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The development of ethnic minorities: A case study of west Africans in South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND THE STUDY AREA

Introduction

Post-apartheid Hillbrow, the study area for this research has been described as a neighborhood of contrast (Morris, 1996). Predominant in its overcrowded population are West African immigrants, particularly Nigerians and Cameroonians. In South Africa, these categories of immigrants are seen as criminals and drug dealers, who disrupt the socio-economic stability of the state. These immigrants, easily identified from their physical and other socio-cultural characteristics, are often targets of police raids, harassments and xenophobia. They are the scapegoats for the high crime rates, and for the prevalence of diseases in the neighbourhood. They often seem to be on the lookout or ready to run, always in groups of two or more, and if walking, appear to be in a rush. They hang around Internet cafes and phone booths. They operate small business activities especially along Pretoria, Kotze and Quartz streets. Kotze and Quartz Streets opposite High Point[1] considered by many, as the headquarters of Nigerian immigrants in the country, is crowded with Nigerians. Some of them own the expensive cars parked on both sides of the road. They are always talking on their cell-phones, exchanging money and other valuables. Elsewhere in the neighbourhood, it is not uncommon to see police officers on the lookout for these immigrants, or police officials interrogating and searching those they can get for identification papers, looking for excuses to arrest them. Traffic officers on their part are stopping cars of suspected foreigners to check for invalid driving licenses, stolen cars, and other illegalities. It seems all the traffic cops and police officials are out to do is to victimize and arrest these immigrants.

These immigrants have come to South Africa with many expectations. But, the socio-economic and political state of affairs in the country appears to prevent them from realizing their expectations. As if trapped in the country, they are required to make

[1] High Point is the biggest block of flats in Hillbrow with 29 stories and 333 units. This building is owned by the Anglo American Property Service (AMPROS) (Morris, 1996).

adjustments to better fit in their new society. Sometimes, such adjustments can take a longer period than initially anticipated (Castles and Miller, 1993).

The author of this thesis is himself a Cameroonian who came to South Africa in November 1998 when the Aliens Control Act, passed during the apartheid years still governed immigration affairs in the country. The Aliens Control Act was the government's racist and discriminatory weapon to determine those to be allowed or disallowed in the country (Peberdy and Crush, 1998). As I will show in the thesis, it encouraged discrimination and xenophobia, especially towards African immigrants in the country. Since the democratic elections in 1994, African immigrants in South Africa have suffered serious human rights abuses, discrimination and xenophobia from the general public, police, traffic cops, and Home Affairs officials. My own experience is no exception: this thesis is written from the viewpoint of a Cameroonian who has been on the receiving end of such treatment. The decision to write this thesis therefore arose from a concern with the socio-economic and political obstacles, which prevented these immigrants from realizing their dreams in South Africa. Inevitably, I tend to assume a sympathetic position to the plights of the immigrants studied in this thesis, although I do at the same time strive to ensure that this does not cloud my scholarly commitment.

The Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research is to understand how West African immigrants experience emigration to South Africa, and how they are affected by their new context. It thus has three main research concerns. Firstly, to identify the reasons why West African immigrants are attracted to South Africa. Secondly, to identify and analyse the factors which contribute to the marginalisation or the integration of West African immigrants in South Africa. Thirdly the thesis aims to identify how interaction with South African society affects West Africans' sense of self-identity: are they becoming 'South Africanised' or is their sense of belonging to a separate group strengthening.

Three main dimensions of immigrant experiences are the subject of this research: Firstly, the structural issues that impact upon migrants' decisions, lives and identity-

employment, housing conditions and the like. Secondly, popular attitude to immigrants in South Africa and especially the question of xenophobia, and thirdly, immigrants interaction with the South African state and especially the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), and the South African Police Service (SAPS). In relation to the latter point, the thesis will argue, controversially, that in South Africa, immigrants from other African countries have been placed by state initiated processes, in a position similar to that of black South Africans under the pass laws. This is viewed not just as coincidental, but also as related to continuities in the structure of the state and society. In particular, the DHA, which played a part in the administration of the apartheid system, contributes to the construction of immigrants as aliens, by treating them as it treated racially oppressed South Africans in the past.

The thesis will use comparative studies of immigrants in Europe and the USA as a comparative framework for its investigations. It will be argued that the particular and peculiar features of South Africa society and its relation to other parts of Africa make this body of literature a more appropriate comparative framework than literatures on migrancy within the developing world.

The Structure of the Thesis

To understand how West African immigrants experience emigration to South Africa, and how this new context affects them, it is important to examine the relevance or lack of relevance of immigration studies in the United States and Europe to that of the present study. From reviews of related literature, cases of the United States and Europe will be used for comparative purposes because they are classical immigration regions. In this way, lessons from international experiences can be applied in the South African situation. Obviously, it is not being suggested that immigration to South Africa is the same sociologically as immigration to the United States or Western Europe. As in all comparative sociology, the point is to determine what similarities and what differences exist between different situation in order to attain a better analytical understanding of the specifics of each.

To achieve the research objective, both primary and secondary materials will be reviewed, comparing and contrasting immigrants' minority group experiences and activities to those of the present study. The literature review in this research will be useful in providing secondary and primary materials, as well as complimentary materials collected using other research methodology. Chapter Two describes the research methodologies used to collect the raw data for this research.

Chapter Three presents the literature review, which disuses the key themes of the research. First, the chapter discuses theoretical debates on international migration, and how they lead to the formation of immigrant ethnic minority groups. The chapter then looks at modern migration flows, to determine the direction of movement of migrants, which seems to indicate that international migrants will largely move from less developed regions to more developed and advanced regions (Castles and Miller 1993; White, 1993). This would explain why people from the West African sub-region immigrate into South Africa. The Chapter also examines factors influencing international migration by looking at some migration theories, and relating them to the present study. How immigrant ethnic minority groups develop will also be examined, bringing out its relevance to the present study. Concepts of ethnicity and identity formation will be examined, relating them to the concerns of the thesis. Finally, international experiences in the United States and Europe will be reviewed, particularly looking at problems faced by immigrant ethnic minority groups, their adjustment strategies, how they resist discrimination, and their coping and survival strategies in their new context.

It could be suggested that it would have been more appropriate to focus comparatively on immigration studies in other Africa countries. However there are two clear reasons for focusing on South African comparisons with the United States and Europe. Firstly, there is a significant similarity between emigration from West Africa to South Africa and emigration from less developed countries to metropolitan centers in the United States and Europe. Immigrants see South Africa as (and to some extent it really is) a significantly more economically developed country, which in theory could provide greater opportunities. Secondly, studies of immigration in Western Europe and in the United

States have shaped the sociology of migration, and therefore it is important to understand what in this literature is or is not relevant in the South African case.

Since the early 1990s, South Africa has become a popular destination for most potential migrants particularly from the West African sub-region (Crush and McDonald, 2002). Today, it is not unusual to talk about the West African Diaspora within the Africa continent particularly, in South Africa. Cameroonians and Nigerians particularly, have been flocking into South Africa, yet, there are no detailed studies investigating why these immigrants come to South Africa. Most of the studies of African immigrants in South Africa have focused on xenophobia, and discrimination towards these immigrants (Crush, 1998; Crush, 2001; McDonald *et al* 1999; Peberdy, 1999; Reitzes, 1998; Reitzes and Crawhall, 1998), or immigrants as crime perpetrators or carriers of disease (especially HIV/AIDS) (Cohen, 1991; Maharaj and Rajkumar, 1997; Leggett, 1999; Gordimer, 1999). An understanding of why immigrants emigrate from their countries of origin, and what attracts them in South Africa would be useful, and provide an opportunity to explore sociological issues like how immigrants experience immigration, and how they are affected by their new context.

It is in this light that the first objective of this research was conceptualized, namely, to identify the reasons why West African migrants are attracted to South Africa. In Chapter Four, the 'push and pull' factors influencing Cameroonian and Nigerian immigration into South Africa will be examined. The Chapter portrays these immigrants as dispersed people with a memory, vision and/or myths about their original homelands (Clifford, 1994). The Chapter examines the history of West African immigration into South Africa, looking at the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects influencing the emigration of these immigrants from their countries to South Africa. Amongst these factors, the Chapter also argues that in the sub-region, there is a powerful sense of familial identity, which plays a crucial role in shaping the migrancy of West Africans to South Africa. The argument is, the role of family pride is a crucial factor in influencing West African immigration to South Africa. The Chapter ends with a schematic model of the

interrelatedness of the different push and pull factors influencing West African immigration into South Africa.

Chapter Five will present an in-depth discussion of immigrant interactions with the DHA. The relevance of such discussion is based on the fact that the DHA is one state institution, which determines the duration, lifestyle and perhaps the identity of immigrants in South Africa. The Chapter begins with the reasons why the then Braamfontein DHA was selected for the research, before heading on to examine immigration policy in the country, and how it affects Cameroonians and Nigerians in South Africa. This Chapter examines state arbitrariness to immigration affairs, and how the DHA promotes xenophobia towards African immigrants in the country. The Chapter also examines how immigrants adapt to state promoted xenophobia and discrimination.

Although the Aliens Control Act of 1991was replaced in 1998 with the new Refugee Act, the latter was only applicable from the year 2000. Immigrants who entered the country before 2000 remained aliens under the Aliens Control Act of 1991. Arguably, the new Act still has traces of apartheid legacy with clear exclusionary characteristics such as deportation, victimization and harassment (McDonald *et al*, 1999; Peberdy, 1999; Crush, 1998; Reitzes, 1994). This has arguably been one of the root causes of the high incidences of xenophobia towards African immigrants in the country (In Chapter Six, the issue of xenophobia will be examined in detail). In the DHA, particularly the Braamfontein DHA, immigrants are treated unfairly; suffer from derogatory remarks, and other xenophobic reactions. Chapter Five also examines the role of interpreters in this department, illustrating how interpreters more often than not work in collaboration with Home Affairs officials to extort large sums of money from immigrants, particularly Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants. This is followed by the difficulties these immigrants encounter before becoming an asylum seeker, and/or renewing their documentation in the country.

Discrimination and marginalisation of Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in the country can lead to dangerous unintended consequences. Refusing to grant immigrants

asylum in South Africa, for example, can force them into a criminal class, where they operate in activities outside the margins of the law. Immigrants' activities outside the margins of the law are discussed in-depth in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

A detailed discussion of xenophobia, particularly towards Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in South Africa, and how they adapt to xenophobic hostility is presented in Chapter Six. The simultaneous increase in the number of Cameroonians and Nigerians in South Africa, with increasing unemployment has been one major cause of xenophobic hostility in the country (HRC, 2000). It is argued that post apartheid South Africa is still very much attached to its past, as apartheid oppressors still exist in post apartheid South Africa (Peberdy, 1999). This has led to serious human rights abuses and police harassments, identified by Human Rights Committee of South Africa (HRC) as the single biggest problem African immigrants are facing in the country (HRC, 2000). It is also related to an increase in police corruption in the country. Corruption of police officers is an inevitable problem, as there are indications that bribery, protection rackets and theft are commonplace among 'ordinary' police members (Gareth, 2002). The Chapter also brings out the role of the media in perpetuating xenophobia in the country particularly towards Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants. The Chapter brings to light the nationalization and racialization of crime involving immigrants in the country by the press (Danso and McDonald, 2001), and argues that the current xenophobic situation in the country, 'racism without race', has replaced the racism of the apartheid years.

In Chapter Six, the fear and dislike of West Africans in South Africa, and the resultant negative actions towards these immigrants has been termed 'West-a-phobia'. The Chapter further presents these immigrants as socially excluded in South Africa, as the majority of them are unemployed, with low-income status, poor living and housing conditions, and belong to minority ethnic groups. As a result of their minority status, they are more likely than others to live in deprived areas, suffer from unemployment, poverty and be victims of crime and xenophobia. Before concluding, the Chapter examines some socio-cultural strategies adopted by some Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants to resist xenophobia and discrimination, and how in the process, such adaptabilities impact on

their identity in South Africa. There is no study of this nature on Cameroonians and Nigerian immigrants in South Africa. Dressing and hairstyling, learning South African local languages and dancing styles, making friends with South Africans, changing their legal status through marriages with South Africans, joining social clubs and organizing social-get-together, as well as forming social organizations and clubs were identified as some of the strategies adopted by these immigrants to resist xenophobia and discrimination in the country. The Chapter concludes with a summary, pointing out the fact that space and place always impact on identity formation especially amongst urban immigrants who developed consciously formed identities to better fit in their new environment (Malkki, 1992).

It is important to examine how interactions with South African citizens affect West African identity. Here the thesis poses the question of whether West African immigrants in South Africa are becoming more 'West African' in identity terms or not, the impact of South African culture on these immigrants, and/or attempts by these immigrants to preserve or redefine their culture. Chapter Seven will examine immigrants' socio-economic survival in South Africa. If these immigrants are discriminated against, and suffer from serious xenophobia, then the sociological question of how they survive in the country becomes very crucial. Paradoxically, they appear to survive through exclusion, which largely involves them in activities outside the margins of the law. The Chapter will identify immigrants' trajectories of survival, and economic successes in the country. First, through immigrants' networks based on trust and community connections, they generate capital for investment and other purposes. Second, those involved in small business activities use family labour, and rely on ethnic consumers as well as the general public for success. They belong to rotating savings organizations, which motivate them, and are a major source of income. The neighborhood, in which the majority of these immigrants find themselves, also carries hidden advantages. They engage in trading activities of various types amongst which, eating and drinking houses, hair and beauty salons, operating Internet cafes and telephone booths are the most common. Some of

these immigrants have become transmigrants[2], while others operate in activities outside the margins of the law. The Chapter examines these activities, stressing the fact that if these immigrants were not discriminated against, perhaps they would not be engaged in certain activities particularly those beyond the margins of the law.

How these immigrants preserve and redefine their identity is also examined in Chapter Seven. Adapting to xenophobia and discrimination discussed in Chapter Six can be consider as one way through which these immigrants redefine their personal identities. Chapter Seven presents the socio-economic milieu of these immigrants, what sort of ethnic goods they consume, and how important these goods remind them of their home countries. The Chapter also discusses some of the contested boundaries and illustrates how contested boundaries for immigrants are means of survival and livelihood for people who are rejected by the mainstream society. Amongst the contested boundaries discussed in Chapter Seven are, taxes and custom duties, identification papers, unlicensed taxi and driving licenses, and illicit financial transaction and money laundering. The Chapter concludes on the premise that, because these immigrant suffer from xenophobia, discrimination and the South African Affirmative Action, they have to look for alternative ways of surviving in the country. Through these activities immigrants are able to survival through exclusion, to attain their aspirations in the country.

THE STUDY AREA (HILLBROW)

Why was Hillbrow selected for the research?

In Johannesburg, Hillbrow, (*fig. 1)* stands out clearly as a neighbourhood of distinct ethnic groups, races and nationalities. It is located at the heart of Johannesburg, a *'world city',* that commands a strategic position in South Africa (Rogerson, 1996; Rogerson, 1997b). Hillbrow is a residential suburb Northeast of central Johannesburg with a population density of between 240 to 400 people per hectare (Swart, 1990). Hillbrow is defined as the area boarded by the North side of Smith Street, the West side of Catherine Avenue and by the East side of Clarendon place (Morris, 1999; Swart, 1990). Some

[2]Migrants who enjoy the benefits of participating in the socio-economic processes of two or more states, and live their lives across borders (Crush and McDonald, 2002; Schiller, 1999a; Schiller *et al,* 1992).

researchers have described it as a neighbourhood of contrast (Morris, 1999), self sufficient (Swart, 1990), and as having a highly racially mixed population (Clay, 1982; Morris, 1999). For these researchers, it appears Hillbrow does not only represent a modern society but everything bad in a modern society. Hillbrow's infrastructure, high population density and the services it provides to its people present the neighborhood as a modern locality. Crime rates in Hillbrow are exceptionally high. The large numbers of poor people, illegal migrants, asylum seekers, and the unemployed could be one reason why crime and deviant activities are quite common in Hillbrow. In the United States, Goad and Hill (2001) observed a similar situation about neighborhoods with high unemployment:

> When people at 'dot-coms' get laid off, that usually doesn't affect crime rates. But when young people who work in relatively unskilled areas can't find work, the rates tend to go up…with the population growing in our city; obviously, the numbers (of crimes) could, and apparently did, grow (Goad and Hill, 2001: 1-3).

Hillbrow's dense concentration of all sorts of business enterprises, cars, hawkers, street kids, homeless people, legal and illegal migrants, and sex workers keep the street busy at all times with frequent traffic jams. The major buildings in the area include petrol and service stations, churches, cinemas, banks, hospitals, libraries and hotels. It is a highly cosmopolitan neighborhood with an exceptionally vibrant appearance. Over the years, Hillbrow has transformed from an all-White neighborhood into a predominantly black neighborhood (Morris, 1996; 1999). Today, Hillbrow can be singled out as a West African stronghold, perhaps because it is a neighborhood where West Africans entering South Africa for the first time often establish a base. With an already large population of West Africans and other black foreigners living in the neighborhood, newcomers often feel a high sense of security and prospects of assistance from friends and relatives. A neighborhood with a high concentration of West Africans like Hillbrow constitutes a good setting for a study on how these immigrants experience immigration into South Africa, and how they are affected by their new context.

Many writers have noted the high concentration of West Africans in Hillbrow. In 2000, the Sunday Times observed about Hillbrow that: *"African immigrants stick together for protection and operate close, supportive networks among themselves. Whole apartment blocks, until recently occupied by whites, are now settled by people from the same African country"* (Barron, 2000: 7). Dominant amongst these immigrants are Nigerians with population estimates of about 45,000 to 100,000 (Leggett, 1998). Thus Hillbrow provides a proper setting for this study, of how these immigrants experience immigration and how their new context affects them.

Furthermore, Hillbrow's vast size, dense population, and their activities make it suitable for criminals to seek refuge and/or hide from the strong arm of the law. Over the years, Hillbrow has developed a negative image, and this can be traced as far back as the 1980s (Clay, 1982; Morris, 1996; 1999). In 1982 Clay wrote:

> To mention Hillbrow is to evoke a wide range of reaction: to some, it is the embodiment of sin, violence and evil, while others view it as a hub, radiating excitement and all the colour and glamour of a plastic age. Yet, others regard Hillbrow as a place to be totally alone and anonymous in one of the most densely populated areas imaginable (Clay, 1982: 1).

The racially mixed character and the high concentration of West Africans in Hillbrow will provide a suitable setting to proper analyze the types of adjustments made by West Africans in their new environment. Whether or not they are marginalized, and how they integrate in the South African society will also be properly analyzed. Few in-depth studies have been done on West African immigrants in South Africa particularly in Hillbrow. Those studies that do exist are related either to crime committed by or against West Africans, or to xenophobic hostility towards them. This research encompasses a detailed analysis of the socio-cultural, economic and political status of West African immigrants, the majority of whom are living and earn their living from and in Hillbrow. The following section will examine the history of Hillbrow, showing how it has transformed from an all white reserve to a West African stronghold.

The History of West African Immigration into Hillbrow: From a white reserve to a West African stronghold

This study will classify the history of immigration into Hillbrow into three periods. The classification is based on the inward movements of the different ethnic, racial groups, and nationalities into Hillbrow. The first period runs from between 1977 and 1985, followed by the period from between 1985 and 1992, and finally the period from between 1992 and 2000. Studies on Hillbrow have established that the racial transition of Hillbrow dates as far back as the 1970s (Morris, 1996).

Although the Group Areas Act of 1950[3] was only scrapped in 1991, Hillbrow's racial composition was largely altered by the 1970s when Indians and 'Coloureds' started penetrating the neighbourhood (Morris, 1996). Hillbrow had an already established reputation for its social and moral decadence (Clay, 1982; Morris, 1996; 1999). It could be argued that even before the coming of West Africans to South Africa, Hillbrow was already regarded as a dreadful place to live in, and its image is not a recent one, neither is it the sole making of West Africans living there. Perceptions of the 'beauty' and the 'glamorous' face of Hillbrow had waxed and waned over time and space.

The presence of West Africans in post apartheid Hillbrow opens another chapter for the neighbourhood. Their contributions towards Hillbrow's tarnished image could be seen as the last straw that has broken the camel's back. Literature on locality studies has questioned whether, while people's lives continues to be mainly circumscribed by their localities in which they live and work, these localities can still exert an influence on the fate of those places given that so much their destiny is increasingly controlled by global political and economic forces (Cook, 1989a; 1989b). Hillbrow is not simply a place or a community, but a setting for interactions, and the sum of social energies and agencies

[3] The Group Area Act of 1950 was apartheid legislation in South Africa, which started in 1948 when the nationalist government of South Africa enacted laws to define and enforce segregation. For example, the 1950 Population Registration Act No. 30 required the populace of South Africa to be divided into three racial categories, based on appearance, social acceptance and descent. First, the whites defined as in appearance obviously a white person or generally accepted as a white person. Second, blacks, define as, of or accepted as a member of an African tribe or race and thirdly Coloureds defined as of mixed descent and those who are neither blacks nor whites (Boddy-Evans, 2001).

resulting from clusters of diverse individuals, groups and social interests. West Africans in Hillbrow form a significant portion of these diverse individuals and groups, and are a central engine of Hillbrow's social energies.

The period between 1977 and 1985: The Breakdown of Segregation

The Group Areas Act of 1950[4] reserved Hillbrow exclusively as a white residential area. In fact, this Act gave black Africans no rights to be in urban areas except as labourers (Royston, 1998). Morris observed that Hillbrow had remained almost exclusively a white residential area until the end of 1977 when Indians and 'Coloureds' started penetrating the neighbourhood. Morris (1996: 71) noted that: "*The five-year period from 1977 to 1982 was a key period, since it was during this time that the racial composition of Hillbrow was altered irrevocably"*. Some analysts have regarded the racial mixing of Hillbrow as a major blow to the prevailing apartheid policy, which was determined to maintain, and enforce the Group Areas Act (Mather, 1987; Royston, 1998). The failure of this Act had lasting repercussions for the neighbourhood. One could argue that the failure of the Act was setting a scene for future West African immigrants to establish their solid networks and base in the neighbourhood.

This grand apartheid dream, notably the Group Area Act of 1950 failed in some minor but significant instances. First, an urban underclass continued to live in Hillbrow and worked in activities like prostitution and drug trade. The nature of these activities was soon to act as a centripetal force, attracting West Africans and other immigrants into the neighbourhood. Second, black people under the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 had always worked as domestic servants for middle and high-income whites, and were usually accommodated in servants' quarters (Mather, 1987; Royston, 1998). In addition, legislation passed in May 1955 supported the legal rights of black people to live on their employer's property even though the number was restricted to a maximum of five

[4] This act forced physical separation between races by creating different residential areas for different races, which led to forced removal of people living in 'wrong' areas (Boddy-Evans, 2001). Hillbrow had been reserved under this act as a white residential area. It is stated that, "By the end of 1972, 1513 Whites, 44885 Coloureds, and 27694 Indian families had been moved in terms of the Group Area Act. By September 1982, ten years later 77930 Coloureds, 1773 Whites and 36747 Indians had been moved in terms of this Act" (Morris, 1996:71).

persons (Mather, 1987). Within South Africa, some black Africans had even changed their African surnames to Afrikaans names (typical of mixed-race 'coloureds') just to get access to the neighbourhood. Interviews conducted with one Molepo recorded the following examples: *"Some Xhosa people whose names were 'Kobese' changed it to 'Kobus' an Afrikaans name, while some Sotho people called 'Moremogolo' changed their names to 'Grootbom' an Afrikaans name"* (Edward Molepo[5], 2001). The interviews showed that people changed their names in other to gain access to Hillbrow and other Indian and 'Coloured' areas. Between 1976 and 1988 for example, the number of illegal residents in Hillbrow alone had reached thousands (Royston, 1998).

Another factor leading to the racial mixing of Hillbrow during this period was the government's incapacity to deliver sufficient housing to that section of the population classified as Indians and 'Coloureds' (Morris, 1996). This inability was part due to the political[6] and economic crises[7] ravaging the country at the time. Morris (1996) observed that these crises had diverted government's attention from enforcing the Group Areas Act, towards solving the socio-economic and political problems of the time. The consequences led to Morris (1996: 74) to observe that:

> This reasoning was to culminate in the setting up in 1983, of the Tricameral Parliament in which those sections of the population classified as coloured and Indians were to be incorporated into the central parliament by way of separate houses namely the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates.

These new developments favoured those who fell within these racial categories and facilitated their integration with the white population in Hillbrow.

Scarcity and poor housing conditions, as well as exorbitant charges for rents in localities designated as 'Coloured' or Indian group areas also forced 'Coloured', and Indian people to move to White designated areas, which had an abundance of housing. In addition,

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[5] Personal communication with this respondent who had stayed and worked in Johannesburg since 1977

[6] Mainly the 1976 Soweto student uprising against the use of Afrikaner as the language of instruction in schools.

[7] Dues to these crises, real growth rate of 5.7% in the 1960s had dropped to about zero in 1977 (Saul and Gelb, 1986).

Hillbrow as a white designated area had lost a significant portion of its population after the June 1976 uprising (Clay, 1982). In 1976 for example, immigration into South Africa exceeded emigration by 30,598 people while in 1977 there was a net loss of 1,178 people (Gordon, *et al.,* 1979). Besides, the abundance of vacant houses in Hillbrow and a substantial drop in property prices in the wake of the Soweto[8] uprising, led to some Hillbrow flat-dwellers moving from the neighbourhood into homes in the suburbs (Morris, 1996; 1999). Additionally, the Anglo-American Property Services (AMPROS) a major landlord in the inner city had 175 empty flats. To fill these vacant flats, and to attract more tenants, AMPROS decided to slash rents in certain buildings in Hillbrow (Morris, 1996). Desperate and homeless 'Coloured' and Indian people were in effect attracted to Hillbrow, at the same time, desperate landlords determined to fill their vacant buildings readily accepted them (Morris, 1996).

Morris (1996) also observed that with the lifting of the 'Rents Control' in April 1978 of all blocks built after 1st June 1960, and because most Hillbrow blocks were built before 1966, some landlords used varieties of techniques to encourage protected tenants, mainly white pensioners, to vacate the buildings. These strategies were intended to provide space for Indian and 'Coloured' people who were ready to pay higher rents. Strategies such as renovating buildings, to render the surrounding areas unsafe for tenants, converting unfurnished flats to furnished flats so that rents could be doubled, and, offering cash payments for tenants to move out were used by landlords to encourage white eviction (Morris (1996). Other factors in the racial transition of Hillbrow include increases in the price of petrol, which had made the inner city more attractive than the suburbs. Morris (1996) equally observed that the number of blacks involved in the inward movement were negligible, and attracted little attention of the media and/or the parliament.

Although government reaction to violations of Group Areas Act was arbitrary[9], it did not in fact prevent people from violating the Group Areas Act. In effect, it raised several debates and controversies among politicians and government officials, on the fate of

[8] South Western Townships

Indian and 'Coloured' people violating the Group Areas Act. According to Morris, the case of the 'State versus Govender' brought about the turning point when Judge Goldstone declared that: *"The notion that a person convicted under the Group Areas Act was compelled to vacate his dwelling was unjust and this practice had to be halted"* (Morris, 1996: 97). Precisely, the Govender ruling held in the affirmative that people in violation of the Group Areas Act could only be evicted if government provided alternative housing (Royston, 1998). In this light Morris concluded thus:

> By removing the threat of eviction, the judgment effectively nullified this fear and *de facto* allowed coloured and Indian tenants to remain in Hillbrow. It also hastened the movement into Hillbrow of many Coloured and Indian people who because of the persistent threat of eviction had been hesitant previously (Morris, 1996: 97).

Certain issues arise from the discussion of this period, and provide useful lessons for the present study. Frequent harassment today in Hillbrow can be seen as an old tradition, which has subsequently led to the adaptation of the neighbourhood as a hideout for future criminals and illegal migrants. Illegal Indian and 'Coloured' people in Hillbrow responded to harassments in three ways. First, the lack of alternative housing in Indian and 'Coloured' designated areas left them with no option other than refusing to leave Hillbrow. Second, ACTSTOP (Action Committee to Stop Eviction) was formed to oppose their eviction, and finally, through ACTSTOP a legal fraternity was formed to assist illegal tenants (Cull, 2001; Morris, 1996; Silverman, 1999; Royston, 1998). Today striking similarities can be drawn between the treatment of West African immigrants and their responses to harassment in Hillbrow, and the manner in which Indians and 'Coloured' tenants responded to harassment. Similar to the illegal Indian and 'coloured' tenants of the 1970s, West Africans in Hillbrow have little option other than refusing to leave South Africa. The falsifications of documents, getting married to South African citizens, are common strategies used by some West African immigrants to avoid police harassment and detention.

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[9]It included harassment, eviction, court action, imposing fines, and police intimidation on landlords to evict and refuse incoming intruders into the neighbourhood (Morris, 1996).

A similar situation has been observed in the US, even though the situation differs from one state to another. In New York City for example, application for marriage must normally be accompanied with a driver's license, a non-driver's identification card, a US passport with a valid visa, or a permanent resident alien's card (Salins, 1997). In this way, the possibilities of illegal immigrants getting married to citizens become very slim. In South Africa, little is done to verify the legal status of immigrants before getting married to a South African citizen.

The period between 1985 and 1992: Hillbrow becomes African

This period marks the inward movement of people classified as Africans (Black South Africans) into Hillbrow. Before 1985, the bulk of the inward movements into Hillbrow were mainly of 'Coloureds' and Indians. Several reasons accounted for the lack of black inward movement into Hillbrow. First, the influx control prevented black Africans from moving into Hillbrow. Second, the passing of the Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Act of 1984, required black people from independent homelands to obtain an entry visa into white designated areas (Morris, 1996). Cooper *et al* (1985) noted that some 426,766 people were arrested between 1983 and 1984 as offenders of these laws. Third, racist tendencies during this period played a major role in slowing down the inward movements of black Africans into Hillbrow. Research conducted in the neighbourhood showed that landlords would prefer Indians and 'Coloured' people who could afford their bills rather than blacks, who could not afford the rents (Morris, 1996). Also, black Africans were considered by other races as undesirable neighbours and would inform the police of any black intruders (Morris, 1999). All these had consequently slowed down the rate of black defiance in the form of inward movements into Hillbrow.

After 1986, the movement of black South Africans into Hillbrow was rapid (Cull, 2001; Morris, 1996; 1999; Royston, 1998). Several reasons have been advanced for such rapid movements. Royston argued that the end of the Urban-Influx Controls was a major factor noting that: *"This removed the system of pass laws, which had previously controlled the movement and settlement of black people, especially in relation to the white urban areas"* (Royston, 1998: 2). High crime rates, politically linked violence in black areas, especially

in Soweto, acted as push factors for the high and rapid rate of outward movements in black designated areas. Statistics show that, between September 1984 and the end of 1996; up to 2,326 people were killed in politically motivated crimes in black designated regions (Morris, 1996). For many township people who were victimised in this violence, the search for a safer neighbourhood was their prime objective. The prevailing problems in the townships, coupled with acute housing shortages made these regions undesirable to live in. Cooper *et al* (1988) observed that housing shortages for black South Africans ranged from 700,000 to 1,4 million unites with Gauteng alone having a shortage of 700,000 houses. Acute shortages of housing in black designated areas left them desperate. Royston (1998: 13 and 14) observes:

> Black people were prepared to risk harassments and eviction to meet their housing needs…Black people were gradually forced to take what ever was available to them: Various forms of formal rented accommodation, the basements of tenements blocks, offices, disused servants' rooms on the roofs of buildings, empty warehouses and garages, and abandoned shops and offices on the periphery of the central business districts (Royston, 1998: 13 and 14).

Morris (1996) noted that the attractive nature of the inner city to newlywed and singles who wanted a home of their own, as a contributory factor to black inward movement into Hillbrow. Intolerable living conditions in shacks forced many black South Africans to seek alternative accommodation in the inner city. A snapshot of the intolerable conditions in the townships was presented thus: *"There is a lot of suffering in the townships. I could not bear living in a shack…the shack was hot in summer. There was no bathroom, no electricity…"* (Business Day, 22 January 1988, cited in Morris, 1996: 116).

The lifting of the Immorality Act No 23 of 1957[10] in 1985 (which had forbidden inter-racial sex) played a major role in attracting lots of black African prostitutes into Hillbrow (Morris, 1996). The multiplier-effect of the sex industry gradually attracted other social interests including, drug dealers, tourist and other migrants into the neighbourhood. Studies conducted in Hillbrow have established the complementary nature of the sex industry and drug dealers (Leggett, 1999; Kirk, 2000). Some unemployed women are

driven to prostitution in Hillbrow as a means of survival. The racially mixed nature of the neighbourhood favored the sex industry and gradually developed into a lucrative market for sex workers, which in turn attracted more black people into the neighbourhood.

Studies have shown that landlords also contributed towards the racial transition of Hillbrow by accepting and exploiting illegal blacks Africans (Morris, 1996; 1999; Royston, 1998; Cull, 2001). During the 1980s, black tenants became favorites of landlords, as they could be easily exploited. During this period, landlords would reject white people, as they might not tolerate any form of exploitation. At the same time, the graying of Hillbrow also accelerated the outward movement of white people from the neighbourhood (Morris, 1996; Royston, 1998). By the mid 1980s, the enforcement of the Group Areas Act had virtually been stopped, and by 1991, Hillbrow had become predominantly black, though it was still technically a white area (News24, 2001). With the lifting of the influx control in June 1986, many black South Africans ever than before moved into Hillbrow. The tacit acceptance on the part of the authorities was obvious and the police were no longer harassing blacks (News24, 2001). Morris had noted similarly: *"As the lack of police action against African tenants or landlords accommodating African tenants soon became apparent, more and more people classified as African no longer felt afraid to move into the neighbourhood"* (Morris, 1996: 117). Royston argued that, the difficulties in enforcing the Group Areas Act in the 1980s, led to the gradual evolving of the official status of black people, from that of illegal to that of people who were simply ignored, and subsequently to people who were given some vague considerations as future voters (Royston, 1998). More black people developed interest in Hillbrow especially when in 1990 blocks of flats in Hillbrow started appearing in the market for sale to any one who so desire (Morris, 1996). The early 1990s saw the beginning of a new period in Hillbrow's racial transition, and is discussed below.

[10] This Act prohibited adultery, attempted adultery or related immoral acts (extra-marital sex) between whites and black people (Boddy-Evans, 2001).

The period between 1992 and 2003: Hillbrow Becomes An Immigrant Area

This period marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Hillbrow. Less than ten years after South Africa's first democratic elections, Hillbrow has completely changed from a white neighbourhood to a West African stronghold. Since April 1994 (and even before) when the African National Congress (ANC) was democratically elected to power, many black people from within and outside South Africa have been flocking into Johannesburg, the majority of whom appear to be illegal immigrants (Dispatch, 1999).

Studies done in Hillbrow demonstrated that the majority of blacks who come from outside South Africa are mainly West Africans. These immigrants more often work, stay as well as seek refuge in Hillbrow (Bouillon, 1999a; 1999b). Gordimer (1999) further described the influx as immeasurable, arguing that they consist of people who have come to find work in South Africa. On the contrary, most of these immigrants appear to be unemployed or only self-employed, engaging in small business activities like selling along the streets, running hair saloons, or as hawkers. Gordimer further cautioned that, the need for survival might push these immigrants into a criminal class, more especially as they are desperate and unemployed (Gordimer, 1999).

It is not clear exactly when West Africans particular Nigerians and Cameroonians started entering Hillbrow, but the fact is during the transition of apartheid South Africa to a democratic South Africa, most West Africans had the opportunity to enter the country (Addison, 2000). While in the country, the majority of these immigrants are attracted to the Hillbrow neighbourhood. Early in 1997, the 'Mail and Guardian' had noted that: *"...over 80% of dealers are from Nigeria. It is only them, who else? When South Africa opened up to the rest of the world, the Nigerians started to bring the drugs"* (*Mail and Guardian*, April 18, 1997:3). Studies by different researchers have identified different periods when West Africans started entering South Africa (Rogerson, 1997a). Leggett (1998) and Bouillon (1999a) claimed that West Africans started entering South Africa in 1992; the Africa Policy Information Centre (APIC, 1997) claims 1993, while Barron

(2000) argues that West Africans started coming to South Africa in 1997. Barron argued that in 1992, Congolese immigrants were the first Africans to entered South Africa, and Nigerians only started coming in 1997 (Barron, 2000). According to the *Sunday Times* of 2 January 2000:

> The second largest African contingents to arrive from outside Southern Africa were Nigerians. By 1997 around 2700 of them were political asylum seekers, and it is estimated that they are around 6000 in South Africa… (Sunday Times, 02 January 2000: 6).

Interviews conducted with Nigerians in Hillbrow showed that most of them came to South Africa in the early 1990s. In 1997 the African Policy Information Centre (APIC), rightly supported such views noting that: *"Since 1993, 60000 Nigerian citizens have moved to the Johannesburg/Pretoria area, particularly Johannesburg's inner-city, high - rise suburb of Hillbrow"* (APIC, 1997: 4).

I found out in this research that several factors attract West African immigrants to the Hillbrow neighbourhood. Firstly, the racially mixed characteristics of the neighbourhood provide a proper setting for these immigrants to freely integrate, with little chances of being discriminated against. Secondly, the economic potential of the neighbourhood, which particularly favours informal economic activities, also attracts these immigrants. The informal sector has especially attracted most West Africans who come from a similar background into the neighbourhood. Thirdly, the neighbourhood's booming drug market with potential consumers attracts drug dealers from elsewhere. Fourthly, the presence of several religious organizations and churches in Hillbrow also contributes in attracting West Africans into the neighbourhood. The main reason being that, churches do not discriminate, and offer support and acceptance of all races, culture and socio-political background (Meintjies, 1998). Other factors that contributed in attracting West African immigrants in the neighbourhood include the neighbourhood's central position in Johannesburg, its cheap accommodation, and its nearness to the then Braamfontein Department of Home Affairs.

West African immigrants-who are they?

Amongst the many African immigrants in South Africa are those from the West African sub-continent. They include migrants from Countries such as Cameroon[11], Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegambia[12], Liberia, Benin and Togo (Bouillon, 1999). This research will focus on Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants living in Hillbrow. Although these immigrants come from different socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds, they have distinct characteristics, and amongst them share a common camaraderie. Perhaps because of the difficulties they faced in knowing one another in Johannesburg, ethnicity set in to provide a common-sense set of expectations and cues for appropriate behaviour (see Roger and Vertovec, 1995). Amongst these immigrants, there are the English speakers from countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, and the French speakers from Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Cameroon, Benin, and Togo. English is an official language in South Africa; the non-English speaking West Africans in South Africa learn to communicate easily within a few months of arriving. This is partly through integrating with English-speaking immigrants. Notwithstanding, they are easily identified and discriminated against on the bases of their accents. South Africans also identify them through their hair and dressing style, the type of activities in which they are involved, their physical size, and the colour of their skin pigmentation. These distinct characteristics are used as 'markers' by perpetrators of xenophobia and human rights abuses against immigrants.

How many are they?

To estimate the exact numbers of West Africans in South Africa is contentious. The main reason for the uncertainty is because there are many undocumented West Africans in the country (Bouillon, 1999a; Hussein, 1993; McDonald *et al,* 1999; McDonald *et al,* 1998). This accounts for the conflicting statistics published by different institutions. The South African Year book for example, estimated that there were about 1.2 million black illegal

[11] Geographically, Cameroon is considered to belong in the West African sub-region, although she is more politically inclined to the Central African sub-region. Cameroon is a bilingual country with French and English spoken as the official languages. This linguistic pluralism of Cameroon is due to her colonial heritage from her former colonizers France and Britain.

[12] Senegal and Gambia

immigrants between 1989 and 1990, and 3 million in 1993. In the 1991 general survey, the number stood at 906,000 foreigners with 245,000 illegal immigrants. Minister Danie Schutte however only released these figures in August 1993. According to the yearbook, in 1992 the number had increased to 2.5 million, and by 1994 the number had doubled to 5 million. In recent times, the Ministry of Home Affairs declared that, of the 2 million illegal immigrants in South Africa, up to 1 to 1.5 million are undercover in Gauteng province alone. By June 1995, police estimates stood at between 5,5 million to 8 million (Bouillon, 1999a). The Human Science Research Council estimated 2.8 to 9.5 million non-South Africans with up to 3.1 million in Gauteng province alone (Bouillon, 1999a). These figures appear to be *guesstimates,* inflated with the intention of portraying these immigrants as potential threat to the country. A clearer picture of these guestimates is presented in Table 4 of Chapter Six of this thesis.

There are thus great difficulties in obtaining accurate numbers of West African immigrants in South. Statistics on West African immigrants in South Africa are unreliable. This unreliability stems from the difficulties in obtaining a national statistic database, more especially as different provinces have different format at arriving at their database. In many instances, the collection of statistics about immigrants is such that it is very difficult to come to any kind of conclusion. The entire asylum-seeking process itself is problematic and complicates the segregation of asylum seekers and refugees from those who have come for economic reasons. It becomes difficult as a result to state the exact numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. If South Africa had an open immigration regime, with less stringent movements into the country, where people could come and work, study and/or do business with fewer constraints, statistics on immigrants would be more reliable than they are today. Until such times when the government will adopt such policy, and people will openly and truthfully declare why they are in South Africa, it can be very difficult to come out with true statistic figures on the number of West Africans in South Africa.

Definition of terms

I will conclude this chapter by defining some of the key concepts used in the thesis.

Immigration/Emigration

Immigration and emigration are often used in migration studies to mean the movement of people into and out of a country respectively. Immigration involves crossing an international boundary, and the person concerned is known as an immigrant. Emigration on the other hand refers to the movement of a person out of a country, and the person moving out is known as an emigrant. An immigrant is often refer to someone who has lived inside his host country for at least one year, and having such intention, and an emigrant is someone who moves out of his country of original residence for at least one year or more. In this thesis, when West Africans move out of their countries of origin, they become emigrants from their respective countries, and when they enter South Africa, they became immigrants in South Africa. The process of moving out of a country and entering into another country is known as emigration and immigration respectively. Hence, when Cameroonians and Nigerians emigrate from their respective countries into South Africa, this thesis considers them as immigrants in South Africa.

Immigrant ethnic minority

Many researchers have advanced concise definitions of ethnic minority group (Barth, 1996; Conversi, 1999; Castles and Davidson, 2000; Castles and Miller, 1993; Martin, 1993). Castles and Miller (1993) also put forward some similar characteristics of most ethnic minority groups. From its simplest understanding, ethnic minority group is a subset of a population within a dominant population, which can either be an integrated integral part, or excluded entity from the main population. When immigrant communities develop as minority groups in a host country, such communities became known as immigrant ethnic minority groups. Socio-economic, cultural, political, religious and physical differences between immigrants' communities and the host community qualify immigrant communities as immigrant ethnic minority groups (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Castles and Miller, 1993; Martin, 1993; Rex, 1996). Immigrant ethnic minority

groups are minority groups singled out by the society in which they reside, and in varying degrees and proportions are subjected to economic exploitation and discrimination. They are often disliked or ridiculed because they speak a different tongue, practice different religion, and have different skin colour and hair texture (Wagley and Harris, 1958). Immigrant ethnic minority groups in this thesis therefore refer to Cameroonian and Nigerian communities, who are visibly different from South Africans. The term refers to Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants who mobilize themselves into groups of common solidarity, language and place of origin, come from different socio-political settings and traditions, and concentrate in particular jobs and neighborhoods.

Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity is highly contested in sociological literature. Rex (1996) and Geertz (1996) for example have linked ethnicity to primordiality. By primordiality, they mean, being born into a particular community, speak particular language, and follow particular religion and social practices. Schiller and Fouron (1990) define ethnicity as a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, and having cultural differences with the dominant population. There are other definitions of ethnicity such as those of Conversi (1999), Rex (1996), Eller and Coughlan (1996), Brass (1996), Barth (1996), and Cohen (1996). This thesis defines ethnicity from the point of view of Schiller and Fouron (1990). That is, a sense of belonging to particular groups notably, Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrant ethnic minority groups in Johannesburg, with subcultures in which, group members find themselves bounded together by a common history, values and altitudes.

Identity

Early sociological discussion of identities seemed to see identity as having a primordial fixed character (Rex, 1996). But more recent sociological thought has seen identity as changing in response to social conditions (Hecter, 1996; Malkki, 1992). And even more recently, social thought has tended to emphasize the active role of subjects in constructing their identity (Hall, 1992). From this recent perspective, in what ways can identity be changed, and if identity changes in response to social change? This research

seeks to find out if people maintain their existing culture or adopt a new one in their new environment as well as the transnational changes of people's identity. In this thesis I focus on the interaction between the identity factors that actors bring with them as immigrants and the identity formation that occurs once they arrive in their new country.

Diaspora

The word Diaspora, derive from the Greek word to scatter or (sow), has been primarily associated with the dispersal of Jews out of their homeland Israel (Skeldon, 1997). Today, it is applied to most ethnic groups living outside their homeland. It worth noting here that, although all Diasporas involve migration not all migration makes up a Diaspora. From a more general perspective, Diaspora is the movement of any distinct ethnic group to other parts of the world. More specifically, it is a massive movement and where the numbers who have left their homeland greatly outweigh those that remain (Skeldon, 1997). The use of Diaspora in this thesis refers more to the general rather than the specific understanding of the word. Clifford (1994) defines Diaspora as a descriptive interpretive term for the contact zone of nations, cultures and regions. According to Clifford's definition, Diasporas are expatriate minority communities that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places that maintain a memory vision, or myth about their home countries. Diasporas believe they are not, and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country, hence, they see their home countries as a place of eventual return. They are committed to their home countries, and maintain a strong group consciousness and solidarity, which is defined by their continuing relationship with their home countries (Clifford, 1994). The use of Diaspora in this thesis indicates the spread of West Africans outside their countries of origin. As with any other Diaspora population, West African Diaspora are often expatriate minority communities in their host countries, with memory vision or myth about their home countries. They have strong group solidarity, maintain continuous relationship with their home countries, and the prevailing situation in the country is forcing most of them to plan an eventual return to their home countries.

Xenophobia/West-a-phobia

There are many definitions of xenophobia (Boehnke *et al,* 1998; Everett *et al,* 2002; Linder, 1994; Mujica, 2002; Heckmann, 2001). From its simplest meaning, xenophobia is the hatred and fear of strangers, which is often expressed by derogatory terms and violence against foreigners. In this thesis, xenophobia is used primarily to mean the fear, and the resultant negative reactions of South Africans on immigrants in South Africa. For this research purpose, the term *West-a-phobia* is used to mean the fear, hatred, and the resultant negative actions towards West Africans particularly Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in South Africa. The presence of Nigerians and Cameroonians in South Africa has generated fear in most South Africans, who feel that these immigrants threatened the socio-economic stability of the country, and steal jobs from South Africans. The resultant effect has been the increasing negative reactions towards these immigrants in the country. It is in this light that the author of this thesis coined the word *'West-a-phobia'*.

Push and pull factors:

'Push and pull' factors is a common concept used in migration studies. The concept, essentially explains the factors pushing potential migrants out of their region of initial residence, and those attracting them to a new region of residence. Alternatively, in migration studies, centrifugal and centripetal forces are used to mean push and pull factors respectively. Some authors for example, Martin (1993) alternatively used 'demand pull' and 'supply push' factors to mean those factors, which will draw migrants to industrial regions, and those that will push migrants out of their countries of origins respectively. Castles and Miller (1993) argued that push/pull factors are emanating from existing inequalities in wealth between the impoverished South and the industrial North. They identified push factors as low living standards, lack of economic opportunities, and political repression. While availability of land, good economic opportunity, political freedom and demand for labour constitutes the pull factors. Bogue (1969) defines pull factors as opportunities to improve one's self in areas of destination, while push factors are undesired socio-economic and political situations in areas of origin, which exerts an explosive push on potential migrants. Castles and Kosack (1973), similarly define push

factors as those factors, which caused migrants to leave their country of origin, which include unemployment, poverty, and underdevelopment. While pull factors are a combination of economic, demographic and social development in the Western world. For this research purpose, push and pull factors are used to mean those factors that push Cameroonians and Nigerians out of their countries, and those that are attracting them in South Africa. Push factors therefore could mean features in these countries such as unemployment, political instability and repression, social and economic discrimination, economic difficulties, family values, difficulties traveling to developed countries, and South Africa's proximity to the West African sub-region.[13] While pull factors in South Africa can be political stability, employment opportunities, precedence of pioneer immigrants, and other socio-cultural facilities, which are not otherwise found in the West Africa sub-region.

Asylum seekers and Refugees

Asylum seekers and refugees are commonly used terms in immigration and forced migration studies. Though they are often wrongly interchangeably used, they are clearly different and have different meanings. According to the 1951 Convention Governing Refugees and Asylum seekers, a refugee is any person who due to:

> A well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term 'the country of his nationality' shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the

[13] The effects of some of these factors on potential migrants can be both push and pull.

> protection of one of the countries of which he is a national (Convention of 1951, Article 1A (2)).

In 1969, a convention of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) extended the definition for African countries to include as reason for refugee status, external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of a country. On the other hand, asylum seekers are people who move across borders in search of protection, but who may not fulfill the strict criteria laid down by the 1951 convention. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting the determination of his or her status, while a refugee is someone who has already been granted legal protection by a state.

In South Africa, most African immigrants are often regarded as refugees. In this thesis, asylum seekers are considered as those immigrants who have applied for legal protection in South Africa, and whose cases are still under review. While, refugees are those immigrants whose applications have been reviewed, and granted legal protection by the Department of Home Affairs. The majority of the immigrants discussed in this thesis are asylum seekers who are issued with a temporary resident permit under 'The new Refugee Act of December 1998'.

Transnationalism/Transmigrants

The concept of transnationalism is only recently employed in migration studies in South Africa (Crush and McDonald, 2002; Peberdy and Rogerson, 2002). Practically, transnationalism involves the back and forth movement of immigrants, goods and services between host and home countries (Crush and McDonald, 2002; Schiller, 1999a; Portes *et al*, 1986). The immigrants involved in this type of back and forth movement between host and home countries are known as transmigrants. Transmigrants actually enjoy the benefits of participating in the socio-economic processes of two or more states (Schiller, 1999a). They live their lives across borders; develop social, familial, political, economic and religious networks that incorporate them into two or more states (Schiller *et al*, 1992). Transnationalism therefore means people cannot simply be thought of as

defining themselves in relation to the nation-state. The immigrants in this thesis considered as transmigrants live their lives in South Africa as well as in Cameroon or Nigerian. They enjoy the benefits of participating in the socio-economic activities of South Africa and their home countries. They live their lives across the borders of South Africa and their home countries, and developed strong Socio-economic, and cultural networks that incorporate them in South Africa as well as in their home countries.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has identified the research issues namely, how West Africans experience immigration into South Africa, and how they are affected by their new context. The main concerns of the research are examined in-depth in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The research setting has been justified with reasons why Hillbrow was selected for the research, including the history of West African migration into the neighbourhood. While Morris (1999) has shown the causes for the racial transition in Hillbrow up to the early 1990s, the reasons why West Africans are attracted to the neighbourhood from the early 1990s are also brought out in this Chapter. Research conducted by Morris (1999) observed that the inability of the government to enforce the Group Areas Act of 1950 due to the economic and political crises of the 1970s, scarcity and poor housing conditions in areas other than white designated areas, abundance of houses in white areas, the role of landlords and high fuel prices were the crucial factors leading to the racial transition of Hillbrow. My research found that, after 1990, the ethnic diversity and racially mixed character, the economic potential, the drug market, cheap accommodation, religious organizations and churches, the central position of Hillbrow and it nearness to the Braamfontein DHA are contributory factors in attracting African immigrants after.

Details of this research methodology are discussed in Chapter Two, while the literature and theoretical debates surrounding the research issues are discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four examines West African Diaspora to South Africa, bringing out the push and pull factors influencing West African immigration into South Africa. Chapter five is an in-depth examination of West Africans and their relationship with the Department of Home Affairs, looking at immigration policy, and the constraints involved in becoming

an asylum seeker in South Africa. Chapter Six presents an in-depth study of xenophobia towards West Africans in South Africa, and West African's adaptability strategies in resisting xenophobia. In Chapter Seven, details of immigrants' survival strategies, including activities outside the margin of the law are examined, and finally, Chapter Eight presents the conclusions based on the findings of the research.