

# **ALEXANDRA RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS**

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Minor Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, in  
partial fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology



**Johannesburg, November 2012**

## ABSTRACT

South Africa is a diverse country with people from different races, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. Yet the differences that exist amongst its citizens are neither embraced nor accepted by all its people. Alexandra Township was chosen as the research site to investigate the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 as this was where the attacks first started. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of Alexandra residents towards the attacks of May 2008 in order to determine their attitudes towards black foreigners. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted in different sections of Alexandra. Interviews were conducted with twelve males and eight females. The findings revealed that lack of service delivery and competition for scarce resources was the major factors that contributed to xenophobic attacks on foreigners. Other factors that played a role included frustration and anger by residents about a feeling of entitlement, i.e. things they felt were owing to them but they had not received such as houses and employment. The study found the views differed between perpetrators of the attacks and observers of the violence. It is clear that xenophobic sentiments are rooted in multiple factors.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DECLARATION

I would like to thank Professor Tina Uys, who has guided this project from the start, for her support, knowledge and encouragement. Her input has allowed me to develop as a researcher.

Thank you to Pragna Rugunanan for her encouragement and kind words.

I would also like to thank Gary Ramaru who assisted me with the fieldwork for this project and accompanied me to the exciting township of Alexandra. Thank you for the amazing adventure.

Thank you to Luke Sinwell for the exposure and insight he shared with me.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their constant support, love and encouragement. Thanks for not giving up on me and giving me hope. I would like to make special mention of my two varsity friends, Annelize Naidoo and Venessa van der Walt. Thank you to my husband, Tumelo, who kept me calm and sane throughout my studies. Thank you for your support, love and encouragement.

Most of all, I express my deepest gratitude to my respondents. Thank you for sharing your life stories and bringing this minor-dissertation to life. I hope that your input will benefit not only you but generations to follow. May your contribution add to the body of knowledge. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours. God bless you.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged.

I hereby declare that the minor dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the degree Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology at the University of Johannesburg, apart from the assistance recognised, is my work. The report has not been submitted to another university or learning institution for any other degree.

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November 2012

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### THE BEGINNING OF XENOPHOBIA

#### 1.1 Introduction

“Our memory of apartheid as an instrument of social exclusion should strongly warn us against all forms of division and exclusion, including the xenophobia that we are presently witnessing” (Nongxa, 2008: 1).

On 11 May 2008, Alexandra township was transformed into a war zone in which hundreds of foreigners were attacked, lost their possessions and had their businesses looted by hundreds of angry locals. The xenophobic attacks started in the informal settlements in Alexandra township and then spread to townships across Johannesburg, as well as informal settlements in Cape Town. The violence in Alexandra lasted for three days. Xenophobic violence mainly targeted black African immigrants and the attackers were assumed to be South Africans who lived in close proximity to the immigrants. The consequences of the violence saw some 62 people killed including 22 South Africans who were wrongly identified as foreigners (Adjai, 2010: 89). South Africans were not only attacked as a result of misidentification, but because they were married to foreigners and refused to participate in the violence (Landau, 2011: 1). A total of 342 shops or retail outlets were looted, of which 213 were burnt down. An estimated number of 80,000 to 200,000 people were displaced (Kamwimbi *et al*, 2010: 67; Lebone, 2010: 632; Landau, 2011: 1). Government set up temporary camps for individuals who were displaced, lost their belongings and feared integration back into the community (Nyar, 2010: 5). The sheer savagery of the violence left many South Africans shocked and surprised by the attacks (Nieftagodien, 2008: 66; Nyar, 2010: 3).

Xenophobia in South Africa is a result of multiple factors. Socio-economic factors such as unemployment and lack of housing are some of the factors perpetuating xenophobic sentiments among South African citizens towards foreigners.



The May 2008 xenophobic attacks that the country experienced highlighted the extent to which South Africans view foreigners, especially those from other African countries, as a threat. These events brought to the fore the depth of xenophobic sentiment in South Africa.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Research on xenophobia in South Africa tends to focus on the experiences of foreign victims in terms of their displacement, loss and tragedy. Literature that has been conducted on xenophobia tends to focus on the views of victims and less emphasis is placed on the perpetrators of the violence and those who sympathise with it (Dodson *et al*, 2000; Wambogo, 2001; Harris, 2002; Kamwimbi *et al*, 2010). Studies that focused on understanding the views of perpetrators often labelled the May 2008 attacks as “actions of criminality”, *committed* by Zulu speaking people (Nieftagodien, 2008: 74; Misago *et al*, 2009: 10). The Alexandra Residents Association, which is an Inkatha Freedom Party supporter, was accused of orchestrating the attacks. A week before the attacks there were three meetings held in Alexandra. In these meetings it was alleged that residents of Alexandra complained mostly about crime and blamed African foreigners (Nieftagodien, 2008: 74; Misago *et al*, 2009: 14).

Two notable studies conducted immediately after the attacks that attempted to understand the xenophobic attacks from the views of South Africans were a study conducted by Bekker, Eigelaar-Meets and Eva in May and June 2008 and the Human Sciences Research Council study conducted in June 2008. The study conducted by Bekker *et al* was based on the attacks reflections of the May and June 2008 xenophobic attacks. The objective of the study was to focus on the perpetrators of the violence and the fieldwork was carried out over a period of three months. The shortcoming of this study was that it consisted of a desktop study of newspapers and documentary evidence as the main sources of information. The study found that the perpetrators of the violence were mainly the youth, who were labelled as criminals. There was also evidence of a third force being behind the attacks. The study concluded that violence in Gauteng occurred as a result of a lack of service delivery by the government, high unemployment rates among the youth and incompetence by the police. Competition for resources such as jobs, houses and service delivery were explanations offered for the violence. These created xenophobic sentiments that converted into violent aggression.

The study conducted by the HSRC (2008) was based on perceptions of South African communities about citizenship, violence and xenophobia in South Africa. What was not differentiated in the report was whether South African citizens were perpetrators of the violence or bystanders. This report focused on informal settlements where the violence occurred such as Alexandra, Mamelodi and Tembisa in Gauteng. Other interviews were conducted in the Western Cape. The data collection method was desktop research, interviews with local leaders and stakeholders, and focus groups with community members. The findings of the study concluded that competition for scarce resources, lack of service delivery and housing were the causes of the violence (Jansen, 2008: 42). These results corroborated the findings of Bekker *et al* which found that the government also played a role in xenophobic sentiments by not communicating and engaging with South Africans on their grievances. Corruption among government officials and porous South African borders were listed among the findings of both studies (Bekker *et al*, 2008; HSRC, 2008).

While these two studies considered the views of South Africans about the May 2008 xenophobic attacks; this research study focused on the views of Alexandra residents who either observed the xenophobic violence, or were perpetrators of the violence. The research explores the voices of the bystanders and perpetrators in Alexandra.

### **1.3 Research objective and question**

The context chosen for this investigation is the township of Alexandra and an attempt is made to shed light on the views of Alexandra residents towards black foreigners with reference to the May 2008 xenophobic attacks. The objective of the study was to provide the perceptions of Alexandra residents towards these attacks. The objective of the study gave rise to the research question: ‘What are the views of Alexandra residents about the May 2008 xenophobic attacks?’

### **1.4 A brief history of Alexandra township**

Alexandra Township, also known as the ‘dark city’, is a black township located on the north eastern outskirts of Johannesburg. This township has an estimated population of 350 000 residents of which the majority are black South Africans; others are migrants from neighbouring African

countries. Seventy per cent of this population is estimated to be under the age of 35 years (Wilson, 2003: 7). Before entering this densely populated township, your first encounter is an upper middle-class suburb called Sandton. The residents of Sandton are mostly white, and black, elites who drive flashy cars, wear designer labels and stay in high-walled fancy houses. Next door is Alexandra, occupied mostly by low income black residents, using taxis as a means of transport, with high rates of unemployment, staying in small houses and shacks. It is estimated that at the beginning of the new century there were about 34 000 shacks in Alexandra (Nieftagodien, 2011: 118). It might feel like you are in two different worlds but when you take a closer look you realise that the two areas are not that far from each other.

Alexandra was an area planned for whites only and white people first resided in Alexandra as early as 1904. However its location and the quality of the plots made it undesirable for whites and in 1905 the area was transferred to the Alexandra Township Company Limited (Sarakinsky, 1984: i-ii; Wilson, 2003: 7). In 1912, in response to an application by the Alexandra Township Company Limited the apartheid government turned Alexandra into a native or black township. This conversion came with a clause: *'no Asiatic or European shall be allowed to reside or carry on business of whatsoever nature on the property hereby transferred'* (Sarakinsky, 1984: i-ii). The implication of this clause was that Alexandra would be underdeveloped, and as a consequence give rise to unemployment, poverty and lack of facilities. In 1912 the Proclamation of a Freehold Township for "natives" and "coloureds" was in place. This Act allowed blacks to own property. Alexandra was therefore amongst a few townships in South Africa where black people could own property. By the time the Act was in place, an estimated 40 black and coloured families had already acquired freehold titles. The Act was significant to Alexandra residents because it allowed them property ownership before the Natives Land Act was passed in 1913 (Sarakinsky, 1984: 1).

The Native Land Act of 1913 was introduced as a measure to further enforce territorial segregation. The Act forbade a certain percentage of blacks to own land in urban areas unless they could prove they were employed by white employers. Another restriction of the Act was banning whites from selling their territory to blacks and blacks selling their territory to whites.

In theory this act applied to South Africa as a whole but it was only practised in the Transvaal and Natal (Anon, 1913: 1; Wilson, 2003: 9).

During this period Alexandra had no management system and in 1916, the Alexandra Health Committee (AHC) was established to oversee the administration of the township. The AHC represented the interests of people who owned stands. The shortcoming of this committee was that it had no public resources and thus could not sustain any development interventions. By the end of the AHC's term in 1958 it was felt the committee had failed to sufficiently run the township. Mismanagement of Alexandra led to the township becoming 'a no man's land'. Subsequently between 1916 and 1958 the population of Alexandra grew significantly and some locals moved to the city i.e. Johannesburg. Residents who remained in the township were not affected by pass laws compared to those from the rural areas who sought employment in the city. Pass laws stated that no black, coloured or Indian people could live on the mines unless they were servants of whites or worked on the mines as labourers. The Pass law fuelled the rise in unemployment because only a few selected people could work as labourers on the Witwatersrand mines. Another factor that contributed to the increase in unemployment was the restriction on work permits to residents of Alexandra. Work permits prohibited people from Alexandra to work in Johannesburg. An increase in unemployment perpetuated increase in crime in the townships. As a result whites feared the township (Sarakinsky, 1984: 1-3). An epoch emerged in which there was an attempt to restore order in the township.

#### 1.4.1 Alexandra under apartheid

In 1948 the National Party (NP) came into power. The intention of the NP was to introduce policies that formalised the institutionalisation of apartheid or racial segregation. This resulted in the segregation between blacks and whites in South Africa. One of the goals of the NP was to reduce the number of black people living in the townships. In an effort to achieve this goal, under the authority of Dr H.F. Verwoerd, Alexandra fell under the Peri-Urban Health Board. The goals of the NP and the Peri-Urban Board were in sync because reducing the population and controlling people's movement were important to both organisations. These organisations were faced with the daunting task of reducing an estimated population of 80 000 to 100 000 to an ideal 30 000 (Morris, 2000: 7).

Between 1958 and 1973 nearly 56,000 people were forcibly relocated to Soweto in the new resettlement board townships of Meadowlands and Diepkloof. Some were moved to Tembisa on the north-east rand. Not all residents were removed from the township. Residents who qualified for urban residence and worked in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg remained behind. In order to provide accommodation for migrant labourers it was necessary to build sufficient structures (Morris, 2000: 7).

#### 1.4.2 Hostel City

In 1963 a government committee decided to turn Alexandra into a Hostel city. A hostel city/ hostel is a dormitory, low budget township for male and female migrants (Nieftagodien, 2011: 112). All property was to be demolished to make way for hostels. The structure of the hostels would be limited to 25 hostels each housing 2,500 people. Each hostel would accommodate single people, men and women who were employed in areas north of Johannesburg and those living in 'servant's quarters' or back rooms (Wilson, 2003: 10).

The decision to turn Alexandra into hostels was not supported by residents and other bodies such as the Johannesburg City Council. This led to protests taking place against the building of hostels, but despite the resistance by residents, the construction of hostels went ahead. Three hostels were built, two for men and one for women. The first male hostel known as 'Madala' was completed in 1971, the second hostel named 'Nobuhle' was completed in 1972. Government's plans to demolish houses and move residents from Alexandra sparked anger among community members. According to Jochelson (1988) as a resistance to the removal of residents, the Residents' Interim Committee (RIC) was established in 1974 by Reverend Sam Buti. Another committee, called the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC), was established in the same year (1974) in support of the RIC. This committee aimed to prevent the government from destroying Alexandra. Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008: 220) state that the ALC raised issues about the conditions in the township but, despite their efforts, the government remained committed to revamp the township.

Irrespective of residents' dissatisfaction with removals and efforts made by committees, such as the ALC the third hostel, which is a women's hostel called 'Helen Joseph', was completed in 1981.

Once the women's hostel was completed in 1981, the proposal of building 25 hostels was abandoned. The problems encountered during the building of the first three hostels included high financial costs and opposition by displaced residents to forced removals (Morris, 2000: 8; Davie, 2003: 4).

Hostels were constructed to house only single males or single females. Families were not allowed here. Some married men who came from the rural areas and worked in Johannesburg left their families to stay in hostels. Not only did hostels house people from rural areas but it was also accommodation for migrants on the mines and townships (Nieftagodien, 2011: 114). This resulted in the breakdown and/or destruction of the family structure. The unsafe environment of the hostels is illustrated by a fight in the male hostels in early 1992. The fight was between residents in the male hostels and residents in the area of Alexandra known as Beirut. In this fight, 60 people died, nearly 600 was injured and 10, 000 people were displaced (Morris, 2000: 16). People who were displaced in the hostel violence of 1992 were given houses in Riverside Park.

The 1970s was a significant period not only in Alexandra but also in the politics of South Africa. The Soweto June 16 uprising took place in 1976. On June 16 1976 thousands of students marched in Orlando West, which is a township in Soweto. Students marched against the apartheid government and their introduction of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in local schools (Jochelson, 1988: 48). This day was also momentous in Alexandra because some of the students, who orchestrated the 1976 march, lived in Alexandra. The Soweto uprising shocked millions of people in South Africa and around the world, as hundreds of students were brutally shot and killed by the apartheid police (Boddy-Evans, No date: 2). With the outraged response from the international community to the level of police brutality and state violence inflicted on blacks, a plan was needed to restore peace in the townships, especially in Alexandra (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2008: 205). This implied that a soft approach was needed in dealing with black people. The people of Alexandra were uncertain about what the future held for them and the government had to come up with a strategy promptly.

Previous projects for the township have encountered countless problems; the abandonment of the hostels project highlighted the extent of these problems.

At the end of 1980, a Master Plan drawn up by engineers and planners was released for Alexandra. The plan was to save the township from the instability it found itself in. The Master Plan entailed that all properties in Alexandra be bought and demolished (Jochelson, 1990: 3). This plan proposed building seven suburbs in the township, with a central business area that would include supermarkets. To cater for the educational needs of residents, a primary school and three high schools were to be built. With the provision of educational facilities and infrastructure as envisaged by the Master Plan, Alexandra could have turned into a middle income black suburb.

Following past plans that were unsuccessful the 'Master Plan' also failed due to financial constraints (Morris, 2000: 9-10; Davie, 2003: 5). The only achievement of the plan was a small area known today as East Bank, with only 260 houses developed. Thus far the apartheid government's attempts at creating a better Alexandra had been a dismal failure. Yet another renewal plan for the township was developed in the mid 1980's.

#### 1.4.3 Urban Renewal Programme

With the approval of the Minister of Co-operation and Development, the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) for Alexandra was put in place in 1986. The Urban Renewal plan was a modification of the Master Plan. This plan would continue with the upgrade for the township. The URP was divided into three phases. The main objective of the first phase of the plan was to encourage private ownership on the basis of permanent title deeds. The shift towards private ownership was carried out to encourage owners to take better care of their township by promoting cleanliness and limiting crime. The logic behind the notion was that if people have ownership of their houses, they are more likely to take better care of it because it belongs to them and they are responsible for the maintenance of the area. However, the densely populated township made it impossible. Consequently 6,000 small stands were created each accommodating between three and seven families (Morris, 2000: 15; Anon, 2005: 4). More than one family sharing a stand created problems between residents/occupants. Firstly, original stand holders felt that they had full rights to their property. Also, permanent occupants felt that they too have rights to the property they occupied.

One of the problems experienced between owners and residents was the responsibility of paying for services. It was decided that the stand holders would be held liable to pay for services (Morris, 2000: 12).

The second phase of the plan focused on paving the way for infrastructure such as service lines and roads. In order to have clear distinctions among stands, the structures were classified as temporary and permanent according to the building material used for the dwellings. Permanent structures were built using bricks whereas temporary structures were built with tin or any other temporary material. The attempt by government to decrease the population of Alexandra came to a standstill when the Influx Control Act was abolished in 1986. This Act limited opportunities for permanent urban residence, controlled and restricted the flow of black Africans into urban areas (West, 1982: 463; Vigneswaran, 2011: 158). Once the Influx Control Act was abolished, black people were allowed to move about freely in South Africa. The impact of free movement further escalated the population of Alexandra. The government was pressured to reduce the population to a suitable number. Based on the division of permanent and temporary residents, it was decided that permanent residents would remain in the township. Temporary residents who desired to remain in Alexandra were subjected to a screening conducted by the municipal police. This test was necessary to determine residents' link or origins to Alexandra. Residents who passed the test were settled on stands on the Far East Bank. These residents could reconstruct their shacks there. Provision had to be made for residents who did not pass the test and those who had their structures demolished. The implications of people not having houses to occupy increased the number of shacks (Morris, 2000: 13).

Shacks/tin houses (building structure made out of steel material) increased from the original number of 7, 352 in 1987 to 20,000 in 1991 (Nieftagodien, 2011: 113). Of this total number of shacks, 6,000 to 7,000 were in backyards and the rest in freestanding areas. Freestanding locations allowed blacks who owned land an opportunity to have some control of their property (Nieftagodien, 2011: 113). During the period of 1987 to 1991 the large number of shacks put pressure on the land and service delivery. As a result the attempt to renew Alexandra failed once again. The end results were financial, economic and social costs to the country and residents of Alexandra (Abbott, 1999; Morris, 2000: 15; Davie, 2003: 5).



On the other hand the damage caused by the Urban Renewal Plan was not only limited to financial loss but extended to other areas in service delivery. For example, small businesses such as spaza shops were affected because of power outages. Disruptions in power supply resulted in food rotting and shop owners being faced with unexpected expenses. The lack of maintenance and proper monitoring of the plan meant that long-term sustainability of the plan was not given meticulous consideration. “By the end of 1986, the cost for the renewal project was estimated at 75 million rand. By the end of 1990 funds had all but dried up and the renewal scheme abandoned” (Morris, 2000: 15).

#### 1.4.4 Alexandra in the nineties

The Urban Renewal Plan suffered the same fate as earlier projects. Moving forward, in the 1990's the Joint Negotiating Forum was established. This forum was responsible for managing the Sandton, Randburg and Alexandra sub-area. Due to allegations of the forum lacking credibility, it was dissolved in 1993. A New Development Plan for the township was drawn up in 1998. Although termed new development, this plan had no distinct difference to the previous plans for the township (Morris, 2000: 16). Once again, the population of the township was on the agenda.

In order to reduce the number of people, one of the plans was to relocate illegal immigrants and those who lived on the banks of the Jukskei River out of the area. Alexandra would be divided into development zones and, once more, structures would be demolished. Furthermore, a clear indication of who belongs and who does not belong would be marked. Authorised occupants by the council would remain in the township and those considered as outsiders would be removed (Morris, 2000: 18; Koplán, 2008). As indicated earlier, the distinction of who could remain in the township and who was relocated was based on the permanent and temporary structures.

The project was financed by the National and Provincial governments, the Johannesburg City Council and also private sector donors (Morris, 2000: 18). The cost implications of the project were estimated at 3 billion rand. The plan was later abolished due to events and rapid development on the East Bank. Such an event was the All Africa Games in 1999.

The athletes were housed in an area on the N3 highway known today as *Tsutsumani* (Shangaan word meaning run), but those houses were allocated to people who were on the councillor's waiting list (Davie, 2003: 6).

The downfall of Alexandra was not necessarily based on the failed plans by government but rather the lack of management to make the plans successful. Every proposal that the government initiated had shortcomings due to lack of proper leadership, financial constraints and lack of long-term visioning. Even though the development of the township had direct and indirect effects on residents, they were, however, not consulted on any decision made. According to Cloete (1992) the opposite is true. Residents of the township were informed about plans of their township through newsletters and meetings. Regardless of these efforts, residents were critical of the upgrade.

Illegal immigrants have resided in Alexandra from as early as the nineties. The government classified illegal immigrants as outsiders and as such they had to be removed from the township as one of the measures to control the population. With that said, it is also important to indicate that people from rural areas were among those to be removed. Such actions indicate the notion of who belongs and who does not belong. The distinction between insider and outsider is defined in the politics of Alexandra and the origins of the township. The distinction of insiders and outsiders would play a vital role in decreasing the population to 220 people per hectare (Nieftagodien, 2008: 69).

### 1.5 **Alexandra today**

As described above, Alexandra has a long history of poverty, inequality and overcrowding. This township is diverse and multicultural. It has people who speak Zulu (main language), North Sotho/Pedi, Tswana, Xhosa, Shangaan/Tsonga, South Sotho and Venda. The area is divided into three sections; the old Alexandra, which is west of the Jukskei River, the West Bank and the Far East Bank. The old Alexandra is characterised by informal dwellings (such as shacks), three hostels and blocks of flats. The East Bank consists mainly of middle class homes. The Far East Bank has RDP houses, an area known as *Tsutsumani* and other housing developments. The population of Alexandra has increased to an estimated 470,000 (Modjadji, 2012: 1). Of this population 54% have resided in the township from as early as 1994 (Wilson, 2003: 11).

Post-apartheid South Africa came with many expectations, especially in poor townships such as Alexandra. Unfortunately the socio-economic conditions in Alexandra have not drastically improved. The township is still congested and poverty stricken. The hardships faced by its population include high rates of unemployment, and to some extent lack of infrastructure. Based on the unemployment definition of those who are actively seeking employment, the unemployment rate in the township is estimated at 32% (Wilson, 2003: 110). This number is higher than the current unemployment rate of 24.9 in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2012). As a consequence of the high unemployment rate in the township, crime and violence are problematic for many Alexandra residents. In a study conducted by Isserow and Everatt (1998) it was found that 83% of the people in Alexandra thought that crime had increased since 1994. This study indicated that the most common crime was car hi-jacking, followed by rape, housebreaking, murder and child abuse.

The provision of housing has a history of challenges. A study conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) alluded that only 62% of households had electricity in their homes and only 23% had access to water in their homes (includes water in the yard and communal area) (Community Agency for Social Enquiry, 2005: 137). Of the total population, 40% stay in formal houses on stands, 45.2% stay in backyard shacks/room on stands, 3.9% stay in blocks of flats and 3% stay in shacks in a shack settlement. This shows that 49.4% of the adult population do not live in formal houses and over 60% of accommodation in Alexandra is not considered as formal houses (Community Agency for Social Enquiry, 2005: 132).

Other infrastructure problems include overload of the sewerage system, poor access to maintenance, poor sanitation, low water pressure, dangerous electrical connections, pollution of the river and others (Anon, 2012: 2-3). In order to curb the problems of lack of service provision and to lessen the pressure on the infrastructure, the Alexandra Renewal Project was launched in February 2001. This project aimed to upgrade the living conditions in Alexandra. The project focused on economic development, housing, spatial planning and the environment, engineering services, social services and public safety and security (Wilson, 2003: 14-15).

In order to meet the needs of the community, the Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre was an initiative undertaken by the community of Alexandra. The centre was officially opened on 19 February 1992. This centre offers services such as meeting facilities, and offers information on different services. This centre has an Internet cafe, a computer training centre, a library, a tuckshop and 22 offices (Wilson, 2003: 16). Amenities in the centre are open to the community of Alexandra.

## 1.6 Outline of the chapters

Chapter Two deals with current debates on xenophobia. The aim of this chapter is to review existing literature on xenophobia and discuss factors that led to xenophobia. This chapter also discusses theoretical explanations of factors that contribute to violent outbreaks.

Chapter Three considers the research methodology used to investigate xenophobia in the township of Alexandra. This chapter outlines qualitative research as a data collection method. The use of snowball sampling as a technique is discussed, as well as thematic in-depth interviews. The chapter also considers ethical issues and strengths and limitations of the research design.

Chapter Four explores individual experiences of Alexandra residents. Their views are presented in the form of narratives. Rich narratives highlight the insights by looking at similarities and differences among residents.

Data analysis and concluding remarks are found in Chapter Five. This chapter provides an analysis by illustrating the perceptions of Alexandra residents towards xenophobic attacks. The first theme *Mayhem of May 2008* deals with the spark of the violence and actions taken by Alexandra residents. The second theme *reasons for the violence* focus on reasons for the violence such as influx of foreigners, housing, working status and crime. Theme three *residents' feelings about foreigners* explore feelings towards foreigners. The fourth theme *views about the government* describe respondent's perceptions of the government. The last theme *putting theory into context* elaborates three possible theories that provide an explanation for the attacks.

## 1.7 Significance of the study

The study is significant in that it hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge on xenophobia in South Africa. The existing research on xenophobia focuses on the stories of the victims of the violence. This study aims to shed light on the views and perceptions of South African citizens living in the township who were bystanders or observers of the violence and perpetrators of the violence. Most importantly, the study also hopes to give voice to the perpetrators to share their explanations of the attacks on black foreigners.



## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **FEARING THE STRANGER: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Throughout the years isolated incidents of xenophobia were reported in South Africa. These incidents saw foreigners being attacked for simply being foreign. With an increase in cross-border migration into the country xenophobia has been the focus of debates and social inquiry. In general, debates on xenophobia focus on the impact and effects on foreign victims and little attention is placed on perpetrators who carry out xenophobic attacks. Reported cases imply that South Africans are attacking foreigners but their view as perpetrators of the violence is given little voice.

In the previous chapter the background to the study was discussed. The problem statement indicated that the South African citizen's perspective on xenophobic violence is underrepresented in the literature, more especially that of people who participated in the violence. In this chapter an overview of the existing literature on xenophobia is given. Factors playing a role in xenophobia is discussed by looking at the impacts of, firstly, cross-border migration; secondly, unemployment, thirdly, housing; fourthly, crime; and lastly, the role of state institutions. Theoretical explanations of xenophobia are elaborated on, specifically the relative deprivation, rational choice and scapegoat theories. These factors are identified by existing literature on xenophobia as having a significant role to play in xenophobic attacks. Given that the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 began in the township of Alexandra, this township will be discussed as the location for the commencement of the violence by making reference to its geographical structure, poverty and inequality. Collective violence will be discussed by highlighting factors that play a role in turning violence into collective action.

#### **2.2 Definitions and conceptualisation**

Xenophobia is defined as “the fear or dislike of foreigners or strangers” (Shindondola, 2004: 4). It is an attitude that can give rise to hostile behaviour by locals towards foreigners (Shindondola, 2002: 4; South African Human Rights Commission, 2008).

According to Sichone (2008: 11) “Xenophobia manifests itself generally in the form of a nationalistic fear of non-South Africans no matter what their origins”. Finchilescu and Warner (2003: 36) propose a slightly different view of xenophobia as being not a general fear of foreigners but “*of certain foreigners*”.

This definition of xenophobia is not without criticism. It is firstly limited to attitudes; secondly, it excludes acts of violence; and lastly, it excludes physical abuse experienced by foreigners (Harris, 2002: 169). In order to make the definition of xenophobia comprehensive, Harris (2002: 177) includes violent behaviour against foreigners as well as negative social representations of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. For the purpose of this study, xenophobia will be defined as negative attitudes by locals towards black African foreigners and in some instances these attitudes are expressed in behaviours that could cause bodily harm or damage to property.

The term foreigner refers to somebody who was born in, or comes from a different country (Matshediso, 2008: 25). According to the Immigration Act of 2002, a foreigner is defined as someone who is not a citizen (Adjai, 2010: 77). In the context of this study, a foreigner will be defined as someone who does not have South African citizenship. Such an individual can either be documented or undocumented. The extent to which an individual is considered an outsider is determined by the attitude of citizens of the host country.

Often racism and xenophobia are considered as one and the same thing. Racism is defined as “prejudice or a discrimination act based on physical appearance of a racial group” (Duckitt and Mphuthing, 1998: 810). Racism can manifest in practices, discourse and representations of otherness (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991: 17). Racism is also a combination of prejudice and power that allows the dominant race to institutionalise its dominance at all levels in a society (Bonilla-Silva, 2005: 2). In addition, racism is the belief that mental and character qualities are determined by race (Auerbach, 2001: 5). The social psychological view of racism is criticised because it produces a schematic view of the way racism operates in society. Furthermore, the definition does not provide an adequate foundation for understanding racial phenomena. Different races experience positions of subordination and super ordination in society and develop different interests (Bonilla-Silva, 2005: 2).

Racism has shifted to a more sophisticated and effective way of maintaining the racial status quo termed new racism. New racism is defined as “racism without races...it is a racism whose dominant theme is not based on biology but on cultural differences. Racism which at first sight does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but only the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions” (Balibar *et al*, 1991: 21). New racism focuses on cultural and ethnic differences whereby other cultures become demonised instead of considered inferior (Balibar *et al*, 1991: 21). Additionally, new racism does not imply superiority or inferiority. It focuses on cultural differences of language, beliefs, religions and customs, and these differences create boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Barker, 1981: 21).

This concept asserts that it is natural for people to live among their own kind and discriminate against those not considered to be part of that community. This type of racism refers specifically to immigrants whose presence destroys cultural homogeneity of the nation and threatens the culture of the host country, which results in outsiders being excluded. Groups that are considered to be outsiders are faced with exclusion practices and violence, which leads to hatred of foreigners (Blee, 2002: 75).

Some authors say racism and xenophobia share the same ideological roots because they are both based on a creation of images, stereotypes and prejudices (Stavenhagen, 1996: 227; Duckitt and Mphuthing, 1998: 810). Prejudice is not only against the individual but also against a group. On the other hand discrimination is a judgement on culture and religious affiliations or groups (Duckitt *et al*, 1998, Pityana, 2001: 2; O’Neill, 2009). The ideology of racism emerges in prejudice and discrimination as a result of race, whereas xenophobia is prejudice or discriminatory actions as a consequence of someone being an outsider or coming from a different country (Duckitt *et al*, 1998: 810; O’Neill, 2009: 533). Even though there are dissimilar features of racism and xenophobia, they are similar in that both judge others on a collective level rather than an individual level (Stavenhagen, 1996: 245; Shindondola, 2002: 4). Both concepts result from a lack of information about a group that is considered to be inferior (O’Neill, 2009: 535-536).



The shared similarities of new racism, when compared to xenophobia, could imply that new racism is to some extent equivalent to xenophobia. In the South African context discriminatory behaviour based on one's culture or differences is considered as xenophobia and not new racism. Against the background of a racist country, using the term new racism could imply that old racism has disappeared and is replaced by a new form of racism. In South Africa, xenophobia is racialised because it does not affect whites to the same degree. South African attitudes towards foreigners are determined by a foreigner's country of origin (Mattes, 1999).

Foreigners that are from Southern and Western Africa are viewed in an unfavourable light among some South African citizens and those from Europe and North America are neutral. An explanation for this behaviour/attitude is that the standards of western civilization have always regarded Africans as an inferior race: the kind that does not deserve to be treated with dignity. The portrayed picture of the African brother or sister has forever been an image of poverty, famine, disease and war stricken (Kamwimbi *et al*, 2010: 68).

This stereotype has stuck with many South Africans for years and when coming across an outcast that image plays itself from beginning to end, which reflects in the manner of how foreigners are treated. Xenophobia is not a phenomenon that occurs in isolation, there are factors that lead to xenophobia.

### **2.3 Genesis of xenophobic violence in South Africa**

Xenophobic sentiments have been in existence for years in South Africa as stated by Shepherd and Robins (2008: 261). A study conducted by the HSRC (2008: 17) reports that the outbreak of the April and May 2008 xenophobic violence across different provinces should not have been a surprise, as it has been brewing for many years. Weeks and months leading up to the attacks, notices and threats were issued, and police and local authorities were notified. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) African Peer Review Mechanism report, it noted that in South Africa xenophobia against Africans was on the rise and needed to be nipped in the bud (2009: 22). The violence brewed in different informal settlements of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, the Free State and Eastern Cape (Nyar, 2010: 3). The HSRC study indicated that there were many danger signs that were ignored.

For example, the first spark of xenophobia was reported in the township of Alexandra in 1994 during the first democratic elections, whereby residents armed with weapons attacked suspected illegal immigrants, evicted them from their homes and destroyed their belongings (Murray, 2003: 455; Shepherd and Robins, 2008: 251). Residents blamed foreigners for crime, sexual assault and unemployment. The operation of chasing away foreigners in Alexandra was called “Buyelekhaya” (Go back home) (Adjai, 2010: 68).

Another incident occurred in 1996, where non-South African traders were attacked on the streets of Johannesburg. This was followed by the death of three foreigners at the hands of South Africans in 1998 (Crush, 2001a: 11). Other incidents followed, for example in 2005, a group of South Africans chased foreigners from their shacks, shops and businesses. In 1997, families from Mozambique were attacked by a group of youths from Setswetla in Alexandra (Landau *et al*, 2009: 24; Nieftagodien, 2011: 126). This incident was followed by many xenophobic attacks, which resulted in the killing, wounding, and displacement of foreigners, with the May 2008 attacks being the most extreme (Crush, 2008: 21).

Xenophobic sentiments in South Africa can be blamed on the apartheid era that was characterised by violence and a long struggle for achieving democracy and freedom (Shepherd and Robins, 2008: 257; Landau, 2011: 2). With a culture of violence being established in South Africa (Harris, 2001: 62). A culture of violence is defined “as a situation in which social relations and interactions are governed through violent, rather than non-violent, means. This is a culture whereby violence is preferred as ‘normal’ (Hamber and Lewis, 1997: 8). During apartheid, violence was legitimised by the apartheid government to oppress black people and black people used violence to achieve their goal of democracy (Hamber and Lewis, 1997: 62; Harris, 2001: 62). Under apartheid the police concentrated on defending white South Africans against crime and enforced the suppression of black South Africans. Resolving crime in the black townships was not a priority and kept at a minimum. As an outcome, a criminal culture flourished in some townships in the country (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009: 7). Violence was used as an acceptable way of resolving conflict (Nyar, 2010: 1). In addition, people were open to the elements of brutality during apartheid. This viciousness was intensified in the mining environment, where mine workers from South Africa and other African countries were harassed by the police, including African migrants who worked

on the mines. Also the prison system played a crucial part in intensifying the humiliation and cruelty suffered by the people from the police (Kynoch, 2006).

The migrant labour system controlled by pass laws and influx control also contributed to violence in the country. The implications of these acts had consequences for families of miners who were forced to live away from their families by giving rise to single mother households. Children who came from fatherless households were affected by the negative environment of not having a father figure on a daily basis. By the time South Africa achieved its democracy and a new constitution was instituted, legally apartheid laws were a thing of the past but in reality the ideals and values of the new democracy were still to be realised and accepted in the life of the country. It is against this backdrop of a new society, emerging but still not fully developed, and of an old one rejected, but dying slowly, that xenophobia became manifest in some parts of South Africa. Taking into consideration the segregation and negative connotations of racism, feelings of inferiority and low self-worth contribute to a violent South Africa (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009: 6).

The intensity of xenophobia in South Africa is illustrated by the derogatory term 'makwerekwere' used by some locals to refer to black African migrants who lack competency in speaking local South African languages and have darker skins (Shepherd and Robins, 2008: 259). This term also refers to the phonetic sound of foreigners' language (Adjai, 2010: 46). Makwerekwere also represents black African immigrants who come from a country that is economically and culturally behind when compared to South Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 40). Name calling is demeaning to foreigners because it conveys a sense of worthlessness (Adjai, 2010: 46). In the township, any African migrant who has a dark skin is considered to be a foreigner because of the association that other black African countries have a warmer climate than South Africa.

## 2.4 Perceptions playing a role in xenophobia

In order to understand the perceptions playing a role in xenophobia it is important to provide a background with regard to cross-border migration.

### 2.4.1 Cross-border migration

#### 2.4.1.1 *Origins of migration*

Cross-border migration between South Africa and its neighbouring countries dates back to 1867 when diamonds were discovered and diamond mines were opened. This allowed for migrants from countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and Swaziland to enter the country (Landau and Polzer, 2008: 43; Rabkin, 2011: 1). Before 1991, the immigration policy of South Africa was considered as a form of racial domination by white people over black people from different countries. Cross-border migration takes place in different forms. There are those individuals who cross the border into South Africa for labour opportunities and others that come in informally. The term migration refers to a movement of people from one place to another (Rugunanan and Smit, 2011: 707).

Movement can either be within their own country or across borders. Migration can be voluntary where people leave willingly, perhaps to pursue job opportunities elsewhere. It can also be involuntary whereby people are forced to flee. Push factors that drive people to flee from their circumstances include war, ethnic discrimination, unemployment, underdevelopment and violation of human rights and economic opportunities (Castles *et al*, 2004; UNHCR, 2007; West, 2011: 10). People who flee their home countries are often referred to as refugees. A refugee is a person who deserves protection and can be guaranteed the substitute or surrogate protection of the international community (Hathway, 2007: 353). A refugee is a term commonly used to include anybody that crosses the international border and has intentions of staying in the receiving country. This term refugee is used for migrant, illegal migrants or asylum seeker (Dalton-Greyling, 2008: 4). A migrant refers to a person leaving their country of birth for a period of a year or more (Martin, 2011: 9).

Undocumented migrants, commonly known as illegal migrants, are people who have stayed longer than permitted by their visa or were unable to go to Home Affairs for documentation (Landau *et al*, 2005: 17). An asylum seeker is a person who is looking for recognition as a refugee. Asylum seekers have the right to stay in South Africa but they do not hold the rights to work, or study until their status as a refugee have been approved by Home Affairs (Dalton-Greyling, 2008: 11).

Immigrants are individuals who enter the host country with an intention of residing here permanently. There are two types of immigrants, legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. Legal immigrants are classified as individuals who enter the country complying with proper legal requirements. A significant point is made by Crush (2008: 8) who states that although some migrants cross the border with required documents, others tend to overstay their Visa requirement, which then results in their visas to expire. In essence, it is possible for the status of a legal migrant to become illegal whilst in the country. Undocumented or illegal migrants are people who cross borders without papers or enter the country with false papers and those who overstay their permits. (Crush and Williams, 2002: 10).

Illegal immigrants enter South Africa unlawfully because it costs money to get a visa. The demand for cheap labour by migrants in the agriculture and construction sectors increases unauthorised entry by migrants. Migrants are prepared to accept the low wages, lack of job security and sometimes unsafe conditions and are therefore favoured for appointment amongst employers in South Africa (Bloch, 2008: 7; Landau and Polzer, 2008: 45; 46).

On 17 May 2002, a new Immigration Act No 13 of 2002 was passed by the National Assembly. This Act came into full force in 2004. The Immigration Act focused on attracting skilled migrants to South Africa by facilitating skills import. According to the Act, South African employers who wished to employ migrant labour in bulk have to apply for corporate permits. This will allow employers to import an agreed number of migrants (Crush, 2011: 15). The Act also gave police the right to arrest, detain and deport people who were assumed to be illegal immigrants (Landau *et al*, 2005: 14). The SAMP study (2001: 11) indicates that although there is no law which states that people should walk around with their identity documents, the police have the right to ask for this document from people they suspect to be illegal according to section 41 of the Immigration Act of 2002.

The Counter Xenophobia Unit was among the state bodies created to monitor civil society, the public service and government departments. This body makes a significant contribution to immigrants by promoting human rights and curbing xenophobia (Adjai, 2010: 77).

#### 2.4.1.2 *Flow of migrants*

South African borders have become porous, thus allowing easy and free movement into the country (Crush, 2008: 14). Easy access into the country creates many problems, not only for the government but also for South Africans. South Africa is host to immigrants from all over the world. Between 1990 and 2004, a total of 110 000 legal immigrants entered South Africa. Of that number, 27% were from African countries (Crush, 2008). In 2000, a significant rise in the gold price led to an expansion of the workforce on the gold mines. Workers increased from 207 000 in 2001 to 268 000 in 2006.

The new workers were from within South Africa. This indicates that the “South African first” policy was put into practice. As a result miners from foreign countries decreased (Crush, 2011: 15). In a study by Polzer (2010: 2) migration was viewed as a challenge not only across the country’s borders but also across provinces. The study illustrated that between 2001 and 2007 Gauteng province had the highest migrant population, with 26%. It further indicated that of the 26% only 3% was due to cross-border migration. The released statistics of 2008/ 2009 by the Department of Home Affairs projected the total foreign population including documented and undocumented as between 1.6 and 2 million. Census 2011 states that 3.3% of people counted in the census are non-South Africans. Gauteng still remains the province with the highest percentage of non-South Africans, 7.4% (Statistics South Africa, 2012: 49). The largest group of migrants in the country are Zimbabweans (Bloch, 2008: 3; Polzer, 2010: 3). The economic and political oppression in Zimbabwe has contributed to the vast number of Zimbabweans in South Africa (Bloch, 2008: 5; Crush, 2008: 8). The exact number of Zimbabweans is unknown and an estimated number of 50 000 is put forward (Crush, 2011: 7). The majority of migrants are males at 63%; however, the female population is slowly growing (Crush, 2011: 11). Contrary to popular belief that migrants are unskilled and poor, migrants from Zimbabwe are a mixture of skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled (Crush 2011: 7). In general, refugees and asylum seekers are well educated, multilingual and entrepreneurs (Landau and Jacobsen, 2004).

The perception of foreigners flooding into the country creates a dilemma for the South African government. The government is unable to establish the accurate number of foreigners crossing the border and, therefore, the numbers are an estimate.

The exact number of foreigners coming into South Africa is unknown, for the following reasons. Firstly, some foreigners enter the country undocumented. Secondly, neighbouring countries have difficulty of keeping accurate data of foreigners leaving their country because some do so without proper documentation. This could be because of lack of training by border officials and bribery of officials. Thirdly, there's an absence of methodology to provide reliable data (McDonald, Mashike and Golden: 1999: 4; Valji, 2003: 2). The misleading data of cross-border migration is further hampered by the lack of capturing movements between South African provinces (Polzer, 2010). Nevertheless, statistics of foreigners entering the country are still published, although they might not be conclusive or validated.

Literature indicates that the influx of foreigners contributes to xenophobia. Xenophobic attacks were blamed on the arrival of foreigners into the country (Duponchel, 2009: 19). Furthermore, the negative perception, the myths and rumours about foreigners flooding into the country convince communities that foreigners are a threat in the country (Misago, 2011: 92). However, Misago (2011: 92) goes on to argue that this view is unsubstantiated because foreigners who were attacked were not new arrival immigrants, and the areas in which the attacks took place did not have the highest number of foreigners.

#### *2.4.1.3 Treatment of migrants*

Post 1994, the democratic government's discourse was perceived as being opposed to immigration. The discussion that follows shows how the government was hostile to immigrants with the ill-treatment of immigrants and refugees. Immigrants were seen as a threat to the jobs of citizens (Crush, 2001b: 108). In a study conducted by SAMP (1999) on attitude of South Africans towards immigration policy, it was found that South Africans are opposed to immigration and foreign citizens. South African's have become more hostile to immigration when compared to other countries (Crush and McDonald, 1999: 8).

Migrants who enter the country with legitimate documents have rightfully earned the privilege of staying in South Africa. This includes immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The international human rights framework protects refugees, whether they are citizens or non-citizens. Migrants, including those who are undocumented, have political rights according to Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Bloch, 2008: 7; Kamwimbi, *et al.* 2010: 69).

Furthermore the South African constitution guarantees unprecedented rights to everyone living within its borders (Crush, 2001b: 110). The constitution states that everyone has the right to fair labour practices without discrimination of their nationality or legal status (Landau and Polzer, 2008: 45). However, these rights are not always accessible or possible due to the slow pace of processing applications (Palmary, 2002: 8). Having acknowledged the rights of undocumented immigrants, in contradiction, these immigrants are a threat to the government. Illegal immigrants violate the law because they enter the country through illegal channels (Klaaren and Ramji (2001: 40). The illegal status of immigrants does not, however, exempt them from being punished by the law because they are not easily traceable (Agamben: 1998: 27).

In order for the government to control the access of immigrants in the country, steps taken against illegal immigration is deportation. A common deportation centre called Lindela is located in Krugersdorp. Lindela is funded by the Department of Home Affairs. This centre is responsible for housing, feeding and repatriation (Adjai, 2010: 51). It is the largest detention centre for undocumented migrants in the country before they are deported back to their original country (Kollapen and Majodina, 2000: 7). At Lindela, foreigners are denied access to legal representation (Landau, 2011: 9). The South African Human Rights Commission published a report in 1999 on the conditions at Lindela. The commission found that the procedures for processing arrested and undocumented migrants are undignified and inhuman (Kollapen and Majodina, 2000: 7). This centre has received complaints of mistreatment and discrimination by police, as pointed out by the SAMP study of 2008. Illegal immigrants that are detained are generally black Africans. This indicates racial discrimination, because white and Asian immigrants are treated differently. White illegal immigrants are seldom arrested by the police and Asians illegal immigrants are remanded on bail (Valji, 2003a: 5 and Adjai, 2010: 52). A detained person should be brought before an immigration officer within 48 hours of their arrest



and informed in writing of continued detention if applicable. This does not happen. They should not be detained for longer than 30 days in absence of review by high court (Majodina, 2000: 11). In 2008, Lawyers for Human Rights reported that detainees were denied basic rights such as drinking water (Adjai, 2010: 51, 53). Ill treatment of immigrants is evident in their living conditions at the centre. Detainees lack nutrition and adequate medical care. People who are detained are treated unfairly. The centre has been accused of overcrowding, abuse and violation of human rights.

According to the constitution, people who live in South Africa are entitled to basic human rights, including the right to be treated with dignity. These basic human rights are extended to illegal immigrants, in spite of their status but in practice this rule does not always apply (Landau and Polzer, 2008: 45). Ill treatment of illegal immigrants is common in the labour market, where the employer is aware that illegal foreigners can be exploited and he/she will not take any action against them (Crush and Williams, 2002: 11).

The South African government is responsible for ensuring that the rights of non-nationals are protected, but this is not always the case. Some South Africans fail to differentiate between legal and illegal immigrants and as a result legal immigrants are treated the same as illegal immigrants. In practical terms it is not possible to determine whether someone is legal or illegal through appearance because they do not carry their identity documents at all times.

#### 2.4.2 Marking the boundaries - Inclusion and Exclusion

According to Stahnke *et al* (2008: 11), people who are perceived to be minorities in society are discriminated against because of their skin colour, language and cultural differences. The basis of discrimination results in such people being excluded from the larger society.

Social exclusion is a process in which individuals or groups are excluded from full or partial participation of the society they live in (Eyben and Lovett, 2004: 21). Social exclusion takes place in three ways.

Firstly, people are excluded from a society at a particular time; secondly, at a particular place; and lastly, by members of the society (Atkinson, 1998: 13). Social exclusion was indicated in

Alexandra when residents marginalised foreigners on 11 May 2008. However, as indicated earlier, May 2008 was not the first incident reported in Alexandra.

The distinction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in South Africa dates as far back as the colonial period when the Dutch and British settlers came into the country (Pityana, 2001: 1). Matsinhe (2011: 299) illustrates this point further by arguing that colonialism has established norms whereby the ‘we’ refers to South Africa and ‘them’ refers to Africa. Such norms created the perception of Africa as a “dark” continent on its own that is separate from the civilized South Africa. Fanon (1967: 8) and Matshediso (2008: 26) maintain that the white supremacy over blacks in South Africa has created an illusion among black South Africans of Africa to be symbolised by the darkness of famine, war, corruption, disease and evil.

The apartheid era rooted the culture of *bona fide* in Alexandra. Bona fide residents are ‘people who are born in Alex, property owners and tenants whose children and grandchildren were raised in the township and people who love the place’ (Nieftagodien, 2011: 115). This culture made it possible for Alexandra people to distinguish themselves as insiders and the rest of the people as outsiders. It is implied that residents who owned property and stayed in the township for many years had a strong sense that the township belonged to them.

A significant point to note is that people who are perceived to be outsiders, especially migrants and those from rural areas instil fears amongst those who consider themselves as insiders (Nieftagodien, 2011: 113). This view formed attitudes that are visible among South Africans today in their actions towards people from the rest of Africa. South Africans who were oppressed by the apartheid system, direct their anger and hate towards those who are alike but inferior to them, in this instance it is the black foreigner (Lazarus, 2004: 610). The attitude towards foreigners is as a consequence of them being categorised as “strangers”. A stranger is defined as someone who is not known or is in a place they haven’t been before (Auerbach, 2001: 4).

Foreigners are perceived to speak funny, dress funny and even behave funny. These connotations make way for strangers to be blamed. Foreigners are also referred to as outsiders or aliens, as indicated by some government officials (Landau, 2005; Adjai, 2010).

An outsider is someone who does not come from the local community. Duponchel (2009: 5) considers the other as not only someone who is a foreigner but also a migrant who is from poorer

Northern provinces. The premise of labelling people to inferior terms such as strangers and outsiders shows the extent of exclusion among people. This notion of distinction shows that foreigners are seen as nothing, as people who are alienated from the community. Duponchel (2009: 5) further asserts that xenophobic violence should not be seen as a result of competition amongst the poor but rather a competition between the rich and the poor.

Moreover, the gap between the poor and the rich is also at the root of violence against foreigners. (Pillay, 2008). Poorest people in the community are controlled by the elite to turn against foreigners so that they can retain power and wealth. This argument is further elaborated on by Pillay (2008) who states that as a result of inequality, South African citizens turn against foreigners because they are not able to reach the people who hold the wealth and power. Foreigners who were attacked in May 2008 were people who lived in the township for many years. The attacks were not carried out on people who were new in the area but rather on familiar faces (IOM, 2009: 29).

In South Africa, outsiders have become a threat to achieving justice and retribution for the injustice of the past (Landau, 2011: 3). This notion of inclusion and exclusion contributes to South African citizens blaming foreigners for things such as lack of housing, unemployment and crime.

### 2.4.3 Housing

Housing is a sensitive and often contradictory issue. According to chapter 2 section 7 of the Bill of Rights, every South African citizen has the right to adequate housing, one that includes running water, electricity and sanitation. The state has the responsibility to ensure that this right is upheld (The Constitution of 1996). This right stipulates that the South African government has the duty to take legislative measures to ensure that housing is provided.

The government to some extent has provided houses for South Africans in need through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This programme was established in 1994 by the African National Congress.

The RDP was implemented to address socioeconomic problems created by the apartheid government. The programme aimed to improve the living standards of citizens, which included

the provision of housing (Consultative Business Movement, 1994: 12). By the end of 2008/09, the government had already built over 2.3 million subsidy houses. The state-subsidised housing increased from 1.9 million in 1996/97 to 2.3 million in 2008/09 (Lebone, 2010: 529). The number of houses that government has managed to build thus far illustrates that the government is working towards maintaining the right to access to housing for South African citizens.

Although the government offers social housing to its citizens, certain requirements need to be met before the house may be occupied. Amongst other requirements, the applicant for the house must be in possession of a valid South African identity document. In situations where the applicant is not a South African citizen, the spouse or partner should be a South African citizen and provide a valid identity document (Consultative Business Movement, 1994: 13). The applicant must be earning an income of not more than R3500 per month. Silverman and Zack (2008: 149) mention that the requirements for an RDP house are fair but the red tape involved in getting a house leads to people waiting for a lengthy period for their houses.

While ownership of an RDP house clearly states that the occupant should be a South African citizen, there is a perception by South Africans that foreigners own RDP houses. A few possibilities of how foreigners occupy RDP houses are suggested both by Silverman and Zack, (2008) and an HSRC study (2008). A non-South African can marry a South African citizen and the South African citizen applies for the house. This method is legal, but other illegal means are suggested. In some instances occupants of RDP houses are poor and searching for other means of earning an extra income. South African citizens, who are in possession of RDP houses, rent or sell their houses to foreigners. This could be an advantage for locals because they can earn extra income on a weekly or monthly basis, provided that they rented out the house or they can get a lump sum if they decide to sell the house to foreigners.

Perhaps it can be argued that foreigners benefit from renting or buying RDP houses because it will provide shelter for them, but a study by the HSRC (2008) tends to differ on this aspect. According to this study South African citizens exploit foreigners. In order for foreigners to obtain RDP houses, an arrangement between South African citizens and foreigners is made.

Once an agreement is reached between the two parties, South African citizens take advantage of foreigners by overcharging for accommodation, water and electricity or demanding their house

back once payment is complete. The illegal transaction of obtaining a house specifies that foreigners do not have the law behind them should things not turn out as planned (HSRC 2008: 37). Time and again foreigners are accused of stealing houses from locals. Evidence suggests that foreigners are not entirely to be blamed. South Africans also play a role in corruption with regard to the delivery of housing by getting involved in underhand deals with foreigners (HSRC, 2008: 44).

Apart from the corruption indicated in the housing sector, social housing also faces other problems. Firstly, RDP houses are small and are usually built in areas with no social or economic infrastructure. Secondly, unemployment, population growth and inadequate resource allocation have led to a backlog in housing delivery. A study conducted by the Department of Human Settlements in 2008 found that only 34% of RDP beneficiaries occupied houses allocated to them since 1994 (Lebone, 2010: 529).

#### 2.4.4 Unemployment

In South Africa, 14, 7 million people are defined as not being economically active because they are not seeking employment. South Africa's unemployment rate is among the highest in the world when compared to developing countries such as China, Brazil and Indonesia (Bernstein, 2011: 7, 9). According to Statistics South Africa the unemployment rate was 24.9 % in 2012 (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Statistics South Africa defines the unemployed as 'people who do not have a job, are not self-employed, and who actively looked for work in the month before the survey's reference work (Statistics South Africa). According to the Census report of 2011 46% of black Africans are unemployed followed by coloureds at 31% and whites at 10% (Statistics South Africa, 2012). This indicates that black Africans make up the highest rate of unemployed people in the country.

Poverty and lack of decent education have left up to 60% of the South African black youth between the ages of 16 and 30 years unemployed (Jansen, 2008: 43). With evidence suggesting a hike in unemployment, there is a pervasive belief in South Africa that immigrants are an economic burden and steal jobs from South Africans (Crush, 2008: 33).

Based on a study conducted by Crush and William (2001: 8) the number of unemployed immigrants in South Africa is low. According to this study 4.2% of Mozambicans are without a job. The popular sectors for migrant labourers are agriculture, construction and domestic services (Crush 2001: 8). Lack of employment creates tension between foreigners and locals, especially in the informal sector employment, where exploitation and cheap labour are common.

Foreigners are assumed to be a threat to local jobs because they are willing to take any job offered to them, at the lowest of wages in order to survive (Misago *et al*, 2009: 20). This could cause a threat to locals to some extent, because foreigners are willing to take jobs that locals are not willing to do. Often foreigners bring with them skills and work experience that are scarce among locals and hence readily accept opportunities presented to them. This result in employers getting a good worker at a cheaper price (Green, McFall and Smith, 2001: 48; Crush, 2008: 33; HSRC, 2009: 39).

The perception of cheap labour is supported by (Crush 2011: 16) who states that South African employers prefer to hire foreigners because they can bypass labour laws, avoid giving them benefits and pay them minimum wages. On the other hand, a study conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) disagrees with this insight. According to this study, the popular perception that foreigners are stealing jobs is a stereotype. The study concluded that threats posed by foreigners do not appear to be based on personal experience because none of the respondents interviewed during this study experienced job loss to a foreigner, or know someone who has (Crush, 2008: 33). South Africans fail to understand that foreigners who hold work permits have the right to work in the country.

The HSRC (2008: 41) asserts that instead of South Africans claiming that foreigners are stealing their jobs, they should rather recognise the economic benefits that skilled and educated foreigners bring to the country. Immigrants have made a positive contribution to the economy by buying goods and service and importing skills into the country (ANC Daily News Briefing, 2008: 1). In contrast to the statement made by the former Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi (Landau, 2008), the view of foreigners by the government has shifted. The new government recognises the economic values that foreigners have made in the country.

A study conducted by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2008) carried out on business owners in Johannesburg indicates that immigrants are more likely to be self-employed. Instead, South Africans have been given jobs by immigrants who are entrepreneurs in the small and medium sectors. A study conducted by the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg indicates that 67% of employees working for migrants were South Africans (Adjai, 2010: 44-45; Landau and Polzer, 2008: 46).

#### 2.4.5 Crime

According to the South African Police Service annual report of 2003/2004 the crime rate in South Africa has fluctuated between the period of 1999 and 2004. Serious crimes such as murder, attempted murder, and robbery have decreased. Between 1994 and 2011 rates of murder and attempted murder decreased by 52% and 55% respectively (Lebone, 2011: 707). Statistics indicate that while some crimes are declining, others are on the increase. For instance, robbery with aggravating circumstances has increased from 84 785 in 1994/95 to 101 463 in 2010/11 (Lebone, 2011: 718). The South African Police Service points out that these figures need to be approached with caution as they are not a true reflection of the crime rate in South Africa, as many crimes are still not recorded or reported (Statistics South Africa, 2006: 63-64).

Foreigners are accused of committing crimes such as drug trafficking, hijacking, robberies, murder, rape and burglary (Wambogo, 2001: 19). Blaming foreigners for crime is more popular in the townships than in urban areas (HSRC, 2008: 35). A view from a South African male illustrates “...they must go back and come in (a) lawful manner...these ones are not here to make a living, they are here to steal, rape and murder” (HSRC, 2008: 36). However, some authors do not support the perception that foreigners are perpetrators of crime.

Landau *et al* (2005), the HSRC report (2008: 35) and CoRMSA (2009) suggest that locals are the major perpetrators of crime. Between 1996 and 2011 overcrowding in prisons grew by 52% (Lebone, 2011: 708). It is easier to arrest South African perpetrators of crime, because they have identity documents and their fingerprints are on the system unlike undocumented immigrants (IOM, 2009: 18). In cases where foreigners commit a crime, locals assist. It is a means to alleviate poverty for these locals.

This is common in crimes such as drug trafficking, which is often blamed on Nigerians. Finchilescu and Warner (2003: 39) contend that the perception of Nigerian foreigners being involved in drug trafficking is evoked by the media and government officials. “As far as I’m concerned, they don’t come to South Africa for political reasons or to work...as many as 90% of Nigerians who applied for section 41 permits-...were drug dealers” (view of Captain Bondesio Giacomo of the South African Police Service). This quote suggests that South Africans perceive some Nigerians to be drug dealers.

Corruption is another type of crime that foreigners are accused of. Evidently entering the country illegally is considered a crime. Illegal immigrants, who are caught by the police without valid documents, are accused of bribing police to avoid arrest and deportation (Masuku, 2006: 5). In disagreement to foreigners committing crime Dodson and Oelofse (2000), Landau *et al* (2005) and the HSRC (2008) report that the national police statistics published in 1998, show that only two per cent of foreigners were arrested in that year. An explanation for low numbers of foreigners being arrested is based on the following reasons. Foreign nationals are seen as being able to get away with crime because they bribe officials in order not to face prosecution. Some illegal foreigners are involved in crime such as tax invasion, but are not caught because they are undocumented (Masuku, 2006: 4). A South African male points out that “those who come illegally, they engage in illegal activities and you won’t know who they are” (HSRC, 2008: 34-36). With that said, it is important to keep in mind that not all foreigners who are accused of committing crime in South Africa are undocumented. Those accused of crime could be either documented or undocumented.

#### 2.4.6 Role of state institutions and the media

To some extent the government played a role in perpetuating the violence against foreigners. The South African government has tried to protect the rights of all immigrants entering the country, by providing them with permits to stay in the country for as long as needed.

Yet the government has remained contradictory in their efforts to accommodate foreigners. Inconsistency by government is witnessed in public speeches made by state officials, whereby phrases such as alien invaders are used in the same context as a foreigner (Murray, 2003: 450).



For example, a former Umkonto We Sizwe military commander and former Minister of Defence, Johannes Modise, threatened to switch on the fifteen thousand volt electrified fence on the South African northern and eastern borders as an effective means of discouraging and reducing clandestine border crossings (Murray, 2003: 451). In addition, government officials have sometimes blamed foreigners for lack of service delivery in South Africa. According to them, foreigners put a strain on public services and make it difficult for adequate planning to take place because of unpredictable mass influxes (Misago, 2011: 92).

There is one view that refugees and asylum seekers escape war, illness and death in their home countries and seek shelter in South Africa. South Africans should be able to treat people from neighbouring with dignity and respect. Neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe offered aid and shelter for South Africans who went into exile. The Department of Home Affairs is among the state bodies accused of mistreating foreigners. The former Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, delivered a speech in Parliament that implied that South Africans are going to compete with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa for scarce resources (Landau, 2005: 6).

Furthermore, he stated that there are between 2.5-to five million illegal aliens in South Africa. This number was based on repatriations, illegal border crossings, and people who overstayed their visas (Adjai, 2010: 42-43). Foreigners gather at the borders of South Africa with no proper shelter, food or access to health care, in the hope of getting the right documents to enter the country. The Department of Home Affairs delays the process of issuing proper documents by taking weeks and sometimes months to provide refugees with adequate documents. A process that should take three days, can easily take weeks. In the meantime, refugees and asylum seekers are homeless and are left with no choice but to fend for themselves (Wellman, 2009: 1-2).

Dower (2003: 36) and Wellman (2009: 2) argue that the maltreatment of foreigners by the government exposes pitfalls in the South African Bill of Rights. Amongst other rights that foreigners are entitled to, the South African government has maintained the right to provide adequate shelter. Refugee camps are provided for foreigners who are waiting for their documents. Refugee camps are used as temporary shelter but they are not well maintained (Klotz, 2008: 837). The South African Police Service (SAPS) has also contributed to the ill treatment of foreigners through acts of prejudice and verbal abuse (Vigneswaran, 2011: 152).

The South African Police Service is given legal powers to apprehend individuals who are suspected to be undocumented non-citizens as indicated by the constitution. They are given legal powers to arrest and detain undocumented non-citizens (CoRMSA, 2009: 32). Even with the right to make an arrest, the manner in which the arrests are handled is not according to the law (Harris, 2001: 30-31). According to the Human Rights Commission (1999) undocumented non-citizens can only be arrested on reasonable grounds but those rules do not always apply. In some instances, suspected illegal immigrants are arrested without being given a chance to produce the right documents that indicate that they have permission to be in the country. It is also not compulsory for foreigners to carry an identification document with them. In cases where it is required an officer should accompany the suspected foreigner to fetch one. Arresting suspected foreigners on the streets tends to be problematic. In some instances South Africans are arrested because they are mistaken for foreigners. South Africans are arrested because some resemble the physical features of foreigners such as height, dark skin and vaccination marks (Kollapen and Majodina, 2000: 12; Valji, 2003b: 5). South Africans have also being wrongfully arrested because the police believe that they have the ability to determine a person's nationality by just looking at them (Vigneswaran, 2011: 165).

Nonetheless, the arrest of South Africans does not imply that more foreigners are arrested on suspicion of illegal status. A study conducted by the University of Witwatersrand in the Johannesburg area indicates that 74% of refugees were stopped by the police, compared to 47% of South Africans (Adjai, 2010: 49). Based on these facts the perceived treatment of foreigners by the SAPS is disrespectful and undignified (The Human Rights Commission, 1999). Murray (2003: 450) argues that foreigners suffer harassment, brutality, deportation and unprovoked beatings by the police. Landau *et al* (2005: 32), further elaborate that the SAPS has the duty to protect the rights of every person in the country. Unfortunately, this doesn't apply all the time. Foreigners live in fear of being deported or mistreated by the police. In order for foreigners to survive the streets they need to have money for bribes to give to police officials to keep them from being deported, arrested or having their documents torn into pieces (Human Rights Watch, 1998). Not only do male foreigners get harassed but women find themselves victims of sexual assault by the police. The media plays a significant role in promoting negative attitudes towards foreigners by portraying people from Africa in a negative light.

The reports on xenophobia that are produced by the media are incomplete, biased, and simplistic and lack in-depth coverage of issues raised (Smith, 2010: 3; Nyar, 2010: 2). Black Africans from the rest of Africa are posing a threat to the livelihoods of South Africans. Terms such as “aliens” and “flooding” are often used to describe foreigners from African countries (Crush and McDonald, 1999: 17-19; Smith, 2010: 4). When referring to foreigners in the country the media creates a sensation by claiming that foreigners are “swarming” into South Africa. The failure of media to distinguish between documented and undocumented immigrants create an impression that all foreigners from African countries are illegal (Adjai, 2010: 42, 47).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of xenophobia it is important to provide theoretical explanations for xenophobia.

## **2.5 Theoretical explanations for xenophobia**

### **2.5.1 Relative deprivation theory**

Relative deprivation is when individuals have expectations and feel that they are deprived of what is rightfully theirs. Individuals feel that they are deprived of wealth that is only shared by a minority. Deprivation leads to individuals feeling impoverished, marginalised and unequal (Pillay, 2008: 100).

Uys (1994: 2) agrees with the definition offered by stating that relative deprivation is “the perception of people that they do not, in relation to other people or groups, possess a specific valuable object or enough of a certain valued object and that they are furthermore entitled to full possession of the valued object”. Siegal (2003: 195) elaborates that people who feel deprived because of racial or economic reasons eventually develop a sense of injustice and discontent. These individuals blame society for not addressing inequality and denying them the opportunity of progressing by legitimate means. The constant frustration that people are faced with eventually leads to hostility and anger, which may result in violence and crime aimed at a population group that is believed to be responsible for the deprivation: in this instance the foreigners from the rest of Africa (Harris, 2002: 171). The culture of entitlement can lead to other problems. Individuals who feel that they are treated unequally may resort to criminality as a way of balancing the scale of inequality.

Individuals who claim to commit crime as means of survival sometimes use crime for other purposes. Criminals loot and rob people's belongings to measure up with the wealthy people in the country (Pillay, 2008: 97).

### 2.5.2 Rational choice theory

According to Scott (2000: 126) rational choice theory states that people take rational actions and have most likely calculated the risks and benefits before deciding what action to take. This theory denies the existence of any kind of action other than purely rational and calculated. Green and Fox (2007: 280) maintain that rational choice theory is simultaneously a normative and predictive theory. It is normative in the sense that it specifies how people should behave and predictive in that it stipulates that people behave as predicted. The actions that individuals take are seen to be motivated by the wants or goals that express their preferences and, therefore, they choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction.

Although people's actions are calculated beforehand, they may appear to be irrational (Scott, 2000: 127; Green and Fox, 2007: 269). Siegal (2003: 109) elaborates further by arguing that according to rational choice theory not only do individuals have to consider the consequences of their actions but also whether or not they have the prerequisites to carry out certain actions. For example, individuals who plan to commit a robbery must have the tools, such as a firearm, to carry out the robbery.

Rational choice theory alleges that xenophobia and racism occur as a result of competition for scarce resources. Immigrants and South African citizens compete for scarce resources, which contributes to xenophobic discourses. This theory suggests that competition increases during economic crises. These economic crises include high rates of unemployment and poverty, as well as other scarce resources (Wimmer, 2002: 202).

### 2.5.3 Scapegoat theory

The scapegoat theory is similar to rational choice theory because both theories claim that competition for limited resources lead to hostility between South Africans and immigrants.

This theory states that immigrants are used as scapegoats for social and economic crises that are experienced by people, in this case South Africans due to competition for limited resources. According to scapegoat theory, xenophobia in South Africa is an after effect of the social transition that took place after apartheid. After the 1994 elections, economic enhancement of black people was expected in which equal distribution of wealth and resources were to be achieved. Economic transition has taken place to a degree, but not at the pace that many South Africans were hoping for. After years of democracy, South Africa has an unemployment rate of 24.9% and many citizens who are without houses. The challenges faced by South African citizens are interpreted as a threat to their economic position, which leads to the perception that foreigners are “stealing” jobs (Tshitereke, 1999: 4-5; Landau and Polzer, 2008: 43).

The three theories discussed above agree that feelings of frustration result in people acting out their anger and hostility towards individuals portrayed as scapegoats. Feelings of frustration are caused by competition over limited resources amongst South Africans and foreigners. The rational choice theory states that individuals make calculated rational decisions but this does not necessarily mean they always make rational choices. The May 2008 xenophobic attacks across different parts of the country can be viewed as an example of individuals being irrational by attacking foreigners and causing them bodily harm. Literature indicated that 600 people were injured in the attacks (Morris, 2000:16). The multiple incidents indicate that a group of people might have made rational decisions based on their frustrations but their choice of action was irrational.

For this study, relative deprivation is the theory of choice. Residents of Alexandra blame foreigners for things they do not have. Scarce resources amongst residents and foreigners cause tension and frustrations. Residents of Alexandra feel that they are entitled to resources such as houses and jobs. Based on this feeling of entitlement perpetrators feel they are entitled to the belongings of those individuals who can afford luxuries and resort to illegal means of obtaining these belongings including stealing, assault, looting and murder (Pillay, 2008). Xenophobic sentiments do not necessarily lead people to act in a violent manner. The question remains: What triggered the residents of Alexandra to behave in the way they did?

## 2.6 **Alexandra: an ‘ideal’ location for xenophobic violence**

Nieftagodien, (2008) and Sinwell (2009) report that failed government attempts at renewing Alexandra township have resulted in residents acting on their frustrations. Socio-economic conditions in Alexandra are unfavourable. The township is overcrowded and overpopulated, and the majority of residents live in informal structures such as shacks. Fifty one percent of Alexandra’s population are either unemployed or employed part time only. Alexandra Township is poverty stricken with 50% of its residents earning less than R1 000 per month and only one per cent earning more than R5 000 per month (Sinwell, 2009). Against the violent history of Alexandra and the socio-economic conditions, it can be argued that the township was susceptible to violence, more specifically in the informal sector of the township.

### 2.6.1 Informal settlements as ‘ideal’ location of violence

Literature has shown that violence occurs in informal settlements based on structure, accessibility and socio-economic factors. A report by Idasa (2008: 10) suggests three explanations for violence taking place in informal settlements. Firstly, lack of formality means undocumented foreigners can easily enter those areas and make a living. Secondly, absence of formal law enforcement could lead to communities taking the law into their own hands. Lastly, informal areas may have fewer existing structures for providing early warning when violence is likely to begin, which prevents quick response by government or civil society groups. Informal settlements are the ideal place for xenophobic violence to occur, because they are a battleground of the poor against the poor (Silverman and Zack, 2008: 147; HSRC, 2008: 41).

Informal settlements are overcrowded and overpopulated, and lack health care service. They have deteriorating conditions and high levels of unemployment, which are blamed on poor service delivery by the government. Residents of informal settlements are faced with a daily challenge of their conditions. Informal settlements are marginalised and deprived of infrastructure and as a result the struggle for limited resources is intensified. The settlement of foreigners in Alexandra is seen as an additional constraint to residents and their unfavourable environment (Nieftagodien, 2011: 109).

## 2.6.2 Poverty and inequality

Lack of development and infrastructure in informal settlements increase the prevalence of fighting for scarce resources among residents and foreigners. Poverty is defined as a lack of money or material possessions. People who earn low incomes feel inferior because they do not have control of their lives (Eyben and Lovett, 2004: 5). Atkinson (1998: 9) says that poverty and exclusion are often used interchangeably but are not the same. Some people are poor but are not socially excluded from society, while others are socially excluded but not necessarily poor.

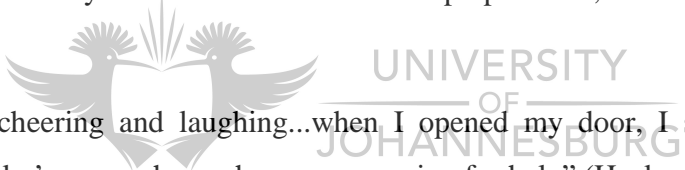
The depth of poverty and inequality in Alexandra is characterised by shack settlement. Backyard shacks are illegal because they have been built on formal plots. These shacks do not comply with the planning and building norms and standards. As a consequence, it is difficult to service and maintain shacks because of the strain placed on utilities and infrastructure (Anon, 2000: 6). Conditions in shacks are unsafe. Shacks are vulnerable to fire (because of the building material used and the close proximity to neighbouring shacks) and often are built in flood zones or on geographically unstable land (Silverman and Zack, 2008: 154). Shack dwellers experience winter as the harshest season, because shacks do not provide adequate warmth. Therefore, they resort to health hazardous measures, such as burning coal in their homes, in order to keep warm. These measures often cause fires and other health-related problems (HSRC, 2008: 41).

While poverty has resulted in violence in informal settlements, some authors suggest that inequality, rather than poverty should be blamed. Poverty and inequality are not the same and cannot be addressed as if they are. It is indisputable that poverty leads to violence in informal settlements but unfairness, inequality and discrimination create resentment and hostility towards people who are perceived to have received what is not rightfully theirs and hence leading to preferential treatment (Geld, 2008: 80). This argument is supported by Eyben and Lovett (2004: 6) who mention that severe inequality can contribute to political unrest and social instability. In unequal communities, poor people tend to resort to violence because they feel that their lives cannot be improved. As a consequence, their morals against illegal activities become lowered. More inequality produces more violence (CSV, 2008: 19). People in informal settlements do not have a sense of ownership because their shacks are built on unauthorised land and their houses are built from material that can burn into ashes any day.

Although government has attempted to alleviate poverty through social grants, this is not enough for the poorest of the poor (Gelb, 2008: 80-84). Lack of service delivery could lead to poverty-stricken communities resorting to collective violence to indicate their frustration.

## 2.7 Collective violence

Tilly (2003: 103) defines collective violence as a type of violence performed by groups of people or a society to damage persons or objects. Furthermore, Aya (1999: 201) argues that violence becomes collective when a group of people start sharing their anger, only to realise that they share the same frustrations and, therefore, want to act out their frustrations. Collective violence could be unlawful conduct and directed at subordinate groups. Collective violence involves two important agents; the bystanders and perpetrators. Bystanders play a passive role by witnessing the crime instead of perpetuating it, whereas perpetrators instigate the violence (Staub, 2003: 292-293). A practical example is the May 2008 xenophobic violence. In these attacks some residents became passive bystanders and others active perpetrators, as the following quotation describes.



“They were cheering and laughing...when I opened my door, I saw people standing around ntinyoko’s spaza shop...she was screaming for help” (Hosken, 2008: 1).

This quotation illustrates the role of a bystander as a witness to the crime committed by perpetrators. In this example the bystander plays a passive role.

Pillay (2008: 96) argues that the behaviour of perpetrators of violence can be blamed on the South African culture of entitlement that supports the notion that people who cannot provide for themselves due to unemployment are given support by the government in the form of social grants. From a psychological perspective collective violence is encouraged when individuals form negative images about the enemy based on stereotypes of the society, and often these negative images are not a true reflection of the enemy (Beck, 1995: 13-15). The distorted images intensify hatred and vengeance towards the enemy, more often in instances where competition for scarce resources is the motivation for hatred.



A similar viewpoint is shared by Staub (2003: 292-293) who argues that negative judgements formed by perpetrators against the enemy make it easier for perpetrators to act out their anger, and more often that anger is based on cultural differences between insiders and outsiders. Aya (1999: 22) supports the argument that competition for scarce resources in society leads to frustration towards the enemy but differs from a psychological explanation of violence. Competition for scarce resources leads to social change and as a result violence is predicted to become apparent (Aya, 1999: 291). Moreover, violence takes place when a threat exists.

A shared ideology of threats and insecurities posed by the enemy makes it possible for a collective to act out in a violent manner towards achieving a common goal of destroying the enemy (Robben and Suarez-Orozco, 2000: 10; Staub, 2003: 295). A report written by the HSRC on behalf of Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2008: 43) contends that acts of violence are correlated with poverty, masculinity and strained social support. In some instances acts of violence can be without premeditation and performed in response to aggression or contextual factors.

Green, McFall and Smith (2001: 481) use hate crime instead of collective violence to explain crimes carried out as a result of hatred towards the other group. They argue that such crimes are not only acts of violence but also crimes of harassment and trespassing. In addition, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation termed the xenophobic attacks as hate crime. Hate crime is viewed as 'message crimes'. The message that is communicated to the foreigners is that they are not welcome in some of the townships in the country (Harris, 2004). Even though hate crime is aimed to convey a message, the manner in which the acts are carried out can blur the quality of the message.

The use of extensive violence such as looting, causing destruction, and carrying knives portrays criminality (Harris, 2004; Von Holdt, 2011: 27). From the above argument, it is evident that collective violence cannot be explained by one factor, but it is a complex phenomenon that can be explained by social, economic and institutional factors (Robben and Suarez-Orozco, 2000: 10). In the context of South African townships, violence can be seen as a result of social and economic disadvantage, criminal act, policing and vigilantism. The inequalities in the distribution of housing, jobs and service delivery created an environment in which people feel the need to defend access to what they feel is theirs (IOM, 2009: 10).

Relating this back to the xenophobic attacks in South Africa, it can be argued that xenophobia leads to violence when the government refuses to listen to the grievances of its citizens. For instance, in Alexandra two meetings took place before the attacks. The first meeting was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May held at the police station and a follow-up meeting was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May at Sankopano, a day before the attacks. In these meetings residents addressed issues and complaints they had about foreigners. Their concerns were ignored and not dealt with effectively.

When residents turned violent because of their frustrations, there were no coping mechanisms in place to resolve issues that arose. The lack of conflict resolution contributed to xenophobic sentiments turning violent (Misago, 2011: 97). The May 2008 xenophobic attacks were termed as criminal. A social construction of crime was created, which saw foreign nationals as criminals who stole jobs and houses. Attacks against foreigners were a form of law enforcement to protect the South African national territory (IOM, 2009: 11-12). According to South African citizens it was also a legitimate means of protecting South African lives and livelihoods (Misago, 2011: 93).

Violence on foreigners has taken place as early as 1994. By law, individuals who carried out the attacks should have been prosecuted, yet this is not always applied. Consequently, lack of execution had led to more foreigners being attacked. As a consequence of community protests and mobilisation most people who were arrested for the attacks of 2008 were released without being prosecuted. The National Prosecuting Authority lacks interest in holding the offenders of the violence accountable for their actions.

As a result, of the approximate 500 cases that resulted from xenophobic violence, 41% were withdrawn and only 27% have been finalised by 2011. Surprisingly, only one murder conviction was finalised by then in spite of the reports that at least 62 people were killed in Alexandra during and after the mayhem (Misago, 2011: 96). The message this conveys is that the government and the judicial system lack determination to execute those who do wrong against foreigners, especially when collective violence is the reason (Kamwimbi, 2010: 69; Misago, 2011: 96).

## 2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to identify key debates in the literature on xenophobia within the South African context. The conceptualisation of xenophobia has been discussed in comparison to racism and new racism. These concepts explain prejudice or discrimination on the basis of race and physical appearance. The element of power comes through when one group is considered dominant and the other inferior. The May 2008 attacks were not the first attacks in South Africa. Xenophobic violence occurred as early as 1994. The migration of foreigners into the country created an impression of increased movement of foreigners. This perceived influx created a division and tension between South Africans and foreigners.

Socio-economic factors such as housing, unemployment, crime, the role of media and the state shaped xenophobic sentiments in the country. Residents of Alexandra felt that they were entitled to free houses, getting employment and staying in a crime-free township. Lack of delivery on expectations led to foreigners being used as scapegoats. Congested living conditions in Alexandra coupled with poverty, inequality and lack of service delivery frustrated residents, which resulted in collective violence. This study attempts to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the views of South African citizens in informal settlements towards foreigners. The analysis of the study focuses on the viewpoint of xenophobia and the experience and perceptions of South African residents.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **EXPLORING XENOPHOBIA IN THE TOWNSHIP OF ALEXANDRA**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In May 2008 South Africa experienced a xenophobic outbreak of a great magnitude. The violence spread from different parts of the country leaving more than 60 people dead, more than 600 injured and thousands of refugees homeless (Matsinhe, 2011: 297). Even if incidents of xenophobic violence were reported as early as the 1990's, this was the first outbreak where masses came together with the ultimate goal of chasing away foreigners in their township.

The aim of this chapter is to outline steps taken to gather evidence needed to explore xenophobia further. Firstly, the research approach used to carry out this investigation will be discussed and justified. Secondly, the sampling method will be discussed. Thirdly, the data collection technique used in the study will be reviewed. Fourthly, analysis of data will be discussed. Fifthly, ethical considerations adhered to will be reviewed. Lastly, the strengths and limitations of the research design will also be discussed.

#### **3.2 A Qualitative approach**

For the purpose of this study a qualitative research methodology was used. Gorman and Clayton (2005: 3) defines qualitative research as a -

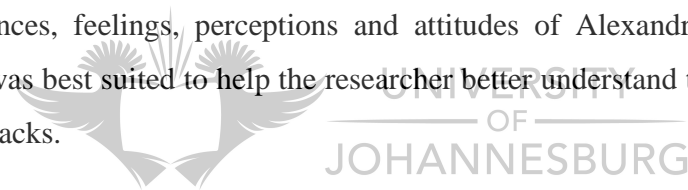
“process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction to derive possible explanations based on observed phenomena”.

Qualitative research aims at understanding and interpreting how the subjects construct meaning from their surroundings. The respondents' meaning of xenophobia was constructed based on their surroundings.

Furthermore, Smith and Dunworth (2003: 603) state that qualitative methodology makes use of language as a fundamental property of human communication, interpretation and understanding because we tend to make sense of our social world through linguistics.

The aim of the study is to investigate Alexandra residents' attitudes towards foreigners. Based on the sensitive nature of the investigation, a qualitative research approach was best suited for this investigation. This approach made it possible for the researcher to investigate a small group of people in an in-depth manner. Through direct interaction with respondents the researcher was able to capture meanings and description of events as they unfolded (Babbie, 2007: 87-90).

Another aspect of the qualitative approach lies in the adoption of a 'hands-on' approach. The researcher was able to immerse herself in the complexity of the situation and interact with the respondents. In this investigation, the researcher was directly and extensively involved in the research process from the onset by developing the interview schedule, recruiting respondents conducting the interviews and transcribing the interviews (Leedy, 1997: 106). It was important to capture the experiences, feelings, perceptions and attitudes of Alexandra respondents and a qualitative method was best suited to help the researcher better understand the events of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks.



### 3.3 **Research method: Semi-structured interviews**

For this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were deemed most appropriate because of the sensitive nature of the study. This type of interview allowed the researcher to probe for further clarification (for example, if felt that the attacks were organised, they were asked by whom) (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 104-106).

The use of the semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in designing the interview schedule; refining the interview guide when important, adding further questions and conducting the interview by randomly asking questions that were not necessarily in order of appearance. Responses determined how and which questions were asked next. It also allowed the interviewees the freedom to explain their thoughts and respond to questions in greater depth and not to respond to a structured format (Horton *et al*, 2004: 340). In this study, research questions flowed from the literature review.

These questions served to guide the data collection, which informed the theory. An iterative approach was used rather than an inductive or deductive approach. An iterative approach allowed for questions to be adjusted according to what was learned (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001: 154).

A natural and conversational interview style was possible. Open-ended questions such as '*tell me how you feel about black foreigners*' were asked as they posed few restrictions on the respondent by allowing them the freedom of answering questions about what transpired from their perspective. An interview schedule was used to conduct interviews (Refer to Appendix A for complete interview schedule). The nature of the questions focused on the xenophobic attacks, how they unfolded and what caused them. The feelings about the attacks were also covered. Individuals' thoughts and opinions were expressed, for example interviewees were able to express how they felt about the government (Gravetter and Forzano, 2006: 333).

### 3.4 The research site

The case study of Alexandra was chosen not only because of the question of access but also because this was the first area to report the May 2008 xenophobic attacks. Alexandra has a strong history of violence dating back to the ANC and IFP battles for power in 1992 to cases of xenophobic attacks prior to 2008.

Upon entering the township the impression is painted of a rural area. People share the roads with pigs, goats, cows and mangy dogs roaming the streets searching for food. The streets are dirty and in some corners there is water on the streets from a broken sewage system. On the corners and pavements are hawkers selling everything, from live chickens, sheep heads, to fruit and vegetables. Small businesses dominate the township, such as shoemaker stalls, spaza shops, barbershops and hair salons.

Socio-economic conditions in Alexandra are not pleasant. The area is congested. The houses are close to each other and there is not much privacy. A yard of approximately 1 000 m<sup>2</sup> contains ten two-room houses (Morris, 2000: 5). These houses are often occupied by families consisting of five or more people. Every yard has an average of three toilets to be shared by all occupants in that yard, which is a possible breeding ground for disease. The number of occupants per house differs; some families are small whereas others are large. Ten houses share one washing line.

The area is abuzz with people moving to and fro and loud music streaming from shebeens /taverns in the area.

### 3.5 Selection of respondents

The researcher needed to get hold of people who observed or participated in the violence and thus a purposive snowball sampling method was used to select the respondents. Respondents who were interviewed referred the researcher to other respondents who met the criteria of being either bystanders or perpetrators of the attacks. Bystanders refer to people who witnessed the violence, whereas perpetrators refer to people who took part in the violence. Respondents were more easily accessible and less suspicious, because referral was through someone they knew and in some cases trusted. This method allowed for difficult targets such as perpetrators to be reached.

Twenty black respondents of Alexandra were selected. The researcher aimed at having an equal gender spread, but it was easier to recruit male respondents than female respondents. As a result twelve males and eight females were interviewed. The youngest respondent was 18 years old and the oldest was 50 years old to allow a spread of age groups. Of the twelve males, five were between the ages of 18-25 years; three were between the ages of 26-35 years; three were between the ages of 36-45 years; and one respondent was 50 years old. Of the eight females, three were between the ages of 18-25 years, while the remaining five were 46 and older. The age spread was unintentional, but developed during fieldwork. This spread made it possible for views of different age categories to be heard. Of the male respondents, six were employed, two were unemployed, two were self-employed, one was informally employed and one had part-time employment. Of the females, two were employed, two were unemployed, one was self-employed, one was a temporary worker and two were students. Out of the twenty interviews, four were perpetrators of the violence and sixteen were observers. Three lived in hostels, and the remaining seventeen lived in 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenues in the township. The streets identified were significant, because the mob moved through those streets. For a more complete profile, please refer to Appendix B.

### 3.6 Gaining access to potential respondents

In 2009, the researcher was involved in a study on the role of civil society in the xenophobic attacks of May 2008. The researcher's study site was Alexandra. This study focused on the role of civil society during the xenophobic attacks. Through the study the researcher familiarised herself with the township and established a few contacts who had the potential of later becoming informants in gaining access to the targeted population. When the researcher began fieldwork in July 2010, she was already familiar with the fabric and makeup of the township under investigation.

The first point of entry was the hostels next to Beirut, an area around the hostels. As the history of Alexandra indicated, the township has three hostels, two male hostels and one female hostel. The male hostels are called Madala and Nobuhie. The female hostel is called Helen Joseph. The researcher collected data from both male and female hostels. In order to gain access to the male hostels, the researcher had identified a key male informant, not only to help with gaining access to the hostel but also to help gain access to the Induna of the hostel. An Induna is elected by occupants of the hostels and plays the role of a caretaker in the hostel. This individual is responsible for the maintenance and running of the hostels.

The male informant was an occupant of one of the male hostels and knew the right person to approach about the study. The Induna of the hostel was informed of the nature of the study, the aims and objectives of the research and permission was sought to conduct interviews within the hostel. Once permission was gained, occupants of the hostels were informed about the study; the first respondent volunteered and was interviewed. The key informant had a network of people that he could refer the researcher to for further interviews.

The second point of entry was the female hostel. In order to gain access to the female hostel, a hawker selling vegetables next to the female hostel was approached and told about the study and intentions of the researcher. The hawker was helpful and agreed to assist with reaching other females from the hostel. Getting permission from the female hostel Induna was not required, as there was no one available to ask permission from.



Once entry into the hostels was permitted a key respondent was identified and interviewed and referred the researcher to others. A key respondent was an individual who was familiar with the hostels and had a network of people who fitted the category of bystanders and perpetrators. Once interviews were conducted at both the male and the female hostels, other areas outside the hostels were identified and interviews were conducted at 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenues in Alexandra.

### 3.7 Data collection

Twenty face-to-face interviews were conducted between May 2010 and August 2010. Interviews were conducted in IsiZulu, Setswana and English. Translations were not necessary as the interviewer is fluent in the above-mentioned languages.

In-depth interviews were conducted on weekends, as this was a suitable time for all interviewees, as well as the researcher. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes. Before the researcher visited the respondents' dwellings for interviews, appointments were confirmed. Four themes were covered in the interviews. The theme of the *events of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks* covered questions on how the violence began, where it began and the build-up to the attacks. These questions were important for the researcher as they provided a better understanding of the xenophobic attacks.

These questions were also important in unpacking the reasons for the attacks and what respondents' motives were for attacking foreigners. The theme *justification for the violence* discussed causes for the violence such as unemployment, housing and crime.

In order to ensure that respondents understood what was asked of them, justification of violence was phrased as reasons for violence. The theme *feelings towards foreigners* discussed how Alexandra respondents felt towards foreigners in general and more specifically towards black foreigners. Through this the researcher established feelings, views and attitude of respondents towards foreigners. The last theme *feelings towards the South African government* looked at how respondents felt about the government in terms of service delivery and treatment of foreigners.

In some instances the researcher visited the respondent that the interview was scheduled with, and that respondent would accompany the interviewer to someone else they knew. All interviews were conducted in respondents' homes where they felt comfortable and secure.

Field notes were written during each interview. Field notes served as an important source of information in capturing the non-verbal communication of respondents. Field notes allowed the researcher to write down new themes or questions that emerged from each interview. A tape recorder was used at all times to ensure that information gathered from respondents was recorded. None of the respondents were reluctant to be tape recorded. One or two also did not have a problem with their real names being used. However the researcher used pseudonyms. After the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the interviews.

It was important to also capture the non-verbal communication of respondents. Throughout the interviews the researcher was able to observe facial expressions and body language to capture unspoken messages or meanings of words. Through observation, the researcher was able to look for, listen to and record feelings that were attached to what was being said (Silverman, 2006: 67). A notepad was used to record non-verbal communication.

From the onset, a few of the respondents were nervous, because they did not know what to expect from the interviews. The researcher once again explained the purpose of the study and respondents were assured of confidentiality. After they were assured that their names will not be mentioned, they became relaxed and were willing to participate. Others were excited about the study and could not wait to tell of their experiences. During the interviews; some became angry when asked about their feelings towards foreigners. Their anger was expressed in their faces and high-pitched voices.

While the research approach used in the study proved to be successful, there were many challenges that were encountered. Gaining access to respondents was not always easy. In terms of the male hostels, the Induna of the hostel was suspicious of the researcher's intentions and needed much convincing that the study was only to be used for the purpose of a minor dissertation. The researcher had to brave dark corridors on some floors of the hostel, as they did not have electricity. A torch was used to navigate through those corridors. Safety was very important, therefore, the female researcher was accompanied by two male friends.

Gaining access to perpetrators of the violence proved to be the most challenging. It was evident that people were fearful to admit to being perpetrators of the violence and in order to reach this group of people a strategy was applied. Instead of asking people about their involvement at the beginning of the interview, this question was asked indirectly towards the end of the interview. One perpetrator admitted his involvement half way through the interview, once trust was built. The researcher was referred to one other respondent who was a perpetrator and an appointment was set up for an interview. A day before the scheduled interview, the respondent changed his telephone numbers and it was no longer possible to get hold of him.

The extent of the involvement of one particular respondent in the attacks was only realised after the researcher listened to the audio of the interview. The respondent kept on referring to 'we' did this and that. Once the researcher realised this, a follow-up interview was done. During the follow-up interview the respondent admitted that they were part of the mob and actively participated in the violence. People were hesitant to participate in the study because they were fearful of being reported to the police and getting arrested. Once the researcher gained their trust by assuring them that the results of the study would only be used for research purposes they easily opened up and shared their experiences. The researcher also assured them that their real names would not appear on record. The assurance of treating respondents' information with confidentiality was important for the researcher and respondents. Respondents' willingness to express their views without hesitation signified some level of trust.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 157) data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. Gorman and Clayton (2005: 205) state that the purpose of data analysis is to search for general statements about relationships among categories of data.

Once the rich data acquired from interviews was collected, it was transcribed and organised. A thematic analysis of data was used. Open coding was applied to search for data that had common themes. Once themes were identified, similar as well as different categories were distinguished (Flick, 1998: 182). A chronological approach was used to discuss the xenophobic attack of May 2008 by looking at what happened on the day of the attacks; the movement of the mob around the township; the manner in which respondents responded to the attack including those who became part of the mob; and the after-effects of the chaos. Once themes were decided upon, further elaboration took place in which connections between the themes provided an explanation or story about the data (Flick, 1998: 185). This coding was useful in identifying themes that talked back to the literature review, such as housing; crime; unemployment; overcrowding; identity of foreigners; and feelings towards foreigners.

Other themes such as criminal elements, post-apartheid Alexandra and feelings towards government played a vital role in assessing firstly, if the attacks had a criminal element in them and secondly, to discover if the township experienced any changes after South Africa was declared a democratic state. Lastly, feelings towards the government were discussed.

### 3.9 Ethical considerations

All research subjects have ethical rights: to be consulted, to give or withhold consent and to confidentiality (Gorman and Clayton, 2005: 43). Ethics are principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts at a particular time (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998: 42). Throughout the study, ethics were considered in order to ensure that the interests of respondents were protected. Integrity, impartiality and respect for respondents were valued throughout the research. In order to protect the respondents' rights, the following ethical measures were adhered to (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 83).

All respondents gave verbal consent to participate in the study. In this study, written consent was not used because of the sensitive nature of the topic. The study was introduced and the researcher indicated the purpose of the study, the procedures that would be followed and the possible advantages of participating in the study, such as having their voices heard (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 85). Once the purpose of the study was explained and respondents understood the contents, they were required to give verbal consent to participate in the study.

Respondents were informed that their answers were important for the study, but they should keep in mind that participation in the study is voluntary. Respondents were informed of the use of a tape recorder in order to capture every word and recall conversations.

Respondents were assured of their confidentiality. Their identity was protected by making use of pseudonyms. Personal information such as their gender, employment, age and background was collected. The information gathered from respondents was only used for the purpose of the minor-dissertation. Respondent information was treated with respect, honesty and confidentiality at all times (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 95).

### **3.10 Strength and limitations of the research design**

A qualitative research approach elicited valuable data by bringing the researcher into the world of respondents of Alexandra. Close relationships with the research subject was made possible by face-to-face interviews. These interviews shed light not only on xenophobia but also on the experiences and perceptions of respondents. A qualitative approach was an advantage, because it allowed for interaction between the respondent and the researcher to take place in the natural setting of the respondents. The familiar environment allowed for respondents to be comfortable and share information freely. A referral method of recruitment made respondents less suspicious of taking part in the study. Seeing that the sampling method used was non-probability sampling, the researcher acknowledges that the findings cannot be generalised as representative of the views of Alexandra respondents as a whole.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter dealt with the research methodology that was used to conduct this study. The study investigated the views of Alexandra respondents towards black foreigners in accordance with the xenophobic attacks of May 2008, which was made possible by the use of qualitative methodology. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents to shed some light on xenophobia from their point of view. The way in which respondents were selected ensured that a deeper understanding of the May 2008 mayhem was achieved.

The twenty interviews conducted with both males and females allowed for gender comparisons to take place and the different age groups allowed for the views of different generations to be explored. Thematic data analysis made it possible for narratives to be linked between the data and the literature review. Ethics that the researcher carried out throughout the study permitted respondents to be treated with respect and dignity. The discussion to follow will consist of the findings of the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR:

### XENOPHOBIA IN THE TOWNSHIP OF ALEXANDRA: FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter findings derived from the twenty interviews will be presented. This chapter is concerned with how residents of Alexandra viewed the xenophobic attacks of May 2008. As an attempt to get a deeper understanding of residents' experiences and views, narratives were used to make the voices of residents heard. Voices of residents allow the reader to understand the events as they unfolded and to get a better understanding of why foreigners were attacked. The narratives will be presented as per the research design by following a chronological order of how events unfolded, the reasons behind the bloodshed and other factors that played a role leading to Alexandra turning into a pandemonium township.

#### 4.2 What triggered the attacks?

According to some of the respondents the xenophobic attacks of 11 May 2008 in their township started in the male hostels. The violence was sparked by an argument between a foreigner and his South African girlfriend. The foreigner stabbed his girlfriend to death and from that point onwards locals became involved and decided to attack foreigners.

*A foreigner was dating a South African lady. The foreigner saw the South African lady with another man and assumed that they were dating, which meant that this lady was cheating. The foreigner stabbed the South African lady to death and that is how the violence started (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

Mary (a 50-year-old female bystander) had a different opinion of what triggered the attacks.

*What I remember is that there were people clashing. The other one was a foreigner and the other one was a South African. The South African perpetuated the violence and encouraged residents of Alexandra to kill foreigners. Basically, it started at one shack where people were arguing and it spread everywhere.*

A contradiction of what started the attacks is implied in the statements above. Amos implied that the attack was started as a result of a foreigner stabbing a South African lady. Mary acknowledges the argument, but according to her the violence was started by a South African. Not all respondents agreed that the attacks were as a result of a clash. Reasons given for the attacks included lack of jobs, lack of houses and less popular, a political agenda. Eight respondents implied that black foreigners taking away jobs was a reason for the attacks. Seven respondents stated that foreigners take away jobs and thus they were attacked. Before the attacks there were rumours in the township of people chasing away foreigners because they were tired of foreigners, as they were perceived as stealing from them. Although these were long-term issues that respondents had, their frustrations contributed to the outbreak of the violence.

*It started because people were complaining about their jobs, houses and other stuff (Thandi, a 47-year-old female bystander).*

A different viewpoint is held by Samuel, a 38-year-old male observer. According to him the violence was started because Thabo Mbeki was still president. Tension erupted from that point. His view was supported by one other respondent.

*Alexandra residents did not want Mbeki to stay president, because he was not interested in what was happening in South Africa...people wanted Zuma to become president. That made people angry.*

The bystanders of the violence did not know where exactly the attacks started. The view that emerged strongly was that the attacks started at the hostels. Those who had knowledge indicated that the attacks started at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the male hostels. It was presumed that the attacks were started by Zulu-speaking people because the male hostels are dominated by Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters whose dominant language is Zulu. The attacks then spread to different areas of Alexandra.

*I think the attacks started from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. That is a place dominated by Inkatha people or IFP for short. The Zulu's were fighting foreigners (Matric, an 18-year-old female bystander).*



### 4.3 Movement of the mob: how did the events unfold?

According to respondents, after the killing of the South African woman by a foreigner, a mob of 200-300 people, mainly males, marched from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to different sections of the township on 11 May 2008. The crowd marched from 18h30 in the evening. Other people joined the mob as they marched along; they were singing and cheering. The songs they sang were about chasing away foreigners. The mob of people was holding weapons that were guaranteed to cause bodily harm such as sticks, shamboks, knives and guns. The group was described mainly as youth between the ages of 18 and 30 years. The mob was male dominated, but included some females. The mob was burning shacks and spaza shops, which they suspected belonged to foreigners.

*I saw a group of people running and holding weapons. The mob was singing that they do not want foreigners here. I just saw angry people holding spears, garden forks and other dangerous weapons. I could see that those people were prepared to go to war. The mob was a mixture of people...the young and old, those with beer bellies (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

*They were shouting these foreigners must go back, we don't need them anymore. We don't have jobs, they are the cheap labourers. They don't pay rent, electricity; they don't do nothing (John, a 30-year-old male perpetrator).*

The movement of the mob was described as follows:

*The police were behind us (local) shooting rubber bullets and teargas. We went to so many places. From Malboro we went to a place called Setswetla, because most of those people are there. From Setswetla we went to places where there were lots of dirty shacks, because that is where they stay (Hustler, a 30-year-old male perpetrator).*

*We first knocked and if a person refused to open for us, we kicked the door down. After that we threw their belongings outside. We mostly looted spaza shops at Sixteenth Avenue, because ninety nine % of them are owned by foreigners (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

As described by the perpetrators, the mob departed from the male hostels and marched to different areas in Alexandra. From that point they moved to Marlboro, because that is where most foreigners stay and then moved to RDP houses in Tsutsumani in an attempt to take out foreigners from the houses. The mob also marched to Setswetla.

*Yes, they went to Beirut and then they went to Marlboro. They went to RDP houses as well to evict people (Lesley, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

According to respondents, the crowd of attackers was organised by word of mouth.

*For example, I would talk to a friend of mine about my idea and he will be convinced. From that point he will recruit other people and we end up being a mob (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

Evidently the rumours turned into action. However, a few residents felt that the attacks were spontaneous and not pre-determined.

*No, this just happened out of nowhere. People did not sit down to discuss (Mariah, a 46-year-old female bystander).*

#### 4.4 **Reasons for joining the mob: spontaneous versus planned**

The mobilisation of respondents was driven by a common goal of chasing away foreigners. In some instances it was the constant discussion, which people were having about foreigners that made people unite. Lucas (a 19-year-old male bystander) said:

*I think it was an individual's plan and that individual was able to influence other people. For example, if I tell you that if we attack foreigners we will benefit in certain ways, people will be convinced by that and make it happen.*

Individuals who joined the mob as perpetrators as they were moving in different sections of Alexandra had an idea that the attacks started in the male hostels but did not know who organised them. Those individuals were part of the mob because they too wanted foreigners to go.

There were also rumours of a third force being responsible for organising the attacks, but evidence to support this was not found (Misago *et al*, 2009: 32). Although it is unknown who was responsible for organising the attacks, the majority of respondents felt that the attacks were organised and were not spontaneous. In order to lodge an attack against an individual or a group, it is important to know how to identify your target.

#### 4.5 Identity of foreigners

During the attacks the physical appearances of the foreigners were used as identifying criteria. The distinct dark complexion of foreigners dominated their identity.

##### 4.5.1 Too dark to belong

A misleading characteristic of identifying foreigners is their dark complexion. *They have a darker skin than us* (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).

This characteristic was tested during the attacks whereby some South African respondents were attacked because of misidentification. South African respondents who were from the Shangaan, Venda and Pedi ethnic groups suffered the consequences of misidentification. A few respondents provided reasons for some South Africans being the victims of the attacks.

*There were South Africans who were beaten up. I saw them at the police station. They were Venda speaking and Shangaan. I think they were attacked because of mistaken identity, because they are dark in complexion, especially Venda-speaking people. Another thing is that there are places here in Alexandra where is it mostly foreigners who stay there, so when locals started attacking in those areas they shot everyone* (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).

Sello and Mariah supported the statement:

*I heard there were South Africans who were attacked. The mob convinced each other that a foreigner is someone who is dark in complexion and cannot understand or speak a South African language. This is the criteria they used to attack foreigners and that is the reason some locals were attacked* (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).

*For example, there was this other Pedi lady who was told to go back to her father Mugabe because things are fine in Zimbabwe. Just because the lady was dark in complexion she was mistaken for a foreigner and those were the types of locals who were beaten. You cannot rely on complexion because it will mislead you (Mariah a 46-year-old bystander).*

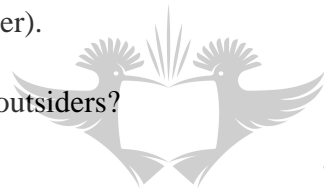
Respondents felt that the attacks became compromised because of identity confusion.

*The mob could no longer tell which individual was a South African and which one was a foreigner, because it was chaotic (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

Conversely, misidentification was not the only explanation for South Africans being attacked but self-defence also played a part.

*It was impossible for South Africans not to be attacked, because foreigners did not allow to be attacked without defending themselves. That will never happen (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

#### 4.5.2 “Unique” to outsiders?



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Another “unique” feature is their style of clothing. According to respondents foreigners like brightly coloured clothes.

*They do not dress the same way we do. They like bright coloured clothes (Matric, an 18-year-old female bystander).*

It could be that bright coloured outfits are part of their culture and not necessarily something they chose for themselves. Most respondents felt that the unpleasant odour of foreigners, especially in males could also be used to identify them.

*...Especially male foreigners, because their armpits smell. You will not sleep with a male foreigner in the same room, ooh they smell bad (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

Sello (a 23-year old male bystander) stated:

*Some of them have smelly armpits. If you come close to them you will faint. Even their attires, especially the colours they wear, they love bright colours.*

A distinct feature of Nigerians was highlighted by Mary (a 50-year old female bystander):

*But Nigerians you can identify them by the shape of their heads, because they are flat at the back.*

This respondent was amused by this feature. However, not all respondents felt it was possible to identify foreigners because most of them have adapted to the South African way of doing things. For example:

*Most of them you will not be able to identify, because they have adopted the South African lifestyle* (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).

This referred to their hairstyles and the clothes they wear. Despite all efforts of blending in with South African culture you can still identify them. This was indicated by one of the perpetrators.

*Even if they put on make-up you can still see that they are foreigners* (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).

#### 4.5.3 Language

*Even their language and accent is different from ours. You cannot understand their language. You just see them* (Thabo, a 27-year-old male bystander).

Foreigners come from other parts of Africa and for that reason their language and accent is different from the locals. Language was seen as an unreliable feature because other foreigners can speak some vernacular languages such as IsiZulu and Setswana. One respondent gave an example about their friend:

*But others, such as my friend Susan, it is difficult because she knows African languages* (Mary, a 50-year-old female bystander).

Failure to speak a South African language proved to be challenging. For example:

*Guys that are from the rural areas are a bit darker, because it is hot in those places...sometimes they would ask you questions in a South African language, maybe IsiZulu and if you respond in any other language that is not South African they will know you are not from around here (Sipho, a 22-year-old male bystander).*

Jacob gave an example of how language can be misleading when trying to determine the origin of people.

*The only foreigners I can identify as non-South Africans are those from western countries, such as Ghana, because of their physical appearance and dress code. Even the way they speak helps me identify them. For example, a language from Zimbabwe has a bit of Ndebele in it, a language from Mozambique has Shangaan in it and, therefore, it will be difficult to differentiate on language sometimes.*

A significant statement was made by Molapo and Ngubeni (2011: 94) in relation to language. According to them the ability to speak a language that is common in an area can determine who is to be included and who is to be excluded. In an area such as Alexandra IsiZulu is a common spoken language and not being able to speak the language automatically marked people as foreigners. The determining factor of being a South African was strongly influenced by language. A second point made was that of citizenship. Citizenship is not about having a piece of paper that grants you civic rights and a document that validates those rights. Instead “it is something that one has because one belongs to a group whose narrative of origins traces itself to somewhere within the borders of South Africa” (Molapo and Ngubeni, 2011: 94). Respondents of Alexandra used language and skin pigmentation to identify their victims. This indicates that ethnicity was more important than citizenship. Perpetrators of the violence saw the attacks as a self-benefiting opportunity.

#### 4.6 **Criminal elements of the violence**

*We marched to places where foreigners were staying and some people were taking some items, especially expensive ones like computers and music system, TV's, jewellery, whatever it is important (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

Respondents agreed that the attacks fuelled criminal activities. Some people stole things that they did not have by looting spaza shops and foreigners' homes. Lesley, (a 22-year-old male bystander) stated:

*The very same guys the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans were running away whilst our local guys were looting in their houses. The spotlight is on us now, because we create this situation so that we can go and steal and start blaming these guys [foreigners] for something that is not there and then we go and chase them out of their house so that we can steal from them. The mission was to chase those guys away, but now we are stealing from them.*

Evidence suggested that the youth were responsible for the looting. Martin (a 42-year-old male bystander) supported this:

*The youth of Alexandra is mischievous and they were the ones running around committing criminal activities...they looted spaza shops and took things like sweets and other things.*

It is implied that the youth was responsible for the violence, but they are not the only ones to be held liable. The area where the violence started seems to have promoted looting among the youth. Older people promoted criminal thoughts among the youth and the youth accepted the opportunity.

*I can blame the looting on the area where the violence started, because it promoted crime amongst the youth. Even though the rumours were amongst the youth the older people encouraged the youth to be in the forefront of the attacks (Martin, a 42-year-old male bystander).*

Follow was a 21-year-old female. She was a perpetrator in the attacks. Her age indicates the point that the youth was among the mob.

*...after that we threw their belongings outside. I took whatever I needed and took them to my house, especially food (laughing).*

Another example of criminal activities was given by Sticks (a 23-year-old male bystander):

*They did have an element of criminality, because if you kick out a foreigner from their home you will take away their things. It now becomes our property, because he/she is going back to their country. We simply take their belongings and sell it. While beating him up we are searching his pockets for money, cell phones, anything you can find.*

However, one respondent disagreed that the attacks had an element of criminality. Mantwa (a 46-year-old female) was a perpetrator and, therefore, it wasn't surprising for her to dispute that the attacks were a form of criminality.

*I don't believe that the locals stole from them, why did they not press charges? Why did they not go to the police and report what was stolen from them? They just speak about it but did not take any action. I don't understand what belongings they were claiming to be stolen, because when they were sleeping at the police station they had their belongings with them (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The violence was seen as an opportunity by respondents who were part of the mob. Perpetrators saw a chance to acquire assets such as money and cell phones. With that said, Mantwa felt that there was no criminal activity involved. She claimed that foreigners who said their belongings were stolen were not telling the truth.

#### **4.7 Response to the attacks**

The respondents in the study responded to the attacks differently. Four emotions were identified: fear, happiness, indifference and ambiguity. Most respondents were made aware of the attacks through the noise coming from the streets. Other respondents were aware of the attacks because they were walking on the streets where the mob was marching. The sight of the mob instilled fear in all the respondents of Alexandra, including South African respondents.

*We were afraid as well even though we are South Africans, because these people might come to you and look at you and think you are a Zimbabwean. Some judge you with your face and skin colour/complexion (Sticks, a 23-year-old male bystander).*



*I was very scared and not feeling safe at all. When you see people running around you automatically feel uneasy, especially when you don't know what is going on (Maggie, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

One of the respondents was very scared, not because of any of the above-mentioned reasons but because of something closer to home. This particular individual was renting out their back room to foreigners and to avoid being attacked by the mob they pretended not to like foreigners.

*I joined the mob, because they suspected I was renting out my two rooms to foreigners. I was supposed to join them, because I was scared I would be received as one of those foreigners and that is why I joined them. They were standing by the gate shouting 'we need those foreigners come out'...we are not foreigners, we too are looking for them (John, a 30-year-old male perpetrator).*

Respondents reacted differently to the noise of the mob. Some respondents were scared and decided to stay away from the violence, while other respondents were happy about the attacks because they shared the same goals as the mob. Follow (a Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator) expressed her happiness as follows:

*I was in the house and heard people screaming and running on the streets. That is when I went outside and decided to join the mob. I didn't know where they were coming from but I knew they were fighting foreigners...I was very happy when the attacks took place because I want foreigners gone!*

Sello (a 23-year-old male bystander) had indifferent feelings about the attacks.

*From my side I don't care if foreigners stay here or not. They do not affect my life in any way. For me it is all the same.*

For other respondents, feelings towards the attacks were ambiguous. Sticks (a 23-year-old male bystander) had conflicting feelings about the attacks and was at a crossroad.

*I was hurt and wanted to help them as well but I couldn't. I'm a South African and South African citizens feel that outside people take their jobs...*

Although one respondent was sympathetic towards foreigners, they had to choose between supporting foreigners or South Africans and in this instance they chose South Africans.

This respondent had to choose to support South Africans because he feared for his life. If he (John, the 30-year-old male perpetrator) decided to help foreigners he felt sympathetic toward, he could have risked being attacked himself.

*There was this lady that I saw, maybe she was hit with a brick in the head and she was bleeding...crying and screaming. The way they acted was very bad, it was bad, bad* (John, a 30-year-old male perpetrator).

These two respondents were against xenophobic attacks, but as South Africans it was important for them to support the actions carried out by their fellow citizens, no matter how uncomfortable it was for them.

#### 4.8 Aftermath of the violence

The attacks interrupted the lives of foreigners, because many of them lost their homes. Alternative arrangements had to be made to provide temporary shelter for them. Foreigners sought refuge at the police station in 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

*I also saw foreigners running towards 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue at the police station where they were given refuge where tents were put up and they were fed.* (Maggie, a 50-year-old female bystander).

Mantwa (a 46-year-old female perpetrator) was angry about government's action to give a place of safety to foreigners.

*When we attack them the government gives them refuge at the police station and put up tents for them. With whose money? They gave them food. With whose money? Did it come from Maputo? Never! They must go back home and vote. The Zimbabwean government issued buses to South Africa during the time of the attacks to encourage Zimbabweans to go back home, but they chose to stay...those buses went back to Zimbabwe half empty.*

One respondent was puzzled about the decision that most foreigners took to continue staying in the country after the attacks. They felt that they had been given notice and, therefore, those who chose to stay should be prepared for the consequences. She stated:

*They are aware of the rumours but they chose to stay. They think that we did not give them notice...if they don't take their stuff and leave, when we start attacking them we will beat them up. We will beat them up and dead bodies are going to be visible (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The mood before, during and after the attacks was not the same for all respondents. Before the attacks, the mood in the township did not change but the mood changed during the attacks. As Mariah, (a 46-year-old female bystander) pointed out:

*People's moods during the attacks were different. Other people were not happy and other people were delighted, because they found an opportunity to loot.*

For some respondents on the day of the attacks it was hectic, because people were scared.

*Foreigners knew they had to leave after those attacks. They were no longer comfortable staying around respondents of Alexandra (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

Things came to a standstill for the majority of respondents. Shops were closed, education was disrupted, roads were blocked and stalls were empty.

*People did not even attend school. Taxis were blocked on the road and so many people could not go to work, everything came to a standstill on that day (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

Some respondents were not comfortable with the attacks and were sympathetic towards foreigners. Those respondents felt that foreigners are human beings and should be treated fairly.

*I was very hurt by those attacks, because we live with foreigners in the same place. So why do people want them to go away, why do they want them to go? We must live together as one family. That thing was not nice for me at all (Thabo, a 27-year-old male bystander).*

A majority of the respondents were not happy with the attacks, because they felt that people should not be treated like that. Some respondents were happy that the attacks took place. They were not necessarily against foreigners being chased away, but they had a problem with the manner in which it was done. They condemned the actions towards foreigners by justifying that foreign countries gave aid to South Africa during the apartheid era and, therefore, they deserve to be treated well.

*I am not disputing that they are foreigners, but to kill them like that was inhuman. Imagine if that was your own mother being killed like that, how would you feel? If people want them to go then let them go, but they shouldn't be killed (Mariah, a 46-year-old female bystander).*

One resident was concerned about the effect that the attacks would have on countries abroad. In particular, they were worried about their safety if they were required to travel to other countries in their line of work.

*I was not okay with the situation, because we travel a lot and I was thinking that if I have to travel to Zimbabwe and when I get there I receive the same treatment we give to foreigners here in South Africa? (Sipho, a 22-year-old male bystander).*

This concern was supported by one resident.

*I was not comfortable with the attacks, because if I leave today and cross the border I will be called a foreigner and be treated badly. As an individual you will not stand for that kind of treatment (Lucas, a 19-year-old male bystander).*

The issue that comes across here is where individuals who were employed were the ones that were concerned about their future safety should they be required to travel abroad due to work. Their concern was mainly situated in the neighbouring countries, because those are the people who are ill-treated by South African citizens.

#### 4.9 **How was the violence justified?**

Respondents of the study blamed several factors for the attacks taking place such as overcrowding of foreigners, housing, unemployment, entrepreneurship and crime.

#### 4.9.1 Overcrowding of foreigners

*...we are overcrowded because of them; they occupy most of our land and are everywhere. Where they come from they have open space and live in a clean country. If you step out of the gate you will see how filthy it is because of them (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The increasing number of foreigners staying in Alexandra has made respondents feel that foreigners are taking over their space, the space they should be utilising for building houses.

*There are too many foreigners in Alexandra. They even build houses here and others own houses. Even our yard, we have too many foreigners living with us. If I had to compare their numbers I would say they are as many as South Africans. When you look left you see a foreigner, when you look right you see a foreigner, they are too much (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

One respondent strongly felt that foreigners in the township occupy inappropriate spaces, such as pavements.

*When you walk down the street there is no space, because foreigners put washing lines on the streets and build their shacks on the pavement, where are we supposed to walk? (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The visibility of foreigners in Alexandra made respondents angry. The large number of foreigners in the township contributed to xenophobic attacks.

*There's so much anger within the respondents of Alexandra about stuff that is going on. So, xenophobic attacks was an open mind and eyes for people about how they feel about this whole thing, so they started to talk about things they don't like about these guys (Lesley, a 22-year-old male bystander).*

#### 4.9.2 Housing

Respondents of Alexandra alleged that housing was amongst the contributors for the attacks. As indicated in the literature, the government built houses as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. These houses built by government are commonly known as RDP houses. Among the twenty interviews, two of the respondents stayed in shacks, two of the respondents stayed in big houses, three stayed in hostels and the remaining thirteen stayed in two-room houses. A shack refers to a small building usually made of wood or metal that has not been built well (Oxford Dictionary, 2005: 1340). A big house refers to a house built with bricks, which usually has sufficient space.

A two-room house is an open house with a separate kitchen and bedroom. With the exception of the two respondents who occupied big houses, the rest of the respondents had applied for RDP houses. Respondents indicated that they applied for RDP houses a long time ago and in some cases, their parents applied for houses. None of the RDP applicants had received their houses.

*We applied for houses and took our application form to Eighth Avenue. Up to today we do not know what happened to those application forms, because we are not getting houses. The government told us that they are building houses for respondents of Alexandra and they did. The problem is that those houses are occupied, but not by us (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

*They also take away our houses...all respondents of Alexandra applied for houses, including myself and none of us have a house today (Mariah, a 46-year-old female bystander).*

Respondents were concerned that they are staying in shacks and small houses and yet the government promised them a better life. The majority of the respondents applied for RDP houses as early as 1996.

*I stay in a shack at the moment and since I applied for an RDP house in 1996 (Jacob, a 42-year-old male bystander).*

The living conditions of respondents were seen as unfair. The houses were small and lacked privacy. Respondents suspected that the houses built by government in extension seven were occupied, but seldom by Alexandra respondents. The occupants of houses were either people from other townships or foreigners as implied by respondents. This was a major problem for respondents, because they have been waiting for houses for many years. The majority of the respondents indicated that they know of foreigners occupying an RDP house and some were willing to point them out. However respondents did not indicate the number of foreigners owning RDP houses

*I can even go with you now to show you those foreigners occupying RDP houses (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

A similar view was shared by Follow (a 21-year-old female perpetrator) who stated:

*I know a lot. I want them to move out so that we can move in.*

Mariah (a 46-year old female bystander) provided evidence of knowing a foreigner who was occupying an RDP house.

*I used to work with this other foreigner who was a security guard at our company. I met him at Pan Africa (shopping mall) and asked him what he is doing in Alexandra. He told me that he is staying here at Tsutsumani. I asked him how he got to stay at Tsutsumani but he didn't tell me. I couldn't understand that because I'm also staying in Alexandra, but I do not own a house. He was a security guard when he first came into the country and now he owns a house. How did that happen?*

The criteria of people who are eligible to own an RDP house indicates that foreigners do not qualify for these houses. But foreigners manage to own RDP houses.

*We see houses being occupied and most of them are occupied by foreigners. I heard foreigners buy those houses, because they can afford them (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The buying of houses from officials was supported by another resident.

*Money talks baby. Money talks, my God. They give the officials the money (Sticks, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

These views indicate that foreigners own RDP houses through corruption, but not all respondents agree that foreigners are to be blamed for this corruption as per popular belief.

*When it comes to RDP houses you cannot blame foreigners, but rather we should blame South African citizens who are in charge of those houses because they sell them to foreigners. Firstly, why do officials allow for a house to be sold? Foreigners do not work inside office and they do not know our budget (Jacob, a 42-year-old male bystander).*

Another resident blamed the South African officials.

*We were told that they were building RDP houses in Tsutsumami and before people could move in some people would breach the security and get keys to those houses before South Africans can move in. It is the people who have access to those houses like those who have tenders to build these houses (Matric, an 18-year-old female bystander).*

This shows indictment on the state and its ability to deliver. This view was supported by another resident.

*But I can't really blame the government, but rather I blame the people who accept bribes. For example, you would tell someone who is in charge of housing that you want a house and they will ask how much do you have? In that case it is not the government at fault. People who are in charge of houses will simply give you a new house number and a key to your new home (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

However, the belief of foreigners owning RDP houses is disputed by Sticks (a 23-year-old male bystander). According to him RDP houses are occupied by South African citizens, but not necessarily residents of Alexandra.

*From what I heard those houses built are occupied by people from other townships and not respondents of Alexandra. There was a fight last week where respondents of*



*Alexandra were trying to get rid of people occupying those houses who are from different townships.*

Samuel (a 38-year-old male bystander) explained:

*According to my knowledge they only give you a house if you can buy it.*

To provide evidence for the selling of houses, Mary (a 50-year-old female bystander) gave an example:

*Do you know that there was a lady who was selling houses? The flat was about R2 000 and the RDP house was R3 000. Just because she has access to those houses, as she was working there. How can you sell those houses, because people have been waiting for them for so many years?*

The statement above implies that corruption is evident in the housing sector. Individuals who are able to afford buying houses do so. It also supports a statement made by one of the respondents that people who have access to houses have an opportunity to sell them.

Not all respondents agreed that foreigners can take away houses. In fact, others believe it is impossible. For example, Thabo (a 27-year-old male bystander) said:

*I also don't believe that foreigners take away our houses, because we just sit down and do not make a plan to get a house and then we go and blame foreigners. How come? No one can take away anything from you or unless you are just sitting.*

It appears that housing is a problem in Alexandra and although the government promised housing for all, it is difficult to provide for all the respondents. One resident in particular dismissed the notion of government providing housing for all.

*People must build their own houses in order to save government's money. I applied for a house a long time ago, but later realised that I cannot wait for the government to provide me with a house, and that is when I decided to build my own house (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

The provision of houses by government for all the people was not commonly shared. Respondents like Thabo believed that other people cannot take houses away from you unless you are active.

In essence, people should make provisions for themselves. A good example of active participation is Amos. He realised the pressure on government in providing houses and took his own initiative and built a house.

#### 4.9.3 Unemployment

The violence was also justified by foreigners taking away the locals jobs. The working status of respondents was as follows: eight respondents were full-time employees, four respondents were unemployed, and the remaining eight were self-employed, part-time workers and students (refer to appendix B for employment status of respondents). The four unemployed respondents blamed foreigners for taking their jobs by accepting lower wages. Mantwa (a 46-year-old female perpetrator) explained:

*When you are looking for a job you do not find it because of them. When foreigners seek employment they do not mind working for R20 and I mind working for R20 because it will not do anything for me.*

*They don't care if they get paid R20 a day and R100 a month...for me it is useless to try and support my family with R100, because I won't survive. That is why white employers do not want to employ locals, because they are scared to pay us.*

Locals often have to compete with foreigners for employment, especially in the construction and domestic work sector. It was indicated that foreigners are favoured by most employers because they are willing to do any job for low wages. The competition for jobs creates tension. Some foreigners live a comfortable life whereas some South Africans are struggling to survive. One of the respondents pointed out that as a result of their comfortable lifestyles they even have their own song, which goes like this:

*We come from far and find South Africans here, but we live better than they do (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

The above statements are inconsistent. On the one hand foreigners are seen as working for low wages.

This shows that the money they receive from their employers is not a lot. On the other hand, foreigners are viewed as living luxury lifestyles. The type of lifestyle that a person leads must be on par with the wages they receive.

Mantwa (a 46- year-old female perpetrator) was not happy about foreigners getting employment and stated:

*Being employed comes with a comfortable life. That is the reason they have their own song, which implies that we South Africans are stupid.*

A justification of using cheap labour provided by foreigners was given by Lesley (a 22-year-old male bystander).

*Subcontractors, which are Alex based, will always go for cheap labour and it is always easy to find cheap labour from foreigners that are not registered, because you can trick them from what that they need to be paid or you don't pay them at all, because you don't pay UIF and they are not registered...they are willing to work overtime, throughout the night, on weekends and public holidays.*

This respondent blamed the culture of entitlement among South Africans, because they feel like they are entitled to benefit from any project in the township and, therefore, they have the right to be hired for that project. Respondents argue that foreigners are favoured by employers because of their willingness to work the extra shifts when necessary.

What was interesting was that not all respondents agree that foreigners take away their jobs, but it is worth mentioning that this was expressed by employed individuals.

*We are lazy because when foreigners leave their country to come here, they will make means of surviving. Other foreigners survive by selling on street corners whereas you as a South African you will not because you will be thinking of what other guys are going to say about you (Lucas, a 19-year-old male bystander).*

South Africans are selective in terms of the jobs they are willing to do. Pride interferes with finding a job; this was indicated by Siphoh (a 22-year-old male bystander).

*What kills black people in South Africa is pride. Black foreigners do not have pride like we do. For example, you can give them female underwear to sell on the streets of Johannesburg and they will sell them. We as South Africans, you will not be caught selling female underwear.*

From the above statement it seems that pride and lack of entrepreneurship exist within South African respondents. Job opportunities are available, but the job description deters people from being employed. The pride of South Africans was supported by Sticks (a 23-year-old male bystander).

*No one can take another person's job. It is plain laziness. Would you go and sell tomatoes on the street corner? I don't think you can, because people have pride.*

Amos (a 50-year-old male bystander) felt that South Africans cannot find jobs, not because of pride but because they lack skills and qualifications. He explained:

*Another thing that is killing South Africans is lack of knowledge and qualifications. Many South Africans complain that foreigners take their job, but some South Africans do not have the knowledge of that job that a foreigner has...we might apply for one job, all of us in this yard and they can only select about three people. The rest of the people will be sent away because they do not have qualifications. That is what happens with foreigners and the locals say those people take away our jobs.*

#### 4.9.4 Entrepreneurship

Two respondents among the interviews were entrepreneurs. Maggie and Amos own spaza shops. Maggie's business is her only source of income because she is self-employed, whereas Amos is working on a full-time basis and his business is a form of extra income. Both entrepreneurs run their business from home but their views on the well-being of their business differed.

*Another reason for the attacks is because foreigners affect our business. Their businesses flourish whereas ours are not flourishing (Maggie, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

Maggie felt that foreigners interfere and have a negative impact on her business. According to her, the competition from foreigners is making business owners close shop.

The cheap prices that foreigners sell their stock for make it difficult for people to buy from South Africans, because of high prices. Amos was asked if there is anything that is affecting his business and he responded as follows:

*It's the nature of every business. Sometimes the business flourishes and sometimes it's slow. As a business owner it's a risk you must accept. I know that many shop owners in the township like to point fingers at foreigners for their business going slow, but that is not fair. It has a lot to do with people's preference (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

For Amos, his pace of business was not necessarily as a result of foreigners in the area. He acknowledged that business has ups and downs.

Different explanations were provided for foreigners' businesses flourishing. The first explanation offered was acceptance of credit by South Africans. As said by Siphon:

*If you open a business all your friends will ask you for credit the entire time and such things make the business bankrupt, because they will never pay you back. Today Siphon comes to you asking for credit on a cigarette. Tomorrow Mandla comes to you asking for credit on a cigarette. Before you know it your box of cigarettes will be finished without you having sold one cigarette (Siphon, a 22-year-old male bystander).*

South African business owners give credit to people they know. This has a negative impact on their business. Business owners do not make any profit from their stock, but rather run at a loss. Respondents believed that the success of their business is as a result of witchcraft and not good business skills. Such beliefs could be perpetuated by the perception that the strongest or most effective muti can be found in African countries. When people want to bewitch you, they are advised to go to a traditional healer who is not of South African origin. The degree of May 2008 attacks highlighted that changes must have taken place in South Africa to result in what was witnessed.

*I think foreigners use muti/traditional medicine, because if I open a spaza shop next to a foreigner's spaza shop then people will not buy at my spaza shop. You will see everyone*

*buying at a foreigner's spaza shop only, which means they are using Muti to attract people (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

In order for individuals to look for employment, Sello (a 23-year-old male bystander) stated that people must actively look for a job and they will find one. Job seeking needs to be constant. He stated:

*When you are looking for a job you must actively look for a job because there are people saying that foreigners take away jobs but they have never looked for a job. They just sit here day in and day out complaining. What jobs are they[South Africans] referring to? When you look for a job you must do so more than once. You cannot look for a job once and then say you cannot find a job.*

This might imply that there are people who are not actively seeking employment but, they still blame foreigners for not finding a job.

#### 4.9.5 Crime

According to an SAMP study (2008), people's association of migrants with crime intensified from 45% to 67% in 2006.

This suggests that South Africans see foreigners as criminals. However, South Africans are the major culprits of crime as suggested by Landau *et al* (2005) and the HSRC report (2008), but often foreigners are labelled as criminals. This was one of the factors that contributed to the xenophobic attacks. Often foreigners are accused of committing crimes such as mugging, rape and house robbery. Lesley (a 22-year-old male bystander) explained:

*...here in Alexandra you cannot walk alone, you'll get mugged or raped...and the suspects are foreigners, because we as respondents of Alexandra know each other.*

The crime committed by foreigners was blamed on their undocumented status because most of them are untraceable.

*The problem is that foreigners commit crime in South Africa and then they go back to their own country so that we never find them, and they don't have ID's so how can you find them?* (Lesley, a 22-year-old male bystander).

South African citizens commit crime but they are not difficult to trace because they have identity documentation. Mariah touched on the issue of crime when asked about changes that took place in Alexandra and she stated:

*This place used to be rough (violent). I remember there was a time I was working at Roodepoort and people used to be killed in the mornings when they were going to work and in the evening when coming back from work. It used to be violent, but now it is better.*

Respondents in the study are not denying that South Africans who stay in the township commit crime, but they argue that most of this crime is committed by foreigners, especially Zimbabweans. Even though respondents agree that black foreigners are criminals they realise that white foreigners also commit crime. According to Amos (a 50-year-old male bystander):

*White foreigners also commit crime, but they are discrete about it.*

Crime is not limited to race, but the degree in which it is committed differs. White foreigners also commit crime, but it is not as visible as crime committed by black foreigners. What emerges is that the crime rate in Alexandra used to be high before there was an increase in the number of foreigners. Thus blaming foreigners for crime is not justifiable.

*Another issue, which is not true, is that foreigners commit crime. Ever since I lived in Alexandra this place has always had crime...every place has crime and Alexandra is no different. You cannot blame foreigners for crime, because those who commit crime must be arrested; it is the same with me, because if I commit crime I will be arrested. They are no different from us, because not all of us make an honest living. Some of us steal for a living and others work for a living. You cannot differentiate between good and bad outsiders, because we do crime the same* (Jacob, a 42-year-old male bystander).

The justification of xenophobic attacks according to respondents of Alexandra can be summarised by four factors: lack of housing, unemployment, crime and overcrowding of

foreigners. The argument is that the attacks happened because of foreigners taking jobs, houses and other services away from South African residents of Alexandra.

#### 4.10 Feelings towards foreigners

Respondents in the study had different feelings towards foreigners.

##### 4.10.1 General views

In assessing feelings towards foreigners, respondents in general claimed they did not have a problem with foreigners. Looking at the previous comments made about foreigners, there is a contradiction in their statement. However, general feelings towards foreigners were based on a general view of foreigners and not specific experiences with individual foreigners. Some of them pointed out that they work with foreigners and they are comfortable working with them side by side.

*I take them like any other person because we are all foreigners in Egoli. This is a home to no one. We have taken Egoli and made it our home. I don't have a problem with foreigners at all, because I work with a guy by the name of Marco and he is my friend, he is also a foreigner (Lucas, a 19-year-old male bystander).*

Contrary to this there were respondents who were not comfortable with foreigners and felt that the foreigners have ownership or control over them.

*I don't like them; I just want them to go so that we can own our country (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

The hatred of foreigners also comes across strongly in the way that respondents speak about foreigners and how they have affected their space. Negative attitudes are expressed in words such as *too much*. For Mantwa and Follow, allowing foreigners into South Africa has had implications on the population.

The flooding of foreigners has being blamed on Nelson Mandela, because he married a foreign lady and, therefore, opened the gates for our brothers and sisters from neighbouring countries.



*Mandela brought all these problems; he brought all the foreigners here, because his wife is a foreigner. I think Mandela is a problem, he is the one we should hang (Sticks, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

Mantwa (a 46-year-old female perpetrator) disagreed and stated:

*I can't really blame our former president Mandela because he married a foreign lady. When Mandela married, foreigners were already in the country. I think that when we achieved democracy in our country that is when we started having problems with foreigners.*

In contradiction to the statement made, Mantwa (a 46-year-old female perpetrator) further explained:

*After Mandela got married that is where we started to have too many foreigners flocking in our country.*

There was a sense that foreigners like to take over participants' space, jobs and houses. This rendered some respondents unhappy. As people who are coming from a foreign nation, they have no right to take over a country that is not theirs. For other respondents, a sense of ownership by foreigners was not a problem, but mischievous behaviour was an issue. Such behaviour is when foreigners cross the borders illegally, as stated by Sello (a 23-year-old male bystander):

*I think they are okay, but I have a problem with those foreigners who are mischievous. The problem is that they do wrong against other people knowing that they cannot be traced, especially those who are undocumented into the country.*

For Jacob (a 42-year-old male bystander), foreigners have a positive impact on the country's economy and they used the FIFA World Cup of 2010 as an illustration.

*We had so many foreigners during the World Cup and if we didn't like foreigners...if you look at those foreigners, they were good for the economy because they were investing in our country. Foreigners bring improvement.*

The above statement illustrates the tolerance of certain foreigners by South Africans. Jacob felt that foreigners were good for South Africa's economy because of the investment they made.

When they came into the country during the World Cup, they contributed to improving the country's economy.

#### 4.10.2 Black versus white

In establishing a better understanding of the respondents of Alexandra's feelings towards foreigners, a comparison between white and black foreigners was made. One resident in general does not have a problem with foreigners but has a problem with them when they start taking away jobs, houses and committing crime. She elaborated:

*If they come in peace I would not have a problem with them, but because of the above-mentioned (crime, jobs and houses) I don't want them. I will prefer it if they just go back where they come from (Thandi, a 47-year-old female bystander).*

When asked about white foreigners, Thandi felt that white foreigners are not any different from black foreigners, but because respondents do not share space with white foreigners they are often overlooked. Her statement was supported by Martin (a 42-year-old male bystander).

*They are just as bad as black foreigners because they also take our jobs. It is just that with white foreigners we cannot justify, because they are not staying with us in the townships. We do not stay with white foreigners in the townships and, therefore, cannot complain much about them.*

What surfaced was that respondents had a problem with illegal or undocumented foreigners because they believe that they are the ones who are ruining the country.

Respondents believed black foreigners did not come into the country to further their education or work as professionals and, therefore, they are forced to create ways of surviving, which often lead them to resort to crime. It is more likely for black foreigners to be labelled as illegal as opposed to white foreigners, because there is a perception that only black foreigners come into the country illegally. Sipho (a 22-year-old male bystander) supported this perception:

*I think most white foreigners come into our country by law. Most of them are here for economic reasons, such as creating jobs for South Africans and giving them opportunities. White foreigners are okay because they abide by the law.*

The assumption that white foreigners are entering the country legally protected them from being victims of xenophobia. White foreigners were regarded as people who created job opportunities for South Africans. They are law abiding citizens. There was a sense that Alexandra respondents were xenophobic towards black foreigners only, but some respondents strongly felt that all foreigners should go back to their country regardless of their race.

*I don't want them at all. They must all go, black or white they must go to their countries, especially white foreigners because they are greedy and stingy. So far, if you are employed by an Indian, those people do not pay. Even if you work for them at their homes they still do not pay you. Working in an Indian house is even worse, because they give you too much work to do but the amount you are getting is not worth the work (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

During apartheid neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe helped South Africa by offering refuge to individuals who were in exile.

*I think we should stay with foreigners, because they are the people who offered us aid when we were fighting for democracy (Samuel, a 38-year-old male bystander).*

According to literature on the attacks of May 2008, the outbreak was termed xenophobia and that was the reason why foreigners were being chased away. But one respondent disagreed that xenophobia was the reason for the attacks.

*I still maintain it's not about the fear or hatred of the next African brother or woman, so it is just fear of us being unskilled and not having the necessary resources to be able to raise our kids and sustain our livelihoods and I think that was the fear (Lesley, a 22-year-old male bystander).*

## 4.11 The South African government in the spotlight

### 4.11.1 Perceptions of government

The people of South Africa voted for the current government in order to have their needs met by the government. The government is responsible for performing certain obligations such as providing basic needs of South African citizens.

The majority of Alexandra respondents with the exception of one or two respondents felt that the government had let them down by not stepping up to the plate. How people felt about the current government was indicated by four major themes being discussed, namely service delivery, false promises, self-benefiting and corruption.

*Oh that one. I think it delivers poor service for me. I see that a few people benefit from government, but I do not benefit anything. I never depended on[ the] government to begin with, but I think that for some people it is really poor* (Matric, an 18-year-old female bystander). Lucas (a 19-year-old male bystander) also echoed government's lack of service delivery.

*Our government will never change, because nothing has changed. When it is time to vote, our government bribes us to vote for them but there are no changes. They will talk about all these things that need to change, but they never deliver.*

The provision of housing was a major concern for respondents.

*For example, my mother applied for an RDP house ages ago but she is still waiting for a house. She's been on the waiting list for a long time. She is not the only one. I know other families who applied for RDP houses and they still do not have them* (Lesley, a 22-year-old male bystander).

Thabo (a 27-year-old male bystander) indicated that he too is not satisfied with service delivery.

*I'm not satisfied. There are so many people living in shacks from a long time ago, but the government is issuing houses and people are not getting them.*

The question remains: if people had houses, jobs and other resources mentioned would the attacks still have happened? About 15 out of 20 respondents felt that the attacks wouldn't have happened if all those things were put into place. What caused the attacks was lack of services and competition among foreigners and locals.

*I don't think the attacks would have happened, because there would be no reason for them to take place. If you have a job, a house and there is no crime, then you are fine. I think people would tolerate foreigners (Sticks, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

Another respondent supported the above:

*I don't think the attacks would have happened, because if I have a house and job then there won't be a need for them. Now we are poor. We live in shacks and some of us share one room with many people. That is not a life! Are we going to die in shacks? (Thabo, a 27-year-old male bystander).*

Mantwa (the 46-year-old female perpetrator) disputed this and felt that even if the government provided them with houses, jobs and health care services the attacks would still take place. For her, the material provision was not at the core of the attacks.

*Even if we get what we deserve, foreigners must still go back to their home countries. They must just come here to visit and then go back home; I don't see why they must camp here in South Africa.*

*Why must they build homes here? Why can't we go to their country and build a home there? They must just go. If where they come from they do not have jobs then it is fine. They can come and work here, but during holidays they must go home. They cannot build homes here permanent. Even during Christmas they are stuck here, why don't they go visit their family at home? After that they have the nerve to sing about how happy they are in our country.*

Houses and jobs were important attributes but the focus was also on personal change.

*My expectations are to see the changes batho ba modimo (people of God) and we must get increases like they are getting, because they are living a luxury lifestyle. They got*

*money and what about us? They promised us that they are going to look after us, but our lives are not improving. We are just the same way we were before...we are staying (pause), look at this place, we are staying in shacks; there is no change (Mary, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

Respondents were not happy with false promises from government.

*The flaw that government made was that during the votes they promised people free education, free houses and that thing will never work, because when you do something for free, where are you going to get the income for the next person? (Jacob, a 42-year-old male bystander).*

One resident was upset by false promises made by government in order to get votes.

*The government does nothing for us and sometimes I wonder why we bother to vote for these people, because they are useless. With every election they will promise you lies so that you can vote for them and then after elections nothing changes (Follow, a 21-year-old female perpetrator).*

Before elections different political parties campaign to the majority of the voters by luring people to things they cannot resist. They play on people's feelings to win votes and once they are elected as the party in charge they forget about the promises made to the voters.

The ANC government has a strong influence on the people, because despite lack of service delivery from them, they still remain the majority party. In the 14 April 2004 national elections, the ANC was the majority party holder with 69.69% votes. Five years later in the 22 April 2009 national elections they continued to receive the majority support with 64.76% of votes (Independent Electoral Commission). Although the votes decreased, the ANC still remains the majority party in South Africa.

The government was also seen as being self-enriching by focusing on their personal wealth. Mary (a 50-year-old female bystander) felt that the government is a joke.

*Our government is a kangaroo government, because it is such a joke to be under these people. I don't see what they are doing for us. They are just lining their pockets, because right now what are we benefiting from this cup?*

The picture portrayed of the government as thinking about their needs only was also recognised during the World Cup when people thought they would benefit as a host country, but didn't.

*We are just cheering, yeah Bafana Bafana; what are we going to get? We are just as penniless as we always were, no increase, nothing. I would also love to have money in my pocket and be as fat as these government officials, but nothing (Mary, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

Thabo (a 27- year- old male bystander) supported equal distribution of wealth.

*There are so many people who are unemployed and our president is busy going to China and other countries. He doesn't care about the unemployed; he is only concerned about himself. If our government receives money, they share it amongst themselves.*

The corruption within the government was pointed out by respondents.

*I am speechless when it comes to our government, because it is really bad...our government is corrupt. Traffic officials, police; in fact, there is corruption everywhere. If you want something you get it. For example, if I have a stolen car in my position I can bribe someone from the traffic department to register the car for me. I can also bribe a policeman to say that the car is legit. Everything in government is corrupt (Sello, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

Reference was not necessarily made to the ANC government, but certain sectors such as transport and SAPS officials were mentioned together with the ruling party.

After pointing out negative factors about the government, there were still respondents who felt that the government is not as bad as portrayed.

*I think our government is okay. I am happy about their service, because they promised us that they will build us houses and I can see that they are doing that (Maggie, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

Respondents of Alexandra felt that the government is failing to deliver on its promises. Instead, the government focuses on fulfilling their own needs and not that of its citizens. The actions of the government could have impacted the way Alexandra is today.

#### 4.12 **Has the township changed for the better or worse?**

##### 4.12.1 Political change

The following quotations address the different views shared by respondents about the political changes that are visible in the township.

*Some things have improved and others are getting worse. For example, when I was growing up the apartheid government was oppressing my parents, but now things have changed because we can be in one place with white people (Mariah, a 46-year-old female bystander).*

*Before 1994, there wasn't too much HIV, but now it is everywhere...but those years when whites were shooting black people I was there but still young. I still remember what happened. A lot of people died and so many people committed crime (Thabo, a 27-year-old male bystander).*

*A lot has changed, because now we have a say in things. Before when we were fighting with a white person, you had to watch what you were saying. Right now we can just say to them 'what'? Right now, when I park my car and you give me a problem I tell them that 'I am not your maid!' I tell them exactly what I feel (Mary, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

The year 1994 marked a significant change in South Africa. The era of democracy had arrived. After 1994, South Africa had its first black president and the country achieved democracy. Many South Africans anticipated sharing in the wealth accrued by white minorities (Landau, 2011: 12). Respondents of Alexandra welcomed this change. For some it meant the end of oppression for their parents, and for others it was the beginning of freedom of expression and speech. The country's freedom was owed to the former president Nelson Mandela:



*Things have changed, because Mandela has made us free, those respondents who came after Mandela are useless and they are wasting our time (Lucas, a 19-year-old female bystander).*

#### 4.12.2 Social change

Respondents of Alexandra stated that the democratic South Africa brought changes in their township. Changes are visible, but those changes are not necessarily all positive. Some respondents stated that the township remained the same with no changes, others argued that the changes were good, whereas some contested that they were changes for the worse.

*Nothing has changed in Alexandra; respondents of Alexandra are still living in the same conditions. There are only changes in townships such as Setswetla and Soweto. Alexandra will remain like this for a long time to come (Thandi, a 47-year-old female bystander).*

*The houses that we are staying in at the moment have been here for many years. They are small, they are two-room houses. You will find that a wife, a husband and their children are crowded in the house, because there is not enough space for them (Amos, a 50-year-old male bystander).*

Lucas, who relocated from Mpumalanga to Alexandra in hope for a better life, was disappointed by what he found in Alexandra.

*The impression that I had when I left Mpumalanga was that I was going to find better living conditions, but I didn't...when I first arrived in Alexandra, I was not familiar with the place and once I made friends I had better knowledge of Alexandra (Lucas, a 19-year-old male bystander).*

These respondents expected changes in the infrastructure such as houses. The building of bigger houses was anticipated, but these changes did not happen at their pace. Townships such as Soweto are developing whereas Alexandra is not seeing much development.

*Aag, Alexandra will always remain Alexandra. What I mean by that is that I do not see much change in our township (Mary, a 50-year-old female bystander).*

This statement was supported by Sticks (a 23-year-old male bystander) who stated:

*Alexandra has always been like this. It is still corrupt, different characters: you know, this is the township, anything you can expect from a township you will find it here.*

For one resident, all hope was lost because of permanent lack of change.

*I don't think anything is going to change in Alexandra, because people are used to their living conditions. Life goes on. Even if we have ten houses in one yard, we simply don't care anymore (Lucas, a 19-year-old male bystander).*

Contrary to the latter statement, there were respondents who felt that there have been changes in Alexandra, but those changes were for the worse. For example:

*The first thing that has changed is the building of shacks, because in the past it was only houses. The number of people coming from rural areas has also increased. Our population has increased. There is no space for our children to play (Martin, a 42-year-old male bystander).*

Respondents felt that the increase in their population was as a result of urbanisation. However, the biggest contributor to the increased population is the number of foreigners in the township.

*What has become worse is the flooding of foreigners in our country (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

Follow (a 21-year-old female perpetrator) agreed that the increased population was as a result of an increase in the volume of foreigners entering the country.

*One thing that has changed is the number of foreigners in our country. Today foreigners are allowed in our country and because of that they have become too much.*

The comments made by respondents about the increased number of foreigners in the township were important because they relate directly to xenophobia. The impression is that Mandela is the cause behind increased numbers of foreigners in the country.

Mantwa was angered by the number of foreigners in the country. She stated that during the apartheid era when Mandela went into exile, he sought refuge from our neighbouring countries but he went into exile by himself, but when foreigners come into the country they come with immediate and extended family.

*...We did not go with Mandela to have children in foreign countries...we as South Africans did not go with him and build houses there (Mantwa, a 46-year-old female perpetrator).*

One respondent, Lucas shared a positive view of Mandela earlier. For him, Mandela made it possible for South Africa to achieve its freedom. On the other hand, two respondents disagreed that things have changed for the worst. They argued that the changes they have witnessed have had some positive contribution to the development and improvement of the township.

*Our education strategy has changed...they have also opened a few schools in the township. In the past it was difficult to get to the clinic but now they are trying (Sticks, a 23-year-old male bystander).*

Sello (a 23-year-old male bystander) supported the idea that changes made the township a better place.

*There are a few changes. In Alexandra we have community halls; we have nearby clinics, such things. Things have improved in Alex. Another change is the relocation of the police station from Wynberg to 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Alexandra.*

The relocation of the police station was a significant change for Sello (a 23-year-old male bystander).

*For example, if someone commits a crime against me I will be lazy to go all the way to Wynberg police station. I do want to lay a charge against them, but the police station is too far. If someone commits a crime against you at 22:00 and the police station is in*

*Wynberg you will think twice about reporting the crime. If you had to walk from 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Wynberg at night you will be putting your life in danger because you will have to pass by the hostel and we know that the hostels are not safe. By the time you get to Wynberg police instead of reporting one case, you will report two!*

By having the police station closer more crimes will be reported, which will contribute towards improving the crime rate in Alexandra.

The comments made by respondents about the increase in crime, and lack of housing delivery, overcrowding and rural migration indicate that respondents are aware of the declining socio-economic conditions in the township. They do not, however, link this to competition over scarce resources.

#### 4.13 Conclusion

The narratives presented in this chapter showed what happened in Alexandra on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2008. They illustrated the way in which events transpired and justifications for the violence. Respondents' views on xenophobia differed.

Respondents' socio-economic conditions played a significant role in the actions that were taken against foreigners. Through narratives a constructive explanation of xenophobia was indicated. There was some agreement as to where the attacks began and the movement of the crowd through different parts of the township. The way in which foreigners were perceived by respondents depended on whether or not individuals were involved in the attacks. The female perpetrators had negative perceptions of foreigners. The bystanders had positive perceptions about foreigners, provided that they do things according to the law. The chapter to follow will discuss the data interpretation by attempting to provide answers to the research question - *what are the views of Alexandra respondents towards black foreigners with regard to the May 2008 xenophobic attacks?*

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

Xenophobia is a phenomenon that has negative consequences for its victims. The violent acts taking place during the May 2008 xenophobic attacks unveiled the distraction and havoc that xenophobic sentiments have on a country, its citizens and foreigners from across the border. The study discussed the complicated nature of xenophobia. This phenomenon is influenced by multiple factors such as poor service delivery, lack of infrastructure, cross-border migration and socio-economic factors. As an attempt to grasp a better understanding of xenophobia the voices of the respondents of Alexandra, through narratives, contributed to unpacking this phenomenon.

The aim of the study was to explore Alexandra's residents' perceptions on xenophobic attacks. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the results of the study. Themes derived from the literature review and narratives from respondents will be presented. This part of the argument starts by looking the mayhem of the 2008 xenophobic attacks. The discussion then considers reasons for the violence by examining factors that led to the violence. The third theme delves into a discussion of residents feelings towards foreigners. Theme four investigates the different views about the government. The last theme elaborates three possible theories that provide an explanation for the attacks.

#### 5.2 Mayhem of May 2008

##### 5.2.1 The spark of the attacks

The year 2008 saw an outbreak of xenophobic sentiments turning into violence. Literature indicated that xenophobic attacks were reported in five provinces in South Africa (Nyar, 2010: 3).

In all the different regions where the attacks took place it was apparent that black foreigners were violently attacked. The manner in which xenophobic sentiments unfolded resulted in foreigners losing their belongings, becoming injured and in some instances being killed.

Alexandra Township was the first area in Gauteng where the attacks broke out. The literature indicates that this township was the first to report xenophobic violence at that time, but does not point out what fuelled the attacks (Adjai, 2010: 89). Narratives have shown that the violence was possibly sparked by a fight that broke out in one of the hostels between a South African and a foreigner. Respondents' views on what exactly started the violence differed. One respondent stated that during the argument the foreigner stabbed the South African to death, which caused South Africans to retaliate against foreigners. On the other hand, a different view was pointed out by another respondent who argued that the violence on foreigners was encouraged by a South African. However, according to other respondents, political factors seemed to have influenced the start of the violence. The attacks transpired at the time when Thabo Mbeki was president of South Africa and some respondents saw it as flowing from the desire of Jacob Zuma to become the new president.

The May 2008 first broke out in Alexandra. This township plays a significant role in xenophobia in South Africa because of its past history. In 1994, when South Africans took to the polls for the first democratic elections, xenophobic violence was reported in Alexandra. Residents of Alexandra had a goal to remove foreigners from their township. Under operation "Buyelekhaya" South Africans went on a rampage to remove foreigners that were suspected to be illegally in Alexandra (Adjai, 2010: 68). In the 2008 xenophobic attacks, most respondents agreed that the attacks started at the male hostel. Some respondents were unsure and others perception of where the attacks started was influenced by hearsay. Taking into consideration the past history of Alexandra, as early as 1992 a fight broke out in the male hostels, which saw some people dying and others injured (Morris, 2000: 16). In 2008, respondents alluded that the attacks were carried out by Zulu-speaking people. Two explanations are highlighted to support this perception. Firstly, respondents state that the hostels are under control of members of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which is a predominantly Zulu-speaking party. Secondly, as pointed out by literature, the Alexandra Residents' Association is an IFP party and this party was accused of fuelling the attacks (Nieftagodien, 2008: 74). Respondents had an idea where the attacks started, but did not know which particular individual started them.

### 5.2.2 Justice by Alexandra residents

On May 11 2008, in the evening, a large number of Alexandra residents marched the streets with the intention of removing foreigners from their township. It appears from the narratives that the mob consisted of 200-300 people, mainly youth and mainly males but also included some females. The crowd moved from the hostels to areas where they identified foreigners. A general view by respondents was that a variety of weapons were carried and used by the mob as they cheered and sang on their mission through the township. Respondents like Sello believed that the violence was organised through word of mouth. For example, if an individual has a mindset of attacking foreigners, it is easy for them to influence other people to start a riot against foreigners. On the other hand Mariah thought the attacks were spontaneous. Literature states that two meetings were held in the township before the xenophobic outbreak. The attacks could have been organised at these meetings.

The narratives indicated that not all respondents who joined the mob did so willingly. Respondents such as Follow and Mantwa voluntarily joined the mob, because they shared the same mindset as other respondents who were part of the crowd. John, on the other hand, became part of the mob because of his association with foreigners. An explanation for his behaviour was to protect himself from becoming a casualty, because he was renting to people who were alleged to be a threat to the community. Another explanation was that he did not want the mob to misidentify him as a foreigner. Two groups of people can be identified with regard to their reasons for joining the crowd. The one group willingly engaged in the violence. The other group engaged in the violence to protect themselves. However, only one respondent from the perpetrators became part of the mob as he feared for his life. It is evident that unemployment influenced some respondent's willingness to become involved in the attacks. For example, two of the female respondents were unemployed. Of the remaining two respondents one was an entrepreneur and the other was in informal employment. Although these jobs provide income, they are not stable as formal employment.

Respondents used two criteria to identify their victims, physical appearance and language. Individuals who were seen to be dark in complexion were identified as foreigners. Also, individuals who could not speak any of the African languages were mistaken for foreigners.

The narratives also show that some South Africans were attacked because of their dark complexion. Misidentification of foreigners is supported by literature, which indicated that 22 South Africans were killed as a result of false identity (Adjai, 2010: 89). The argument of false identity was not shared by Sticks. He argued that South Africans were attacked because foreigners fought back.

Literature on collective violence illustrates that such violence is influenced by two agents: perpetrators and bystanders (Tilly, 2003). Bystanders are part of the mob but do not necessarily play a role in attacks, whereas perpetrators are individuals who attack victims (Staub, 2003: 292). From the narratives, it was evident that there were some respondents who were bystanders and others who were perpetrators. Perpetrators acted out their anger in a violent manner. The culture of entitlement surfaced in the narratives. People who are not able to provide for themselves feel entitled to have some form of support (Pillay, 2008: 96). Evidently the findings expressed the extent to which perpetrators felt they were entitled to belongings of foreigners. Not only did perpetrators attack foreigners, but they also saw an opportunity to gain. As shown by literature (Lebone, 2010: 632), 342 shops were looted. The narratives confirmed that looting did occur.

In conclusion, the xenophobic attacks in Alexandra were encouraged by people from different age groups and genders. The perpetrators interviewed for this research included one female youth, while the remaining three were above the age of 30. These perpetrators shared a commonality of poverty and, therefore, used that as gaining wealth from people they perceived to be a threat. The goal of chasing away foreigners became influenced by the perceived benefits from the violence.

### 5.3 **Reasons for the violence**

The reasons for the xenophobic attacks in Alexandra can be summarised under four headings: influx of foreigners, rising unemployment, lack of housing and crime.



### 5.3.1 Influx of foreigners

It is apparent from the narratives that the increase in Alexandra's population is blamed on foreigners staying in the township.

Foreigners are accused of occupying too much space in the township by building their shacks on the pavements. The number of foreigners in Alexandra is a consequence of cross-border movement. Literature on cross-border migration points out that porous South African borders have allowed for free movement of immigrants from different parts of the world (Crush, 2008a: 14). Laws and regulations such as the Immigration Act of 2002 and the Refugee Act of 1998 have made it possible for migration to be regulated in South Africa. Implementation of these regulations is challenging. A few respondents felt that the marriage of Mandela to a foreign lady gave leeway to the entry of foreigners into the country. However, this notion was not supported by the literature. Narratives did not highlight the impact that the media had on instilling the perception of too many foreigners crossing the border into South Africa.

### 5.3.2 Housing



The narratives illustrate the perception of foreigners taking away houses as one of the reasons for xenophobic attacks. The majority of the respondents had applied for RDP houses as early as 1996. In cases where respondents were underage, their parents had applied for housing. Respondents indicated that they have been waiting for years to receive their houses. It is apparent from the narratives that the government has built houses in Alexandra. The only concern that respondents have about those houses is that they are occupied by either foreigners or people from outside the township.

Some respondents were sure that they knew foreigners who were occupying RDP houses and were aware of where they stay. Mariah knew of her former colleague who was a foreigner and worked as a security guard. This man was staying in the houses built in Tsutsumani, even though he was not a South African. Narratives point out that foreigners got houses through corruption. This is substantiated by literature (HSRC, 2008). This corruption occurs in a form of bribery whereby foreigners buy houses from willing South Africans.

Another way suggested was those housing officials who have access to houses sell them to foreigners. Literature on housing clearly states who is eligible for RDP houses (Consultative business movement, 1994; HSRC, 2008; Silverman and Zack, 2008). Respondents discussed corruption as the common way in which foreigners get RDP houses; however, none of them mentioned the possibility of any of the foreigners being married to South African citizens. This, by law, gives foreigners the right to stay in an RDP house.

Nonetheless, the literature on housing does acknowledge bribery within the housing sector (HSRC, 2008). It clearly states the transactions that take place between South Africans and foreigners. Interestingly, what was evident from the narratives was that even though respondents accuse foreigners of taking houses, others acknowledged that South Africans who agree to bribery are also culprits.

### 5.3.3 Working status

South Africa's unemployment rate is among the highest when compared to third-world countries such as Brazil (Bernstein, 2011: 7). Based on the 2012 unemployment rate, this indicates that there are a large number of people who are not working. It appears from the narratives that respondents' views on foreigners and employment differ. Individuals who were unemployed complain about foreigners taking away their jobs. According to them, competition for jobs with foreigners is problematic. Unemployed respondents felt that foreigners are easily employed, because they accept low wages and this was a disadvantage for South Africans. The acceptance of cheap labour according to the unemployed respondents is more common amongst illegal immigrants, especially in the informal sector. On the other hand, individuals who were employed did not see foreigners as a threat to employment opportunities. For them laziness and pride are the main restrictions why South Africans cannot find a job. It became evident that South Africans are selective when it comes to the type of job they are willing to accept. Apart from being particular, South Africans also expect handouts and are not actively seeking for employment.

It is evident from the literature that cheap labour is common among foreigners. Even if foreigners accept low wages, they have the skills required to do the job (Green *et al*, 2001; Crush, 2008 and HSRC 2008).

Studies on unemployment suggest that employers are willing to pay low wages to foreigners, especially those who are illegal, because of their status (Crush, 2011). Interesting to note is that the literature illustrates the economic benefits of foreigners coming into the country such as buying goods in South Africa, and employing South Africans (Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008; HSRC, 2008). Conversely the view of foreigners contributing to the economy is not recognised by respondents.

Maggie and Amos were entrepreneurs. They both had their own spaza shops. Their circumstances were different. Maggie started her own business as a means to an income, because she was unemployed. Amos opened his own business to have extra income; he is employed full time. The narratives show that spaza shops are popular types of business in the township, more especially among foreigners. It seemed that businesses owned by foreigners have more support from residents as compared to those businesses owned by South Africans. Respondents illustrate that the success of foreigners' business is because they sell their goods at low or reasonable prices. A study conducted by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2008) supports respondents' view of foreigners being business minded. Immigrants are more likely to become self-employed. This view was a concern for Maggie, because she felt that competition from foreigners is not good for her business. Apart from Amos and Maggie who owned their own spaza shops, respondents who were unemployed did not clearly indicate what they were doing to find employment.

#### 5.3.4 Crime

The perception of foreigners as perpetrators of crime was not substantially argued. One or two respondents explained that Alexandra has always had a high crime rate. This indicates that the moving of foreigners into the township did not fuel the beginning of crime. On the other hand there were respondents who argued that there are two explanations for foreigners being accused of committing crime in the township.

Narratives pointed out that it is not easy for one South African to commit crime against another South African because residents of Alexandra know one another. Another reason is that South Africans have fingerprints on the system, which make it easier for them to be traced.

Also, some foreigners who commit crime are illegally in the country and, therefore, it is not easy to trace them and prosecute them for their crimes. The popular perception of foreigners committing crime in the township is supported by some literature (HSRC, 2008).

#### 5.4 Residents' feelings about foreigners

Narratives point out that respondents' view on how they feel about foreigners differed. Respondents' views about foreigners are determined by behaviour and space. Follow disliked foreigners, because she felt that they are invading her space. She felt that South Africans do not have the freedom in their own country, because foreigners are controlling the environment. It also appears from the narratives that the type of foreigners that respondents had a problem with were illegal immigrants who are mischievous. When comparing black and white foreigners, narratives indicate that respondents felt that there is no difference between the two because they both steal jobs. Respondents' perceptions about white foreigners are also influenced by the fact that they do not stay in the township and, therefore, are not forced to share space. However, Mantwa dislikes white foreigners even despite the fact that they do not stay in the township. She stated that white foreigners are worse than black foreigners, because they are greedy. In determining respondents' feelings towards foreigners the following conclusion can be reached. In general, respondents do not have a problem with foreigners who come into the country legally, who abide by the law and do not misbehave.

Respondents' feelings were also illustrated in the language that they use when talking about foreigners. It appeared from narratives that words such as *smelly armpits* and *overcrowding* often refer to black foreigners. The derogatory word 'makwerekwere' is often used to refer to black immigrants (Nyamnjoh, 2006: 40). A new term that refers to foreigners emerged in the findings. The term Makwabo or Kwabo emerged from the findings as a township lingo for the black foreigner. *As South Africans' we differ and it is the same with Makwabo. I think it happened because there are those Kwamo's...*(Sello). This word might be used in Alexandra only, but that is not fully known.

The word 'Makwabo' (township derogatory term used for foreigners) is used to hurt and disrespect the person it is directed at. Such words are often used to clearly mark a distinction between those who belong and those who do not belong.

Literature on social exclusion states that people who are considered not to be members of the community are discriminated against by members of the society (Atkinson, 1998: 13).

To a large extent the way that respondents feel about foreigners is as a consequence of the picture portrayed by the government and the media. Literature states that government officials speak of foreigners as individuals who are not welcome in the country. This is evident in the public speeches they make by making use of words such as aliens. Also the government exaggerates the number of foreign immigrants in the country, which results in South African citizens feeling that the number of foreigners is on the increase (Murray, 2003: 450). Other state-owned institutions that encourage xenophobic sentiments towards foreigners are the Department of Home Affairs and the South African Police Service. The role of Home Affairs is evident in the ill treatment that foreigners receive. This treatment is illustrated in centres like the Lindela deportation centre. This centre was created as a temporary shelter for foreigners who are recognised as illegal in the country and need to be deported back to their countries. The violation of human rights in this centre is clearly indicated. Although the South African Police Service has the right to arrest any foreigner that they suspect to be illegal, the manner in which foreigners are arrested is not according to the law (Harris, 2001). The police do not give foreigners a chance to produce their identity documents when asked for them; in some instances foreigners' documents are destroyed. Often South Africans are mistaken for foreigners and get arrested (Valji, 2003). It is obvious from the narratives that respondents do not connect the way they feel about foreigners to state institutions such as the South African Police Service and the Department of Home Affairs. Respondents tended to view their feelings based on their immediate environment such as space.

## **5.5 Views about the government**

### **5.5.1 Perceptions of the government**

Narratives show that there is strong agreement among respondents; people have a notion that the government fails to deliver the basic services and that the government makes false promises. In addition, the government officials are corrupt and only they benefit from the system. The majority of respondents believe that there is a lack of accountability from the government and that they are not satisfied with service provision, job creation and the state of housing.

Furthermore, people of Alexandra are wary of the government because they feel that the government does not inform them on why certain decisions are made in a certain way. The distrustful attitude towards government by respondents can be attributed to the lack of service delivery. The current government made wrong decisions and engage in bad management of resources. With that said it is important to note that the apartheid government was a big problem and created grounds for the situation in which the current government finds itself in today. It is evident that the xenophobic attacks were consequences of the inequalities and frustrations caused by the government.

#### 5.5.2 Political and social changes

Alexandra is characterised by poverty and inequality. The lack of infrastructure and development has played a crucial role in increasing the prevalence of fighting for scarce resources among residents and foreigners. Backyard rooms and shack dwellers in the township are reflective of poverty in the township (Eyben and Lovett, 2004). When respondents voted for a democratic government in place, they were expecting change in their lives such as better living conditions, infrastructure, development and growth in their township. Narratives point out that there are mixed feelings regarding change in Alexandra, respondents mention that there are changes, although they still believe that those changes are not necessarily all positive. The government takes time to do the changes. These changes include infrastructure and delivery of houses. This resulted in respondents losing hope in the government. Respondents feel that Alexandra is overpopulated, which can be ascribed to urbanisation and the increased number of foreigners living in the area. Respondents feel that the government is too merciful with regard to allowing foreigners in the country and most of all they point fingers at the former President Nelson Mandela. This is seen as the cause of the increase in the crime rate in the area. It is believed that if the government can build more police stations the crime rate in the area will decrease.

The socio-economic conditions in Alexandra is due to poor service delivery by the government, corrupt civil servants, the distrust which people have of the government, their fears of and lack of confidence in the government.

Lack of visible and recognised change in Alexandra have resulted in respondents feeling like they are being treated unequally and are discriminated against by the government. As an end result resentment and hostility towards people who are perceived to be gaining from the country persists, and in this case such individuals are black foreigners.

## 5.6 Putting theory into context

The xenophobic attacks in Alexandra were as a result of respondents acting out their anger towards foreigners. This anger could have been fuelled by a fight, but other underlying factors played a significant role. When foreigners become neighbours of Alexandra residents things changed. The population in the township increased. Increase in population encouraged competition of scarce resources such as housing and jobs. This increase forced the people of Alexandra to compete for limited resources that were not enough for everyone. Competition led to feelings of hostility towards foreigners. The hostility between South Africans and immigrants is supported by three theories: relative deprivation theory, the scapegoat theory and the rational choice theory (Wilson, 2003: 7).

Both these theories point to limited resources as a fuel for hostility (Tshitereke, 1999). Respondents used foreigners as scapegoats for things that did not go smoothly in the township. Narratives indicated that people who were unemployed blamed foreigners for taking away their jobs. The one respondent who owned a spaza shop blamed her lack of business success on foreigners in the area who owned spaza shops. People who had applied for RDP houses many years ago and still have not received them; believed foreigners and people from outside the township were occupying these houses. Although it was pointed out that crime in Alexandra has always been there, foreigners were accused of committing crime because of their undocumented status. The way respondents felt about foreigners encouraged hostile behaviour towards foreigners. The manner in which South Africans chased away foreigners on 11 May was seen as rational based on the views of respondents. Respondents acted cruelly towards foreigners, as this was motivated by their goal of removing foreigners from the township. This view is supported by the rational choice theory (Scott, 2000, Green, 2007).

In conclusion, the uprising of 11 May 2008 in the township of Alexandra was as a result of respondents feeling deprived of what was supposed to rightfully belong to them. Respondents perceived they were marginalised when they compared themselves to foreigners who seemed to be living in better conditions than South Africans. When foreigners started residing in Alexandra, the already constrained resources of South Africans became limited. The competition for possessions such as houses and jobs increased hatred, frustration and hostility towards black foreigners. When respondents assessed their surroundings, it was evident that they felt they don't have what the government has promised. The same government that promised poverty alleviation, service delivery and a better life for all discriminated against foreigners and instilled fear of too many foreigners in the country among South Africans. Poverty, inequality, unemployment, lack of service delivery led to a fear of the foreigner. As a result South Africa experienced the mayhem of 2008 in the dark city.

#### **5.7 Limitations of the study**

In assessing xenophobia among Alexandra residents, only the views of South Africans were explored. The voices of local South African were important, particularly those of the perpetrators of the violence. Through their retelling of the events, a better explanation for the attacks was made possible. The decision to conduct interviews with South Africans only was because limited research has been done among South Africans with regard to xenophobia, especially among perpetrators. Another reason was that getting the views of people who were not victims of the violence was an area of interest for the researcher. The positive aspect of such a decision was that the views of those who committed the violence and witnessed them were elaborated upon. The limitation of this was that only the views of South Africans were heard and not those of black foreigners who were victims. The interviews were conducted in 2010, which meant that residents relied on memory to recall the events. Even with relying on the reflection of experience, the information gathered helped fill in gaps to a multifaceted concept. Despite challenges encountered during fieldwork, strategies used proved to be effective.



## 5.8 Recommendations

The study would like to make the following recommendations.

### 5.8.1 Policy recommendations

The government should recognise xenophobic sentiments as xenophobia and not as third force influence or criminal activities. Service delivery needs to take place fast and effectively. Quicker responses by government to emergencies such as the outbreak of xenophobic attacks on foreigners should be done efficiently. Educating South Africans about people from neighbouring countries should take place. Multiculturalism among South Africans and foreign countries must be seen as a priority.

### 5.8.2 Further research recommendation

A further study recommendation would be to conduct a comparison study between foreigners and South African citizens about the views on xenophobia. Furthermore a broader quantitative study should be carried out

## 5.9 Conclusion

The history of Alexandra characterised by poverty, unemployment, inequality and violence formulated the problem statement of the study. The May 2008 xenophobic attacks in the township led to the research question: what are the views of Alexandra residents towards black foreigners with regard to the May 2008 xenophobic attacks? The study has contributed to providing the answer to this research question by providing the views of bystanders and perpetrators.

Chapter Two of the study contextualised xenophobia by placing the phenomenon within a South African context and looking at what it constitutes. Multiple authors and theorists were used to study the complexity of xenophobia; the definition of Shindondola was used to get deeper insight into xenophobia.

This chapter highlighted was that xenophobia did not start in May 2008, but it is something that has existed for many years.



Xenophobia is not as a result of a single factor, but a number of factors contribute to the deeply rooted fear or dislike of foreigners. Seeing as xenophobia only affects black foreigners, literature on racism and new racism was reviewed and a link to new racism was discussed. What came to the fore in the literature was that xenophobic sentiments in South Africa are as a result of competition of scarce resources.

The objective of this study was to provide the perception of Alexandra residents towards xenophobic attacks of May 2008. The aims of the study were, firstly, to investigate why black foreigners are victims of xenophobia from the perspective of South African residents and, secondly, to explore Alexandra residents' perceptions of xenophobic attacks.

In order to attempt to provide answers to the aims of the study, a practical approach was used. Chapter Three of the study discussed the use of qualitative methodology as a practical method of gaining understanding of xenophobia. This methodology was helpful in two ways. Firstly, it allowed for the feelings of respondents to be captured. Secondly, it made it possible for residents of Alexandra to tell of their experiences. This was made possible through narratives. Xenophobia is viewed differently in both males and females and, therefore, it was important to get both genders' views.

The twenty interviews conducted made it possible for a sample of respondents to be interviewed. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, gaining access to respondents was not easy. The use of snowball sampling not only made it easy to gain access to respondents but it also made it possible for respondents to trust the researcher, because the researcher was referred to them by someone they knew. The feelings and experiences of respondents were discussed in narratives through thematic analysis. Respondents' voices allowed them to tell their story in a way they experienced it.

Chapter Four discussed study findings by using narratives. Foreigners were attacked as a result of their dark skin complexion and not being able to speak an African language. The attacks were sparked by unemployment, whereby foreigners were hired for jobs in the informal sector based on acceptance of cheap labour. The manner in which foreigners occupied RDP houses was because of bribery and corruption and in some cases valid marriage to a South African, but the latter was not strongly indicated.

The overcrowding of foreigners angered respondents and led them to believe that the majority of crime committed in the township was done by undocumented foreigners. Feelings or views were guided by the status of a foreigner, i.e. legal or illegal. However, there were respondents who felt very strongly about foreigners leaving the country regardless of their reasons for coming to South Africa.

It was also established that different views of the rise of the violence were given; respondents who took part in the attacks shared common feelings of not wanting foreigners in their township. There was a strong link of foreign identity to their dark skin complexion. The justification of the attacks was attributed to housing and unemployment. The notion of foreigners taking away jobs and houses was the highlight amongst other factors that contributed to the unfortunate experience by foreigners living in Alexandra. The narrative approach made it possible to gain deeper understanding of how the events of the xenophobic attacks unfolded.

Chapter Five analysed the findings of the study in terms of five themes. This chapter indicated that the xenophobic attacks started in the male hostel. Respondents indicated that the attacks were as a result of clash and little mention was made of President Mbeki as president. Factors that contributed to the attacks included influx of foreigners, foreigners taking away jobs, houses and also committing crime in the township. When South Africans fought for their freedom, they did not anticipate sharing it with other people. The majority of respondents who were living in small houses and were unemployed expected their environment to change for the better. Lack of service delivery from the government contributed to respondents blaming foreigners for scarce resources they did not have. According to respondent, it seemed that violence was the only means to voice their anger, not only to foreigners but to the nation as a whole.

In conclusion, the study has illustrated how political, social and economic shifts in South Africa have influenced the way in which residents of Alexandra view black foreigners. The level of competition for scarce resources has contributed to differences across gender and employment status. The twenty interviews conducted have established the deeper understanding of xenophobia in Alexandra township.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### *Alexandra residents' views on xenophobic attacks*

Research question: *What are the views of Alexandra residents towards black African foreigners?*

Objectives of study:

- To find out the views of Alexandra residents towards black African foreigners
- To establish the Reason for xenophobic attacks
- To pinpoint the Start of violence. Justification from residents of the violence and bystanders of the violence.

**Ice breaker: Please tell me about yourself.**

**Probe:** Ask about family.

Their background

1. Are you employed?



**Probe:** If employed, what do you do for a living?

**Probe:** Are there any foreigners working with you?

**Probe:** Percentage of foreigners to SA citizens

**Probe:** If unemployed, how do you make a living?

2. How long have you been living in Alexandra?

**Probe:** How have things changed from the time you started living here until today?

#### *Events of May 2008 xenophobic attacks*

3. Please tell me what happened in the May 2008 xenophobic attacks in Alexandra?

**Probe:** Tell me exactly what you saw.

**Probe:** Do you think the attacks were planned/organised?

**Probe:** If organised, by whom and how?

**Probe:** Do you know about a meeting that took place at Sankopano before the attacks?

4. Were there rumours about the attacks in the township?

5. What was the mood like in the township before the attacks?

6. What was the mood like in the township after the attacks?

7. Do you know how the attacks started/where they started?

8. How did you hear about the violence, or know there were attacks taking place?

**Probe:** How far away were you from the violence?

9. How did this make you feel/affect you?

10. Can you give me a picture of the mob, i.e. gender, age?

**Probe:** What were they saying and holding in their hands?

### ***Justification for violence***

11. According to you, why did the attacks take place?

**Probe:** Evidence for justifications

**Probe:** RDP houses, crime, employment as justifications for the attacks if respondent does not mention them.

**Probe:** Do you know any foreigner occupying an RDP house? If so, tell me about them.

12. Would you say the attacks were an element of criminality/crime?

**Probe:** People's belongings were stolen.

13. During the attacks, 63 South African citizens were attacked. If the aim was to chase out foreigners, why did some South African citizens get attacked?

***Feelings towards foreigners***

14. How do you feel about foreigners in general?

15. How do you feel about white foreigners?

16. How do you feel about black foreigners?

17. How do you identify a foreigner?

***Feelings towards South African government***

18. How do you feel about the South African government?

19. Do you feel that things have changed after 1994?

20. What are your expectations from the government?

21. Are you satisfied with the service delivery in South Africa?

**Probe:** If answer no, exactly what are you not happy about?

22. Are you happy about the delivery of houses by government?

**Probe:** If answer no, exactly what are you not happy about?

23. Do you think that if the South African government provide houses, jobs and service delivery to people of South Africa, the attacks would still have taken place?

24. Do you have anything to add?

**Additional questions:**

**For people who own small business such as Spaza shops**

25. How do foreigners who own small businesses such as Spaza shops affect your business?

26. Do you feel that foreigners dominate small businesses in Alexandra?

## APPENDIX B

### PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Perpetrator</i>	<i>Bystander</i>
Amos	50	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Martin	42	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Thabo	27	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Sticks	23	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Sello	23	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Sipho	22	Male	Black	Employed		Bystander
Samuel	38	Male	Black	Unemployed		Bystander
Lesley	22	Male	Black	Unemployed		Bystander
Lucas	19	Male	Black	Part-time employment		Bystander
Jacob	42	Male	Black	Self- employed		Bystander
John	30	Male	Black	Entrepreneur	Perpetrator	
Hustler	30	Male	Black	Informal employment	Perpetrator	
Mary	50	Female	Black	Employed		Bystander
Thandi	47	Female	Black	Employed		Bystander
Maggie	50	Female	Black	Self- employed		Bystander
Mariah	46	Female	Black	Temporary worker		Bystander
Lesego	19	Female	Black	Student		Bystander
Matric	18	Female	Black	Student		Bystander
Mantwa	46	Female	Black	Unemployed	Perpetrator	
Follow	21	Female	Black	Unemployed	Perpetrator	