. If, however, groups have cognitive alternatives at their disposal due to their beliefs that the status quo is illegitimate, unstable, insecure and hence amenable to being challenged, then they can engage in **social competition** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This may involve collective action whereby they actively challenge or resist the status quo, aiming to alter the status and power differentials in society.

Once again, however, participants' narratives were geared towards resisting the above options, deeming them too risky. In extract 8, the participant emphasises that foreigners have to adopt a position of resignation rather than retaliation in order to prevent further difficulties between the groups. His statement of "we just laugh and go" serves in highlighting the position of powerlessness he finds himself in due to the ever-present threat of violence. Although it is acknowledged that the state of relations is unfair and illegitimate, the participants emphasise that the violent nature of South Africans ultimately prevents them from engaging in any type of social action, especially as they find themselves in a place

where they are largely unsupported by authorities and where there exists no cognitive alternatives nor any boundary permeability.

When collective action or social competition is suggested, the foreigners justify their passivity by labelling such actions a “big danger” (extract 7) that would only serve in “generating another fire” (extract 9). In extract 7 the participant attempts to explain foreigners’ failure to resist the current social situation by stressing the danger that any form of social action may cause. By repeatedly using the word “very” in describing the extent of the risk that would be posed, the participant stresses the gravity of the problem and tries to convey a grave sense of danger. In extract 8, when the interviewer questions the participants’ supposed stance of passivity by suggesting that they do something about their social position, the participant rhetorically asks “How?” countering the researcher’s question to show his group’s immobilised state and their lack of available options. When the researcher poses the question of whether foreigners can indeed challenge the relations, one of the participants in extract 9 responds with repetition of the researcher’s question followed by an utterance of “hah” – an expression supposedly intended to convey a sense of disbelief or astonishment. This serves to construct the researcher’s suggestion as absurd or unbelievable. In extract 7, the participant challenges the researcher’s question by asking “Who are going to protect us? Who?” implying that an expectation for foreigners to fight the status quo is highly unrealistic. It is emphasised in these scripted narratives that the outcome of challenging the current relations is bound to be either violence or death (extract 8). One of the participants in extract 9 also employs a metaphor of “adding fuel to a fire” to demonstrate the peril that resistance would place foreigners in. Thus although these participants complain about their treatment, they show through their narratives that they are completely immobilised in countering xenophobia as they constantly have to be on guard and sensitive to the needs of the outgroup.

According to the common sense logic of the participants, challenging the status quo would only serve to incite further trouble. The social hierarchy is thus constructed as being stable and far from precarious and therefore compliance or submissiveness is deemed to be the only solution. The accounts serve as scripted formulations as they are used to construct the participants' sense of powerlessness and justify their sense of passivity by presenting realistic threat as pervasive, "routine and expectable" and as that which they condemn but have come to accept without challenge (Edwards, 1994, p. 211).

The participants construct themselves as being in a bind, unable to advocate for social change as well as unable to forge a positive identity - since, according to their narrated logic, attempting to accentuate their distinctiveness would exacerbate intergroup hostility. These accounts serve the purpose of rhetorically positioning South Africans as being in a powerful position of dominance, whilst constructing foreigners as being powerless, which in turn shows how theorisations about the power differential between groups affects notions about what can be done to change the prevailing circumstances. Whereas minority groups in different settings may, for instance, be able to engage in constructive dialogue, rights-based activity, political lobbying and revolution, these participants show how realistic threat closes off all of the above actions. Their narratives thus serve in constructing strategies ranging from social mobility to social change as futile. This is important as in social psychology the onus for reducing intergroup conflict is usually thought to lie with the prejudiced group, who are often regarded as primarily contributing to problematic contact encounters (Swim & Stangor, 1998). However, here it becomes clear that foreigners may also be complicit in maintaining the status quo, due to their constructed belief system about a lack of options. The narratives thus reveal that participants' theories and ideas about the type of action they can pursue are influenced by theories and constructions about themselves and outgroup members.

4.2. The narrative production of symbolic threat

In a similar way to realistic threat, participants' symbolic threat narratives are also discursively constructed and action-oriented. The following extracts demonstrate that these narrations also recruit self and other stereotypes, as well as servicing the production of anxiety as a discursive accomplishment. However, the types of stereotypes appear to differ from those employed in realistic threat narratives. Similarly, the production of anxiety assumes a different phenomenological quality, reflecting different interactional concerns from those constructed above. Whereas anxiety in the preceding section revolves around concerns for one's life and physical safety, the symbolic threat narratives reflect concerns about intergroup relations posing a threat to one's culture and way of life.

When considered in terms of their action orientation, these extracts have significant implications for social identity as they do the work of constructing a positive social identity for the participants. Thus, it emerges that the participants do indeed engage in a type of social creativity strategy (albeit this is discursive in nature). Through the deployment of these narratives, the participants construct themselves as being better than South Africans – a construction which contrasts with depictions of themselves as powerless victims. The main way in which this is accomplished is through comparison with the outgroup on a dimension reflecting the positive attributes of the ingroup. Variation across the realistic-symbolic threat narrative divide becomes more clear as one observes how when talking about violence, the participants construct themselves as powerless but when cultural issues are at stake, the narratives are geared towards a different type of identity construction.

Extract 10, Interview 9

I3: What I know of the Zulus, they are too lazy (.1) they don't want to work (.) so they know the Zimbabweans are strong for working (.) even ladies, we are not lazy, we work (.1) the boys, they work (.) everybody is working hard, but here they are only just drinking and they don't have money for drinking, that's why they want to rob people, that is the reason they take money from us (.) they want to drink but they don't want to work (.) they are jealous when (.3) some white men to come to collect the Zimbabweans, they are jealous.

R: Jealous?

I3: Ja that is what I know...

I2: I think the South Africans, they have got their own style of living, (.2) regardless of going to work (.) I don't know how they manage to get some monies. I don't know how they (.3) manage to get their life going on like that but they just don't like working. Even if they are given something to do (.) the pace of doing it is different from the pace that we do the job, you see. They are, I mean (.3) slow and (.3) they don't care, you see (.) they have got no feelings over something.

Extract 11, Interview 16

R: And South Africans may also be saying that foreigners are (.1) stealing their jobs, they say they're stealing their women, saying that they're bringing Aids and er (.2) foreigners are bringing crime, what do you think about that?

I1: One thing with Zimbabweans I must say that the people value some of these things to such an extent that you wouldn't just want somebody to do anything anyhow, we value ourselves I must say, that's one thing for sure and that's one thing that's not common here because there is a lady who was telling me (.) she told me before she got married she went for the depot the injection, because her mother didn't want her to get pregnant and bring a child home, but that means she was sleeping around without any protection (.) because all they are scared of is getting pregnant, these other things they don't mind, they would rather have it with whoever today and whoever tomorrow which is so uncommon with the Zimbabweans, like, I have a man today tomorrow I'm hanging with another man and tomorrow it's a different man (.4) never (.) never we value ourselves so much to such an extent that its even difficult for them to marry a Zimbabwean, they can't marry us because they know we are strict and we stick to our values.

I 3: () We have strict rules, we have our cultural things that are existing, if a man damages a girl she supposed to stay there and not supposed to go home, so if you like to compare that, it's clear. They don't want to accept it but their culture is very bad, it's the culture which is causing all these things...

Extract 12, Interview 13

R: Do you plan to go back to Zimbabwe?

I1, I2: & I3: Yes, yes.

I2: If I could go tomorrow, definitely.

I1: Ja, home is best, ja. Ja, I have come to realise that no matter how a place, how beautiful it is, how you are getting all the food on the table, home is always the best.

I2: Yes. Lifestyle wise, you know lifestyle wise, to us we came here and wow (.2) is this how people here live and we were so shocked at things, you know, things we were seeing, in the community, everywhere. Lifestyle wise, you know, we just miss home. It's a totally (.1)

kind of different lifestyle from the ones that, you know the South Africans have. It's not safe here.

R: And your Zimbabwean identity, when you were there, were you able to maintain it or have you lost it when you came down to South Africa?

I1: No, we have maintained it.

I2: That's what has been keeping us here.

I1: You know I was talking to this person the other day and then I said, you know there is a friend of mine who is in Jo'burg, where, before I came here she should come home for holidays (.) she would go like (.1) you will see when you go to South Africa it is so difficult for you to maintain yourself, you will start partying, you will start doing this, you will start (.3) and then I came here, the first month I haven't changed, second month I haven't changed, third month (.1) I am still me, I am still maintaining who I am.

Extract 13, Interview 12

I1: Remember not only we in South Africa, our the kids are growing as well. It is those kids, we must be here with those kids (.4) if our kids are going to remember where we are coming from. They are going to tell us, we are South Africans. We need to protect our legacy. We are coming from someone. How our ancestors are waiting for us, so we need to lead our children back where we are coming from, give them our culture, our language. We can't let it vanish because we are in South Africa. Remember, it does not matter what colour you are wearing in your skin. So being a foreigner, we've got an identity.

R: You've got that identity.

I1: Ja I've got that identity.

R: And it's important to preserve that?

I3: Yes we've got that.

In these accounts the participants construct themselves as being morally superior to South Africans. They engage in a type of moral 'othering', whereby the outgroup is stigmatised and denigrated on the basis of their constructed immorality. By constructing the outgroup as posing a significant danger to the sanctity of their moral code, the participants reinforce their own sense of positive identity. In extract 10, the participant contrasts the laziness of South Africans with the hardworking nature of foreigners, presenting foreigners as the antithesis of indolent South Africans. The participant stresses that *all* Zimbabweans, including females, are hardworking. She also evokes a different kind of emotional state in narrative - that of jealousy. She presents her statements with a large degree of certainty, illustrated by her assertion that this is what she 'knows'. By claiming that South Africans are jealous of the positive qualities of foreigners, she locates the motive for xenophobia not with foreigners but

instead with South Africans. Such an accusation serves in absolving the participants of any blame for contributing towards intergroup antagonism and instead justifies their presence in the country. This construction defends against stereotypes that could be levelled against foreigners – that they are job-stealers, criminals or spreaders of disease. It is instead rhetorically implied that foreigners are more deserving of jobs and privileges, since they have valuable skills and admirable qualities. Her account functions rhetorically to refute claims that foreigners are a problem but instead locates the problem of prejudice with jealous South Africans. The second participant emphasises that she has difficulty understanding the lifestyle of South Africans. In trying to make sense of this lifestyle, she attributes their lack of progress to their fundamental nature of laziness and apathy, stressing that “they have got no feelings over something” (extract 11). She portrays their behaviour as difficult to understand and as alien to the morality and ethos that her group represents. The construction of these stereotypes again shows that these constructions are not merely about negatively evaluating outgroup members but function rhetorically to “enhance and maintain collective self-esteem through a process of relative ingroup favouritism”, as the participants contrast the negative attributes with their own sense of dedication, ethos and hard work (Haslam et al., 2002, p. 157).

The participant in extract 11 begins by professing that there is something that she must say in order to reveal a supposedly unvoiced yet critical viewpoint. She proceeds to juxtapose the behaviour of what she constructs to be morally defunct South Africans with that of foreigners. Zimbabweans are constructed as people who have strict morals and values, whereas South Africans are constructed as licentious individuals who display scant regard for such values. Her repetition and stress on the words “never never” serves in polarizing the characteristics of each group, as she emphasises that Zimbabweans would under no

circumstances engage in moral transgressions such as promiscuity or pregnancy outside of wedlock. In emphasising the disparity between the groups, she argues that a marriage union between members of either group is likely to fail due to the high degree of moral incompatibility. Her words of “we value ourselves so much to such an extent” emphasise that Zimbabweans are not merely moral beings, but are exceptionally morally upstanding, so much so that they deserve to be commended. Participant 2 in the same extract adds to this argument by highlighting South African deficiencies in the form of brief list. In her final statement, she candidly deems the culture of South Africans to be “very bad”, effectively locating the root of social ills with the culture of South Africans. Both participants exhibit an air of superior virtue and condescendingly pronounce judgement on the lifestyles of South Africans, while constructing themselves and their fellow group members as being morally upstanding. They position themselves as being offended and taken aback by the lifestyle of South Africans. Culture and way of life are thus incorporated into these narratives to stress the dissonance between the groups and to construct foreigners as being better than citizens. The participants thus suggest that their culture is superior; in turn implying that contact should be avoided with those who pose a threat to their valued standards and morals. Consequently, although the participants’ statements about South Africans serve as complaints, they also function to portray the participants in a particularly positive light.

In the final extracts, the ramifications of such constructions for intergroup interaction become more explicit, as participants suggest that intergroup contact may signal a threat to their valued traditions and way of life. The participants in extract 12 remark that they are eager to return home, particularly because of the cultural clash they have experienced in South Africa and because of the fact that they do not feel safe here. It is emphasised that upon arrival in the country, they were astounded or “so shocked” at witnessing the contrast in lifestyles.

Participant 1 sheds some light into theorisations of what might happen during association with South Africans. According to her theory, too much association with South Africans could result in an erosion of cultural values due to the negative influence of South Africans. Her account contains narrated fears about becoming too familiar with South Africans, who are regarded as engaging in morally reprehensible behaviour such as “partying”. She reports, however, that whereas her friend had warned her about the possibility of being negatively swayed by South Africans, she has been able to withstand this and maintain her identity due to her strong resolve and character. According to the participants’ reasoning in the extract, South Africans represent a different way of doing things that is unfamiliar and threatening. Moreover, South Africans are constructed as symbolising a culture of violence and iniquity which needs to be ultimately resisted.

In the final extract, the participants advocate for the preservation and protection of their culture. They construct their culture as particularly valuable and as that which they do not want to be tainted. According to these narratives, foreigners choose to avoid contact in order to ensure that their positive values and identity are preserved. In turn, these narratives of symbolic threat serve in constructing foreigners as being threatened by contact, as they emphasise that they do not wish to “lose that identity” (extract 13). The same participant mentions the need to protect a “legacy”, a construction which contrasts with the earlier constructions of foreigners’ supposedly lowly and victimised status. By constructing their culture in this way, it is implied that the culture brought with foreigners from their homelands needs to be maintained and protected from the negative influence of South African culture which represents a deviation from that which needs to be venerated. By talking about maintaining their culture for future generations, the participants construct their traditions as that which they take pride in.

Overall, these constructions portray foreigners as not only being the *wronged* parties in contact, but the participants rhetorically construct themselves as being the more admirable or respectable of the different parties to contact. The self and other stereotypes deployed in these narrations work rhetorically to construct foreigners as having better, more enviable attributes or qualities than South Africans. Hence, the construction of negative stereotypes and the production of symbolic threat are not so much about the negative attributes of South Africans as they are about enhancing foreigners' positive social identity. The stereotypes that are constructed in narrative are, therefore, again shown to be more than perceptual or cognitive phenomena but are instead bound up in participants' social life and function as "a strategy of social influence", whereby they are used strategically to derogate South Africans whilst bolstering the participants' positive social identity and justifying their presence in South Africa (Reicher, Hopkins & Condor, 1997, p. 94).

The narration of symbolic threat is also shown to be associated with anxiety of a specific kind that differs to that produced in realistic threat narratives. This shows that whilst psychologists have labelled this construct as 'anxiety' as if it were a fixed psychological state, anxiety for one's life and anxiety for one's culture are narrated as two different experiences with different phenomenological qualities. Anxiety, consequently, takes on variable meanings across the participants' narratives. In these narratives, anxiety takes on an emotive form where it becomes constructed around fears about losing one's culture through association with those who are morally reprehensible and who may exert a negative influence. It is through the construction and rhetorical deployment of symbolic threat narratives that these individuals begin to salvage a positive sense of identity and self-esteem amidst a dominant discourse of victimhood. Whereas South Africans have throughout the narrative, been constructed as untrustworthy, violent and lazy, these symbolic threat narratives build on such

stereotypes and are aimed at showing that the worldview and values of South Africans are at odds, with foreigners evaluating South Africans in terms of moral dimensions. These accounts therefore serve in illustrating how foreigners assess themselves according to the value loaded attribute of being morally better than South Africans. The basis of this moral superiority also has its roots in realistic threat narratives, as it is first by showing South Africans to be violent and inhumane that the participants are able to develop these later narratives.

Symbolic threat is, therefore, used in constructing a positive identity or a sense of “enhanced group distinctiveness” for foreigners amidst their narratives of despair, victimhood and insecure social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 106). According to social identity theory, a minority group engaging in social creativity may choose a new dimension on which to evaluate itself or it may alter the value associated with certain distinctive attributes of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The participants in this study appear to introduce novel characteristics or dimensions on which they can compare themselves with South Africans. Their comparison with South Africans on a moral dimension shows them as being inherently better than South Africans as they accentuate the supposed differences in values and morals that exist between South Africans and foreigners. In this way, the participants emphasise that they are powerful and legitimately deserve respect, whereas South Africans’ power is constructed as illegitimate and unfairly gained. This ultimately shows that even when objective social conditions do not permit the forging of positive social identity; it is indeed possible by another, discursive, means.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has sought to explore how African foreigners construct threat in narrative and how this lays the foundation for constructions of their social identity as a minority group. After reading about Integrated Threat Theory and its efforts to better contextualise threat, I recognised a need for an even greater contextualisation of threat, so that threat is not merely understood as a cognitive state and studied in a purely quantitative manner. Consequently, this study has involved a radical re-conceptualisation and contextualisation of threat, so that the notion of threat as a cognitive variable has been disregarded while focus has turned to how threat operates in a discursive realm. This has allowed for an appreciation of how threat is collectively constructed and oriented towards the achievement of socio-political discursive work.

An analysis of participants' talk has demonstrated that they construct different threats in ways reflective of varying interactional concerns – concerns about fear for life and fear for culture. Threat, as a discursive accomplishment, is constructed through narrated versions of self and others and through the production of anxiety. Stereotypes, rather than being simply cognitive phenomena, were also recruited in participants' narratives. Furthermore, rather than anxiety being a separate affective state, it was instead worked up in narrative and shown to take on variable, emotively imbued meanings reflecting different phenomenological concerns.

The research has, therefore, been instrumental in understanding that these different forms of threat can be highly variable, functional, and discursively interrelated rather than being static in nature. Studying threat from this perspective has also allowed for a more in-depth

understanding of participants' own understandings and theories about what happens during interaction with South Africans.

The research has also demonstrated how constructions of threat are rhetorically geared towards the construction of social identity. Despite constructions of powerlessness through the deployment of realistic threat narratives, these participants were also able to construct the availability of social creativity strategies by constructing a discourse of moral superiority, which was accomplished primarily through the rhetorical use of symbolic threat. This shows how participants simultaneously construct themselves as powerless, oppressed and stigmatised (showing that they have no cognitive alternatives, no means of assimilation and no means of collective action) and at the same time use social creativity strategies to construct a positive social identity (where they show themselves to be better, smarter and more humane than their South African counterparts). Symbolic threat and realistic threat are thus each used to achieve different types of identity work, constructing foreigners as hapless victims but also as a benign and morally superior group. Thus, although foreigners position themselves as being disempowered and unable to alter their circumstances through the use of any of the strategies mentioned in Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory of Social Identity, it emerges through their narratives that the participants do in fact engage in a type of social creativity strategy, albeit discursively, whereby they come to redefine their identity as foreigners, through the construction of negative stereotypes as well as the rhetorical use of symbolic threat.

Moreover, it appears that symbolic threat narratives build on constructions developed in realistic threat narratives where foreigners depict themselves as victims at the hands of violent aggressors. The realistic threat narratives thus set the foundation for foreigners' social

creativity strategies as they emphasise the destitute and disempowered position of foreigners who seemingly have no options. As a result, realistic threat is used to explain segregation, but it also services the social creativity strategy whereby foreigners construct themselves as *morally superior*. It was firstly through constructing South African citizens as inherently violent, untrustworthy and inhumane that foreigners were able to develop their later discourse of moral superiority. These constructions thus served to lay the groundwork for foreigners' narratives of symbolic threat as the participants drew on constructions of South Africans as violent, lazy and untrustworthy as the basis of their moral deficiency.

This thesis has, therefore, served to show how threat is discursively employed to accomplish social identity work in African foreigners' narratives. The variability, for instance, of presenting oneself as a victim, whilst also depicting oneself in a seemingly contradictory way as being superior, may not have been uncovered if the data were not analysed through a qualitative lens. By attempting to grapple with the participants' narratives viz. their discursive constructions of threat, this research has shown that threat need not merely be considered an intrapsychic state, but instead that different forms of threat as postulated by Integrated Threat Theory can be considered important discursive tools that are at the disposal of participants when attempting to make sense of contact encounters and constructing their social identity and position in South African society. By using these forms of threat in a different way through the study of narratives, the research allows for the highly dynamic nature of discourse to emerge. This research also reinforces the idea that foreigners need not be considered passive recipients of prejudice but instead can be deemed agents who actively construct certain realities and identities in making sense of their world and achieving certain ends with their discourse.

The research has shown how common sense everyday theorisations and constructions limit certain forms of action. In this way, the role that discourse has in perpetuating the current social relations is appreciated. By challenging both the status quo of the current real-life situation, as well as re-shaping narrative about what can be achieved by foreigners, social action may one day be a feasible option for such participants. In turn this work can be understood as somewhat of a rejoinder to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) work, as it shows how social categories and conditions can be *constructed*. The findings of this research are particularly significant considering that this research was conducted in a setting where relatively little violence has occurred. This displays the significance of discursive work and demonstrates how participants' social identities and realities need not always reflect objective conditions in society, but instead may also abound in subjective discursive constructions. The constructions reveal that foreigners see no role for themselves for themselves in the struggles against xenophobia, whilst also seeing themselves as deeply divided from South Africans. Intervention therefore could possibly be geared towards addressing some of these issues. Further exploring minority participants' theories and specific concerns may also be useful as they could be incorporated into interventions aimed at reducing intergroup conflict.

Recommendations for future research

In this thesis, the perspectives of foreigners from different countries were all considered together and have largely been treated as homogeneous. Future studies may, however, benefit from exploring the perspective of different groups and looking at how discursive narrations may differ across nationality. This, in turn, may provide for an even more contextualised understanding of threat. Also, since this way of studying threat has proven to be useful, such an approach could be used in better understanding the perspective of other minorities in

different contexts and the ways in which their constructions of intergroup life may be tied to social identity.

This study has explored only the perspective of foreigners, which has proven useful in that it has allowed for an in-depth study of the narratives of this group. Furthermore, it has heeded the call to increasingly incorporate the perspective of minority group members, such as foreigners, into social psychological research. However, it may be useful for future research to concurrently incorporate the perspectives of foreigners *and* South Africans who share common contact experiences or who are even acquainted. By doing so, such research would be truly interactionist, and would prove useful in better understanding how foreigners' and South Africans' constructions work together in perpetuating the current intergroup relations. By studying both perspectives simultaneously, necessary interventions can be accordingly designed, incorporating the input of all relevant parties.

If interventions are to truly engage with the input of minorities and majorities, then taking heed of participants' specific interactional concerns may also be especially important as it is by grappling with specific contextually embedded concerns and theories, that intergroup prejudice such as xenophobia may be better understood. These concerns need to be increasingly addressed, not only through quantitative methods, but also through methodology such as that employed in the current study. This study, for instance, has appreciated that although discursive constructions may be "flawed, incomplete reference[s]" to materiality, they are nevertheless tied to experiences of social reality and have the potential to hinder successful contact and promote segregation (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002, p. 705). This means that to grapple with the problem of xenophobia and in order to reduce feelings of intergroup threat and mistrust, efforts need to be made not only to deal with the objective

conditions in society such as poverty, violence and unemployment. The subjective experiences of all parties concerned also need to be increasingly taken into consideration as their subjective experiences affect their approach to outgroups and the role they envision for their own group in the social climate. It has been shown in this study that foreigners' discursive constructions stem from their objective realities but also have the potential to influence these social realities and are therefore worthy of future study by those exploring ways to combat xenophobia.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Participant

I am a Psychology Masters student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). I am interested in learning about your experiences as an African foreigner in South Africa. I can be contacted at 205507117@ukzn.ac.za or 082 786 8131.

My supervisor is Professor Kevin Durrheim, who can be found in the School of Psychology, on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You can contact him at Durrheim@ukzn.ac.za or 033 260 5348.

Information in this study will be gathered from group interview that you would be required to attend. The interview may last for about 1 hour. The interviews will be tape-recorded.

Your name will not be included in the report. What you say during the interviews will not be linked back to you in any way. Since the interview is taking place in a group, however, it is difficult to make sure that other participants will not share with others what was said.

I understand that participation requires valuable time and effort and I will therefore provide you with R30 for participating. The results of the study may be published and possibly shown to other people at a conference. If this happens, your name will not appear anywhere. You are in

no way forced to participate. You can withdraw at any time or for any reason during the study. If you choose not to take part in the research, you will not suffer any penalty.

I appreciate the time and effort it would take to participate in this study.

Please complete the next section:

I (Full names of participant) confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I can to withdraw from the project at any time or for any reason, should I wish.

Signature of Participant.....

Date.....

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- Introduction
- Verbal briefing on informed consent

General areas of inquiry:

1. Can you tell me a little about life in South Africa?
2. Do you plan to go back to your home country?
3. What does it feel like living here, right next to South Africans?
4. What type of relationships do you have with South Africans?
5. Can you tell me what you understand about xenophobia?
6. Why do think things are the way they are between South Africans and foreigners?
7. What can you do to fight xenophobia?

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS (Silverman, 2005, p. 376)

| | | |
|-------|--|--|
| [| C2: quite a [while Mo: [yea | Left brackets indicate the point at which a current speakers talk is overlapped by another's talk. |
| = | W: that I'm aware of = C: =Yes. Would you confirm that? | Equal signs, one at the end of a line and one at the beginning, indicate no gap between the two lines. |
| (.4) | Yes (.2) yeah | Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second. |
| (.) | to get (.) treatment | A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap, probably no more than one-tenth of a second. |
| _____ | What's <u>up</u> ? | Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude. |
| :: | O: kay? | Colons indicate prolongation of the Immediately prior sound. The length of the row of colons indicates length of the prolongation. |
| WORD | I've got ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT | Capitals, except at the beginning of the lines, indicate especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk. |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| .hhhh I feel that (.2) .hhh | A row of h's prefixed by a dot indicates an inbreath; without a dot, an outbreath. The length of the row of h's indicates the length of the in- or outbreath |
| () future risks and () and life () | Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said. |
| (word) Would you see (there) | Parenthesized words are possible hearings |
| (()) confirm that ((continues)) | Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions |
| .,? What do you think? | Indicate speaker's intonation (. = falling intonation; , = flat or slighting rising intonation) |
| > > What do you think? | Indicates data later discussed |