Making Meaning amidst Xenophobia:
How Apostolic Zionist Churches Make Sense of Outsiders, Scarcity, and Entitlement in Alexandra Township, South Africa

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Abstract

Reports from the May 2008 surge of ‘xenophobic’ violence in Johannesburg’s Alexandra Township and across the country name the causes of the attacks as: poor service delivery and high unemployment; a sense of entitlement and chauvinistic nativism; increasingly pervasive and publicly accepted anti-foreigner sentiments alongside a practice of vigilante justice; and the absence or agendas of local leadership. Drawing on these reports’ findings this dissertation firstly names the conceptual foundations that describe the causes and overlap with political and religious rhetoric: entitlement and work; outsider and insider; and scarcity and abundance. The role of leadership is utilised for its structural, as well as existing conceptual implications. Secondly, this research uses analysis of discourses of the above named concepts, observed in two meaning-making institutions located in and near Alexandra Township’s, where the 2008 surge began. These case studies are one majority Zulu and one majority Xhosa Apostolic Zionist Churches, and are based on one month of ethnographic research in each church and semi-structured interviews with approximately one third of both churches’ members and leaders, commonly using translation. Finally, this dissertation argues that the particularities of these churches position them as unique pockets of passive resistance to the xenophobic mobilisations that have and continue to engage many of South Africa’s Township residents, through a savvy assessment of needs and strategies; these reflect both the historic moment from which such churches emerged in South Africa and members’ current experiences as urban labour migrants. Ultimately, this research aims to provide insight into the role of one particular type of meaning-making and action-shaping institution, in areas where traditional political engagement often does not operate.
Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Forced Migration Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Becca Hartman
31 July 2011
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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my grandmas. Margie Shafer Hartman (Grandma in the Woods) died half way through my field work, and Grandma Artis Melba Cheadle died the week that I completed writing this document. Grandma Hartman was one of five daughters who grew up in the beautiful Pennsylvania countryside, USA to my great grandparents J. Harold Shafer & Mildred Kyle Shafer. In a time (mid 20th century) when it wasn’t common, or deemed a good investment, grandma and her sisters went to college. Grandma Hartman was also a thoughtful American Baptist her whole life and believed in the power of religious community for moral guidance. She played the organ in her church for many years, and while she may have been surprised by the drums and dancing of African Initiated Churches here in Johannesburg, the AIC focus on ancestors make me think that Grandma has been a part of the research all along. Grandma Cheadle was the matriarch of a large family; her seven living children and many grand- and great grandchildren pilgrimage every year to be together for Thanksgiving (where we eat), weddings (where we dance), and funerals (where we sing and tell stories). Grandma’s hard work and loving practices made her beloved and respected among her American Baptist church community, family, and friends. Mirroring her commitment to education, each of her children pursued a college degree and many in the family have achieved multiple degrees, largely in service-oriented sectors. Her far and wide travels across the US with her children reveal both her depth of patience and sense of awe and adventure. I love and miss you both.
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Chapter One
Introduction

In May 2008 there was an escalation of violence against African foreign nationals, starting in townships in Johannesburg, South Africa, resulting in more than 60 deaths (including at least 20 South African citizens), over 100,000 people displaced, uncounted rapes, and hundreds of thousands of rand worth of property damage (Misago et al. 2010). Several research-based reports emerged following this xenophobic violence (Atlantic Philanthropies 2010; Misago et al. 2009; Human Sciences Research Council 2008), to address what happened and why it happened or did not happen in various places, often with competing explanations. Recognizing that attacks against African foreign-nationals have been occurring since the end of apartheid and that they were (correctly) predicted to continue even after the escalation in 2008, the reports also made recommendations about how to prevent similar violence from happening in the future. In Alexandra Township, Johannesburg where the violence began (Misago et al. 2009), the reports discuss the most prominent, consistent socialising institutions, churches, as responding agents and sites of future conflict resolution efforts (Misago et al. 2010: 41), opening the door for more research on the daily internal and communal impacts of religious groups and organisations. While the points of difference from these reports are many, their convergences and common gaps inform the conceptual framework of this dissertation, which addresses three conceptual and two structural aspects of churches operating in Alexandra Township.

The concepts addressed in this dissertation are a synthesis of the commonly name causal factors from the post-2008 reports: scarcity, outsiders, and entitlement. Each concept has a conceptual partner or counterweight: abundance, insiders, and work. These conceptual partners, their theoretical foundations, and their expression in the case studies are discussed in their own chapters. The structural issues addressed, leadership and meaning-making processes, are incorporated into all three chapters.

1 Following the 2008 surge of attacks there were many terms used to classify the violence. Politicians, civil society members, academics, and media weighed-in, variously calling it non-ideological criminal thuggery (Misago et al. 2010:27), xenophobia, and afro-phobia (Everett 2010: 8). The definition of xenophobia, a fear or hatred of outsiders, implies or ignores two important aspects seen in the violence in Johannesburg and across the country; 1) the violence was not targeted at all or only foreign nationals, for instance no ‘white’ foreign nationals were attacked, but neither were South African citizens exempted from the attacks, and 2) xenophobia connotes fear or hatred but does not necessarily imply violence in its definition, yet the attackers use of violence is central to this discussion (Polzer 2010). Further, naming the attacks as xenophobic implies that a fear or hatred of foreigners was the cause of or a strong contributing factor to the violence, an assertion that is too simplistic and a-historical to support. However, xenophobia has become the most widespread term to address the violence, because anti-foreigner sentiment played a role in the violence, I will use the term xenophobic throughout the rest of this dissertation to refer to the May 2008 attacks.
Drawing on case studies built upon participant observation and semi-structured interviews in two Apostolic Zion Churches, this dissertation argues that the particularities of these churches position them as unique pockets of passive resistance to the xenophobic mobilisations that have and continue to engage many of South Africa’s Township residents. The foundation and continued experience of these churches have structured their savvy assessment of needs and strategies, which positions them as uniquely passive resisters. These particularities include: the church’s growth from the migratory patterns of urban labourers; the role of religious membership in both migration and urban settlement and survival; and the relatively consistent experience of ineffectual political action among the Townships’ poor residents. Ultimately, this research aims to provide insight into the role of one particular type of meaning-making and action-shaping institution, in areas where traditional political engagement often does not operate.

Violence against a national ‘other’ has been occurring consistently in South Africa since the end of apartheid, and South Africa’s complex history reveals the wide-spread use of violence in local and national inter- and intra-communal including ethnic life (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008). However, the popular-culture explanation of violence against the ‘other’ in the 2008 attacks focused on competition for jobs and houses, and the notion of citizen as more deserving of these scarce resources than non-citizen (Misago et al. 2009). That rhetorical offensive against the ‘other’ was heard through words of township members and national political officials alike, thus it is valuable to ask ourselves how this explanation or justification of violence was established and how it has been re-produced (Murray 2003). The reproduction of discourses and the ways in which people make sense and meaning out of particular experiences is central to the ongoing episodes of violence and climate of xenophobia in South Africa, and is the point at which we can benefit from a better understanding of churches as meaning-making, discourse-producing and socialising institutions.

Scholars have written about protestant, Anglican and Catholic churches’ responses to the violence in Johannesburg (Phakatih2010) as acts of assistance and solidarity, but there has been nothing written to similarly describe the role of African Initiated Churches (AICs) or Pentecostal churches. While these churches generally do not have the same level of economic resources or denominational or

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2 The May 2008 attacks also occurred in rural areas and locations outside of townships (Misago et al. 2009). Others have also written about non-resident based anti-foreigner movements, including mobilizations by business forums (Segatti 2011).

3 AIC can also refer to ‘African Independent Churches’ or ‘African Indigenous Churches’; these are multiple names for the same phenomenon.
organizational structures as mainline churches\(^4\) or other religious groups, they are central meaning-making institutions situated in the midst of the violence-affected areas, and present in large numbers.\(^5\)

In addition, while Apostolic Zionist Churches (one type of AIC and the case studies of this research) are not as commonly studied today as they were in second half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, their apolitical position emerged, as the churches themselves did, in a particular historical context; a post-Apartheid South Africa may provide a new landscape for changing these pervasive institutions’ engagement in communities.

AICs may be able to provide unique insight in building upon the existing knowledge of xenophobic violence in South Africa in general and the 2008 attacks and aftermath in particular in Alexandra Township, yet several fundamental questions persist: Do these churches have or want a relationship with broader Alexandra Township and its many internal communities? How are social and moral positions created and reinforced within the churches? Are churches perpetuating the moralised nationalist (and nativist) rhetoric that is attributed among the causes of the attacks, as some Dutch Afrikaans churches did during Apartheid (Hughey 1987)? Do church leaders affirm their own legitimacy and authority (scape-goating) by capitalising on the xenophobic discourses heard commonly among the 2008 attackers, as other political leaders did during the attacks (Misago et al. 2009)? Would these institutions be open to engaging in future conflict resolution efforts? This dissertation aims to address these questions by examining two Apostolic Zionist Churches’ roles as meaning-making institutions in Alexandra Township.

**Historical Context**

*Christianity in South Africa*

Religion in South Africa runs the gamut of the world’s religions, as each group of migrant residents and colonial settlers has brought its traditions and adapted with its changing surroundings (Prozesky and deGrutchy 1995: 28-29, 73, 98, 126). From the earliest known San and Khoi peoples, to

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\(^4\) ‘Mainline churches’ in this dissertation includes protestant, Anglican and Catholic churches; this reflects a fairly standard use of the term (Garner 2000).

\(^5\) AICs and Pentecostal Churches exist throughout the township, and based on a mapping exercise in November-December 2010, it appears that there are more AICs by sheer congregation numbers, than Pentecostal Churches, although I cannot confidently make any claim as to membership numbers. AICs typically meet in small shacks and school classrooms, whereas Pentecostal churches cover a wider range of congregation sizes but stretch much larger than most AICs, making accurate information (beyond generalisations) a challenge for a small scale research projects (observations 14, 18 November 2010; 4, 12 December 2010).
the first African migrations; the Dutch and then other European missionaries; and migrant labour from China, India, and West Africa, this is a religiously pluralistic society (Ibid). Christianity is a religion that was barely existent in Africa before the mid-19th century, when various missionary societies became established, although traders and early settlers had been arriving in waves since the mid-17th century (Ibid: 28-82). As of the 2001 census (unfortunately the 2007 community survey did not provide additional information on religion and the 2011 census was underway when this report was finalised), 80% of the South African population self-identifies as Christian (South African Census 20016 Primary Tables: 25).

Early in the 20th century, “Black church leaders of both the mission and the Ethiopian7 churches played a major role in protesting against the racial discrimination that was built into and flowed from the constitution of the Union”, and the “principles adopted” in 1912 by what would be renamed the African National Congress in 1923 “affirmed the liberal Christian values as taught in missionary schools” (Prozesky and deGrutchy 1995: 87). South Africa’s churches and religious institutions have been written about extensively in relation to leaders within the apartheid struggle as well as the start of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), for which several of its founders “were theological students or ordained ministers, or at least had some contact with the church” and critiqued the non/late/slow-actions of mainline churches8 (Ibid: 99). Christian leaders “played a crucial leadership role in the absence of recognized black political leaders” (Ibid: 107), and churches became sites for social gathering, when people’s movements were otherwise restricted and any gathering was viewed with great suspicion or banned (Ibid: 95-110). Religion, in the form of the Dutch Afrikaans Church, was also integral to providing the “material, spiritual and cultural support” for Afrikaner nationalism in 1948 (Ibid: 88), as well as the moral legitimation of the system of apartheid itself (Hughey 1987). Christianity was the official religion under the apartheid regime, and while today’s South Africa is a secular state, the Christian undertone of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Christian identity of post-Apartheid political leadership are widely acknowledged (Bozzoli 1998).

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6 While Statistics South Africa produced a Community Survey in 2007 to supplement the 2001 Census, the survey did not include information on religious affiliation; the next national survey conducted in 2011 was not available at the time of this piece’s submission.
7 Ethiopian Churches, which are discussed in great detail below, are “a black African initiated parallel Christianity, whose structure was very similar to mainline North American and European churches” (Prozesky and deGruch 1995: 98).
8 Steve Biko, “a Catholic and executive member of UCM” (University Christian Movement) and often attributed as the leader of South Africa’s BCM wrote “a scathing attack on the white-dominated multi-racial churches” and “argued that despite their criticism of apartheid they had tacitly accepted the status quo and adapted themselves to the South African way of life” (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995: 100).
For the purposes of this study there are four categories of churches in South Africa: Mainline Churches; Ethiopian Churches; Pentecostal Churches; and African Initiated Churches (AICs). As Prozesky and deGruchy narrate the history, resistance against the colonial religious glass ceiling came in two forms: 1) the Ethiopian Church⁹, a black African initiated parallel Christianity, whose structure was very similar to mainline North American and European churches, and 2) Pentecostal, Zionist, Shembe churches, (AICs) which focused on the spirit and healing and avoided politics (1995: 98). While the literature on Christianity in Africa often considers Pentecostal Churches and AICs as distinct expressions of one overarching category¹⁰, largely defined by their emergence from and as alternatives to Mainline Churches (Meyer 2004), they are important to further distinguish within this research, which has partnered with AICs for its case studies. The distinctions in much of the literature are drawn around a combination of theology and ritual, but the added distinction prioritised in this research is based on the Church’s structure and role within the community, consequently splitting Prozesky and deGruchy’s second resistance grouping into two distinct categories.

By way of brief overview, Mainline Churches, which are internally diverse and heterogeneous, include Protestant and Catholic Churches (Garner 2000: 50). The structures of mainline churches vary in their emphasis on hierarchy and dogma, but commonly have formal training for leaders and a defined and written code of conduct and practice, adopted and adapted by communities that claim membership to that community and title (e.g. Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist). This is not to argue that two mainline churches will be exactly alike, nor does it adequately acknowledge varied identities that have emerged within Mainline Churches, ranging from conservative to progressive, and constantly changing. One can, however, attend an Anglican service in the U.S., in South Africa, and India, and recognise a significant overlap in how church ‘happens’.

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⁹ As Adogame and Spickard position the Ethiopian Church, “One notable feature of these churches was that in spite of the change in the mantle of church leadership, they were still tied to the apron strings of the mission churches in their liturgical and hierarchical structures. Some of them still depended largely on the parent churches for financial resources” (Adogame & Spickard, 2010).

¹⁰ Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCC), including AICs, have historically been the object of study for their sense of ‘authenticity’ and ‘independence’; unfortunately this assertion of dualistic ideas of the authentic/performed, indigenous/colonial, liberating/legitimating have impacted the amount of information we have on these churches, as well as the subject of such studies (Meyer 2004). This study distinguishes Apostolic Zionist Churches largely because of their distinct socio-economic status as compared to Pentecostal churches in Alexandra in particular and in Johannesburg more broadly. While historically studied for their ‘authentic’ or ‘indigenous’ values, this study has selected these churches for their uniquely pervasive, non-hierarchical, small membership and highly participatory worship practices. Each of these will be addressed throughout the paper.
Pentecostalism and other charismatic movements are among the fastest-growing religious communities in the world; a 2006 survey from the World Christian Database suggests that one quarter of the world’s two billion Christians are Pentecostal and charismatic, which is to say, “lively, highly personal faiths, which emphasize such spiritually renewing ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’ as speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying” (Pew Report 2006). Pentecostal Churches are commonly traced back to the Chicago (USA) Azusa Street Revival, although Meyer (2004) argues that today’s Pentecostalism is something uniquely different from its earliest iteration. Pentecostalism is a global charismatic Christian movement with networks across continents and established leadership training programs (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995: 99). In South Africa, “Pentecostal churches had extensive Bible-training programmes which reached tens of thousands of black church leaders and preachers, many of them becoming pastors in African Independent churches” (Ibid: 99).

African Initiated Churches have the same charismatic core as Pentecostal Churches but are not globally connected, do not commonly have formal training for their leadership and do not focus on the health and wealth gospel that at times characterises the latter, but often see cultural ancestral practices as complementary to (and not antagonistic to) Christian practice (CDE 2008). AICs include the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the Shembe Church, and Apostolic Churches. AICs, which emerged in the early 20th century in Africa are characterised by the “centrality of the Bible, ecstatic prayers, healing, prophecy, visions and dreams, elaborate rituals, flexible modes of worship and liturgies, and charismatic leadership” (Adogame & Spickard 2010: 5). Zionist Churches in particular emerged to address “the needs of an impoverished proletariat. Avoiding any direct political involvement, and placing their major emphasis on a ministry of healing” (Prozesky and DeGrutchy 1995: 98). As migrant labour was forced off of farms and into the urban environment, that “early migrant experience gave rise to a distinctive religious expression, which has been called Zionist. It radiated from the industrial cities into the countryside through the migrant networks, but its strongest social support is still within the urban working class” (Ibid: 117). The Zionist Church, with its strong Puritan behavioural code (Kiernan 1994: 76), is also “well established in neighboring countries, notably in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and even in Zaire” (Ibid: 118). Prozesky and De Gruchy argue that the Ethiopian and charismatic churches, as two primary responses to mainline Christianity, were divided along economic distinctions, the “Zionist church serves the social and religious needs of the poor and illiterate by attempting to

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11 To grasp the magnitude of this global religion, consider that there are 12.90 million Pentecostals in Kenya, 35.2 million Renewalists in the Philippines, 65.1 million Charismatic Christians in Brazil, 23.4 million Pentecostals in Nigeria, and that the largest Pentecostal Church in the world is in Seoul South Korea (Pew Gallup Polls cited in Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2010: 214-242).
transcend their sense of deprivation and inadequacy; the Ethiopian church caters for the educated and somewhat better-off who have rebelled against a form of Christian discrimination” (Ibid). These characterizations of the Zionist and Apostolic churches in particular will be addressed with greater nuance in this dissertation.

The case-study churches in this study call themselves Apostolic Zionist Churches and have characteristics shared by the other charismatic traditions but structurally are very different from ZCC. Structurally, Apostolic Zionist Churches has a large number of small congregations, never reaching the hundreds or even thousands of members possible in the ZCC and Pentecostal Churches; when a leader emerges from the ranks of the small church (usually between 25-40 members), a new branch will break off, following the new leader (Ibid: 124).

Non-members’ perceptions of these denominations vary as much as the classifications and practices themselves do. Writing in 1994 one scholar explains, "In today's discourse, syncretism carries implications of impurity, backsliding, undisciplined sloth and indulgence, the incapacity to keep up, giving in to old ways; it implies weakness rather than strength. What is being imputed (and rejected) is a lack of agency and of power” (Kiernan 1994: 70). He goes on to argue that “The Zulu Zionist synthesis...arose on the contrary from multiple instances of agency and power” (Ibid: 70). Now over one decade and a half after that statement and after the end of the formal apartheid context that orchestrated against the mixing of races and cultures, and near the end of which political ethnic clashes occurred with frequency (Kiernan 1994) perhaps little has changed in perceptions of particular practices. Churches are still stigmatised by those who are not members (or perhaps are members of mainline churches) as practicing sorcery, exploiting members to make money, and being uneducated, untrained and backward (Anderson 2005: 69; Bompani 2008) and whose religious practice is “‘fetish’ and ‘demonic’” (Adogame & Spickard 2010: 6). Such perceptions impact levels of trust, partnership, and belonging within and across the communities in which churches exist (Bompani 2008). What has changed post-1994 is the political landscape, and one wonders if the protectionist position from which Apostolic Zionist churches emerged has not changed as well, or has the potential to change these churches’ relationship to the broader political landscape.

Alexandra Township

Alexandra is not simply a township, but a place that holds a prominent position in the history of black life and anti-apartheid resistance in South Africa: “The story of oppression and resistance in the township is already frequently told as part of the litany of African nationalism — its civil religion” (Bozolli
Alexandra Township was one of the few places where “non-whites” could own land in early 20th century, urban South Africa, and could live during apartheid distanced from the immediate control of the apartheid regime, although not uncontested by the government (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008: 6). Although it was initially developed as a white settlement in 1904, no whites responded to the sale of land, so Alexandra became a “native township” in 1912 (Ibid: 17-20). Many urban migrants and other black workers chose to live in areas like Alexandra and Sophiatown (also a township), even though issues of overcrowding and conditions of sanitation, roads, water and services were often poorer than the government “locations” (Ibid: 25-31). As early on as the 1930s, the township experienced oscillating ethnic tensions over internal leadership structures, and tensions between the township’s home/land owners and renters/squatters (Ibid: 35-57). Among its historic episodes of politically motivated violence, mobilised around ethnic lines, is an alleged Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) ‘takeover’ of one part of Alexandra in the early 1990s, resulting in a conflict between the IFP and African National Congress (ANC) in 1991-1992 (Ibid: 359-383). That violence in the early 1990s claimed over 100 lives and displaced non-Zulus formerly living in that area once known as ‘Beirut’, and today more neutrally termed “RCA” (Reconstruction Area, a name originating from the government sponsored development efforts in that area) (Sinwell and Podi 2010). It is from within the boundaries of the RCA that the violence in Alexandra started in May 2008.

Alexandra is situated geographically in the middle of four upscale suburbs, and is a single, direct taxi route to the inner-city, which makes it an attractive home to a significant number of foreign nationals (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008: 386), but unlike other neighbourhoods within the inner-city, some of which have up to 47% foreign-national residents (Landau 2006: 128) Alexandra has a diverse foreign-national population and a significant South African population as well (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008: 416-421). During the height of apartheid, Alexandra was a hub for political resistance (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008). With apartheid’s end, prominent residents with economic means were able to move out of Alexandra seeking greener pastures and leaving behind Alex’s high levels of violence, crime, poor service delivery and high unemployment (Religious leader interviews: 14 November, 1 December 2010). According to a recent pilot study, Alexandra is one of the poorest and most densely populated areas in Gauteng, with 91% of nationals and 94% of foreign nationals living below a proxy poverty line (Misago et al 2010: 24-25).
Churches in Alexandra Township

The three most common forms of formal association in Alexandra Township are ward meetings, religious organisations, and police or security committee (CPF) (Ibid: 44). Of those three, religious organisations likely represent the most common form of weekly, if not daily, participation. Churches are abundant in Alexandra: mainline church buildings stand solidly in most parts of the township; shacks bursting with music from Sunday morning until night, and schools and community centres occupied to capacity every weekend house the AIC Churches; self-erected tents and large skeleton structures hold the throngs of people attending Pentecostal churches; and the Juskei River commonly reflects the religious garb of one church or another, coming to pray (religious leader interviews, October-November 2010). Forty-four percent of foreign nationals and South African citizens attend religious organisations in Alexandra, making churches among the most likely places for people of different nationalities to come together to build community (Misago et al 2010: 44). An initial mapping exercise within Alexandra revealed that many churches have little to no national, linguistic, or ethnic diversity among their members; however, it is unique and noteworthy that some do.

Alexandra’s churches range from mainline to AIC and Pentecostal, however, Pentecostalism is less prominent in Alexandra than it is among other immigrant and upwardly mobile communities in Johannesburg. This observation, echoed by research from other South African townships (CDE 2008), may reflect the attraction of Pentecostal churches to the upwardly mobile working class, which is often not achievable or at least not witnessed by the populations living in townships (CDE 2008). In Alexandra, pastors of both AICs and mainline churches readily offer the distinction of a mainline/AICs divide as part of the explanation of how their church chooses to engage with the broader Christian and Alexandra community; while leaders of these various churches actively cooperated during the anti-apartheid struggle, today that solidarity has largely broken down (personal interviews 14 November 2010; 18 November 2010; 1 December 2010).

Rationale

This study takes as its starting point several in-depth reports covering the 2008 xenophobic violence that started in Alexandra Township, and academics’ and civil society’s warnings about continued xenophobic violence within South Africa. While recent reports found religious institutions to be the one place where foreign nationals and citizens hold common membership, and recommended working with churches on vulnerability reduction (Misago et al. 2010: 42) and even conflict resolution efforts (Phakathi 2010: 8-9), without a better understanding of the churches’ articulation of the
xenophobic violence and relationship between the church structure and the congregants, there is no roadmap for considering such recommendations. Meanwhile, protests against some of those same underlying causes flare regularly in Alexandra Township and across Johannesburg. In addition, the causal factors named in each of the post-2008 reports have yet to be explored through a theological lens. This include, for example, examining the relationship between nationalist discourse, attacks against non-citizens, a post-liberation conflation of citizenship with entitlement, religious movements that preach earthy gratification (immediate), vigilante justice (immediate) in poorer areas, and the relationship between a sense of entitlement and empathy, the latter which is required for participatory democracy. Some of these themes are addressed in my research. Furthermore, while much of the current research on religion in South Africa is focusing on Pentecostalism, which is international in its trends and membership and promises upward mobility to its membership, there is still a need to better understand Apostolic Zionist churches as they are embedded within impoverished communities (Bompani 2008), with an often different discourse about wealth and worldly success.

Unlike much of the Anthropology of Religion literature on religion in non-Western contexts that have historically focused on tokenism and magic (Meyer 2004), this study looks at meaning making in the mundane experience of daily violence and community life. Similarly, drawing from the sociology of religion (Berger 1969), this research aims to discern the relationship between congregant and leaderships’ understandings of the violence, and the presence of concepts circulating among extra-church community leaders, politicians, and those who stand to benefit from them. Religious communities are locations of prominent leaders (Sundkler 1961: Sectio V) and loci of making sense of and developing a response to the experiences in one’s daily life (Berger 1969), yet academics and activists alike do not have a full understanding of either the relationship between the leadership of a church and its congregants; how intimately ideas are disseminated from both the leadership, congregants and prominent community leaders within the church; or how these churches, the primary meaning-making and socialization institutions in Alexandra, makes sense of the violence itself and its members’ relation to that violence. Where such knowledge does exist, that knowledge must be updated for a post-Apartheid South Africa and applied to specific issues, like xenophobia. This study not only interrogates the specific experience of the 2008 violence, but also associated concepts, which find resonance in churches as well as the political sphere: scarcity and abundance, insiders and outsiders, and entitlement and work. These concepts were central to much of the rhetoric and articulated reasoning of the 2008 violence, and may likely be central to future conflicts.
The duality of scarcity and abundance reveals itself in Alexandra through the experience or articulation of limited amounts of land and housing, number of jobs, and number of women (Misago et al. 2009; Misago et al. 2010). Issues of entitlement and work are engaged in Christianity’s concepts of grace, salvation, and the so called Protestant work ethic (Mafuta 2010). Theologically, Christianity’s call of generosity, giving the shirt of your back when someone asks for your cloak, and sharing one’s meagre portions with faith that God provides, all add complexity to the experience of Christian worship in the midst of acute poverty (Rauschenbusch 1907; Yewango 1987) and political rhetoric of scarcity (especially when that scarcity finds a scapegoat in foreign nationals). The question of what preachers are preaching and how congregants understand such concepts should influence our understanding of motivating factors to the violence and future conflict resolution efforts as well. The fluidity of the insider/outsider distinction raises unique questions in South Africa, given the high numbers of internal and international migrants, the distinction between ethnic divides (including the role of language), the country’s colonial and racial history, and the decade and a half old concept of the rainbow nation (Chipkin 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2010). Theologically, the example of Jesus can be articulated almost solely as one of welcoming and living with ethnic, social, moral, religious, and national outsiders, with stories like that of the Good Samaritan illustrating such aspirations of love beyond boundaries (Rauschenbusch 1907); Christianity has of course also been a significant source for exclusion and call for violence against other religions, the non-religious, the ‘deviant’ within the religion, or those who are seemed as a threat to religious order around issues of sexuality and life (Volf 1996). French philosopher, Rene Girard, found Christianity to be a unique religion due to scripture siding with the poor and the weak, in contrast to the majority or the powerful (Peterson 2006); alternatively, messages by many Christian leaders support notions of worldly goods reflecting God’s blessing, while others take believers out of this world to focus on the hereafter. Again, this study will seek to uncover the relationship between how the leaders and congregants of churches in Alexandra make sense of these concepts, and their experience and meaning making in relation to the 2008 violence. Furthermore, violence or the threat of violence is a daily occurrence in Alexandra, and for many across South Africa. If one of the church’s central functions has historically been to help people make sense of the world and themselves in that world (Beyer 2007), then how the leadership and congregants made sense of the 2008 attacks will give some indication of both their level of engagement with experience of acute future violence as well as the daily experience of living in Alexandra Township.

In addition to reviewing the historical and sociological writing on Alexandra, this study utilises independent research, 2010 survey data and recently published reports describing a post 2008
community, to pave the way for long term analysis of the township and its social factors. Analysis of the 2008 violence notes the role of assistance among religious communities generally and the specific capacity for religious institutions in Alexandra Township to be places for future conflict resolution efforts, as well as the importance of leadership in turning a community toward violence or its absence. However, none of the reports examine the role of religious leadership or the presence of national diversity within religious communities across Alexandra Township’s many wards or neighbourhoods, nor their influence in making sense and shaping people’s understandings of community. In its broadest aim, this study will provide an analysis of the ways churches understand the violence and internal dynamics with which they achieve this, in an atmosphere of hyper-nationalism, poverty, violence, poor service delivery and unaccountable leaders within an ethnically and nationally diverse urban area.

**Research Question(s)**

(How) do churches in Alexandra Township shape the ways that members make meaning of daily life amidst an atmosphere of xenophobia?

**Sub-Questions**

1) How do church members talk about the 2008 violence in Alexandra, about xenophobia, and about relevant religio-cultural concepts like insider/outsider, scarcity/abundance, and entitlement/work?

2) (How) does church members’ discourse resonate with public and political discourse around xenophobia-related themes of violence, outsiders, scarcity, and entitlement?

3) Is there a relationship between how congregants and church leadership make sense of these themes and does it carry religious language?

**Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to understand first, how religious communities, in an atmosphere of xenophobia, understand relevant religio-cultural concepts like insider/outsider, scarcity/abundance, and entitlement/work, and second, how this understanding develops and is challenged between the congregation and the church leadership. The study attempted to answer these two questions by first mapping (through interviews) basic demographic information about churches in Alexandra and drew on that snapshot of the issues to craft the research tools for the case studies. The second part of the research was a case study of two Apostolic Zionist churches of similar socio-economic status, one in
RCA, and one outside of RCA through participant observation and interviews with the leadership and membership. I chose comparative studies within one denomination in order to discern meaning-making rhetoric and processes within this unique ‘denomination’ through the churches’ similarities, as well as to explore the impact of the structure of the church in relation to how congregants and leaders have come to understand the violence of 2008 and several correlate concepts through their differences. I chose the Apostolic Zionist church because two such churches exist in similar socioeconomic conditions but with different congregational make-up, allowing for comparison of differences in articulation within the church while controlling for as many factors as possible. The churches that agreed to allow me to work with them exist within or in close proximity to RCA, and church members tend to live in close proximity to the churches, which is not necessarily true of mainline or Pentecostal church. While there may be a high level of mobility even within Alexandra, the politicised memory of the RCA persists. Therefore the churches were selected with the assumption that the congregants’ experiences of the violence was more direct than could be presumed for two churches of another congregation.

The study’s objectives are to:

- Establish what churches exist in Alexandra, gain a basic understanding of the demographics of their membership (in terms of geography, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status), and how the pastor or leadership speak about issues of scarcity, outsiders, and entitlement.
- Establish the attempts of churches, around the 2008 attacks, to both prevent and then heal the community affected by the attacks, and to address the physical needs of those attacked.
- For the case study churches, establish congregants’ articulations of scarcity/abundance, outsider/insider, entitlement/work, and members’ understandings of the 2008 violence, listening for theological and nationalistic language.
- Examine attitudes of congregants in relation to the church structure (e.g. leadership structure, meetings beyond Sundays, structures of accountability, responsibilities to the group) and compare across the two congregations, which are otherwise comparable regarding socioeconomic status, and to some degree theology.
Chapter Two
Literature Review

To consider how the churches serve as a meaning-making and identity-constructing institutions for members – in relation to the atmosphere of xenophobia that is present in Alexandra – I will present an overview of the main findings from the post-2008 reports, discuss why and how each of three themes (scarcity, entitlement, outsider\textsuperscript{12}) was selected from the post-2008 reports, and build onto those concepts by drawing on a variety of scholars and disciplines. However, before introducing the three key concepts that structured the analysis of this research I will build the necessary analytical foundation in two parts. First, I will present the role of religion as a meaning-making, socialising, and identity-building institution, theorised through sociology and anthropology. Second, I will present an expanded discussion of the dynamics of Christianity in South Africa, as these developments affect everything from the leadership structure within different churches to how various churches are perceived by and understand themselves in the larger community.

Role of Religion in People’s Lives

One foundational claim on which this dissertation’s argument is built, is that religious community shapes the way people think and behave in complex and diverse, but powerful ways. The theory, arguments and defence of this claim have produced volumes on their own. In this sub-introduction of the literature review I will give a brief defence of this claim, drawing heavily on sociological Peter Berger, and conclude with reference to several practical applications of the ‘shaping’ role of religion in aspects of life that relate fundamentally to this dissertation’s case study; politics and development.

Building on Marx, Weber and Durkheim, theories of socialization initially focused on the role of education and the family in establishing roles for all members of society (Meyer 2004: xiv). Berger explains this same pursuit of order and place by way of the cultural imperative: “The cultural imperative of stability and the inherent character of culture as unstable together posit the fundamental problem of man’s world-building activity” (1969: 17), and socialization is one of the ways that this problem is addressed through “the processes by which a new generation is taught to live in accordance with the

\textsuperscript{12} Discussions of xenophobia and violence are woven through each of these concepts, and therefore will not receive their own separate discussions. Similarly, leadership is not theorized here, even though it features prominently in the post-2008 reports and will be discussed throughout the research analysis, because it is primarily a functional category in the context of this research.
institutional programmes of the society” (Ibid: 24). Religion\textsuperscript{13} is one primary means of learning one’s role in a society (Beyer 2007), from heavy ideological tasks like Christianity supporting slavery in pre-Civil War U.S.A. or the Dutch Afrikaans Church supporting Apartheid in pre-democracy South Africa, to reinforcing social agendas like the Protestant work ethic. Religion helps people to understand themselves within the larger narrative of the world and often “legitimates” claims to understanding the world precisely “because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality” (Berger 1969: 41). Religious systems do not operate apart from other social systems, institutions and forces (e.g. political, cultural), but shape and are shaped by those systems every day (Adogame & Spickard 2010: 11). In addition, for almost every religious community supporting one system of belief there exists a community within the same tradition in contradiction to the first, for instance in the case of liberation theology from Central and South America or religiously based liberation movements in the US and South Africa, in contrast to the examples above (CDE 2008).

Despite the breadth of purpose that religious practice and beliefs speak to, how one learns to operate within the social surroundings and make sense of those surroundings is often facilitated by religion in a personal, communal and/or broader cultural sense. Wearing (or not) the \textit{hijab} (headscarf) for Muslim women, eating (with different levels of strictness) Kosher among Jews, and the boundaries of ‘appropriate’ sexuality in Christianity are three examples of religions’ power in charting individual and communal lives and attaching daily actions with particular meaning (Aldridge 2007). Different communities and individuals interpret religious mandates differently, but religion will likely have something to say about most social practices from birth to marriage to death, and perhaps birth again.

Peter Berger’s (1969) secularisation thesis that dominated the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century states that as a society modernises, it secularises. This theory has been revisited and reconsidered with the fast spread of Pentecostalism throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa, the spread of Islam throughout the Middle East and Africa, and the very public nature of a politicised religion (Biggar & Hogan 2009; Bompani 2008; Ellis and Haar 1998; Robertson & Chirico 1985). Berger himself has revised his original thesis to say that as societies modernise, they pluralise, that is, that they adapt to exist in the midst of diversity, including religious diversity (Berger 2006). Not only scholars, but also politicians and policy

\textsuperscript{13} Recognising a long-standing and important debate about what religion is, this dissertation approaches religion from a functional sociological perspective that sees religion as “a human projection, grounded in specific infrastructures of human history” as part of society’s “world-building” enterprise (Berger 1969: 182, 13). Of course, while Marx took the same approach, that “man makes religion; religion does not make man” (Marx 1977 reprint: 131), his conclusion that religion is illusory, and dangerously so, is in contrast to Berger who does not want to make any ontological claims about religion, and does not believe that his starting point says anything definitively about non-sociological claims about religion at all (Berger 1969: 182). In this dissertation I take the latter’s stance.
makers have taken notice of the influence of religion in people’s daily lives and decision making (Hogan 2009). In addition to the presence of a growing number of ‘believers’, scholars have watched carefully the capacity of religious communities to facilitate or hinder health and healing processes for members and the group (Hagerty 2011; CDE 2008; Copeland-Linder 2006:580; Pfeiffer 2002; Thomas 2001; Garner 2000; Bozoli 1998). As one author writes about a case study of an Apostolic church in the Western Cape, the church’s “spiritual and physical ‘medicinal’ rituals fought off types of sickness/pollution that encompassed anything that was a threat to one’s wellness or health as it related to an assortment of issues varying from violence, unemployment, marriage, infertility, to family problems” (Thomas 2001: 137). Building from similar conclusions, a Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008 report found that “Both in the townships and in the suburbs... religion had done far more to improve lives and morale than the political programmes and promises of recent years” (CDE 2008: 27). The report, which covers Johannesburg, sees beneficial effects from religious faith “in the areas of hypertension, longevity, depression, suicide, sexual behaviour, alcohol and drug use, youth delinquency, well-being, hope, self-esteem, and educational attainment” (Ibid). The report also describes a sense of entrepreneurship among Pentecostal churches, which diminishes the members’ sense of dependency on the government and promotes an improved sense of self. In addition to such commentary on seemingly positive aspects of religious institutions, scholars have also examined the potentially destructive impacts, including: the rejection among some apostolic churches of ‘western’ medicine or promotion of alternative medicine (Pfeiffer 2002; Hunt 1998: 273); the exclusionary nature of religious community that creates yet another set of outsiders (Narayan 1999: 13, 41; Wolterstorff 2009: 23, 25); and the Marxian opiate-like effect of religious ideologies that bolster the state’s authority, maintain the status quo of poverty and unequal systems, or are manipulated by external political ends (Etherington 1996). This Marxian political critique has been one of the primary accusations against Zionist and Apostolic churches, so I will briefly turn to that specific critique before moving onto one additional intersection of religion and the broader social world, development.

Role of Religion in People’s Lives: Religion and Political Life

Religious institutions have long been recognised as a potential transmitter of state ideologies in overt and subtle ways (Althusser 1971: 144), including joint economic-missionising colonialism across Africa (Adogame & Spickard, 2010: 12). Even as religious institutions perpetuate particular ideologies, they may contradict or subvert others. Religious institutions’ positions may even change over time, for example, in the case of the Lutheran Church in Nazi Germany (Bonheoffer 1963). AICs have typically
been considered apolitical, offering little threat, for instance, to the Apartheid government of South Africa.

One scholar writing on AICs and politics recently concluded, “South African AICs, precisely because they are deeply rooted within their social environment, promote and channel a democratic culture and democratic values that sustain a confidence that the promises of the liberation struggle can still be realised in the post-apartheid era” (Bompani 2008: 677). If we contrast this subtle and pragmatic political agenda to the description from two religious historians, we see the spectrum in which politics and AICs are held (the majority of scholars reinforcing the latter):

It should be very clear that Zionists are not engaged in a programme of social reform under a religious guise. Their objective is not to preoccupy them. Rather, their concern is with the rescue and salvation of individuals on a voluntary basis, and with supporting them economically, socially and spiritually. Their solution is not the reconstruction of an unjust society but the formation of refuges for the socially battered. To this end, they eschew all worldly pursuits, with the exception of the necessity to work, and cultivate an ascetic approach to life which stresses diligence, sobriety, frugality and savings. This self-contained and conservative outlook rules out any involvement or even interest in matters political. They are not merely politically neutral but intensely anti-political, another way in which they have always differed from Ethiopians (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995: 123-3).

In the latter analysis, we do not see a church so consumed by other worldliness that they pay little attention to life here and now, but the presentation of a community that is precisely concerned with ameliorating the ills of their position in this world in a way that does not upset the current system or flirt with the broader cultural answers.

AICs and Zionism emerged in a context of new, urban migrant labour and parallel systems of believing and belonging that rejected non-white religious leadership, eventually taking up the mantle of resistance, in a variety of subtle and overt ways, to Apartheid. While syncretistic and urban poor religious institutions are not unique to 20th century South Africa, post 1994 is the first encounter of this strain of Christianity within a democratic, non-legislatively racialised South Africa. While living conditions may remain poor to abhorrent, it is reasonable and even necessary to take a new look at the role these religious institutions are playing in contemporary, urban South Africa.

The nature of Zionist communities in South Africa has been debated since the 1970s, largely on this non-uniform tradition’s relationship to politics. While the Zionist church was not born into Apartheid, it was born from people’s experiences in the new, urban environment. Prozesky and DeGruchy argue that in response to the newly competitive urban environment of “insecurity” employment:
The Zionist churches supplied answers to these problems. They provided intimate and supportive communities, they gave concentrated attention to healing, and they mobilized spiritual reserves to counter the aggression of sorcery. In all of these ways – organizational, supportive, therapeutic and protective – they formed coping institutions which aimed at the delivery of benefits in the here and now (1995: 123).

The primary function of the Zionist church, then, was “to address the problems confronting those initially drawn into the cities as migrant workers” whose “experience is predominantly one of dislocation and disorientation” (Ibid: 122). If that role has expanded in a post-apartheid era, one AIC church leader articulated the consistent goal of the church as being to “give hope to a demoralised nation, to give dignity to people who were taught to be racially inferior, to give unity to a country that was divided” (Reverend Jacob interview cited in Bompani 2008: 677). One question that remains, then, is, with the change in political system, have the specific needs that AICs emerged to address changed? And, if the mission of Zionist churches, in particular, are to be both unifying and healing, how do such churches respond in the context of the highly divisive anti-foreigner rhetoric and actions of the 2008 attacks? Before turning to these questions, however, is one final insertion about the interplay between religion and development in the South African context.

Role of Religion in People’s Lives: Religion and Development

Marx’s famous critique of religion, as an “opiate of the masses” (Marx 1977 reprint: 131) has proven a fruitful jumping-off point for many scholars and researchers’ exploration of the relationship between religion, oppression, and liberation as well as development (Etherington 1996). In the South African context, with particular attention to Pentecostal Churches, studies on economic improvement, development and health have highlighted the capacity of religious institutions, in the absence of a fully functioning state, to improve people’s lives. Chipkin & Ngqulunga (2008) argue that churches in South Africa perpetuate the state’s support of liberal capitalism. Perhaps ironically the Ethiopian and Zionist churches first emerged from the church’s white leadership’s refusal to promote black leadership within one denomination, as one historian argues, because they thought the black leadership would not “temper their zeal and submit to the curbs of missionary discipline” (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995: 118). Robert Garner (2000) has published on the capacity of Mainline, Pentecostal, and Apostolic Zionist churches to foster a sense of discipline, cohesion, upward mobility and social change among congregants of five case study churches in the Natal township of Edendale (population 100,000). Garner bases his scale on indicators of: indoctrination; religious experience; exclusion; and socialization,
ultimately finding that Pentecostal and some African Independent Churches are most poised for change “from below” in fostering economic mobility among congregants (2000: 316).

With a basic understanding of some of the roles of Christian institutions in South Africa heretofore, we now turn to the post-2008 reports on the xenophobic violence and an explanation of how themes were selected from within these reports.

Reports on the 2008 xenophobic attacks

Scarcity/abundance, outsider/insider and entitlement/work are three conceptual pairs that I as the researcher drew from the reports of the May 2008 surge of xenophobic violence. Therefore, while this dissertation does not take up the question of the cause of the violence, it is important to summarize these reports’ findings in order to reveal how these conceptual pairs fit into the existing analysis of the violence and xenophobia more broadly in South Africa. Following these synopses is a brief section on violence, followed by theoretical discussions of the concepts at the centre of this study.

Three years after the three week flashpoint of violence against African foreign nationals across South Africa’s townships, informal settlements, and rural areas there is a strong foundation of research diagnosing the causes of the violence in a variety of settings, including the unique characteristics of Alexandra (Atlantic Philanthropies 2010; Misago et al. 2009; Human Sciences Research Council 2008). A report published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) aimed to provide an analysis of immediate and root causes of the 2008 violence and present recommendations based on original research in seven sites in Gauteng (including Alexandra) and the Western Cape, conducted over a five month period (Misago et al. 2009). In the aftermath of the violence, many pronouncements made by politicians, community leader, scholars, media and civil society were based on outdated information and conventional myths, which were often inaccurate (Ibid). In response, the IOM report went beyond attitudes and perceptions, which dominated existing research, to articulate the “political economy of violence against outsiders” (Ibid: 2). Grievances from South African attackers, named by many scholars, politicians and civil society groups as the causes of the violence, include complaints that foreigners were taking jobs, gaining access to houses and services (electricity, water, refuse) when citizens were not, and taking South African women (Ibid: 7). These claims are neither new nor unique to South Africa. Also named among the causes, experiences, and aftermath of the attacks, are a nationalistic rhetoric implicating political officials and local leaders in spurring a xenophobic atmosphere that equates poor service delivery, and the nation’s high levels of poverty and unemployment with the presence of foreign nationals (Ibid: 33-36). In addition, attacks occurred in some parts of Alexandra and not others, and the
fault line did not fall along levels of poverty, presence/quality of service delivery, or numbers of immigrants; the strongest immediate indicators of violence in various parts of Alexandra were the structures of power, leadership and authority negotiated in that neighbourhood, among the city’s political representatives, local leaders, police officers and business people (Ibid: 2-3). This leadership appeared to be: 1) the focal point of unacknowledged frustrations about service delivery, housing, etc. and a vocalization of immigrants as the real culprits, resulting in a locally recognised leadership that would take the law into their own hands; 2) the organisers or galvanisers who rallied the crowd against immigrant homes and shops as a way to boost their own business or legitimate themselves in the eyes of the people; or 3) the dam that held fast, refusing to let attackers enter the premises for fear that non-immigrants would also be attacked and killed (Ibid: 38-46). This report found that “only a trusted, competent and committed leadership (from grassroots to high-level officialdom) can make a significant difference in terms of preventing social tensions from turning into xenophobic violence” (Ibid: 3).

Acknowledging the importance of leadership in directing the violence, and the importance of religious leadership both within their congregations and the broader community, this raises questions about what role, if any, religious leaders had before, during, and long after the violence had taken place.

Additional findings from the IOM report stress a “lack of trust, prompt and effective conflict resolution mechanisms that leads to vigilantism and mob justice,” with political vacuums that community leaders’ vying for power through such means as “reinforcing communities’ resentment towards what is a perceived as ‘non-compliant’ foreign nationals,” and a culture of impunity in relation to public violence - especially xenophobic violence (Ibid: 3). They found that local leaders and police often chose not to intervene when violence broke out because they either supported the hostile sentiments toward foreign nationals, or feared “losing legitimacy and political positions if they were seen as defending unpopular groups” (Ibid: 3). Religious institutions (e.g. churches) are one source of social capital, promoting trust and interdependence at least within and often beyond the community, toward a range of a constructive and destructive ends (Candland 2000; Chipkin & Ngqulunga 2008: 74) particularly in the case of non-hierarchical religious organisation (Narayan 1999: 22). Given the pervasiveness of religion in South Africa (Chipkin & Ngqulunga 2008) and in Alexandra (Misago et al. 2010), these findings give rise to questions about the perceived mission, if any, and the engagement of a variety of churches around issues of trust both within and beyond their own congregations. This question is particularly interesting when interrogating mainline churches in contrast to AICs. It is in light of these findings and the report’s recommendations that this research’s examination of churches’
leadership and church structure, and meaning-making processes in relation to violence can add an important missing link to the existing literature.

A five hundred page report supported by Atlantic Philanthropies (2010), with contributions from a handful of institutions (Strategy & Tactics, Gauteng City-Region Observatory, University of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, Gauteng Provincial Government, UJ’s Centre for Sociological Research, University of the Western Cape, the Amandla Forum and the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and scholars, looked at the responses of various sectors, including faith-based organisations, trade unions, the African National Congress, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and the corporate sector, as well as location specific case studies. The Atlantic Philanthropies report also noticeably extols the role of civil society (including faith-based organizations) in responding to the needs of those attacked, with the articulated purpose of analyzing civil society in order to promote it as a permanent and integral part of everyday life, not just in crisis response situations (Atlantic Philanthropies 2010). The report itself finds cause for the violence in “South Africa’s exploitative and racist apartheid past, ongoing poverty and structural inequality, internal and international patterns of migration, immigration policies and deep-seated xenophobic attitudes” (Parsley & Everatt 2010: 2). The authors argue that “these factors combined with political instability, electricity blackouts, rising consumer prices and a low national mood to form a toxic cocktail which fuelled unprecedented national rage targeted at African migrants and fellow South Africans” (Ibid). In another introductory chapter, Everatt describes the poisonously xenophobic or anti-foreigner attitude revealed in focus groups in early and late 2008 and again in late 2009 (2010: 7). The report found civil society organizations and local leadership were effective in curbing the violence in the short and medium term, although issues of scarcity and poverty are still articulated by residents as a problem of foreigners (Sinwell & Podi 2010). Neither this nor the other reports, however, further describe or identify the perpetrators who galvanised the crowds and exploited scarcity sentiments for their own gain. According to analysis from the previously cited report, the causes cited above are in fact not sufficient to explain the violence, but they go some distance in setting the scene in which the May 2008 attacks occurred (while the Atlantic Report was published one year after the IOM report, the claims had been discussed within the prior report). This lengthy report, while it does have a chapter dedicated to the response of churches, does not, beyond one statement, detail the role of AICs in resistance, promotion or response efforts. The report also recommends that the state work with religious communities, including AICs, in future conflict resolution efforts to prevent future violence, but there is little justified foundation for this as a solution (Phakathi 2010).
The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted research in the months following the May 2008 attacks and published both a research report as well as a report from the June 2008 roundtable hosted by the Democracy and Governance research programme of the HSRC and the British High Commission of South Africa. Citing a rise in xenophobic sentiments in both rural and urban populations in formal and informal settlements, HSRC’s report found, “While the causes of the violence are complex and multifaceted, three broad factors have emerged as underlying causes... relative deprivation, South African exceptionalism, and exclusive nationalism” (HSRC 2008: 14). The report defines relative deprivation as “a general sense of feeling deprived of something to which a person or groups feels entitled to,” South African exceptionalism as a superiority complex in relation to the rest of Africa, stemming from the Apartheid experience, and exclusive nationalism as an effect of cohesion efforts post Apartheid to foster social solidarity (Ibid: 15). The report was based on six focus groups in Alexandra, Mamelodi, and Tembisa, and divided by gender and age, and ultimately made 11 recommendations for preventing such violence in the future (Ibid: 25). Among HSRC’s recommendations, echoed in other later reports, were both programs to counter concerns of job and housing competition, poor service delivery and overcrowding, and educational campaigns to inform South Africans about the status, contributions and diversity of immigrants to South Africa today. This report makes claims of connection between discourse, belief, and action, which raises questions about the presence of counter or alternative discourses on deprivation, exceptionalism and nationalism, and their capacity to similarly impact on behaviour.

Violence

The production of violence, while difficult to separate from other themes addressed in this chapter (including xenophobia), will be taken up here and continued throughout the rest of the literature review as a separate but interconnected phenomenon. “Violence has become like a festering sore in the body of South African society. It has undermined the fabric of our society. It bursts forth, pouring pus and blood just as we begin to have hope that temporary calm will become a true harbinger of peace” (Straker 1992: ix). These words, written in Ramphele’s forward for Gill Straker’s 1992 published *Faces in the Revolution*, articulates exasperation with violence that persisted even as formal Apartheid was coming to a close, and its destructive consequences for those involved in the struggle. With the onslaught of mass violence aimed against the non-white populations during Apartheid and structural violence stretching into the 19th century, South Africans are no strangers to the need to make

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The HSRC’s reference to deprivation is similar to what I discuss as ‘scarcity’ in this dissertation.
sense of this violence (Straker 1992). Straker cites French-Algerian philosopher, Franz Fanon, who believed that violence, once experienced, had to be expressed through violence from the victim, lest the victim should be consumed and destroyed by such violence: “it may be directed outward against a scapegoat, which explains the frequency with which the oppressed attack on another, relating to one another in the dehumanised terms that were imposed upon them” (Fanon cited in Straker 1992: 109). In the case of the May 2008 violence it is the reported account that many of the perpetrators and those in the crowd articulated a sense of personal victimization about suffering, which was rhetorically part of the motivation for attacking foreign nationals (Misago et al. 2010). While much could be said about violence on its own, I will move on to the discussion of violence and scape-goating as religious conceptions and systems for maintaining order, within the overarching framework of scarcity.

**Conceptualising Scarcity/Abundance**

The concept of scarcity emerged from all of the previously mentioned reports in the sense of an experience of limited resources (houses, jobs, services) by Alexandra Township residents; this scarcity was accompanied by a discussion of who deserves the resources, and in what order, both of which are addressed by the outsider/insider and entitlement/work sections of this literature review. If scarcity is, as I argue, a central feature of both residents’ and political leaders’ discourse in relation to foreign nationals, it is worthwhile to grapple with the complexities of this concept and its daily implications. This section of the literature review is intended to introduce several ways of engaging with the concept, and, as neither poverty nor the number of foreigners present adequately predicted the parts of Alexandra that were affected by the May 2008 attacks (Misago et al 2009: 46), I aim to explore alternative frameworks for conceptualising scarcity beyond a have/have-not analysis.

There are a number of angles from which one can approach the issue of scarcity; natural resource scarcity in Africa and scarcity as the essence of economics are two common approaches. Beyond however, the purely economic aspects, are a variety of explanations that attempt to explain human behaviour: scarcity stemming from an unsatisfiable desire inherent in the human condition (Danner 1995); and scarcity as the foundation for a “total sociocultural order” (Stanley 1968: 855), even within a South Africa specific context (Percival & Homer-Dixon 1998). Unique to writing on scarcity, but related to this dissertation, is a conceptualisation of abundance (scarcity’s inverse) as the definition or articulation of God, with important relational consequences for human interaction (Allison 2006). Each of these will be engaged briefly in this review. In many ways these discussions of scarcity overlap significantly with the concept of precariousness (Gibney 2009) and vulnerability (Misago et al. 2010).
utilised in (forced) migration studies. Drawing on these resonances, scarcity, as discussed here, is more than not having something or having too little of something, it also connotes an attitude of fear or apprehension that the limited resource could be gone at any moment, leaving one’s self without, and even spurring competition or violence over those resources (Girard 1986). This discussion will draw heavily on French philosopher, Rene Girard’s writing on scarcity and disorder as the drive for human disunity and the motivation for (ritual) scape-goating.

The inclusion of a theological argument (Allison 2006 referenced above) in sociological interrogation is unorthodox, so let me address the oddity directly. When addressing a similar question, sociologist Peter Berger said:

Only after the theologian has confronted the historical relativity of religion can he genuinely ask where in this history it may, perhaps, be possible to speak of discoveries – discoveries, that is, that transcend the relative character of their infrastructures. ... An ‘empirical theology’ is of course, methodologically impossible. But a theology that proceeds in a step-by-step correlation with what can be said about man empirically is well worth a serious try (1969: 189).

That try is a caveat and not the object of Berger’s work, but this dissertation’s discussion of scarcity works on a sort of reverse of what Berger is proposing. The literature reviewed here includes a theological understanding of scarcity as a new avenue through which to interpret the experience of scarcity by members and leaders of the case study churches. Liberation theology, which argues that God has a preferential priority for the poor and that poverty and the systems that support it are antithetical to God’s desires (Etherington 1996: 211), while relevant to this discussion, will only be nominally addressed below.

A community experiencing resource scarcity and the social fissures that can arise from a context of extreme austerity are ripe for various group cohering measures, including scape-goating, according to French philosopher Rene Girard, who has written extensively on religion, violence, and a consistent scape-goating narrative and praxis within religious communities across space and time (Girard 1986). Girard uniquely ties the social experience of identifying, blaming and killing a sacrificial ‘guilty’ party to historical, religious practices in which “a person or group become a scapegoat, blamed for whatever seems to threaten or disrupt the group” (Girard 1986 cited in Peterson 1999: 104). However, as one interpreter of Girard explains, “As society united to seize, accuse, and kill the scapegoat, it fails to deal with the deeper social cleavage that result from mimetic desire” (Ibid: 104). Mimetic desire, which is central to this particular understanding of religious scape-goating, is a desire based in part on exactly the limited nature of the object, it is literally mimicking another’s desires, based on the norms, standards,
and ideals set beyond the individual, by the broader community (Girard 1986: 145-8). A classic example is a man who falls in love with his best friend’s girlfriend or wife. While the concept of scape-goating was mobilised in some of the post-2008 reports from Johannesburg, it is Girard’s analysis of the relationship between scape-goating and scarcity (which causes the desire) that is most crucial to understanding the relevance of scarcity issues within this research’s main questions. Issues of greed and jealousy will be discussed in the chapter five case study churches, raising interesting questions about Girard’s theorisation.

Building on Girard’s concept of scarcity, Allison deploys a conception of the Christian God as abundance, which is not related to an ‘other’ (that is, more than, bigger than, better than the other, a desire stemming from scarcity) but simply is of its own power (Allison 2006). Central to Allison’s conceptualization of abundance is a rejection of human action necessarily defined by that desire and thus defined by scarcity (Ibid). While this thesis does not aim to make any theological statements of its own, these two ways of understanding scarcity and abundance provide an alternative framework for further exploration of the role of meaning-making and identity practices within religious communities in this research’s specific context of Alexandra Township.

Danner has argued that it is not scarcity in terms of the limited supply that we should be concerned with, but making ends meet for those items “unlike free things”, which are “more wanted than are available” (1995: 28). While this supply-and-demand framing of scarcity does not get at the unique situation of, for instance, government houses for South African citizens, his interpretation introduces an interesting concept, that scarcity “is far from an expression of the stinginess of nature or of a supreme being, nor is it just a manifestation of human perversity, sensuality run amuck or a greed taking advantage of others” but “human persons, individually and collectively” whose “wants and hopes transcend their material means” (Ibid: 32). Danner’s scarcity is therefore based in the very kind of desire that many AICs warn against. While Danner argues as a ‘western’ scholar, both his conclusion and its negation are applicable beyond his social context, and in fact tends toward at least one positive outcome, “This in turn has produced the most basic and foundational expression of social collaboration and human solidarity” (Ibid).

One post-apartheid piece of research addresses the issue of resource competition in South Africa from 1980-1998, with particular attention to the period around Nelson Mandela’s release from prison in 1990. While much of the authors’ focus is resource scarcity in the former homelands, which spurred considerable urban migration, their theoretical discussion of the precursors to scarcity-induced violence are more widely applicable and include, “quantity and vulnerability of environmental
resources, the balance of political power, the nature of the state, patterns of social interaction, and the structure of economic relations among social groups” (Percival & Homer-Dixon 1998: 280). The authors argue, looking particularly at KwaZulu Natal and the Witwatersrand:

The concentration of many people on a limited resource base, in the context of weak local government authority, leads to resource capture: ‘violence (becomes) entrenched with formation of competing local power structures whose leaders seek to gain and secure power through the control of basic residential resources such as land, home allocations, services, business rights etc.’ (Hindson & Morris, 1994: 1). This violence also plays a role in determining migration: people often leave their homes after violence erupts, but their places are quickly taken by migrants desperate for housing (Cross et al., 1992: 43) (Percival & Homer-Dixon 1998: 288).

In this urban, poor, South Africa-specific case, the authors argue that while scarcity is not the most central cause of the late 20th century violence, that no political mobilisation or the social context that aggravated it, would have been as successful as it was, or as destructive. This South African analysis fits into what Stanley began crafting as a more comprehensive “sociocultural theory of scarcity” (1968: 856).

“Scarcities are seen to arise out of unconcretized implications of already existing values, norms, legitimizing symbols, integrative social organization, and technics viewed as patterns of social meanings constituting a total sociocultural order” (Stanley 1968: 855). Stanley’s cohering analyses from a survey of literature integrates each of the three concepts explored in this dissertation, that is, scarcity, outsiders and entitlement. As he argues, “there are few more fundamental and theoretically productive issues in all of social science than the notion of scarcity” with respect to: “development and modernization discussions”; a new shift at that time away from “iron determinism” and toward a “relative freedom of choice”; its relation to “modernization and development” including “massive changes in scarcity definitions and scarcity consciousness”; and finally the connection between “objective and subjective realms of experience” as “a generic factor in all social movements” and thus of “relevance for the study of collective behaviour” (Stanley 1968: 855-6). This fundamental issue of scarcity and its relation to both freedom/choice and development raise interesting questions for the case study churches in this study, as discussed in chapter five.

**Conceptualising Entitlement/Work**

Entitlement-qua-citizenship was a strong theme throughout the post-2008 reports in the sense of ‘South Africans’ deserving scarce resources more than foreign nationals, who were perceived to be the deceitful or corrupting benefactors of state sponsored programs and spending (Misago et al. 2010). Entitlement has strong resonances in both political and religious discourse, although the sentiments are
often contradictory. Nativist, nationalist discourse may argue for one person’s ‘right’ to land and services of the state, and it is the violation of this right that spurs self-justified retribution against whomever when that entitlement is neglected or affronted. Christianity has seen lively debates about precisely questions of deserving, most commonly presented as ‘salvation by grace’ versus salvation evidenced through works (Mafuta 2010: 11-17). In both cases the source, arbiter, and implications of entitlement and work are different. Like the other literature review segments, this section argues for a particular conceptual foundation behind this issue of entitlement and work through which I will interpret the empirical research of this study.

Researchers have shown very clearly that citizenship is not the only or primary indicator of levels of various vulnerabilities within Johannesburg (Misago et al. 2010). However, in the rhetoric of the 2008 violence, an articulation of entitlement, and elected officials’ failure to safeguard nationals’ benefits and rights, was central to the crowd’s justification of the violence. ‘Work’ was a major theme in the post-2008 reports and is a unique conceptual partner to entitlement in this context. The relationship between these two concepts is not dualistic, but complex, referencing a sense of entitlement to work, a sense of entitlement without work and a sense of entitlement alongside work. The literature reviewed here is a discussion of citizen as prioritised rights-holder and the systems that (re)produce that discussion: starting with a description of post-independent South Africa nationalist project-turned-nativist (Ndlovu-Gatsheni); moving to an applied description of nativist discourse as an urban survival strategy in Johannesburg (Landau); next looking more broadly into the elements of political discourse of fear as explanations of xenophobic violence (Neocosmos); and finally, stepping back to examine the role of the state within the perpetuation of xenophobic violent patterns of social behaviour, toward understanding the relationship between entitlement and violence (Nagengast).

In 1968, Franz Fanon predicted that within post-colonial countries, the black bourgeoisie would go into competition with Europeans but that the majority of poor, black citizens would “start a fight against non-national Africans” (Fanon 1968/1990: 125 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 63). In South Africa’s case, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) has argued that many citizens in the country have adopted a nationalism-turned-chauvinistic-nativism sense of entitlement based on indigeneity, which has fostered the country’s witness of violence against African foreign nationals. The contested terrain of post-liberation South Africa, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, include, “imaginings of the African liberation agenda”, “ownership of strategic resources, knowledge production, control of public discourse, imaginations of the nation and visions of citizenship and democracy” (Ibid: 61). This contested terrain continues to draw, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni has suggested, from both liberation conceptualisations (and
promises) of the nation, and a sort of “cultural nationalism and nativism as a way to compensate for crisis and decline” now “unable to deliver on material promises” (Ibid: 67). This tension between the South Africa’s ideologically neo-liberal ‘bourgeoisie’ and those who feel left-behind by the promises of post-Apartheid South Africa are represented precisely by the gap in space, access, and resources that these oversimplified categories hold. To explore more fully this connection between ideology and action, I turn to empirical research from Johannesburg and other urban African centres.

Landau argues that nativist discourse is the product of a population of South African citizens formerly denied access to urban spaces, and battling to claim that space anew in the context of “the threats that trade and travel pose to existing values, hierarchies, and livelihoods” (2006: 126). In this sense, the battle of belonging is both a battle with the past and a battle of proximity; while African foreign nationals are not the people who previously denied access to South Africans or are responsible for the continued deprivation of a large percentage of South Africa’s citizens, they are the closest in proximity and perception of powerlessness (particularly in relation to state authorities or leaders) to those urban poor residents struggling to realize their own plans. The presence of foreign nationals, “as scapegoats... help to preserve the post-partheid project’s legitimacy by providing convenient explanations of widespread crime, disease, and unemployment” as well as “a reified and dehumanized foreign ‘Other’” (Landau 2006: 127). Thus, Landau argues, urban internal migrants make claims on the basis of nationality rather than the numerous other potentially divisive “fault lines” like “ethnicity or class” that would disrupt the national project and fail to position South Africa’s internal migrants in an advantageous way (Ibid: 30). Building upon this argument for the adoption of nativist rhetoric, we turn to one theory of the interplay between such rhetoric, the state, and violence.

Neocosmos aims to look past the explanation of scarcity as the cause of violence, arguing that “poverty can only account for the powerlessness, frustration and desperation of the perpetrators, but not for their target” (2008: 586), and argues that among the precursors of violence is a political discourse whose politics of fear has three components: “a state discourse of xenophobia, a discourse of South African exceptionalism and a conception of citizenship founded exclusively on indigeneity” (Ibid: 587). Each of these three components of this politics of fear is evident in the post-2008 reported discourse, implicating a range of individuals and institutions in the production of that political discourse and violence (Atlantic Philanthropies 2010; Misago et al. 2009; HSRC 2008). This author introduces the

15 Neocosmos argues that “Indigeneity, then, is never a historical fact nor a natural one. It is always politically defined by those with power”; while this argument will not be taken up in this dissertation, it is important to present here (2008: 591).
concept of South African exceptionalism into the discussion, which depicts the country as economically and socially ‘developed’ akin to the US and Europe and in contrast to the rest of the continent.

Harkening back to the schism or tension presented in Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s description, Neocosmos presents this exceptionalism as a “schizophrenia characteristic of the new Black ruling elite” (2008: 591). Finally, moving from the politics of fear to the role of the state in its perpetuation, Neocosmos argues, “Although state institutions have never condoned violence against migrants and have regularly condemned it, they have provided an environment where in such xenophobic violence has effectively been legitimized by the state” and perpetuated by the media (Ibid: 589, 590).

Nagengast summarises the relationship between the state, power, violence, ethnicity and legitimate leadership, by arguing that ethnic violence in a state, “insofar as it is tolerated or encouraged by states in order to create, justify, excuse, explain, or enforce hierarchies of difference and relations of inequality, are acts of state violence, even though states themselves may not appear on the surface to be primary agents” (1994: 114). While Nagengast is writing from the Americas and speaks specifically to state-sponsored violence, the author’s discussion of culture, other-ness, myth, and boundaries are salient in the discussion of South African nation-creation. In communities like Alexandra, in which the state is present in various and often contradictory ways, there exist alternate forms of regulation and the emergence of alternate leaders from the elected leadership that governs other parts of the city and country (Misago et al. 2009: 38). Even with an ambiguous power from the state, the conceptions that are allowed to dominate a culture ultimately set "the limit to what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable, within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us" (Stuart Hall in Nagengast 1994: 118). Thus, one report argues that the rhetoric and the practices of state-officials who do not distinguish between non-citizens as refugees, asylum seekers, internal migrants, legal migrants, and illegal migrants, “is a particularly dangerous form of stereotyping, as the label ‘illegal’ legitimises police abuses and community ‘justice’ by positioning the migrant as a criminal deserving of punishment” (Misago et al. 2009: 17). Having established this theoretical and Johannesburg-specific discussion of nationalism, identity, nativism, the state, and violence, I now move to alternative ways of defining belonging, beyond the national identity.

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16 Some researchers have sited local political leaders’ promises of housing and service delivery reform as agitating the xenophobic violence by overpromising, under-delivering, and scape-goating foreigners for the scarcity of housing and resources; police officers are present in Alexandra, although they are often not trusted and suspected of corruption (Misago et al. 2010; Misago et al. 2009).
Conceptualising Outsider/Insider

Building upon the above discussion in which nationalism and nativism undergird membership and its rights, this section addresses social divisions beyond the parameters of nationality. In as far as the ‘other’, that is the one set apart by national, ethnic, sexuality differences, is the object of violent aggression, it is valuable to interrogate this complex set of terms here. Not only did a sense of belonging and membership emerge as important within the post-2008 reports, but so did the modes of constructing otherness and the strategies for counteracting that kind of othering. “All societies are built from social groups rather than individuals, and these groups determine attitudes, beliefs, identities and values, as well as access to resources and opportunities - and ultimately access to power” (Narayan 1999: 1). Religious communities are one such social group, whose business is precisely to influence attitudes, identities, and even power in its many varieties. This section of the literature review, therefore, is intended to explore the theoretical relationship between religion, migration, nationality and community in order to better interpret the methods of exclusion and inclusion within the particular social institution of the case study churches.

The nuances of belonging in Johannesburg do not cut along distinctions between citizen and foreign national, between ethnicities, races, religions, or class distinctions, but a variety of intersectional ways in which these distinctions are parsed to form context specific membership. This section will outline several theories of the intersection between religious identity, migration and belonging, including: (moral) tactical cosmopolitanism (Landau & Freemantle); transnational religious identities (Levitt); religion as inclusive, democratising membership (Bompani); and religion as familiar and ordering force (Prozesky and deGruchy). After a brief introduction, though, I will outline each theory and the claims they make about the individual migrant or host and their communities as they engage with identity, survival, and social improvement.

Citing high levels of mobility, the legacy of apartheid, the breakdown of families, and the social consequences of the ANC’s neo-liberal economic policies, scholars have generally agreed that South Africa has alarmingly low levels of trust (Chipkin & Ngqulunga 2008: 72; Landau 2009: 202). Immigrants in border towns and major international jumping-off points like Johannesburg often come with the purpose of making money, intending to stay for a short while, and sending remittances to their ‘real homes’ to support their ‘real families’ (Landau 2006, 2010). As new residents navigate their way into life in the city, religious networks are one common method of accessing housing and jobs, and for foreign nationals, accessing specialty goods from and communication to ‘home’ as evidenced in Nzayabino’s (2005) research on one Congolese church and Jinnah’s (2010) research on Somali communities, both in
Johannesburg. Of course religious communities can both remind migrants of their homes (through food, language, customs of the home society), and work to acclimate migrants to their new surroundings (through food, language, and customs from the host society). I will now consider several researchers who have shed light on the variety of ways migrants utilise religious membership to access identities and resources in their new residences.

Tactical cosmopolitanism, introduced by Landau and Freemantle (2010), describes the way that Johannesburg’s foreign-nationals establish a discourse of self-exceptionalism with which they do not root downward but remain mobile and even articulate a level of disdain for the national population or culture (Landau 2010: 323). One aspect of this identity, what Freemantle (2010) titles moral tactical cosmopolitanism, reflects the bridging capacity of religious identity on an individual level, to reach across (without denying) other distinctions and proclaim a common connection. This identity “promotes a system of moral principles that is based on the inherent worth of the individual human being, regardless of origin, race, religion, nationality or ethnicity” in which migrants’ “counter-discourse to the language of nationalism” actually “construct a cosmopolitan order of divine nature through emphasising the inherently boundary-crossing nature of Christianity and their commitment and ability to coexist peacefully with everyone around them” (Freemantle 2010: 21). Thus the right to residence is based on “‘goodness’” in this space of South Africa, a space that belongs to the continent (Ibid).

The study of transnational religious communities reflects an identity that accompanies the multi-site and cyclical patterns of migration, as well as the transnational networks of religious communities and practices (Adogame & Spickard 2010; Levitt 2002, 2007). As Levitt writes, transnational migrants “use religion to delineate an alternative cartography of belonging,” in some instances reinforcing the religious identity, community, and loyalty as primary above national boundaries (2002: 17). For instance, one Brazilian pastor living in the US explains his leadership approach: “when they are good Christians, they are good citizens. ... I teach my followers that they have a responsibility to all mankind but especially to their fellow Christians. We live in a world where Christ is the king, not George Bush or Fernando Collar” (Ibid: 22). In other instances, transnational migrants’ religious experiences result in a reinforced sense of dual or multiple nationality, with religion as the connecting bridge between spaces and communities, as “religious identities and practices also enable migrants to sustain memberships in multiple locations” (Ibid: 1, 21). While Levitt is writing about transnational religious communities and diasporas primarily in the Americas, the mission to “provide members with moral compasses and orient them to act upon these values in particular settings in particular ways” (Ibid: 23), and even functional consequences of religious communities such as to
“reproduce patterns of domination and exclusion” (Ibid: 24) apply to the South African context. AICs as migrant churches are less hierarchical and formally established than many other churches, and in the case of this study are primarily crossing provincial, not national borders. Still, Levitt’s assertion that one’s primary loyalty is a political position carries implications for the context of AICs in South Africa.

In an effort to shift the understanding of AICs (of which Zionist churches are a part) away from the traditionally conceived anti-political, withdrawn community, Bompani (2008) engages with the question of what defines the political and argues that political engagement and rhetoric is pervasive throughout the AIC churches she studied. These churches, she argues, are democratizing institutions that encourage members to conceptualise themselves as rights-holders even in the context of struggle in South Africa. Bompani’s experience of interviews and participant observation with five churches in Soweto, Johannesburg in 2001-2 and 2004-5 lead her to conclude that AIC members and leaders have always been engaged in politics, rejecting party-specific politics, but supporting justice “as a network of solidarity to fight for their proper social rights, like education, health, knowledge about HIV, economic support and housing”, through localized circles of influence (2008: 666). Unfortunately in the majority of her interview citations Bompani (2008) does not distinguish between the three types of churches that she interviews, at times homogenising the Ethiopian, Apostolic and Zionist responses, which could have otherwise provided additional insights into their differences as much as their similarities. Thus we do not know, when one bishop helped to draft a report for the authorities, “drawing attention to the living conditions of the churches’ members and asking for change and official intervention”, what church that leader came from (Ibid: 171). In addition, her description speaks of AICs as an actively democratizing institution located within expectations of citizens, leftover from the liberation struggle (Bompani 2008), leave out any discussion of national diversity and the moralizing unity expressed through the religious immigrant discourse described above. However, the importance of unity within AICs and the presence of ethnic diversity and struggle in South Africa come through clearly in Bompani’s interviews:

People seem to forget that the struggle in this country was not such a unified struggle. I was living in KwaZulu-Natal and being part of the IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] or an ANC supporter made a big difference. Especially at the end of the ’80s. The church did not want the same kind of division inside. People could not come and say you should support this party or that one. You can do it privately, but that is you, not the church. The church tried to bring unity and not division in these days. The church and the Bible reminded us that we were brothers and sisters, all Africans fighting and suffering together. That was what we needed in such chaos (Bishop Masuku, Jabulani, cited in Bompani 2008: 669).

Similarly, a sermon from the Bishop of the (apostolic) Methodist Church of South Africa warned against the danger of division for “the African people”, as Bompani describes, “Even at the beginning of the
1990s, when the political struggle brought division among blacks, independent churches, according to Bishop Ntongana, preached unity” (Ibid: 667). To illustrate this point, the Bishop spoke of a two-day function (date unknown) that he and members of his congregation attended in Alexandra; when they arrived they were “stopped by six men brandishing guns, who asked them to identify themselves” (Ibid). Recognising that these people were Zionists, they were allowed to go through unscathed, “We did not want any kind of division and we did not recognise ourselves in that division. At that time the country was so divided and only institutions like the independent churches could unite South Africa” (Ibid). This focus on the unifying capacity of the AICs presents an institutional or structural parallel to the moral tactical cosmopolitan discourse argued by Freemantle (2010), although Bompani’s analysis focuses on internal South African division post-independence and a glossing rather than bridging role for the church. Without being able to further interrogate the following statements from one Archbishop we cannot know it’s ties to the pan-African agenda he seems to be presenting, “We, as African indigenous churches, as I said to you, we have no way of separating the church lifestyle from the political life. We are not interested in organising ourselves into political parties, but we are, as we have for so many years, organising ourselves as Africans” (Ibid: 672). A gap exists precisely within this religious identity-migration nexus in the particular context of South Africa; in which AICs are a strong branch-based religious network with a prominent presence in neighbouring South African countries.

In the literature Zionist Churches are described as associating largely within the religious community, “strongly cohesive and exclusivist” (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995: 124), with an outlook of the surroundings that are almost the antithesis of the tactical cosmopolitan described above. This group think, as told by religious historians Prozesky and DeGruchy, inspires a strong commitment to the religious community, which stems from the perceived disorder of the broader community, connected to sorcery and “human malice”, thus:

...most Zionists have entered the fold through an experience of healing. ... And the malice is to be found in relationships which get out of control. Zionists would hold that the cities harbor too many uncontrolled relationships; therefore malice flourishes and sorcery abounds. At another level, this is a statement about the degree and intensity of social strain and uncertainty within a society, and especially about the experience and tolerance of these conditions by low-income earners (Ibid: 126).

This explanation for a socially tight community is undergirded by a distrust of the place in which one lives and the perceived danger of unconstrained relationships of a variety of sorts, and results in relationships primarily within the religious membership and a rejection of the perceived gluttonous worldly temptations of the broader community.
Summary

The three major themes discussed in this dissertation, as described above and elaborated below, were selected because each is implicated among the central motivations for xenophobic violence in the post-2008 reports, and resonates with political and religious discourse, which are the two most common forms of association and formal membership in Alexandra Township. As the reader likely noticed, however, my position of engagement with these themes’ literature varies. For instance, my analysis of the entitlement/work theme directly compares the discourse of the literature of nationality with descriptions of Christianity in the case study churches. For the theme of scarcity/abundance I consider interview responses and observations against the concept of scarcity theorized through a variety of lenses (including theological). Still different, identity and belonging are considered through theories of religion’s role in the full migration process, with a discussion of how the case study churches’ position impacts their own conceptions of ‘outsiders’ within and beyond their own membership. That which connects these three different approaches to the literature is the driving question: (how) do religious communities, as socializing institutions, influence members’ understanding of scarcity, entitlement and outsiders? Recognising these different approaches to the text and the dissertation’s overarching argument, there are several questions that remain unanswered or inspired by the literature reviewed here: What does the relationship between desire, present material resources, and strategies for fulfilling those desires in the context of Alexandra’s Apostolic Zionist churches? Are there alternatives to the pervasive chauvinistic nativistic discourse in South Africa, what are they and what do they achieve? Within the precarious notion of belonging, what does a non-national conceptualisation look like among majority-South African churches, why, and what are its implications? Chapter five through seven will take up the conversation that the literature has begun.
Chapter Three
Methodology and Design

This research uses qualitative methods situated within a constructivist paradigm, that is, a belief that the world that we experience is constructed by each of us and together (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 197), and employs the modified tools of discourse analysis to engage with the collected data. A desktop analysis of the literature that exists on the 2008 xenophobic violence, Alexandra, and AICs, coupled with fieldwork. This study had two phases of research.

I chose to do two case studies within one denomination in order to discern meaning-making rhetoric and processes within a denomination that is highly heterogeneous, as well as to explore the impact of the structure of the church in relation to how congregants and leaders had come to understand the violence of 2008 and the research themes of scarcity, entitlement and outsiders. Working with two Apostolic Zionist churches provided the opportunity to identify patterns in this category of Christian practice that is not structure by any regional, national, or international system. I chose the Apostolic Zionist church because two such churches exist in similar socioeconomic conditions and size, and with one dominant ethnic group within the congregation, allowing for comparison of differences in articulation within the church while controlling for as many factors as possible. Church members tended to live in close proximity to the churches, particularly when compared to non AIC churches (church leader interviews, October-December 2010). In the early stages of the research, the case study churches were selected in a limited amount of time, approximately six weeks of mapping. In selecting the case study churches, I prioritised churches whose members’ lived in close physically proximity to the church and churches’ whose worship location was in close physical proximity to the source of the May 2008 violence. The assumption that supported this selection criteria was that physical proximity to the violence was the best guarantee that some members and leaders were impacted by the

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17 Apostolic Zionist Churches are similar to and different than other Christian ‘denominations’ like Methodist, Lutheran, or Baptist. I use ‘denomination’ here precisely in order to talk about this set of churches that is often differently named, defined, or simply mis-named in the literature. Such misnaming is common because of the missionary and researchers’ attempts at classification (Prozesky and deGruchy 1995). The diversity that exists in AICs and in Apostolic Zionist Churches (which are themselves not uniformly understood in scholarship or among members) exists in every Protestant denomination; one important difference is how members of the churches relate to a conception of a broader community of similarly named and practicing group of churches elsewhere. My observation is that beyond the members’ branch and home churches, there is no sense of affinity or claim to common membership with other churches even though such churches exist and ultimately stem from a similar origin. This claim is not central to my argument, so I will not spend time defending it, except to the extent that the particular organizational structure of the churches impact on how they negotiate meaning within the church; such analyses are woven throughout the concept-focused chapters (five through seven), and the conclusion.
violence itself (although it was not assumed that members were necessarily attacked or attackers), and that the church addressed the surge of violence within the worship space and time. While this assumption was largely affirmed, the impact of physical proximity will be taken up further in the concluding chapter (seven).

Apostolic churches are common in Alexandra and in many townships in South Africa, and they are the only churches that exist within the physical space of RCA (excepting one large 7th Day Adventist Church on the border of RCA). Their small congregation sizes enabled me as the researcher to interview a diverse representation (age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, marital status, job status, length of membership) of one quarter to half of the congregation, therefore reducing the potential bias of interviewing only individuals recommended by the pastor. If I had selected a larger church for my case study, I would have relied more on the discernment of my ‘gatekeeper’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 4) to introduce me to interviewees. The size of the congregation and the nature of decision-making in the church were important factors for consideration, because as a white American female who does not live in Alexandra, gaining access to and the trust of members of the case study churches was one of the biggest methodological challenges I faced.

Phase 1

The first phase of research was a mapping exercise to collect demographic information about what church communities exist in Alexandra, followed by a semi-structured interview addressing the sub-themes outlined in the research schedule. This first phase was aimed to provide a broad snapshot of themes, as well as to inform the selection of the case study churches. The mapping exercise included pastors or elders of approximately 5% of Alexandra’s churches. Estimates of the number of churches in Alexandra Township, gathered from church leaders interviewed for this research, ranged from 100-400 churches. Assuming the fluctuation range is somewhere in the middle, I surveyed 12 churches including Methodist (2), Lutheran (2), Anglican, Catholic, 7th Day Adventist, Ethiopian, Pentecostal (2) and Apostolic Zionist (2) churches. This survey does not count the two case study churches.

This first phase of the research aimed to: 1) Establish what churches exist in Alexandra, who their membership is (in terms of geography, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status), and how the pastor or leadership message about issues of scarcity, outsiders, and entitlement; and 2) Establish the attempts of churches, around the 2008 attacks, to both prevent and then heal the community affected by the attacks, and to address the physical needs of those attacked. In the first phase only a leader (and none of the congregation) was interviewed.
Challenges

One methodological challenge that I faced was the unique nature of Alexandra’s physical organization. There are no existing up-to-date lists of religious organizations and while most of the mainline churches have buildings, it is common for several churches to use the same building several times throughout one Sunday. Most of the AICs do not have their own buildings and instead meet in schools or in open areas, with pastors who work at paying jobs during the week. Both types of churches are committed to starting branches and occasionally visit their branch churches around the city, therefore may be absent in Alexandra on any given Sunday. To overcome this challenge I walked around the township with an Alexandra-born community organiser several Sundays (to find those churches that do not have their own building), and scheduled or conducted interviews (20-60 min) with pastors from a number of churches until I had achieved a geographically and denominationally balanced sample. This process also helped me to familiarize myself with Alexandra’s physical and cultural layout, to be seen by members of the community walking around with established and recognized leaders, and to gain access to religious leaders whose contact details were not available on any sign or website.

Phase 2

The second phase of the research was participant observation, and member and leader semi-structured interviews with two Apostolic Zionist churches, one within RCA (the Reconstruction Area) where the xenophobic violence started in 2008, and the second just outside of RCA. I selected two churches of similar socio-economic level that experienced the violence in some manner, claimed to have foreign nationals in the congregation, and were receptive to me attending their services for one month. I introduced the churches to my research project as a study in the role of religion in people’s lives and the role of the church in the community. I did not articulate the study as one of xenophobia; this was not only a more accurate description of the study as a whole, but was also intended to broach the possibly sensitive subject of xenophobia without evoking a defensive response, or a response that interviewees would think I wanted to hear. Through participant observation in the churches I looked for the language and ritual of services, the message of the sermon (through translation), and the way that individuals operated and expressed themselves within the community. In-depth semi-structured interviews with pastors/leaders as well as members were structured to draw out responses to the themes of outsiders, scarcity, and entitlement and xenophobia (see Appendix A). I ended up interviewing 35% (14) and 46% (7) of the majority Zulu and majority Xhosa churches respectively.
The aims in the second phase of the research were to: 1) Establish congregants’ articulations of scarcity and abundance, outsiders and insiders, entitlement and work, xenophobia and leadership, with special attention paid to theological and nationalistic language; and 2) Examine attitudes of congregants in relation to the church structure (e.g. leadership structure, meetings beyond Sundays, structures of accountability, responsibilities to the group) and compare across the two congregations, which were otherwise comparable regarding socioeconomic status, and to some degree theology. The challenges of this second phase will be engaged through a discussion of ethnography and discourse(s) analysis below.

**Ethnography**

In contrast to daily ‘normal’ observations, Hammersley and Atkinson describes the distinction of ethnography as such:

> it involves a more deliberate and systematic approach than is common for most of us most of the time, one in which data are specifically sought to illuminate research questions, and are carefully recorded; and where the process of analysis draws on previous studies and involves intense reflection, including the critical assessment of competing interpretations (2007: 4).

With the above expectations set, this ethnographic study included participant observation through attendance of four services for each church, and semi-structured interviews in the churches and people’s homes. During the church services I sat on the side or the back of the small room with my research assistant, so as to set ourselves apart from the worshipping congregation. I noted observations about ritual and jotted down questions to discuss later with my research assistant/interpreter after the service. When requested by church leaders and members to speak or *round* in the service, or be prayed for, I complied. After the services I transcribed the recorded translation and assigned an alphabetical code to each week’s service, as well as to each individual interview. I took notes also of my experience in the lengthy process of finding and inviting churches to be a part of this study, on negotiating the location of interviews for members and leaders, and one what I perceived to be the impact of my presence in the worship service. While there were few written documents from which to draw on (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3), the two documents that I did see, a quarter A4 paper certificate granting approval for the pastor to start a new church and the log where payment for and participation in travel are recorded, are discussed through the field notes in chapter four. As an ethnographic study, while the first stage of research incorporated a valuable mapping exercise, from which I have hundreds of pages of interview and church service transcripts and field notes, in this dissertation I largely discuss
the two case study churches in order to facilitate “in-depth” discussion (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3).

**Discourse(s) Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a research method born out of the ‘linguistic turn’ or ‘turn to discourse’, when scholars began looking beyond grammar and *what* was being said, and started looking at what was not being said, how ways of talking and acting are created and shared, the dialogic nature of meaning, and the power dynamics that run through these practices. Discourse analysis tries to “develop a theory of language in use,” to pick out patterns and order, although it must be acknowledged that there are a variety of approaches to or schools of discourse analysis and that there is no one accepted way of ‘doing’ or ‘using’ it (Wetherell et al 2001: 4). As one text put it, each author and/or approach has their own sense of relationship “between the world and the world” (Ibid: 10). Given the nature of this study, which draws a great deal on not only translated interviews, but also paraphrased, translated worship observations, this dissertation utilises a modified discourse analysis, focusing on discourses and the discussion of conceptual themes rather than on discourse analysis, per se. Many of the core assumptions about language and meaning, and the relationship between speaker, hearer, and broader social context still apply.

This analytic approach is particularly appropriate to this study in part because discourse and religion both create and define reality; referencing Max Mueller’s definition of religion (1856) and the author’s own sense of “relaxed tolerance” when engaging in a discussion of definitions, sociologist Peter Berger names:

...language as the great world-building instrumentality of man, reaching its most far-reaching power in the construction of the gods. Whatever else it may be, religion is a humanly constructed universe of meaning, and this construction is undertaken by linguistic means (Berger 1969: 177).

Discourses relate to actions past, present and future:

As accounts and discourses become available and widely shared, they become social realities to be reckoned with; they become efficacious in future events. The account enters the discursive economy to be circulated, exchanged, stifled, marginalised or, perhaps, comes to dominate over other possible accounts and is thus marked as the ‘definitive truth’ (Wetherell et al 2001: 16).

Thus the discourses of one dominant socialising institution within the physical boundaries of Alexandra Township, exactly three years after the xenophobic violence took place, not only speaks to how people have come to understand that spike in and continued violence, but also has repercussions for possible
future events as well, even shaping the way we “experience and behave in the world” (Burman and Parker 1993: 2). While this study draws on a variety of research referencing such spheres or discourses, including politics, it fills an important gap in primarily addressing the religious institutions. Religious institutions shape and are shaped by their members, the broader structure of the religion (whether it is formally hierarchical or not), and of course the culture(s) in which these living institutions exist. Therefore, ‘discourses’ analysis can help us to learn how religious institutions makes sense of, produce meaning with and aim to shape the actions of its members in relation to the issue of xenophobia.

This study is grounded in a Foucauldian definition of discourse, that is, acknowledging that language (words) and practice (actions) that represent/produce knowledge in a particular historical moment, and are irrevocably connected to power dynamics (Foucault referenced in Wetherell et al 2001). This approach therefore raises the additional questions of why some discourses become dominant over others, the extent to which discourse can be controlled, and who stands to benefit from dominant and alternative or sub-discourses.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the power of discourses on other discourses or speakers does not “function in the form of a chain,” but circulates (Foucault 1980: 98 cited in Wetherell et al. 2001: 77). In this research I have compared discourses of church congregants against those of the academic literature and to some degree public political discourse, which has enabled me to discuss divergences, similarities and gaps between the two, but has not allow me to speculate as to their mutually influencing relationship. Thus my conclusions do not speak to how political discourses specifically influences church members or that religious discourses clearly influence political discourse. The same holds true for patterns between leaders and members within the two case study churches, although within the case studies I have drawn on additional information from interviews and participant observation to interpret the discourses. This study will not make claims about people’s factual, historical actions or about how church members really feel about an ‘other’. This study ultimately makes claims about how church leaders and members talk about concepts related to xenophobia and how they articulate themselves and their institutions in relation to their physical and social surroundings.

The ‘texts’ that I will be analysing will be drawn from transcripts of interviews and participant observation gathered through case studies of two churches and their members, as well as transcripts of interviews with several church leaders from non-case study churches in Alexandra Township. The use of semi-structured interviews will enable me to begin with the initial interview guide based on themes developed from the literature review, and still provide space within the conversation for new themes and discussions to emerge. In the four worship services in which I am positioning myself as a participant
observer, I will be watching not only for “people doing things together” but also “people refusing to do things together” in the worship service and through the interview process (Scott 1990 cited in Ragin 1994: 10). The analysis itself looks at discourses (political, religious, public/popular) and ways of speaking about specific and recurring themes (the three themes mentioned above) within each of those discourses. Close textual or rhetorical analysis is therefore secondary to a sketch of the discourses and themes themselves, in part because translation was used to varying degrees throughout the entire research collection period.

The primary data in this study is several-hundred pages of interview transcripts, and transcripts and notes from participant observation in church services. The information gathered in these interviews is so great, so without the appropriate tools, there is a high risk of bias within its interpretation. It is the essence of ethnography that “the analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practice, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider, contests” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3). Recognising the subjective nature of this type of analysis, and taking heed from six common analytical shortcomings of discourse analysis, during my own analysis I paid particular attention to the risk of “circular identification of discourses and mental constructs” and “analysis that consists in simply spotting features” (Antaki et al. 2003: 11-15). In order to reduce this bias I structured the interview questions around the themes that emerged in political and public discourse from the post-2008 reports, and inserted lengthy quotes with contextualizing descriptions (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 203) from each transcript into a simple framework tool based primarily on the writing of Wetherell et al (2001) (Appendix F). While the structure of this analysis tool was intended to limit bias, it also enabled new themes to emerge (Ragin 1994: 16), thereby reducing the risk of bias from an overly narrow analysis tool or set of concepts (Palmary 2009: 64). The analysis of interviews and worship services does not prove the existence of this discourse but speak to the previously acknowledged discourse outlined in the post-2008 reports. With discourses that emerge unexpected, analysis aimed to go deeper into examining the structural and rhetorical features of those discourses.

While the interview schedule probes the thematic concepts of scarcity, outsiders and entitlement, and structural themes of structure and leadership, several new themes emerged as crucial and were integrated into the findings in this dissertation, including: the paramount nature of establishing trust; and the importance of rift-aversion over serving people outside of the church.
Challenges

Alexandra Township has a wide diversity of ethnicities and nationalities among its residents, and many languages spoken. While I had a translator with me every time I went into Alexandra, finding and conducting interviews, or attending church services for participant observation, language was potentially a barrier to building trust with people for whom English was not their first language. In addition, not only were elements of the message lost in the translation (which out of practical necessity was often also a paraphrase or summary), but there may have been cultural or linguistic nuances that are particularly difficult to translate. The language barrier posed challenges to the analysis of the interviews and participant observation. Even people who were proficient in English often felt insecure about their speaking, and some who were not proficient insisted on using English even though it hindered the communication of feelings and ideas. Translating church services not conducted in English required immediate translation because the services were too cacophonous to pick-up individual voices or song lyrics and sometimes people spoke too quietly to be recorded on a microphone and transcribed at a later time. Translating in a service posed two challenges, the first was translating into a recording device in a way that was not distracting or disrupting to the service, a challenge that was aggravated by the fact that the case study churches worship in very small, congested corrugated tin shacks or small rooms. The second challenge was often speedy preaching and multiple people speaking at once. To overcome these methodological challenges, my research assistant/translator and I discussed the importance of direct translation and following the dominant speaker while giving contextual clues like “a middle aged woman said” or “the bishop did”. However, as will become apparent in the analysis, the translation often slipped in and out of a translation and a paraphrasing of the messages. One strategy utilised in this dissertation, to adjust for this imperfect result, is to italicise all direct translations and try to indicate where it was clear from transcribing that the paraphrasing begins. In addition, every interview or translation or a worship service quote or observation is followed by whether the text was given in English or required partial or full translation. The aim of these measures is to provide as much information as possible so that the reader has accurate information on which to judge my interpretation of the data.

Ethical Considerations

I have striven to maintain high ethical standards in this research, as set by the University of Witwatersrand’s Ethics Review board, both to produce quality research and to protect participants. Integrity in all practices and honesty with those interviewed is essential to conducting research on
migration, xenophobia, social cohesion, violence, and religion, as each is a political subject discussed in the midst of potentially exploitative power dynamics (Ponterotto 2005: 130). Therefore, all participants were informed of the nature of the study; participation was voluntary and participants were allowed to terminate their involvement at any point; confidentiality and anonymity were ensured to the degree chosen by the interviewee. As I had a research assistant with me at all times, I explained to the participants that he holds the same commitment to confidentiality that I do as primary researcher. I have weighed the costs and benefits of having a research assistant constantly present for translation, and, after initial exploratory fieldwork in Alexandra Township; I concluded that communication was most facilitated by having a translator present at all times. As this translator was an Alexandra Township resident, and was known by many people around the community, this additional person impacted on what was said and how, yet his presence enabled individuals to speak in whatever language they chose.19 There is, however, no neutral or un-impacting way to collect knowledge and ideas from interviewees; therefore I aimed to reduce unnecessary biases as much as possible. I assured the interviewees of anonymity in any presentation or writing of this research.

I recognize also that as a white American researcher the power dynamics between me and the individuals and congregations I work with were uneven. Being a young woman may have made me more approachable for some people. I strove to communicate my intention with the research clearly and to show the necessary humility as a researcher and a guest in someone else’s community.

Information was shared (see Appendix B) and approval was attained (see Appendix C) before interviews began, informing the participant of the nature of the study and outlining the rights he or she holds. These include the right to not have the interview tape-recorded (see Appendix D); the right to anonymity within any writing on the research; the right to conduct the interview where he or she chooses with whomever he or she chooses in the room; the right to refuse to answer questions; the right to a set time-frame; the right to withdraw from the interview at anytime. In addition, consent was obtained by the leadership of the two case study churches (Appendix E), confirming that I could attend services for one month and during that time could invite the members to participate in an interview. While pastoral or leadership consent may have limited the degree to which individual members felt that they had a choice in participating, not only was this form required by the University of Witwatersrand

19 Anonymity will be a challenge because: many residential areas in Alexandra are extremely tight, close spaces and one path to enter or exit; many homes’ walls that are too thin to keep out noise; and as a researcher I stand out in Alexandra and will therefore likely draw attention to the interviewee. However, I will offer to meet the interviewee at whatever locations he or she prefers.
Ethics Committee, but it expresses a commitment on my part to respect the church community and enables me to begin building trust with individuals within the community.

After the interview the participant was invited to contact me or my advisor in case he or she decides that the interview should not be used or if he or she had follow-up questions. Participants were given a copy of the Letter of Consent and Information Sheet for his or her records.

While I did not ask about legal migration status or inquiries of guilty parties with regard to the 2008 violence, these are two pieces of information related to my study that, if they came out, could have legal consequences. I was careful to inform participants that this is not information that I was collecting. If such information emerged, I neither recorded the response in my notes nor reported the information to authorities.

Limitations

Three limitations were mentioned in the section on methodology, and several additional or related limitations are addressed here. Given the size and organizational structure of Alexandra, I cannot assume that my mapping exercise will reflect all of the religious institutions there, although it captured most of the diversity of churches present. While employing an Alexandra Township born guide, translator, and research assistant helped me to gain access to parts of the community that I may have overlooked as an outsider, there are parts of Alexandra Township, for example, the RCA, which may be more closed-off to outsiders in general because of the neighbourhood’s politised history and compact physical space. In addition, as previous research on xenophobia has been conducted within Alexandra, some leaders may associate me with these previous studies and researchers, influencing their responses to my questions. I believe, however, that going through existing channels of introduction, e.g. declaring my intentions as a researcher to the highest political and religious leadership, alleviated some of the tension or suspicion that may have hindered achieving an introduction or holding a meaningful conversation.

Given the unique nature of Alexandra Township, which is different than many other parts of Johannesburg, any findings on the role of religious institutions in matters of religious communities, meaning making and the relationship between congregation and church structure do not reflect to other areas of the city. In addition, because of Alexandra’s unique history and geography within Johannesburg, findings from Alexandra Township cannot be taken as being representative of townships of similar profile in other parts of the country or region. That said, much of the analysis from both phases of research has likely provided information that is relevant to other communities. This is not an analysis of
the role of religious institutions in social service delivery (which is part of questionnaire but not the focus) therefore, the study will not provide direct recommendations for government, NGOs or service providers in using religious institutions as such a channel in an economically impoverished area. However, insights into the types, longevity, reach, leadership structure, and congregation of these institutions will go some distance in understanding issues of improving service delivery or even engaging in future conflict resolution efforts. The value of these studies is their in-depth analysis of two specific church congregations, and the subsequent analysis of those communities’ discourses when mapped against a public political discourse.

I am limited as a researcher by my language, English, which is spoken to some extent by most pastors but not spoken comfortably by all congregants of the AIC churches. I therefore needed a translator for introductions to new pastors as well as for interviews. As a white foreigner I stand out in Alexandra, drawing a lot of attention, and for some, may have been associated with reporters, tourists or government officials. I was also aware of potential barriers erected by way of being a young woman in a situation where some of the pastors, particularly the black AIC pastors may be more conservative or ‘traditional’ in gender relations and more private in conversations with white outsiders. As a practicing Christian, of the progressive, liberation theology bend, much of my experience in participant observation with churches was unfamiliar and clashed with my own theology or practice. Being conversant in Christian language and scripture, and having studied religion as an undergraduate, was an asset. While I did not use my religious identity as a tool in conversation, it proved to be an asset toward being allowed to observe in the case study churches and even build trust with members and leaders of the churches. I worked hard to clarify my role as an academic observer, so as to not mislead pastors or congregations, but still received comments or questions throughout the participant observation phase to suggest that both case study churches and I had different understandings of my time there\(^{20}\). While I approach research from a constructivist paradigm, and acknowledge that my interaction with interviewees and those I am studying is central to my research findings, I tried to refrain from participating in church services as a member of the church would. However, as AIC researchers have argued, “religious studies students” must “be prepared to participate more fully inside the independent churches’ community life. ‘One must also be willing, if called upon, to engage in preaching or the conduct of some part of the service’” (H.W. Turner, ‘Problems in the Study of African Independent Churches’, Numen, 13, 1, January 1966: 34 cited in Bompani 2008: 675). Indeed, refusing to offer

\(^{20}\) While I spoke of myself as a student in migration at the University of Witwatersrand, one gentleman, at the end of our interview asked if I thought God would bless his church because they had opened their doors to me; members and leaders of both churches spoke of my presence as a blessing or a gift from God and a good omen.
scripture, to preach, or to be healed would have significantly hampered my relationship with both case study churches.

Finally, this study was not intended to valorise or demonise religious institutions and their leadership. Recognizing that they are pervasive existing social institutions in this community, and that they are one of the few places where nationals and foreign nationals hold a common membership, the study was intended to reveal what exists in these institutions. My intention has been to reflect how churches (e.g. members and leaders) shape people’s conceptions of the world in a particular climate of xenophobia, in order to better understand what role these communities could play if tension or violence should arise again, and consider the challenges and benefits of utilizing these unique social structures to reach different segments of the population.

**Reflexivity**

Finally, this research strives for a high level of reflexivity. As interviewer and analyst, I acknowledge that my background and experienced has shaped everything from choosing this topic to the selection of sub-themes from report analyses (which themselves are situated as knowledge producers and therefore political), the development of tools, and my interpretation of the data. I have maintained awareness of this factor throughout the research and analysis. This dissertation therefore does not suggest to ‘know’ the community or individuals that I am researching in full. In addition, prior to this degree I worked with an organisation that trains young people to build mutually enriching relationships across religious boundaries in order to achieve common goals in the community; this lens toward the cooperative, positive, and justice oriented aspects of religious community have shaped my design, implementation and analysis of this research, even as I have striven to maintain a critical analytical eye in every stage. It is my hope, however, that through an explicit naming of my acknowledged gaps and background (above) that the reader will have as complete as possible a picture of the full research process in order to engage with the research and findings in a way that is both fair to the researched community and promotes more nuanced and complete understanding in the field.
Chapter Four
Setting the Scene: The Leadership and Meaning-Making Structures in Apostolic Zionist Churches

The presence, absence and direction of political leadership was the best indicator of what parts of Alexandra Township would be hard hit by the May 2008 violence and what parts would not. This dissertation does not engage with the conceptual development of leadership or meaning-making, that is, I will not be presenting a literature on either one, except to the extent that they have already been addressed. Nonetheless, it is important to discuss the role of leadership and meaning-making processes within the Apostolic Zionist case study churches in order to respond to the questions I have raised from the post-2008 reports. This chapter therefore draws on empirical observations from the majority Zulu case study church to describe the leadership structure and practices of the case study churches, and the processes of producing and engaging with contested meanings within the church congregation. Where I observed fundamental differences between the majority Zulu and majority Xhosa church, they are mentioned below.

Leadership Defined

There is no money to be made in Apostolic Zionist Churches. The leadership does not get paid and in fact often needs to contribute their own funds to support the church community (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). Beyond the top position, the bishop, at least one third of the church holds leadership positions. This is both a matter of function and prestige. The formal positions in the church are the bishop, manager, president, reverends, and secretary.

The bishop, in the case of the majority Zulu church is the son of the founder of the church and was chosen by the church council to take up the head of the church in his father’s absence (death). As the church manager21 explained, the bishop “was ordained, not because of his father but because of the other bishops recognize he can lead, he can be trusted by the bishop” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). There is an archbishop who is above the bishop and has some role over all of the branch churches, however the archbishop does not interfere with daily decisions within the church. The head of the majority Xhosa church is a man who received a calling in a dream, consulted with his home church in Eastern Cape, and founded the church with his wife and a couple of colleagues and family members; he is not called the bishop, but simply reverend.

21 This interview was conducted with both the bishop and the manager together at their request. As the manager was more fluent in English and a charismatic personality, he responded to the majority of questions even when they were directed at the bishop.
According to the manager, the job of the manager is to preach, pray and help, and he is subordinate to the bishop, “I get my instructions from him because of his position” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011).

The church’s president explained, “Before I was a reverend, so I am a president” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). As president he pushes people to fix things together and to improve the building, and he also preaches. He described his training as climbing the ladder within a work setting and as an organic progression within the church, “when you go to the church... you grow up, as much as you learn something from the church, your position is change” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). In this sense there are no leaders brought in from outside of the church, as pastors of mainline churches often are, this church’s leaders are selected from within. In the majority Xhosa church there is only one position below the head Reverend, who served both roles of the manager and president as described above.

There are three or four reverends at each service, not including the higher leadership. In a church where one’s performance is the highest qualifier (along with the church council’s recognition) of leadership, there is a hierarchy of roles that males can climb with performance and with time in the church. One young (29 years old) male leader referenced the church constitution in guiding the decision making process of the elders, connoting a certain degree of formality or externally and internally perceived legitimacy, and said that within the constitution, the church committee can appoint pastors without any training except that they “just check your background and check your values” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). When asked if the members of the church participated in the 2008 xenophobic violence, one middle aged (40 years old) male leader explained, “You can’t do that when you’re a Christian and they’re scared of the pastors, don’t want to be pointed out by the pastors” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). This statement suggests that pastors are known in and know the community, and that they perceive themselves to hold significant sway within their congregations. While multiple people preached or gave testimony in the majority Xhosa church, there were not multiple reverends. This majority Xhosa church was also one half to one third the size of the majority Zulu church in terms of membership.

Several people appeared to fulfil a role subsumed under the position of secretary. The secretary keeps track of the money donated throughout the service (though there is not always a formal offering, sometimes people give money during prayers and sometimes someone walks around with a Bible to collect coins). He or she also takes minutes of who is able to attend specific events, for example, going to KwaZulu Natal for a burial. The secretary is often a young adult who is more proficient in English than
the elders may be, which is important for writing testimonials and letters of reference for church membership transfer or in recommending young members for scholarships.

The structure of the church, from where one sits to whom one asks for help seems widely known and was expressed by all of the people interviewed, both young and old. As hierarchical as the church leadership structure appears, the worship services are egalitarian in terms of sharing ideas and participating in the service, even as there is respect for the church leadership and a general order for the service. In responding to the number of members within the church, the church manager explained that there were “100 registered” reflecting a relatively formal process of at least declaring one’s membership in this church, and record keeping (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). Explicitly naming registration serves a similar purpose here as referencing the constitution above; they reveal a larger structure of order that is respected and followed, though such aspects were only ever mentioned by the church’s leadership. One leader emphasized the larger church structure beyond their own congregation while lamenting the lack of formal training for the leaders in his church, and articulated a higher level of training for leaders as one of his major priorities for the church (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). This gentleman expressed a high level of ownership within and commitment to the church. A young (19 years old) man had the most to say about responding to conflict in the church, which he had never experienced, using language that reveals a high level of respect for the church’s religious and cultural leader, he explained, if conflict happens, “we need to solve it. Maybe we could invite bishop. I think he’s the one who can solve, cause he’s like a king, you know, in the church” (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011).

One fundamental difference in leadership between the majority Zulu and majority Xhosa church was the latter’s use of couples in their leadership structure. When conflicts arose within a couple in the church, the head Reverend and his wife, mama fundisi, would both address the issue. When a new year’s docket of leaders were named in one service celebrated with a branch church in Pretoria, both the second in command and his wife were called and appointed to serve as leaders.

**Women and Leadership**

When asked how many leaders there were in the church, one leader said there were eight or nine, and added that there are also the female leaders, and leaders in the branch churches. Women preach and circle\(^\text{22}\) and heal, and are healed within the church just as men are. According to one leader,

\(^\text{22}\) Circling or rounding is the name for dancing around the centre of the church in a circle. This happens for approximately one hour in the three to four hour service and is accompanied by drums and signing. Circling opens
during August women run the whole service, because it is women’s month; the rest of the year the men are the dominant leaders within the formalized aspects of the service. The second Sunday I was attending the church, the women started the service and it was 20-30 minutes until the male leadership arrived. While the women did not light the candles (the men did when they arrived), which often signals the start of the service, they did begin the singing and confessional. Later on in the service, a male leader acknowledged their leadership publicly and thanked them for their capacity to go on worshipping even if the male leaders are late (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). When I asked women if they are leaders within the church, most said that they are members, they used a different term (discussed below), or described their role without identifying explicitly as a leader. When I asked men if women are leaders in the church, the vast majority said yes, they are, and they went on to describe the women’s roles. This difference in language could have a number of explanations but it is noteworthy that responses were largely divided by gender. It may be that in interviews with men the question about women in leadership followed from asking them their position in the church, and they felt that I as a woman (from America) brought in my own ideas about gender and leadership. The women may have had a formalized, official definition of leadership in mind when they responded, but few were comfortable calling themselves leaders. One criterion for leadership, both male and female, is to be married, which will be discussed more in further chapters.

Role of Leaders

One middle aged (45 years old) woman described the role of the leaders alongside the need for personal faith and prayer:

Don’t come here and ask a priest is going to pray on me and all that problem is going to solve. You pray by yourself and everything is going to be solve. Even if – let me say I’m coming here but my heart is not here, there is nothing that is going to solve, eh, you have to help yourself (U interview, English, 5 February 2011).

While the leader can see the problem troubling you, he cannot make it go away, as that requires faith and prayer to God. She is also commonly advised by the bishop that she must first speak to her father in order to address issues with the ancestors (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). This interviewee continued to explain that since she has been attending the church and praying with the pastor and her ancestors, “I found all my problem little bit solved, not all of them. Can’t fix all my problems – sometimes the service and invites the ancestors to join in that space (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011).
the other one I have to fix on my own” (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). Her expression of self reliance and the role of the priest not as absolver of sin\textsuperscript{23} but as diagnosing doctor reveals both the power of the individual in the process of healing and the importance of the connection to the ancestors who advise as to what actions will successfully address the problem facing the person in need.

How Ideas are Shared

One leader attributed his life without drugs or danger to the fact that he attended church more than hanging out on the streets growing up:

\textit{So the kids – you must – here in the church, there’s only thing we learn is just how do you live, you understand? So when the kids used to come here always – I don’t think it can be same as the kids in the street all the time spending the time in the street doing funny things} (K interview, English, 23 January 2011).

Is there anything about the church, aside from keeping kids from influences consistently describes as dangerous, that helps children grow up in healthy ways?

While there are no specific programmes for children (except an occasional Bible Study for the bishops’ children by a female member, many young adults do regularly attend a mid-week programme. Every Wednesday evening there is a prayer meeting at a branch church a five minute walk across London Road, the edge of Alexandra Township across which many people fled during the May 2008 surge of violence. This service is largely for young adults and is conceived of as a time when young people can be trained and instructed in doing and leading church. As one young woman (25 years old) explained, at the service they “\textit{teach about the law and the Bible, how to start the church if there’s no pastor, if we are young, how to start up the church, all that}” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

Young people also receive practical preaching training during the service, that is, in addition to listening to five to fifteen people preach and give testimony, the young people are highly encouraged to give testimony of their own, and if they don’t feel comfortable to speak, they simply read scripture. Observation would suggest that it is neither shameful nor embarrassing for elders to give instruction or directions within the church, during the service.

The entire worship service can be seen as a method of training, not just for young adults, but for all attendees. People learn the ritual and the rounding through watching and practice, and the same is true for how to speak, what to say about the scripture, what to discuss in one’s confession. Individuals are often selected for prayer and healing as much as they volunteer, and the leaders can divine

\textsuperscript{23} The term ‘sin’, which is often associated with confession, was rarely, if ever used during the service or interviews with members.
something bad in your present or future even if you do not say a thing, although this belief may encourage people to be more forthcoming and honest, or acquiesce to a prophetic claim. Ideas themselves can be taken up by one member and expanded upon or altered slightly by someone else four testimonials down the line. Some people speak independently of anything else that has been said during the day, while others solely read scripture, some speak of personal experiences related to scripture and others give instructions to members of the congregation encouraging one behaviour or admonishing another. This kind of dialogical and at times conversational method is revealed through some examples of church observations in the rest of the chapter, and referenced in several interviews in which key concepts or responses resonate with the messages shared at a previous church service. In this way, even in a hierarchical and male lead structure, every person is encouraged to preach, to confess, to round, to be healed, and to contribute to and encourage the community.

Church members have several methods for valuing the freedom to express one’s self (or God through one’s self) without moving too far beyond the mores of the community. As one leader explained, leaders can pray for members and speakers within the church, but cannot chase anyone out, no matter what is said:

*What you’ll find is other people don’t have many to speak, maybe they stand up and they say nasty things, you know, I can’t stand up maybe and say stop – no, no, no. if they are saying something that is not good, maybe I will sing, I will just sing a song. And then I will stop. And if you continue again, I will just sing a song. It’s a sign. We have signs of telling you maybe you are talking too much – we will keep on singing, you will stop now. Someone needs to stand up and share a word for us. You see, on church, we are rounding now, and then I just stop the rounding and kneel down and we need to pray right now* (S interview, English, 3 February 2011).

Signs and instruction can come in verbal forms as well. In the confessional part of one service, a woman warned the congregants about “false priests” and reminded members to look for Jesus here on earth now, calling perhaps for the high level of scrutiny and suspicion that was articulated throughout the interviews (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011). That same day during the confessional, a young woman warned that friends can lead you astray, so you should follow what God wants, not your friends (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011). Several interviews reference the presence of liars and thieves, even within the church, thus these warnings do not necessarily take aim only outside of the church but also focus within the church.

*Leadership and Meaning-Making within the Service*
The nature of the worship service itself is a dramatic example of how individuals relate to the church community as a whole, and how ideas and opinions are shared. From children watching the adults round or kneel down and pray to all members listening to how the leaders talk about ancestors and God, are experiences that are directly put into practice as members are encourage to fully participate. Some lessons are matters of custom, for example, at the beginning of each testimony, the speaker always gives thanks to the priest and welcomes everybody in the house by grouping (elders, women, men, and children) or name. Practical issues are often discussed without ceremony within the experience of the church service itself; one Sunday nearing the end of worship a leader admonished the congregation for going in and out of the small room too much because each time the door is opened bad spirits are allowed back in the church (Zulu majority Church service, translation, 30 January 2011). This belief and articulation of opening a door (that is exiting and entering worship during the four hour service) reinforced a sense of appropriate behaviour within the service. Several issues were taken up in practical ways in the church services that I attended, including time and the training of young members.

One Sunday people were very angry that people are coming 15 minutes to 90 minutes late to the worship service, which had already started an hour late. One member argued that people would not show up so late to work, so why is it okay in church? One Sunday when the church was starting particularly late (because of society meetings) people began speaking about the issue publicly as they opened the service, incorporating this semi-forum into the confessional.

One woman’s opening confession, which came after many confessions about hard weeks and painful experiences, was challenging people that the troubles in life, personal and communal, may be a reflection of God’s unhappiness with people’s action. In doing so, she also gave instruction for people to get in the ‘right mind’ for the service and enter church with a specific attitude:

*Everybody’s confessed that they had a lot of troubles.* One woman just sums up the confessional saying, *as you are people, look at the ways that you do things and lets pray, immediately when you enter this building, lets pray that Jesus is going to redeem us and take care of our problem and most important thing we must remember, we must always live in a Godly way and must always pray and give thanks and must always look at our ways, the way we do things – are we not hurting anyone? ... Is this the way to go?* (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).

Yet the importance of training and this perpetually iterative process is perhaps best expressed by the bishop at the end of the service; he called for an educational session the next week to “*sit down and understand what is happening*” in the church, why some wear uniforms and others don’t, the meaning of the dancing and the sticks and so on, as he felt that too many people were unaware (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).
One way that children and adults alike learn how to speak in church is through the call-and-response format of several leaders’ speaking method. When leaders are praying there is often a call by the leader followed by a confirmation response in unison by the congregation sometimes calling for a simple hallelujah or a *we thank you God*; the congregational recitations of the Lord’s Prayer is said by the congregation, one phrase at a time, repeating the prayer as stated by the leader. In a similar vein, there is one leader in particular who preached every Sunday and every time he would communicate a point and then repeat the same point but leave the key word unsaid, waiting for members of the church to fill it in. He would also ask the congregation about what scripture had been read the last week or even in the beginning of the testimony time in order to make the point that was consistently named by several of the male and female leaders each week that people must be present with their bodies and their minds.

*Training Young People*

The first Sunday that I was attending the church a woman spoke in her confessional time about her desire that the children of the church be taught the Bible and that they learn how to give testimony; in this instance as in all parts of the service, all ages are present in the church (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011). At the end of the same service the bishop prayed that the children “*can be guided amongst the church*” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011). In both cases the children themselves heard that they were the object of attention, and the rest of the members were simultaneously told that nurturing children and youth are a vital part of the church’s mission.

That same Sunday almost the entire service seemed to consist of a running commentary on young people and their participation in the service. They were heavily chided by one woman during her testimonial for not speaking in church, although many people echoed the sentiment. She told the young people to “*stop being shy and stop being lazy*” and know that “*Jesus already is giving you powers, is giving you everything, why can’t you use it right now? Get up and work for God*” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). This woman told them that they should not be ashamed to come up front and testify because for a long time “*man could not know how to read but would stand up and preach*” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). One woman stood up near the end of the testimonials on that same day and instructed the young adults that, while they may be leaving the church asking, ‘who is that crazy lady who talks to much about us’, “*this woman’s comments were not rude*”, but were encouraging and the young people should take them as encouraging (Zulu majority
Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). Two young adults, male and female, stood after this chiding, thanked the speakers for their words and gave instructions to their fellow church members about how to deal with stage fright; one speaker said that she would take strength from the church mothers (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). The week after the youth received several long and emotional messages about the need for them to preach (after which they did speak more), many middle aged and older members stood and thanked them for their contributions, praising them for their words or their reading, “thanking the young people for standing up, for not being lazy and not being afraid” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011).

On the issue of training more broadly, during one church service a conflict arose between a leader and his grown young adult son, ending with the son storming out of the church. Consider the story from the father’s telling:

The priest confesses, says, as you saw, I was praying for my two sons. As I pray for the one, I saw an attitude... is right for their children to give their parents attitude? But not speaking but they giving you the face, and the action, you know, saying I don’t care what you do. Cause I was wearing a white top... when I was speaking to him, praying for him, he spot that cause he was wearing a white coat, has a little bit dirt on it so one of the son just touches my coat, saying, look at that, you have dirtied my clothes cause is pure white, and that is a sign of disrespect for me, say I’m trying to help you and you tell me you need to be clean. I’m praying for you – is a problem with girls and I’m trying to save you from this pandemic of HIV/AIDS. And the son doesn’t understand that. (begin translator’s narration of the actions that preceded this translated statement) So is asking everyone just to help. There were two sons that went out, one came in, meaning one left, went home because he didn’t agree with his father and he said the way he looked at him in his face, if they were about to fight, his son was gonna beat him. So he asking that, is this the way we gonna have chi ldren, disrespecting us while we try to find him the road. So one guy went out to fetch him, I will tell you that he’s calling him so that they can speak to him and show that, eh, he’s still young and he still need our guidance all the time (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011).

The leader and other church members spoke about the incident twice more throughout the service and again at the next weekend’s night vigil, incorporating questions of children’s rights, a conflict between the state’s definition of children’s rights and how the Bible and the culture says children should be disciplined, and the role of parents in guiding their children who do not want to take advice (Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011). On several occasions the leader asked for advice and said that even though he is a church leader, he still needs “guidance”, he still needs instructions on parenting from the church, that they all do (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011).

This chapter is drawn from a section of ethnographic field notes written from the month of participant observation with the majority Zulu Church. While there is a great deal more to be said, the
previous descriptions at least give an indication of the unique leadership structures and meaning-making practices of the Apostolic Zionist Churches. With this ‘scene’ in mind, I will move on to a discussion of the dissertation’s findings in relation to the three conceptual pairs at the heart of this study. The implications of leadership and meaning-making structures will be taken up again in the conclusion.

Chapter Five

Corrupting greed & selfishness: scarcity and abundance in Apostolic Zionist Churches
Scarcity is primarily used as an economic notion, or spoken of in an African context in relation to natural resources (including land); in this dissertation’s additional discussion of scarcity as a theological concept, I am exploring the interplay between the experience of poverty and the teachings of the case study churches. Poverty was not the immediate indicator of sub-sections of Alexandra where the 2008 xenophobic violence took place, but scarcity of jobs, service and resources was central to the attacking crowds’ self-justification of their actions. This chapter therefore interrogates the ways that the case study churches conceptualise scarcity and the connection of that concept to both actions-quafa-foreign nationals and perceived solutions to daily grievances of scarcity. Before engaging with the empirical research findings, I will first review the main arguments discussed in the literature and the gaps or questions that this chapter seeks to address.

Instead of engaging scarcity in its purely economic discussion, the literature review engages with authors whose writing incorporates an economic element alongside inquiries into human behaviour and motivation. Scarcity, according to Danner, is the source of collaboration and solidarity, which are formed out of a desire that transcends present means. In the South African context, scarcity is discussed as motivating factor for migration, as well as an essential and oft-missed factor for the political mobilisations and destruction of the transition years at the end of Apartheid. From a survey of scarcity literature, the question emerges, what are the varieties of ways that scarcity, freedom/choice, and development operate together and what are the collective behavioural patterns that can be observed? Moving to the theological frameworks, Girard argues that scarcity is a consequence of desire, the source of jealousy and conflict, and ultimately the catalyst for communal acts of scape-goating, ritualised by every religious community in history to maintain order and stability. Drawing on Girard, Allison argues for a worldview based on the abundance of life and God, in contrast to the scarcity of resources, with a variety of relational consequences. These few diverse approaches to scarcity provide rich modes of interpreting the data gathered for both case study churches.

The theme of economic scarcity was the most consistently talked about concept throughout all of the interviews; the theme of abundance was also regularly discussed, although never in economic terms. The AICs in Alexandra are perceived as less well-off (financially) than the Mainline or Pentecostal churches, by both outsiders and members (according to members’ interviews). The church itself does not have the mainline church network connections to access funding or partnerships with more wealthy
congregations elsewhere.\textsuperscript{24} One explanation I received for why members wear robes in the service is that no one can tell who is rich or poor under the robes, and even if one is poor during the week you don’t have to feel monetarily poor in the church. Scarcity and abundance are abstract concepts that incorporate a broader definition than having a lot or a little, and while this analysis incorporates economic notions of scarcity, it aims to go beyond them. I introduced this concept into the interviews by phrasing the questions in practical ways, first about specific needs and near the end of the interview in relation to the rhetoric of the xenophobic violence of 2008. Those initial questions include: if somebody came to you and didn’t have enough food/money/a place to stay, how would you respond?

\textit{Pragmatic and Immediate Responses to Need}

Generally speaking, respondents discussed plans for immediate, practical assistance (not long-term or structural solutions) and their language included little religious rhetoric except to the extent that helping others is a moral imperative in most religions, including Christianity. One middle aged (45 years) woman gave a resourceful and immediate solution to every question of scarcity I posed. To the first question, \textit{if someone comes to you and doesn’t have money for school fees?}, she responded that she is a staff member at the school, and she knew that parents can enrol their children without fees if they make a plan to assist the school in some other way (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). To the second situation, \textit{if someone came to her hungry?}, she responded that she would cook right then and there and sit down and eat with the person, as long as she had food in her own kitchen (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). Finally to the question, \textit{if someone doesn’t have enough money to cover their expenses?}, she responded that you must ask specifically what someone needs money for; if they can’t pay their electric bill, she would purchase R50 worth of electricity for them. After every response, she would respond “problem solved”, and while the long-term problem was not solved through her recommendations, her ability to draw from her own knowledge and experience expressed a very practical and resourceful response that was common for many members. All members said they would

\textsuperscript{24} For instance, one Anglican Church received donations from sister churches around Johannesburg when the xenophobic violence broke out in 2008, which they could then give to the police or distribute to organizations helping those impacted by the attacks (religious leaders interview; 18 November and 1 December 2010). A Pentecostal church regularly runs a soup kitchen for members (and non-members when the food is available) because the pastor is well-connected outside of Alexandra (she also lives outside of Alexandra) and has coordinated donations from grocery stores (religious leader interview, 14 January 2011). The leaders and members of the AICs do not have access to these types of networks or resources, nor did they have prominent community members in their churches or former members who made a lot of money and moved out of Alexandra Township but still attended the church, both of which were present in many of the mainline churches (religious leaders interview; 18 November, 1 and 12 December 2010).
share what food they had, or offer their floor for a night to anyone in need. As is reflected in the final of
the woman’s three responses above, one level of resourcefulness is assessing the truth of the need and
addressing that need in specific ways. The need to consider the truthfulness of a statement or situation
is a sentiment that is reflected throughout each of these concept-based chapters, for example,
referenced as trust in the outsider/insider theme below.

The question of how to verify a story and who to trust was put most explicitly by a young (29
year old) male leader who spoke of the problem of deceit in the church, “not all people there at the
church are Christian. Also there are thieves” and people with false motives (S interview, English, 3
February 2011). Just as there are those that are physically present at church, but not spiritually and
mentally engaged (a sentiment that was echoed throughout the leadership interviews and most
commonly in the worship services themselves) so too does the church have members who are attending
under “false motives” as “wolves in sheep's skin” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). According to
this leader, some people want to be perceived as pious, and others want a good funeral, but they are
not reborn and genuine. Subsequently, his response to need is, “first of all, I do assess if what he or she
is telling me is true or not” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). After the assessment, he then
proceeds to: give what is needed; encourage people to continue looking for work; pray for the person;
and offer his room (for men needing a place to stay) or resources. In these responses there is an
articulated sense of generosity, even in the midst of few personal resources. While this kind of response
is not surprising in the context of a religious community, people’s self descriptions consistently
referenced a commitment to giving something, even if they themselves did not have a lot, as long as
they knew the reality of someone’s situation.

When asked about the larger problems the community faces, some responses reflected a sense
of helplessness in the face of addressing the needs outside of the congregation. One young woman (25
years) with children explained that the church is a place of protection where leaders speak truth through
ignorance and:

...if the people inside the church, if you tell them with the time, sometimes if there's a
space there, they tell you there's a space there and if you don't have the money for rent,
he going to talk about that, the owner of that house, that they can help us for that
month until the lady, maybe the man can get space. He provide some food sometimes,
you not sleep without food. If we sure that this problem you have, you report to the
church and we help you (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

When asked specifically about foreign-nationals and the issue of housing, however, she felt that that
was “nothing that we can help with” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). A middle aged (38 years
old) male leader explained, “You know, actually here, as a Zion, the people, they’re undermining us, as there is nothing that we can do for them. Because you never know what has really happened otherside there, except if that person can come direct and tell you what they don’t have or what he need” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). An elderly woman explained that such requests have never come to her in her almost fifty years of members, but if they did, she would offer the person one night’s rest on her floor while explaining that even she herself, who shares the bed with her children, she wants a house, too (V interview, translation, 5 February 2011). She has put herself on the government housing list three times and at the age of 76 still has not received a house (a common story among many Alexandra residents).

I asked one middle aged (40 years old) male leader about questions or requests he receives when others do not have enough, and he emphasized the importance of hope, which is one resource that leaders can give to the members of the church as long as each preacher is “motivated yourself first before you can preach something” (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011). This sense of hope, like the power of prayer and health (discussed later) is a relatively low cost resource. African Initiated Churches, including Apostolic Zionist Churches, are often conceived of as focusing only inwardly within the church community. The response of one older (60 years old) female leader frames the issue of working for people outside of the church’s walls or members:

They wish to do it, but they don’t have power in terms of helping people outside the church. But within the church they come together – if there’s somebody within the church that need help, but within the church they come together and they help. And other reason being, she says cause they from different places, so people say, I’m poor, is hard to help somebody outside, but within themselves is perfect (T interview, translation and some English, 5 February 2011).

For the speaker this help came in the form of assistance to get a tombstone for her husband’s funeral; this definition of who is within the realm of the church’s capacity to help corresponds to attendance and a shared commitment to the church. Her articulation of power to work internally reflects the sense of non-capacity and perhaps discomfort with how the church is perceived beyond and by its own members. These conceptions of scarcity do not stem from solely an economic equation of supply and demand, but incorporate the value of trust and deserving into the expenditure of resources amidst consistent scarcity.
Members’ Needs and the Power of the Group

In talking about member’s own needs and the needs of the church, interviewees’ unanimous first response was that they don’t have a job and want one, or that many people in the church don’t have jobs and they need them. The second biggest need for the church was a new place to worship. This focus on jobs reflects the high level of unemployment in Alexandra, which is even higher than the national average. One recent study found that 72% of South African-born residents and 59% of foreign nationals in Alexandra did not have a paid activity (Misago et al. 2010: 5). Work as a solution is the preferred structural response by members to the problems of poverty that the church faces. One young (29 years old) male leader living in Soweto spoke of a need for a “proper house of worship” in part because “we are believe as a church of poor people, and people who are not educated” but illiterate (5 interview, English, 3 February 2011). While he was the only one to express this reason for wanting a different building to worship in, almost every person interviewed expressed a desire for a ‘proper’ worship space, instead of a shack. This church has worshipped in shacks since its founding over 40 years prior, yet the immediate response of a desire for something different reveals the importance of space and perhaps prestige or pride for its members. The two greatest needs of the church, it should be observed, jobs and a building, are the most commonly named needs of Alexandra residents who demonstrated against foreign nationals. Two people mentioned wanting to grow the church’s membership and attendance numbers.

The church community deals with issues of scarcity together in some practical ways. For instance, if the church is taking a trip to KwaZulu Natal for special church services between all of the branches or for a funeral, those who cannot attend (either because they are working or they don’t have enough money for the trip) are still expected to contribute money to help someone else go. One middle aged (45 years) woman said that she would give money and say, “This R50 you can go to contribute for me and write my name and tell them to say why I didn’t come” (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). In this response we see both the function and expectation of the group initiative, as well as the importance of writing and speaking the name of those who could not attend, that in your absence you have actually enabled someone else to be present and are still acknowledged and receive blessings. This level of expectation from the community provides a pressure to contribute, even though many members’ are supporting families back ‘home’; in one church service the pastor of the majority Xhosa church articulated this expectation as the reason why many people stop coming to church before Easter, precisely because the church was hosting guests coming in and everyone was expected to contribute to this expense (Church Service, translated, 6 Feb 2011). In other ways, the common experiences of many
in the church – from needing a job to having personal marriage problems, for example, at times hinder people from sharing these troubles with one another. One young woman explained that she doesn’t often ask for prayers or help in getting work because everybody is looking for work and you must all share any opportunities that come; in a sense, your need is not special, is not an exception (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). Similarly, although healing will be discussed here as one of the abundant resources of the church, it was commonly expressed by female respondents that they would not share their pains with members of the church, or speak of past hardships of unfaithful husbands, for instance, with anyone except the pastor’s wife, because many people had experienced that hardship, giving the sense that one’s experience, again, was not the exception, but the rule.

Group-coherence among the churches was not achieved, through scape-goating foreign national others as the 2008 attacking crowds did. There was, however, a great deal of responsibility placed on the group for ills that befell the church community. The sacrificial lamb in most of the expression of need or unrest, were the values of the outside world, like greed and jealousy. The conceptual distinction between Girard’s description of the history of religious experience as inherently competitive and scape-goating, and Allison’s conception (built on Girard) of existence independent of any ‘other’ is played out in the tensions of the church. The church itself warns against desiring what someone else desires, wanting too much, or causing any rifts within the church, which leads to a discourse of patience and increased value in those things that actually are limitless and free.

God Provides

Some respondents shared the sentiment that God provides all that is asked for, although such messages were less common in this church than in health and wealth gospel Pentecostal churches I have read about or attended in Johannesburg and beyond. While the centrality of and focus on jobs was present in the majority of conversations, for one middle aged male leader, this sentiment was balanced by a statement of faith and gratitude; in response to the greatest needs the church faces he said, “Food, because, you know we’re not working, even myself I’m not working, but I can eat because God is there” (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011). Citing the Biblical scripture of Moses and the Hebrew people wandering in the desert for 40 years only to be gifted (eventually) by manna to eat, this same leader articulated prayer as the means by which expectations of abundance can be achieved,

That is what I was saying, that is very serious because, you know what, people who come to the church, the intention of different thoughts. They know when they come to the church they have food, they understand when they come church they have everything – since we preach we say God has everything when you come to God you have everything.
He or she comes to the church, doesn’t get everything, than we need to motivate them and we need to pray, they cannot just quick come, but then they need to pray. God is there, we belong to Him but we need to devote to him, surely so that He can help us (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011).

Again referring to the Biblical scripture of Moses and manna, this leader believed that relief to the many needs of the church, “it will come one day” (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011). This gentleman’s description of faith contained the nuance of continuous patience without the mere acceptance of suffering that is often central to academic and social critiques of churches as enablers of an unequal system (Marx 1967 reprint: 131); this congregation was not focused on the life hereafter, but being patient for results in life here and now. This echo of the importance of prayer – if not to have enough or live in abundance then to serve as a primary tool to navigate all of life, resounded consistently through the interviews. The coupling of prayer and patience with hard work is addressed in the Entitlement/Work chapter.

Time and Money

The first Sunday that I attended the church service I was invited to read the scripture and give a short message on the scripture. I chose Mark 12:41-4425, the story of Jesus in the temple and his lesson that the old woman who in giving all that she had, gave more than the wealthy men who were giving much more than her monetarily, but were giving the extras or the leftovers of their wealth. My intention in selecting this scripture was precisely to draw out conceptions of scarcity and abundance. Referencing the scripture, one woman translated the lesson for the lives of the community saying, “It is a New Year – what are you going to give in the New Year? Your attendance? Service? Yourself? Your true heart or your leftovers?” (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011). Another woman spoke about the value of love over money during her testimony in the personal experience of two brothers who were visiting in December. As her story goes, her two visiting brothers were living in Sandton (exemplifying the epitome of wealth next-door to Alexandra Township) but after a while their kids wanted to come and stay with her, their aunt in a poor part of Alexandra. Her conclusion was, “If you have Jesus Christ in your heart and you love people, they will come to your house and you’ll see the children” (Zulu majority

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25 Mark 12:41, 44 “The Widow’s Offering 41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (The Bible, New International Version).
Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011). While she doesn’t have many children of her own, she said that “the sign of children is the sign of God saying Jesus loves you. Just open your heart, you’ll see good things coming to you” (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011). Love, then, and perhaps faith, are articulated as the cause of blessings, material and otherwise.

Two weeks later (my third week in the church services of the majority-Zulu church), one man’s testimony spoke strongly against the love of money, that in fact, money is evil. He paraphrased Isaiah 55:1 saying, “you not buying the bread, is God, so that doesn’t worry all the time”, we mustn’t love or misuse money (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 6 Feb 2011). Prior to this testimony, one woman had closed her confessional by saying:

I love money so much, help me lord not to love money so much, cause I tend to put everything in front, and I tend to fight with my husband because I want money. Even my mother at homeland, she calls her just asking for R20 in airtime. She’s an old woman, but is like saying, I have money, I want to see this money all the time, is like an evil spirit trembles over me, over me (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 6 Feb 2011).

Others spoke during the preaching or testimonial part of the church with a message to everyone, and in part a response to this woman’s confession, “And don’t worry about what others give” in terms of offering, “give what you want to give” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011). At the end of that service the bishop told people that if they want what they don’t have, if they are envious and greedy, they will become a thief; instead we must remember our own talents from God and “look at your ways, you look at your own things, you know”, not others (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011). Thus the message of greed and being content without a lot of money or things is a consistent message in the church, in both preaching and in confessionals when one has not heeded that consistent advice. A strong sense of disgust in matters of money expressed among leaders and members in this church stand in stark contrast to the health and wealth gospel of many Pentecostal churches that name financial wealth as a sign of God’s blessing.27

The churches, do, however, face financial needs, so while greed is never supported, people are encouraged to work hard and to give what they can to the church. This ambivalent nature of money can be heard within the evolution of one service of the majority Xhosa-church. In his sermon the head pastor included these words:

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26 Isaiah 55:1 “Invitation to the Thirsty 1 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (The Bible, New International Version).
27 For an insightful discussion of how some Pentecostal churches conceive of money-as-God’s favour I recommend reading Jeannerat’s “Of Lizards, Misfortune and Deliverance: Pentecostal Soteriology in the Life of a Migrant”.
This week, I told myself this, the poor people they want to be rich, the rich they want to be rich more, who’s going to go to God? Who is going to go? Because the one who stays on the top, they don’t look down, but the Bible says, one is top they gonna take him down, the one that stays down is gonna be on top. Alleluia. ... There’s richness and there’s love. Where there’s richness there’s no love. What God say? He put the things together. Cause the one doesn’t want to get rich. He want to get rich in another way, but God put them together. ... God doesn’t want anyone to rich, so he wants to richness with love. He wants us to have love all the time. ... In God, let’s not seek the things of the world, richness of the world. Lets seek the richness of the God. Which is why we here actually. Eternity. Eternal happiness is something that no man can take from if we seek God’s love and are rich with God’s love (Xhosa majority Church Service, 2 April 2011).

Here we see God’s message of the inversion of worldly wealth and the importance of being rich in love. Following his message, his wife, mama funidisi (literally ‘mother pastor’, the wife of the pastor) gave a slightly different message, after reminding people that their Easter donations don’t go to the pastor’s family, but that they fund the guests who are coming to visit for Easter Sunday. “If God doesn’t give us the riches, what are we going to do this Easter? ... Wants God to give us the richness in him” (Xhosa majority Church Service, 2 April 2011). Her preaching, which lasted thirty five minutes, continued through the Biblical story of the prodigal son:

He was looking for a job. He was working and he was looking after pigs. The Bible says he didn’t eat with them. He didn’t eat with the pigs but after everything was done. So he say, basically say, all the servant of my father, they are eating as the servant. And me the son, I’m not eating anything because I’ve taken all the riches from my father. So he went back to his father, he saw him. You know what he said to him, his father saw him coming from far. So doesn’t have anything, look at him, let’s put him in new robe... and the fat cow and slaughter for him. Let’s give him a... Let’s welcome him. He... the richness of this world, so he didn’t want to.... the pure example of showing, if you want the riches of this world, then you must want the riches that God gives you cause everything of the world ends. Has a beginning, has an ending. But God’s things doesn’t end (Xhosa majority Church Service, 2 April 2011).

Ultimately, then, it is not that riches are bad, but how we use them that determines their moral value. The scriptural reference may suggest that as Christians they may be poor sometimes, but there will be a homecoming, a feast with God eventually. Finally, as the offering was being given, a middle aged female leader prayed, “As they give the best of their pockets, my Lord, I want you to bless them, my Jesus, bless them abundantly my lord, in the name of lord Jesus Christ, in Jesus’ name. Amen” (Xhosa majority Church Service, 2 April, 2011). The next week the church had a night vigil and the head pastor’s message was, “But when you pray, don’t pray to be rich. When you pray, don’t pray to be poor, ask God, put me on the middle” (Xhosa majority Church Service, 8-9 April 2011). The leaders’ ambiguity on money and its power are not
resolved but perpetuated in these statements. This process is repeated for multiple such worldly-political-religious concerns every Sunday.

The question posed in the beginning of this section (if somebody came to you and didn’t have enough food/money/a place to stay, how would you respond?) is not a real life scenario for those interviewed – it was largely a hypothetical question for most. This form of asking for help did not resonate among members of the church, but posing these questions revealed a belief that the outside population considered the church as poor and unable to provide resources in comparison to other churches in the area (a few of which are known for having soup kitchens). One member articulated a level of pride in this church when contrasted with ‘other churches’ that are health and wealth gospel Pentecostal (my term not his) in nature. His statement reflects not only his understanding of another predominant charismatic religious group in Alexandra, but also resonates with the moral high ground of the poor, one common interpretation of particular Christian scriptures. This man’s testimony pits his church’s way of doing offering – giving whatever attendees want in small amounts, a fifty cent piece, a one or two or five rand coin, against other churches’ practices that “value people according to the offerings they can give” at the front alter (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011). In other churches there are lots of hands clapping at the start of 2000 rand donations, and the same for 1000 rand, a little muted for 500 rand, diminishing with 100 rand down to no claps at 10 rand, he said. He continued, you “have to be seen as matching up – have to pop out money. Is the most important to see what can you offer,” but this church isn’t that way (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011).

Prayer in Abundance

Prayer was perhaps the one resource that members (in statements and practice) had in abundance. Prayers throughout the first Sunday service ranged in their subjects and content including prayers for the self, prayers of gratitude, prayers for people in hospital and jails, and prayers for the church. One woman opened her confessional with a prayer of gratitude that she was able to go home to KwaZulu Natal and finish her house there. Her advice was, “if you have money, use it and thank God for giving you that money” (Zulu majority Church Service, translated, 30 January 2011). The speaker deemed her house building project a Godly use of her money and suggested that God is pleased when people invest their money. In many instances of need, including responses to the xenophobic violence
of 2008, it is prayers that the members were able to give to address a situation. This likely reflects not only faith in a God that answers prayers but also an economy of prayer whose wealth is accessible to all. In the midst of the majority Zulu church’s night vigil to usher in the New Year, the same religious leader who discussed mediating expectations of God’s blessings (referenced above) spoke passionately to the eighty people squeezed inside this very small space, “God is going to give you anything you need in your life. You look like you don’t believe it, that God can give you whatever you want. Because God has powers to do everything. He was able to create us. How can He fail now to help us, to relieve us from things” (Zulu majority Church Service, English, 12-13 February 2011). This articulation of prayer seems to imply the role of faith in answered prayers, and not the emphasis on patience, as articulated above. This is a God that is limitless and can do anything – perhaps it is a message intended to enliven people who are worshipping through the night and showing signs of tiredness, but this sense of hope also reflects the leaders’ understanding of what his role is as a leader. His message in some ways captures the intention of the service, which was to clean the church of its baggage and bad spirits from 2010 and prepare it for great things in the year to come. These at times contradictory understandings of money are not unique to this church, perhaps they serve to both learn to accept and hope and work for more for individuals living in poverty.

Prayer is also a resource for health. It is through prayer, in partnership with the ancestors, that leaders can divine what is troubling a person’s life and discern the appropriate response. In a tactile sense, the present of mud and water is enough to make a healing salve for leaders of the church, as is described in an act of Jesus (John 9:1-7) to heal physical ills. Leaders and members alike reference the power of taking water at home and blessing it, then washing with it or drinking it in an act of healing (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011). As one female leader described, “Even myself, sometimes I can take the water from the tap and put my hands and pray myself, maybe something will be hurting me and then that thing goes away” (L interview, English, 23 January 2011). While (clean) water is often scarce in a township setting, as long as one can acquire some water, with the use of prayer, the capacity for healing is endless.

28 John 9:1-7 “Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind ¹ As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ⁷ “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing” (The Bible, New International Version).
God’s omnipotence and Life’s Hardship

Continuing with the theme of God’s abundance, one woman explained, “You know, God helped me, always I trust – everything I want I say God must give me some and God give me some” (T interview, some English, mostly translated, 5 February 2011). She described many struggles in her life but she says that God has always provided. To the best of my knowledge she was the only member of the church who owned multiple corrugated-tin roofed rooms, three in her yard, in addition to the one room house that she lived in. One of these rooms was occupied by a young home-less mother she met in Randburg, where the interviewee herself stays during the week as a housekeeper. Thus exemplified, people expressed a desire to help in the specific and immediate ways that they could with the resources that they had. This interviewee also expressed that not having enough or experiencing bad things in the world are either Satan or are God testing us because “God knows what is going on” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). The theme of life’s hardships, as evil in the world or as a test, are common religiously framed responses that are argued to help people to cope with the struggles in their lives (Copeland-Linder 2006: 594-5). One middle aged woman (40 years) living in Soweto expressed that both hardships and blessings are from God, “They build everything and they told us one day we going to see no food, no water, nothing, but you must keep praying” (L interview, English, 23 January 2011). Citing scripture that speaks to her on this subject, she referenced Isaiah 59 29, which tells her to be patient in waiting for God’s response to our requests and to keep praying (L interview, English, 23 January 2011). She knows that faith has a pay-off because “since I came here, nobody hurt me, and then met too, I don’t like to hurt anybody because I’m coming to pray to God” (L interview, English, 23 January 2011). Another middle aged (40 years old) woman expressed a different but related sentiment that bad things in life come from Satan, “because if doing something wrong is because of Satan, if something doing right is a Christian, understand? Yes” (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). Beyond ‘good’ and ‘evil’, this issue of scarcity and abundance was one theme in which nobody mentioned the ancestors, and nobody cited cultural tradition or the role of sangomas in ameliorating this tension. In addition, the variety of ways in which people explained the presence of evil in the world (Satan’s evil, God’s testing, human malice) may signify that this is not a commonly discussed issue in the church. People had equally diverse responses to the question of what caused the xenophobic violence of 2008. What is clearly absent from both sets of responses is blame of foreign nationals.

29 This chapter told part of the larger Hebrew Bible story of God’s blessings held from God’s people on earth due to the sin, arrogance and non-truth that pervades their lives.
The Root of the Problem

Getting to the heart of the solution of the scarcity of resources, members saw a clear disjunction between any real problem of the scarcity issue and the solution of kicking out and beating foreigners. One gentleman epitomized the sense of scarcity and competition that is often associated with foreign-nationals in Johannesburg, although without the articulated malice that commonly coincides, “Not to say they are against them, but they see that we lose something because of that” (K interview, English, some translation, 23 January 2011). When asked about the claim that ‘foreigners take our jobs’ one middle aged (45 years old) woman explained:

*That’s why I said apartheid is not ending, is still continuing. And that people, people of the suffer, they don’t realize to say that particular person continuing to using them against the other South African citizen. They are using them to give them that job. He don’t mind to tell him you are going to stay at my house, you are going to stay in the back and I am going to give you so much every month. He working for 150 rand or 500 rand as long as he stay because of suffer. If I’m suffering, I’m one of them, I can do this same as the foreigners do it* (U interview, English, 5 February 2011).

In this response we see an element of the empathy discussed in the insider/outsider section below, of imagining herself in the position of the foreigner – separated now only by level of desperation or suffering; and the political use of ‘apartheid’ in referring to the apartheid system of pitting one black community against another and capitalizing on people’s desperation to act against the collective best interest, which, in this case is demanding more money for work.

Through these explorations of scarcity and abundance, we see that indeed, the collaboration that Danner writes about occurs within the church for the sake of collective needs like burials and pilgrimages home. However, for the functions of the church, that is, collectively hosting visitors or investing in a new building, that level of financial sacrifice does not occur. Scarcity is recognised as a mobilising political factor, and regularly verbally resisted because of it. Percival and Homer-Dixon’s analysis of conflict in South Africa’s past is exactly the motivation for regularly preaching against the manipulation of peoples against one another based on issues of scarcity. Neither are these congregations’ members and leaders rejecting resources from the state (e.g. government grants, houses), nor mobilising around them because of their explosive potential. Engaging Stanley’s discussion, we see not only an alternative economy of prayer, healing, contentment and hope emerge, but in chapter seven on outsider/insider, we will see the issue of freedom elevated as a central strength of the churches’ modes of worship as well. The issue of desire itself is warned against within the church, as the source of jealousy and division; as this issue is regularly engaged within the worship service and incorporated into the very structure of church practice and leadership, we see group cohesion emerging...
though further rejection of the disorderly ‘outside’ world and its many vices. As these vices need to be regularly purged from the members’ and leaders’ themselves, the weekly rituals of healing and testimonials seem to serve the scape-goating purpose of Girard’s notion of scarcity. Finally, the churches’ treatment of faith, patience, and prayer reveal a hint of Alison’s notion of abundance, although the churches identity, as expressed by members, is based heavily on the distinctions of the worshipping communities, precisely in contrast to both the mainline Christian and non-Christian alternative.
Chapter Six

God doesn’t like lazy, selfish people: entitlement and work within Apostolic Zionist churches

Like scarcity, entitlement emerged from the post-2008 reports as an enabling factor for the May 2008 violence, and was central to the attacking crowds’ explanation of their own motivation. As was referenced in the literature review, some Christian teachings run counter to the sense of entitlement present in many current articulations of nationalism in South Africa; the potential juxtaposition was interrogated through the church case studies in order to understand this important aspect of the contributing, counter or alternative discourses present amidst Alexandra’s climate of xenophobia.

Before moving to the findings, however, I will review the literature’s main arguments and gaps in order to pave the way for the rest of the chapter to flesh out the role of entitlement and work, and the impact of those concepts on members’ actions.

The literature presented on entitlement and work reveals a robust discussion on the continent and in South Africa on the post-liberation phenomenon of anti-foreigner violence. Ndllovu-Gatsheni argues that chauvinistic nativism is a relatively new form of nationalism (for South Africa) born from the post-apartheid nation-building project, which uncritically grounds rights in a claim to ancestry in this particular physical space. For Landau, this claim to (particularly) urban spaces is a mode of over-compensation for a history of rejection from those very places and an experience of the ‘unfair’ competition of foreign nationals in newly reclaimed spaces. Neocosmos builds onto these explanations to describe a political discourse of fear drawing on the arguments of indigeneity and South African exceptionalism referenced above, as well as a state discourse that fosters xenophobia, thus bringing the state into the entitlement-conceptualising process. Finally Nagengast argues for a subtle acquiescence by the state and patterns of action that promote violence as an appropriate solution to the problem of infringed-entitlement.

To complement this largely political analysis of negotiated rights and belonging, interrogation into the churches’ understandings of entitlement and work took several forms. Respondents’ articulations generally stood in sharp contrast to the theoretical frameworks reviewed above and in contrast to the discourse utilized in the 2008 attacks. This contrast is surprising given the position of respondents among the poorest in Johannesburg (Misago et al. 2010: 24), although members’ sense of disenfranchisement in part because of the experience of poverty may explain part of the church
members’ rejection of entitlement-quaque-politics and the practice of distancing themselves from the political or discourse machines described within the literature.

**Responsibility**

While a classical conceptualisation of citizenship presents a relationship of both rights and responsibility, much of the literature reviewed in this dissertation, in discussing the aggravation of xenophobic violence, did not discuss the ‘responsibility’ side. However, responsibility was integral in interviews with church members, not in relation to citizenship but with respect to membership in the church. Members said that they had responsibilities to the church itself and to people outside of the church by virtue of being Christian. For instance, those that have some means of earning money do more for the church financially than those that are not working or do not have a family member working, but all are expected to contribute to and share responsibilities in the church, regardless of resources (K interview, English, 23 January 2011).

**Entitlement and the Rejection of Violence**

Many of the respondents felt that they deserved houses and jobs, as citizens. One 38 year old male leader explained, “Obvious. Yes, yes, yes, like, yeah, because like there’s RDP houses that they make, the government that they make” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). His own application for housing from 1998 still hasn’t been filled but he sees foreign nationals in those houses, “because the people who are working there in the houses – once you give them something, they just give them the house” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). This gentleman blamed “corrupt officials and employers” for foreign nationals being hired in a competitive job market (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). The second highest leader from the majority Xhosa church explained, “yes, I believe that I deserve a house and also it’s up to the people that we vote for to provide us houses” (LL interview, translation, 8 April 2011). This particular interviewee came to the church explicitly to ask God to help him to find work. However, an explicit sense of entitlement to houses and work among respondents was accompanied by a sense of affinity with foreign nationals. While the majority of respondents offered their knowledge that foreign nationals undercut wages and live in RDP houses (and this was a contributing cause of the 2008 attacks) members were quick to place the locus of the responsibility with the government workers managing the housing distribution or bosses in charge of hiring, and not necessarily the foreigners themselves. While all of the church members were urban migrants, the very group that in Landau’s (2006) research mobilised nationalistic rhetoric to assert their right to the city, the church members’
rhetoric was more akin to what Landau (2010) later describes as the international migrants who do not root down and fight for territory but hover above the surface of their temporary residences. Perhaps because members’ associate themselves so strongly with their ‘homes’ in Eastern Cape or KwaZulu Natal, they do not feel that they can make any claims on urban Johannesburg.

**Hard Work and Patience**

Church members talked consistently about the importance of working hard and having faith. One 17 year old student talked about his dreams for his own career future and said, “I want to, in my life, I want to be proud and celebrate” (W interview, English, 6 February 2011). Another young (29 years) male leader said that he often tells people that “God doesn’t like laziness and complaining and people who don’t use common sense” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). If people are complaining about work he will ask them if they have looked for a job and will probe further as to when and for how long they have been looking, “we don’t just accept stories, yes. As a pastor, you need to work with the truth” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). Coupling a sentiment of the desert of work and the need for prayer, one leader responded to the question of need with reference to Moses and his people’s wandering in the desert for 40 years without food and water, continuing:

> You need to talk to your God and say, hey God, I need, A-B-C-D and definitely God will give it to you. And also, make means, yes, for getting those things. You cannot think that you pray and job will come to you and look for you. It will not happen that way (S interview, English, 3 February 2011).

The leader of the majority Xhosa church described how he advises his members to work:

> I said, you know, when you work, whatever you did, you must look at your job first. And your manager or supervisor is going to see what you doing. And then if he saw what you do, is gonna be touched, is gonna tell the big boss, no man, you see that man is working hard, like that and that, can we give him ten cent. I got people like that one the job, they always complaining about money – they said, I’m working hard, I do this an…. But if you can go and see, is not a job that he must do – the amount he is getting is right for the job but he needs more money than the job (CC interview, English, 6 March 2011).

This kind of practical advice was also given in a different iteration, advising members how to get the weekend off of work when the church was going to travel together to join a sister church out of town one Sunday.

Teasing out the complex relationship of faith and work, a member from the Xhosa-majority church explained her understanding of how God works in the world:

> People know that they must work. You cannot just think that when you stay home and say, ‘oh God I need food’, God will just give you the plate, no. You must, we must work
for that. Even job. You can’t just say I want job and sit down and you don’t do anything. You must go out and look for a job. Even if right there... there is no job, stay there, until somebody come and talk to you. That’s what we believe. If you pray, no one can turn your back – even if they say there’s no job, but they’ll need you for something. Even if to clean the shelves, but they’ll take you for something (HH interview, English, 21 March 2011).

This woman’s description of the importance of self-reliance alongside hard-work reflects a clear rejection of the complacency-critiques of some scholars in relation to religion; however, this sentiment was couple alongside a rejection of engagement with the government as a means of making change in the community.

The dependence on employers and the stress of work were commonly vocalized during the church services, for instance, the church used to have a Bible Study but the person who was leading it got a job so it stopped, although there were prayers and announcements to try to bring it back. During her opening confessional one woman spoke angrily about her employer who told her to return to the house early that day because she needed to leave the children with the speaker; this made her “very, very angry” because her employers knew, “that on Sunday is time I supposed to go to church and be with other fellow worshippers”, she explained, asking for prayers (Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). In the instance of the night vigil, the bishop, the head of the church, could not be present to preside over the service because he had to work. He was scheduled to lead a delegation to KwaZulu Natal the next week for a funeral, so he could not get time off during this particular night shift (Church Service, English, 12-13 February 2011). Those who had work said that they did not attend the Wednesday evening service or do more evening activities as a church because once you come home from work, you are tired, maybe you must cook dinner for your family and then there is no time.

One member’s testimony during a church service were echoed throughout various weeks, “and if you want any position anywhere - in a church or a company - you must earn it through your hard work... your work should speak for you” (Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011). The speaker is a truck driver and in a company where many people wanted his position, the speaker said that every year someone dies because they use muti means, “they put a spell where they work” (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011). Another man spoke with both apprehension and frustration about his work place where competition is high and often destructive. He explained, if you don’t have a “right heart” and you manipulate people at work to get a better position, and “if you take a position without working for that position, will go away because you don’t deserve that” (Zulu majority Church

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30 Muti is traditional medicine, and in the above case, a curse put on it likely by a sangoma.
Service, translated, 6 Feb 2011). The scripture opened before his testimony was Isaiah 55:6-7, which speaks of God’s mercy for those wicked people who turn back to God.

The issue of work is woven throughout the worship service itself. Opening songs commonly have lyrics like I’ll keep working for the Lord (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). The act of circling, which awakens and enables the ancestral spirits to come into the worship space, is a physically rigorous activity. When people are tired they will step out of the circle, and the leaders regularly walk around and choose people to join the circling, enabling others to step out. It is a matter of discipline as well as a spiritual practice. At the end of one service, the bishop encouraged everyone to not get tired but “to keep preaching” and “persevere” for the church (Zulu majority Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011). In this convergence of message and practice the physical acts of the service become metaphors for the evangelical call into the rest of the community, to preach and to persevere.

Entitlement Qua-Party Politics: Rejection

AICs are known within the academic literature as largely a-political or anti-political institutions (Bompani 2008). Members of the case study Apostolic Zionist churches expressed a strong dislike of political leaders and getting involved in the political system because of issues of distrust and division that could ensue:

No, in the church, we not, we don’t even talk about that. You know, even when we have got a meeting, we don’t even touch something around politic. Because if you can see, the politic is just full of Satanism, yes. Politic is not good thing. Because, you know, the politics, like, let me make an example, there is the IFP, the big party is the IFP and the ANC, you understand. There is a leader, which, the first one was Mandela – the other one was Buthelezi. You see, that two people, they are eating together, yes, they are hearing everything, they can even inform each other, they talk. But the other people, they’re fighting, you understand? Obviously not good. You can’t understand why they’re doing this. Because the leaders are not fighting, they are staying together, but the followers, that’s the problem. So here in the church, you can’t talk about politic, no (K interview, English, 23 January 2011).

In this description of politics, the people on the ground are the ones that fight and suffer, in contrast to leaders who appear to benefit from politics. The reason for this rejection, however, requires further interrogation.

Another young (29 years old) male pastor explained:

31 Isaiah 55:6-7 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (The Bible, New International Version).
No I’m not political. Being a pastor, you know sometimes once you become political, it causes divisions. But in the church I have people who belong to ANC, I have people who belong to IFP, I have people who belong to maybe DA, I don’t know and I don’t want to know. Cause just imagine if I stand up and say I am IFP, what now will people instantly think about me. They will say, oh, our pastor is IFP that is why he says this that is why he acts like ABC. He is full, is full of IFP mind, you know. If you are a man of god – you should not join any division – you should stand and say I am a man of God, everyone is my child (S interview, English, 3 February 2011).

This sentiment of non-divisiveness will be taken up further in the next chapter on outsiders/insiders. As articulated in this quote, the speaker feels that the internal diversity of politics within his church precludes him from participating himself, as does his primary alliance to God.

One middle aged (45 years old) woman explained that she is not involved in politics because she fears it would lead her “to do something wrong” because “in the new... most of the time you see the political people, and they like to use the people - they like to use them in the wrong way .... As long as he have, he get what he want” and forget about the suffering people (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). Her statement reflects a sense that politics corrupts, she holds great disdain for politicians because they seem selfish and never remember their constituents, including her. In the interview she said that the church does not approach ward councillors in part because councillors will say to them, who are you?, to which the members do not feel they have a powerful answer (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). Instead “We just speak with the problem that we have to solve in the church, that something that you have in your house, you can see which way and help you to solve that thing” (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). The church largely faces inward, she explains not only because they have the experience and the influence within that sphere, but also, it would seem, because (and she expresses her statement as a belief of the whole church) they do not feel that they have such a voice outside of the church. She does not feel that she has an answer to the legitimating question of, so who are you?

Politics, the 2008 Attacks, and Responses

As with the issue of scarcity, respondents rejected the solution of violence to the affront to their ‘entitlements’. Many respondents offered the term ‘xenophobia’ after I asked about the violence in 2008, revealing a high degree of consciousness about this term. The most common sentiment expressed in discussions about the 2008 violence was that of personal pain in seeing others attacked. As one young (19 years old) man reflected, “No I wasn’t affected but it was hurting me because people were dying. There were so many evil things that were happening. So it was hurting to see other human being beaten
like that” (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011). One middle aged (40 years old) female leader explained that when it was happening:

   I’m feeling the pain. The message, I’m giving them the message because people need to know what the Bible says...don’t hit the other one – because the time Jesus is going to answer you, turn around and give you the trouble that you’re going to do (L interview, English, 23 January 2011).

This confidence in the judgment and justice of God was coupled with “they don’t know what they is doing,” an echo of Jesus’ cry on the cross, asking for forgiveness for those who persecuted him (L interview, English, 23 January 2011).

   One older woman’s story during the opening confessional time echoes the messages consistently put forward throughout the themes that violence is not a legitimate means of addressing a real grievance and its use may even question whether someone’s claims are perceived of as valid by affected parties. The story that she told was of her grandson who came home beaten and bloody early that very morning:

   When she asked what happened, he said, ‘I found this old guy who beat me up, said I stole some metal in his house’, so she replies ‘if my son, that is true, as your sins, you need to face your consequences and also if that guy he truly believe you are the one he should have taken you to the police station, not to beat you up’. ... basically says, if I don’t know what happened, my son, if I don’t know anything, I don’t go with him, so whatever happened I don’t know and if it’s the truth (Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).

This response reiterates the importance of trust, but also presents a counter narrative to other residents’ perceptions of violence as a legitimate redress to grievances (Misago et al. 2010: 12). One leader situated the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in the daily lives of individuals in this way:

   we see someone who is beaten in the street. Instead of help, we say, ah you’re right to be beaten, is probably because of alcohol or something. We should be like that Samaritan woman that took care of the person, to a nice place, let’s not judge (Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).

As another leader was wrapping up the service in which the story of the Good Samaritan was the primary scripture reading he stated that you cannot be both a Christian and a criminal because you would see that you are committing crime against your brother and you wouldn’t do it:

   Cause the problem is that spiritually they’re not connected, cause I know my neighbour is not about the material –is the deeper feeling inside. And they need to have that and as young people they just want to experience it. Just want money for booze, to do mischief, they don’t have that direction as young people, and we have the guidance of the Bible
that we should read. And also stick to it and preach and practice. Is painful (Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).

Along with this instruction on Christian behaviour the leader argued that you can’t have a short temper but must be humble, can’t be angry but must be calm. This snippet of his summary of the messages throughout the service situates the story of the Good Samaritan in the daily experience of the young people of the congregation and the broader community, and later in the daily experiences of the older working or family members. Thus in the context of all of the troubles, trials and tribulations that people may face, he calls on the congregation to be something different from the broader community, a sense of relating to others that is counter to what ‘seems reasonable’ or even ‘deserved’.

The most common response to questions of xenophobia, was a strong conceptual distinction between discourse about foreigners and the actions that the 2008 crowds took against those foreigners. For instance, a 25 year old woman in speaking about the 2008 violence said that some of what people say – that foreigners commit crime, fight and attack people with hammers – is true, but not in all cases; she expressed frustration that the crowds didn’t try to distinguish real guilt from innocence because, “to fight all of them, there’s no one that is guilty or not guilty to fight all of them” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). This respondent’s primary concern in this statement is not the use of the violence, then, but the possibility that people not guilty of any crimes were killed due to an undifferentiating crowd. One middle aged woman insisted that the attacking crowds need to talk about problems or complaints of working for low wages with foreign nationals instead of using violence against them (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). A young (21 years old) woman said that the violence started because “people think people who come from out in South Africa” take their work, but the truth, she said, is that they are just willing to work for less and this is not a crime (O interview, English and some translation, 30 January 2011). One middle aged (40 years old) female leader placed the primary blame on the councillors while reiterating that there is no cause for violence, “but the councillors is naughty because how they can give the other people the houses who don’t want to go with the line” (V interview, translation, 5 February 2011). Thus, while reiterating the same accusations as the crowd that attacked foreign nationals, her position of blame and at least rejection of violent tactics differ significantly than the crowd, as described in the previous chapter.

When asked if the church tried to stop the attacking crowd in 2008, one young (19 years old) man said, “It was impossible for them to stop it, cause those people you cannot stop them. So they didn’t do anything” (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011). His analysis to the causes of the violence was that foreigners were taking jobs by undercutting wages, though he did not think that undercutting wages
was a problem and certainly not illegal (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011). This young man hadn’t looked for a job yet as he was finishing some supplementary courses after secondary school to prepare for graduation. He knew that many others, “they say those people are criminals” but he disagreed with this sentiment (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011). Among respondents, prayer was the most practiced response and dialogue was the most commonly suggested solution to the violence, as explained by one young (28 years old) male leader, “God hates violence ... we’ll pray for those people that if they have guns in their hands and knives, they must put down their guns and talk to those people on the table” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011).

A couple of members explained their attempts to stop the crowd, protect foreigners about to be attacked, or speak out against the violence. One middle aged (45 years old) woman who saw people throwing stones and using sticks told the story of how she spoke to the head of the crowd, saying:

*Please, let’s give that people a chance and sit down to talk to them and ask him, why you are here? How can we help you? You see? The problem is going to solve, rather than take the stick and stone and throw it to that person. He’s the same like you and he suffer – we have to help him* (U interview, English, 5 February 2011).

It was unclear where this confrontation took place. One young woman (25 years old), said that when she was trying to stop the crowd, they said, “and you too, you’re supposed to go - follow him, because you like him.’ No. I like everybody. There’s not anyone that I say, I don’t like this. Because I feel that everybody is a person like me. There’s no reason to beat somebody up” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). This young woman later explained that she sees herself much like the foreigners:

*Yes, I’m very scared and I have a very pain because I know if the somebody is coming to Gauteng, he wants a job, like me, everybody wants something to eat, to make something better for the child, so how you supposed to beat somebody because everyone wants to try* (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

In spite of that fear and the crowd’s response, as her story goes, “I take my Bible and I say, in the name of Jesus, there’s no one the stranger from the God” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). She said this to “all the people that were beating everything” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). This young woman was proud of her response to the violence, and paraphrased scripture in her retelling of the story to reflect a universalistic God whose boundaries do not know nationality. The church, she explained, is a place of protection. She spoke with admiration about one particular leader in the church:

*The pastor is a, I don’t know what I can say about that pastor, that pastor has a nice heart, because if, before December, there’s a forum, like the people from Zimbabwe, that the community will beat him to go away, so the pastor tries to take on those people cause he knows that the people will come to church every day, and he lock the church, and he know that the people don’t have the crime, and tell the community, don’t touch*
that people, because they don’t belong to the crime. To all of that thing that we talking about that foreigners is like this. No, the people is not the same. Lots of people if you come here, you protected (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

One of the highest male leaders of the Zulu-majority church, when asked if he was afraid when he stood up for the foreigners during the attacks answered “I wasn’t, I know God” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). Describing his actions for three members of his church, “Some we protected them, some from Zimbabwe we protected them, like myself, three of them, I keep them at my place. Some say, pastor, we’re scared, and I say, don’t worry” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). This leader explained the cause of the violence related to the ‘big’ leadership, “The cause... I don’t know it was rumours – but our big people in this country, they talk about the foreigners should be taken to their places. And now people say hey, you people are wasting time now” (I interview, English and some translation, 14 January 2011). In this case the man has positioned himself against the countries’ “big” leadership, and the political discourse of fear, which has named as inciting violence.

One middle aged (40 years old) woman told the story of her neighbour who was from KwaZulu Natal but was picked out by the crowd as being Zimbabwean. The woman was respected by neighbours and friends as if she were this young man’s mother. When the crowd came and attacked the neighbour they broke his cheek, kicked him outside and put him in water with electricity until he died; she tried to defend him, saying he wasn’t Zimbabwean, but she could not protect him, which caused her great emotional pain. Spurred by her actions, the crowd told her, “When you’re talking, we want to beat you right now.’ He said it is because you are in love with him and whatever, and then I see who says it because was 20 people” (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). Not only did this woman feel threatened, but she also saw who the threats were coming from. This woman stayed inside instead of going to church to pray during the violence because she feared for her own life. She believed that her neighbour was attacked because he was successful and people were jealous, “I think that the jealous, somebody was hate you and jealous with you would tell you - you was Zimbabwean” (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). Her description suggests that the guise of nationality was used as a weapon to intentionally attack South Africans who were seen as successful within the township. The crowd’s message of being in love also rejects any level of commitment between neighbours, arguing that romantic love was behind her defence and put her at risk to become a target.

The members of the case study churches have a unique relationship to foreign nationals, the attacking crowds, and the government. Although they were South African citizens, both churches claimed to have foreign nationals in their membership, placed the blame for unmet entitlements on
South African employees, and argued against violence as the solution to their own experience of lack of work or lack of housing. Any interpreter must take into consideration the possibility that interviewees are painting themselves in a better light or are expressing what they think the interviewee wants to hear. However, not only did other churches’ religious leaders speak harshly on foreign nationals during the survey fieldwork of the study, but the specific positioning of these churches suggests a sort of usefulness to the fairly welcoming position expressed across the members and leaders. Members did not express the strong nationalistic rhetoric that Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes of and they did not want to stay in Johannesburg and claim it for their own as Landau describes. Members’ rejected political mobilisation and manipulation as discussed by Neocosmos and instead of asserting nativist claims, identified strongly with their ethnic community whose home is elsewhere. Finally, the patterns of behaviour that condone and promote subtle and overt xenophobia and violence are targeted specifically as the motivation for members to reject politics, and for some, even put their own safety at risk for the aim of helping others, as during the May 2008 surge. This rather specific, almost hidden, positioning by the church seemed to be a strategic position, development over many experiences of disillusionment and broken trust with politics and a national guise of solidarity.
Chapter Seven  
Neither here nor there: outsiders and insiders among Apostolic Zionist churches

The complexity of the question of who belongs and who does not belong, who is an insider and who is an outsider, is reflected within the fact that at least one third of those killed in the 2008 surge of xenophobic violence were South African citizens. Thus, while the attackers’ rhetoric centred on foreigners, nationality was but one aspect of what exempted someone from being targeted by the attacking crowd. The purpose of this empirical research discussion is to sketch one of the many alternative discourses of belonging and membership (in contrast to the 2008 xenophobic mobilisation) that was and is operating within the space of Alexandra Township. Before discussing the research findings, however, I will provide a brief review of this literature’s theories and gaps, and the aim of this chapter in the overall argument of the dissertation.

The literature presented above on the outsider/insider concepts is a review of theories that address the intersection of migration, religion and identity. In order to not only move beyond the primacy of nationality inherent in (and important to) the climate of xenophobia in Alexandra, but to also achieve some level of sophistication in understanding the specificity of the navigation of belonging in that space, this chapter discusses how the case study church members and leaders conceptualise and experience belonging in an outside of the church. Landau and Freemantle’s (moral) tactical cosmopolitanism is an identity adopted by some foreign national migrants in response to hostility from the ‘host’ communities they encounter in Johannesburg; it is predicated upon a (moral, mostly Christian) articulated standard of behaviour that places (moral) tactical cosmopolitans apart from and above the rest of the community. Levitt’s transnational religious identities explore the multiple and various ways that religious membership can both reinforce and supersede national identity, but in practical ways shapes people’s commitments and patterns of migration among trans-national migrants and those that stay behind. Bompani argues that, in the context of South Africa, AICs serve a powerful role in promoting democracy and agitating for justice within local spheres of influence, even as they steer members away from party politics. Prozesky and deGruchy argue that religion is an ordering social institution that counterbalances the experience of chaotic social or political surroundings; these systems of structuring and explaining life travel through networks of similar experience, need, and objective (e.g. urban labour migrants). For each of these authors, individuals’ membership is driven by their experience of dislocation (physical, national, economic, social) and their desire to belong to or situate themselves within some niche of their new setting. While these theories aim to explain the interaction between
migration, religion and identity, this dissertation’s empirical research stretches beyond (but also includes) that interaction to explore the implications of how members and leaders consequently relate to the belonging questions most salient in the broader community of Alexandra Township.

Within the case study church interviews, when asking about the diversely defined other I often phrased the question in this way: what does the church or Bible say about people who are outsiders? This question commonly received a blank stare, soliciting a follow-up question: does God say anything about how to treat people who are different or outsiders or foreigners? Responses typically fell into four categories: reactionary-bordering-defensive; universalistic religious; intentionally welcoming; or rift averse, and at times a combination of these expressions. Interviewees also talked about outsiders with different degrees of distance referring to people from Zimbabwe, Transkei, and “another planet” to name a few. This diversity reflects different ways of defining an outsider within the parameters of the region, the nation and beyond.

Throughout this chapter I will argue that the urban South African migrant religious communities of the Apostolic Zionist Churches present unique ways of believing and belonging in Alexandra Township. Analysis of these churches draws on elements of each of the theories presented in the literature reviewed more heavily than the other concept-based chapters, although this will be taken up more fully after the presentation of selected parts of interviews and participant observation.

Reactionary-bordering-Defensive

In each interview I asked about the individuals’ feelings toward outsiders before I asked about the xenophobic violence of 2008. In five of thirteen cases in the Zulu majority church, and three of the seven cases in the Xhosa majority church, the respondent volunteered the term ‘xenophobia’ before I broached the subject and explained that Alexandra had a problem with xenophobia a few years ago and that it was really bad. Within the Zulu majority church, half of those interviewed (some members and all of the leaders) insisted that their membership included international members from Zimbabwe (mostly), Botswana and Mozambique, reflecting a perception that having international members was positive, and that not having international members somehow made them more suspect in the ‘xenophobia’ issue. This response should be considered in the context of a physical area that has been heavily researched specifically in relation to the 2008 xenophobic violence. This high level of sensitivity to the issue of xenophobia and the insistence on having foreign national members is made even more complex

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32 This interviewee insisted on speaking English during the interview, which I respected while asking follow-up questions to confirm that she was talking about people born outside of South Africa.
by my experience of only being introduced to one foreign national member during my four weeks with
the Zulu majority church, and none in the Xhosa majority church.

For a senior leader in the Zulu church, this question was an opportunity to distance his own
church’s members from the xenophobic violence:

*The people who are complainting are the people who are not attending the church
because here, you’ve got the different people attending this church. Zimbabwe, Lesotho,
Zulu, Shangaan, we don’t have apartheid about other people, yes, as you accept anyone
(K interview, English and some translation, 23 January 2011).

In addition to the negative response to what was intended to be a neutral, if loaded, question, and in
calling unfair practices against foreign-nationals *apartheid* the speaker is articulating a strongly moral
rejection of different treatment of outsiders. In interviews and the church service, others consistently
used the term *discrimination* to talk about being inclusive as a church. In the majority-Xhosa church, the
leader also insisted, “No, I’ve got people here from Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and other one is came from
Mozambique. We got Vendas, Shangani, Pedi, we are mixed, is not only a Xhosas, yeah, we mixed” (CC
interview, English, 6 March 2011). A young leader from the majority-Xhosa church took issue with the
language I was using:

...the words, the people for the outside - ah, no, people you come from outside... you
come from Mozambique, Lesotho to join the church, are the same as people from South
Africa. Yes, because if the people of Mozambique or Lesotho you got a problem, yes, I
organize a time to go to Lesotho, yes, to organize the meeting for the family of the
person - the guy to join the [church], to do meeting, to solve this problem (MM
interview, English and some translation, 8 April 2011).

The church, he said, had Mozambican membership in branch churches and had a branch church from
Lesotho visiting for Easter. These responses reveal the unique nature of the Apostolic Zionist churches as
highly embedded within the community and very aware of locally sensitive topics. The defensive
response to this question also likely reflects what many members named as the causes of the anti-
outsider violence, which are jealousy and greed.

*Universalistic*

The most common response to this question was a universal conception of Christianity, beyond
the possession or bias of an individual. This response resonates with Landau and Freemantle’s (moral)
tactical cosmopolitanism, in which membership is not based on national identity but the moral actions
of every individual. While respondents were not commonly explicit about the moral parameters of
membership, the prescriptive nature of worship in these churches address the issue of moral behaviour.
The urban residents of Landau and Freemantle’s concept as well as a majority of the members of the Zulu and Xhosa churches do not consider Johannesburg their home, although church members’ are looking to return to KwaZulu Natal or Eastern Cape while many within the tactical cosmopolitan conception are keen to travel to a new and different home as well. This emphasis on the universality of Christ requires further consideration because the vast majority, and many Sundays the entirety of attendees, were South African citizens, albeit with some ethnic diversity. The ethnic enclave nature of both churches appears to be at least distinct from, though not in contradiction with, the moral argument for a non-national basis for belonging, and is instead connected to how members found the church and why they stayed.

The universal messages of the case study church members commonly referenced scripture and empathy drawn from personal experience in their defence of such broad parameters for membership. As one male leaders said, “I think in God we are all the same, whether you come from whatever country, we are all the same, we are all human beings, there is no one to be treated badly. I think God do emphasize that” (Z interview, English, 6 February 2011). Similarly, a male senior leader explained, “You see, Jesus is for everyone, not just for South African. We coming to religion, it is for all the world” (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011). One Sunday another leader interpreted the story of the Good Samaritan Luke 10: 25-37 in this way:

You can love your neighbour but don’t forget the neighbour is everyone that walks around on the streets – everyone you meet around is your neighbour. Don’t choose your neighbours. Love your God. Jesus is here with us (Church Service, translation, 30 January 2011).

A young woman (25 years) referenced common daily practices explaining:

There’s no one that is stranger, because people like me, there is nothing that is wrong because we the same, we eating the same food, we work here, we look like anybody. … I believe that all the people they have a God, there’s no stranger from God. If we are people all, we are people (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

An older woman in the majority-Xhosa church incorporated an evangelical bend to her description:

Whoever comes to Gauteng, they come with an aim of saying, my situation back at home is painful. Let me go to Johannesburg to look for a job, let me go and seek something. … [the church leaders] preach a lot about that because in God there’s no Zimbabweans, there’s no Chinese man, no English man, we all human, we all people in front of God. So we should take everybody, try to call them to come to the temple and to pray for them, or to pray with them, so to get healing and to get, just to be as one. And also to preach about other races, and to preach about other people attending the church service and uniting as nation because in God we are one. We have no colour and we have no language barrier, and no nations can separate but in God we are all human and
we should all preach. If somebody’s in the darkness, try to call him to be in the church to see the light – so if we have Zimbabweans, whatever, come from anywhere and is in the darkness and we don’t call them to show them the light, we not doing God’s work so much (FF interview, translation, 19 March 2011).

This woman also explained in her understanding of the cause of the violence:

So, with the violence, we don’t try to stop the violent per se, but we look at the society as a whole, saying as a society we need to pray for people that are abusing drugs, alcohol, smoke, and there are people that rape their own daughters in the house, so firstly we need to understand where this mind comes from of people doing this such a thing and you’ll find other, that other people are under influence of something to do this. So we need to look at those. So in the church we not only praying to stop the violence, we also praying to stop the cause of, might be the cause of violence that people go inside facing difficulties. In terms of how we help in the church, firstly we look at the society, what is the society’s problem, yeah (FF interview, translation, 19 March 2011).

Such a broad social systems approach to problems indicates that the xenophobic violence is perceived to be part of the multitude of interrelated problems that the community experiences. The interviewees’ commitment to stopping the many ills around her not only reflect a sense of mission often articulated by the head of the majority Xhosa church, but also distinguish the church from that set of problems and behaviours named outside of its walls.

Universal responses also came out strongly in response to questions about what makes this church different from other churches in Alexandra Township. A middle aged (40) woman responded to what makes her church different from others by saying that they “don’t discriminate” (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). The church doesn’t help you, she says, because they know you but they “treat everybody like they know you long time”; it doesn’t matter if “you are wearing the uniform or non-wearing” (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). This experience was particularly important to this interviewee because even though she has been attending the church for four years she still considers her church membership and her ‘home’ to be elsewhere, so she is herself one of those semi-outsiders enjoying the hospitality of the church. Another middle aged (40 years old) woman who takes a taxi from Soweto into Alexandra Township every Sunday for worship explained:

We are different churches but we pray only one God. The other ones33 don’t like – don’t like Apostolic ones – no, we praying only one God. Only the uniform is the difference. But only one Bible, there’s not 20. .... No, the people is for the God, and God knows what’s going on (L interview, English, 23 January 2011).

33 In this instance it was unclear if she believed these perceptions to be held by other churches or other Alexandra residents in general.
Here we see an inkling of an issue that many articulated: the Apostolic Zionist church as exiting outside of the parameters of mainline (e.g. definitive) Christianity in Alexandra. One middle aged (45 years old) woman explained, “we all black, and we all South Africa, we all in Africa”, and later, “we love all the people” (U interview, English, 5 February 2011). During interviews several members directly compared foreign nationals to themselves, people who had come to Johannesburg looking for work and a better life. This level of empathy reflects both a positioning of the speaker against the common discourse of foreigners as murderers, robbers and job-stealers, and reveals the level of vulnerability that the speakers feel in relation to the city, or perhaps to those who echo xenophobic perceptions.

Several people spoke of the church as a physical space and set aside religious site that does not belong to the rules or personal biases of the individual, but should be governed by God. As a sign of wide-welcome, at the end of one service the bishop invited all people present, members of the church and not, to stay for special prayers after the service had officially ended. In relation to questions of diversity, a young (29 years old) male leader explained that pastors don’t have the power to force someone out of the church if they disagree with someone’s statements because “at the end of the day you must know that you are a child of God” (S interview, English, 3 February 2011). One older (60 years) woman, who trains the younger members in the ways of the church said:

Is the place for God, so we should welcome everybody. So we not supposed to discriminate and say we don’t want this. Is not a personal place, is not a personal place of say, this is my place - is for everybody, so we cannot divide in the church, because it’s not yours (T interview, translation and some English, 5 February 2011).

Another middle aged (45 years old) woman, herself a sangoma, a traditional healer, explained that while she prays for members, helps to divine for members, and catches people who are healed or need physical restraint in the church, she only practices as a sangoma in her home:

I never help there in the church, this place is not belongs to me, belongs to somebody else. ... No, you know that, if it’s not your place, you’re not free, you’ll not feel free. So everything I do here34, I’m free here on my place to do everything. Because our things are not the same, you see, like us - that one [bishop] he’s sangoma but in spirit of God. Me, I’m using medicine and spirit of God and all that, they are not the same (Y interview, translation and some English, 6 February 2011).

This issue of sangomas is central to another common response to questions of belonging, that is, the church as an intentionally welcoming community.

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34 The interview took place in the woman’s home in Alexandra one Sunday morning before church. She was not attending church that morning because she was attending the society meeting instead.
Intentionally Welcoming

A 25 year old young woman responded to my first question about how long she had been attending ‘this church’ by explaining, “This church is friendly, we are free, like if we are here, everybody will come. There is no one we will say, don’t come here, don’t come inside” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). She continued, if you have a problem where you live in “KZN, or Cape Town or Pietersburg”, the church will get in a taxi together and go to your home, “because here we have Zulus, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotha...” (N interview, English, 30 January 2011). In this quote the interviewee is referencing two types of diversity that she takes pride in: ethnicity and culture. Ethnic (and geographic) diversity is referenced explicitly. Her statement about being friendly and free and letting everybody in is an echo of a sentiment discussed at length during the worship service (I interviewed her after that worship service). This connection of cultural tradition and even ‘home’ echoes Levitt’s discussion of transnational religious identity in which the church helps you to maintain a connection with your home away from this place. In this church several members have a shared sense of the place each calls home, the group makes pilgrimages together to that home, and the worship reflects the religious practices of ‘home’. The second expressed diversity, a commitment to welcoming sangomas into the church service, is one of the parameters that positions Apostolic Zionist members outside of the mainline membership of Christianity, as expressed by some mainline and Pentecostal church leaders (religious leader interviews, October-November 2010).

Regarding culture, several people in the majority Zulu worship services, from the confessionals to the preaching, and applied in the announcements, spoke at length about the importance of allowing sangomas in the church. These were individuals who, for a variety of reasons, felt the Apostolic Zionist Church broadly speaking, was under threat of questioning the role or right of sangomas to be in the church. In several speakers’ articulations of the church-qua-outsiders, there is an explicit connection between ethnic, national and religious/cultural diversity:

There’s somebody who is not needed inside – how come? This is a church. Like the sangomas, the traditional doctors. With another church they’re not needed, that people. But you know that people, sometimes is red in the face, yeah, here everybody welcome even using the traditional, as long as you do everything in the church, no problem. As long as you read the Bible, no problem, as long as you not fighters (N interview, English, 30 January 2011).

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35 When I refer to the Church in this section I am speaking of the broader Apostolic Zionist Church, even though it cannot be said to be one systematically connected, largely congruent, and formally structured system like other mainline churches.
During the opening confessional one man situated the issue of *sangomas* and worship style within the rhetoric of the unity of God and the independence of each person, “Let’s not look at other people, how they do things. Look at what’s inside your heart” (Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011).

Continuing, he emphasizes that people should be allowed to “be free” in the way they want to worship, that “people forget that they’re not God – there is only one God and it is up to him to judge the people. ... We not supposed to judge, we not supposed to discriminate anyone” (Church Service, translated, 23 January 2011). The man’s comment was particularly referencing the issue of *sangomas*. This rhetoric is in sharp contrast to discourse within the worship service that referenced quite strict understandings of appropriate sexual, familial, and monetary practices. Still, the incorporation of traditional healers within the worship service was an important sense of openness or ‘freedom’ for many respondents. The majority-Xhosa church seemed to have a much more ambivalent relationship to *sangomas*, never mentioning it explicitly in the worship service. The head of the church explained it in this way:

“No is not that the church doesn’t want it. My belief is we can’t mix it. We must do one thing at a time. ... No, I got no problem with sangoma that come and pray with us in the church. But they must know, is not a sangoma - is a church. When they come out the church and go to their house, they can do his belief towards his sangoma (CC interview, English, 6 March 2011).

In such a simple but important distinction, we see also the effect of the non centralised nature of AICs, which lends itself to a great deal of variation in practice.

Another way that the churches expressed an intentionally welcoming claim was through the use of multiple languages in the service. While the majority of people from each church spoke Zulu and Xhosa respectively, the Zulu church consistently had Xhosa and Sotho members attending, reading scripture in their own languages. This small institutional incorporation of a wider conception of those who belong can be contrasted to, for instance, many Pentecostal churches that preach in English, even if they draw musically and in other ways from various national or ethnic traditions. Many respondents cited the reading of scripture in one’s own language as proof of their inclusivity. As one of the few non-Zulu members explained, it’s not a problem to be a Sotho speaker “because there are Pedis and the Xhosa – we’ve got all the nations here. We’ve got Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana and amaVendas now”, and each is invited to read from their personal Bible and testify in any language (L interview, English, 23 January 2011). If a special guest comes to the church someone will attempt to translate for them; however, non-Zulu speakers are expected to generally understand Zulu as the majority of others’ speech is not regularly translated (I interview, English, some translation, 14 January 2011).
Rift-Aversion

One of the most pervasive themes present throughout interviews, worship language and worship practice was a complete aversion to distinction-as-separation, that is, the importance of non-divisiveness. So strong was this theme that I eventually inquired into whether there were traumas in the past in the church that has sewn painful and irreparable rifts. This emphasis on order echoes Prozesky and deGruchy’s analysis of Zionist churches as oases of sense in an otherwise chaotic external world, and Bompani’s description of AICs as a neutral actor amidst many violent factions. The importance of a cohering community, which was articulated primarily as rift-aversion, was commonly discussed through the church as a guiding institution for young people. During the service as well as interviews, many respondents explained that children must grow up in the church so that they do not get lost to the drugs, crime and idleness that define much of the community outside of the church.

There were mild to extreme examples of members’ rift-aversion. One man stated explicitly that there should be no:

...politics in the church; your actions reflect on you, the church, the people and the pastor, so you must live an exemplary life. The church should be free and fair to all who want to worship as they choose; they are safe in a holy place and do all the offering out of your heart and the love that you want to do the offering, yes (Church Service, translation, 23 January 2011)

During the opening confessional one morning one woman spoke against gossip and loving money – the first is divisive and the second simply evil, she said (Church Service, translated, 6 Feb 2011). In his summary of that same service the bishop said “If there’s problem, let’s talk about it, let’s get it out, and give them. And having envy and greedy and wanting people things, that is not right, we need to change” (Church Service, translation, 6 February 2011). It is instructive that the majority Zulu church made one structural change in the policy of who would be assisted in burial within the church in order to avoid

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36 One male leader who had been attending for 17 years explained that the church used to be a part of a larger church, and that after the original bishop’s death, there was a disagreement over leadership. The community (that now constitutes the church I worked with) asked permission to start their own branch in RCA and the other segment of the original congregation continued worshipping in a school classroom closer to East Bank in Alexandra. “You know the founder, the father of the bishop – when he’s passed away, because that the archbishop was still young, you understand, when he passed away, we used to attend garage that big man, other side there. So this man now is growing up so that one was demanding us to do whatever he need on his area, that’s all. So they don’t – there are something that they need in are other branches in KZN but we don’t go there, but they need us to go there all the time, you understand? Is just a simple thing. So they... is alright, you can pray other side. We are not even fighting, only getting together, we are just greet them nicely. But only are just separating” (K interview, English, 23 January 2011). The break was described as amicable in the end.

37 This quote references a particular approach to monetary donations, which will be taken up further in the scarcity/abundance chapter.
division; previously, any family member of a church member could be buried by the church, but this caused great tensions in relation to the resources needed to assist in this way. The church therefore decided that only members and their siblings or parents or children could be buried by the church; for anyone else church members may travel to the sick or dying person and hold prayer vigils, but they would not support the funeral financially (U interview, translation, 5 February 2011).

We used to bury your children or your mom or your father, or your aunt or your uncle, we used to all these things. Now we used to agree with these: we’ll bury your mom, we’ll bury your father, we’ll bury your children, we’ll bury your husband. Only these four people. That other one, your cousin, uncle, grand-mom – you have to look for yourself. We can come and help you maybe to give a prayer or in the night vigil, to be with you until you go in the graveyard to bury that particular person. But to your children, husband, your mother you’re father, we are going to be always there. We have to choose – by that time he wasn’t think about that, he just think, as long as you have a family, your uncle and your grandmother now we say no, we can’t. We can’t do like that (U interview, translation, 5 February 2011).

According to this interviewee, this shift in policy seemed to lesson tensions and disagreements within the church and reveals the balance between serving others and the importance of a cohesive community (U interview, translation, 5 February 2011).

The importance of being and being perceived as non-divisive and the importance of addressing problems head-on were present long before anyone was interviewed, in the insistence by a few of the first interviewees that we conduct the interviews in the church itself, seeing and being seen by others (English, 23 January 2011). Members did not want to be suspected of saying anything bad or secret about the church. As I conducted more interviews and participants began giving thanks for these conversations during the church confessional time, often members felt more comfortable and preferred to hold the interviews in their own homes. In the experience of leadership, this non-divisive priority was practiced through a rule that only married men and women could be leaders (P interview, English, 30 January 2011). Not only could unmarried leaders lead individuals to vie for power within the church through sexual relations, but, it was argued, they also cannot provide an appropriate example for young people in the church. For instance, one middle aged woman explained:

Eh, if you are married is the way because you are clear – you are not doing, what you call, cheating, and still like that... if you are unmarried they can’t take you as umxoquete because of you can’t teach the people if you yourself are not teached, understand. Yes, so if you are married, is easier to tell these people to get that way, to get that married, you supposed to be... act like this, or doing like this or something like this (P interview, English, 30 January 2011).
Here the role of marriage is a sign of respectability and an important part of the role of women in the churches, to teach about marriage and behaviour. As the oldest living woman in the church explained, when young women come to her with relationship questions or problems, she advises, “remember that the man is the head of the house and you need to listen to him so that he will listen to you” (V interview, translation, 30 January 2011). This same woman refused an invitation to be a priest because she was not married and though it inappropriate, given that her husband had died.

These categories, synthesised from empirical observations and interviews, lend themselves to analysis of this chapters’ literature. Therefore, I will spend a greater amount of time not on more empirical data but analysis of the literature and how these churches can be understood in the broader question of the dissertation and the broader implications of engaging with xenophobia in Alexandra.

The churches presented a self-exceptionalism in relation to the broader community, akin to Landau and Freemantle’s (moral) tactical cosmopolitanism, although without a broader sense of self as someone who is a kind of citizen of the world. This self-exceptionalism is predicated not on a broader community that is hostile to non-members, but on a community that holds all kinds of threats and dangers. While the broader Alexandra community may hold these churches at arm’s length, with some level of reserve based on suspicion, fear or apathy, the church itself is at the same time both hidden and public in a way that perhaps fosters the mysterious element of their presence in the community. The way that members speak of foreign nationals reflects Landau and Freemantle’s characterisation in which nationality plays a secondary role to a broader humanity, or in the church’s case, the broader conception of Christ for everyone. This appeal is not different from the messages of other church leaders in the area, but is noteworthy, given the expressed level of competition that members’ face precisely in the work and housing sectors with foreign nationals.

While these churches are not made up of transnational bodies, they carry many of the same characteristics, and therefore can draw some insights from Levitt’s work on transnational religious communities. In addition, Zionist churches broadly speaking are cross-continental transnational religious communities, thus this analysis may contribute to the body of literature of such communities in North America and Europe. There appeared to be no question among the case study Apostolic Zionist Churches that religious identity is a greater loyalty than nationality, but members were not in a position where their national membership was questioned or posed any challenges. Given members’ analyses of the cause of the problems in the community, their sense of call to daily living was based on the call of Christianity with no expression of citizenship. Again, while travelling from one province to another within South Africa does not pose the kind of cultural backdrop differences that trans-continental travel
does, the church was intentionally maintaining worship, dress, and other practices from their homes in the Eastern Cape or KwaZulu Natal. Finally, members’ verbal or (for a few) interventionist positions of support for foreign nationals could be considered a political position, although members did not express them as such. While the majority of members’ prayers to address the xenophobic violence did not seem to have immediate repercussions, those that aimed to physically protect foreign nationals in May 2008 were questioned on their loyalties and therefore also their rights to live in the spaces they occupied in Alexandra.

Church members and leaders expressed a greater commitment to surviving on their own than to fighting for justice-as-access in the community, in contrast to Bompani’s discussion of the democratising and social justice articulation of those members within the AIC churches she studied in Soweto. Acknowledging that she incorporated Ethiopian churches into her analysis, the difference between the two studies’ churches is significant, although the emphasis on the church as unifying leader is echoed in both. The barrier for action in this study’s churches seemed to be past experience of local government that was corrupt and produced no results, and a real sense of having no leverage or position in relation to the local (much less national) systems of power.

The case study churches fit Prozesky and deGruchy’s classical description of non-Ethiopian AICs, with a couple of exceptions. First, while religious ritual, traditional healing, and ancestral practices, were all present in the churches’ worship services, members’ explanations for the cause of violence and bad things in the world named both other worldly and very human causes. This keen analytical discretion co-existed alongside an expressed belief in the power of non-human influences in the world. The authors’ argument that healing within the worship service is connected to the physical experience of social and person strain, particularly among the poorer members of society, is a rich area to explore. While Prozesky and deGruchy are writing as historians, the regimentation of practice evidenced in this research’s observations of church services give pause to the larger psycho-social arguments these historians are making. This was most commonly expressed as a health outcome of attending church, that is, the relief of stress and anxiety through membership in the church. Second, church members’ relationship to the church itself were diverse and not as restrictive or protectionist as described by the authors. While young people seemed to reference the church as family, a surprising number of members did not discuss the role of the church beyond its healing capacity.

The final word of this chapter will be spent on the issue of freedom. While the theoretical discussion of freedom was introduced under the scarcity/abundance chapter, it is in response to questions of belonging and membership that the issue took shape. The case study churches seem to
provide a unique space in which every person is welcome and has a role. This is not meant to paint a picture too rosy, as the roles are hierarchical and often gender-based, and membership does not grant access to broader bower or resources in the political sense. However, the churches were expressed as intentionally set aside spaces where much is expected of members, and much is returned. The focus on freedom particularly by the church members suggests that the churches would not readily agree to partnerships or intervention outside of the church community itself.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion

This research has set out to make one broad argument with four connecting points: 1) scarcity, outsiders, and entitlement are three complex but consistent concepts undergirding the May 2008 attacking crowd’s expressed motivation for xenophobic violence, as well as academic analysis of the continue violence; 2) understanding how these concepts are constituted and rearticulated in alternative discourses is important, particularly in religious and political discourses, as these are two influential meaning-making institutions in both Alexandra Township and South African more broadly; 3) the historical and particular structural aspects of Apostolic Zionist Churches\(^\text{38}\) position these churches as unique community institutions with an under-studied relationship to the xenophobic atmospheres in which many exist; and 4) these unique churches have an impact on their own members’ and the broader communities’ beliefs and behaviours. The first three points have been made and supported in this dissertation by the discussion of a variety of literature and two case study churches in Alexandra Township. I have argued that in the particularity of the South African context, in its post-Apartheid democracy amidst one of the highest gaps of inequality in the world, and in places where xenophobic violence has erupted, there commonly exists an institution that appears to effectively foster a small community of members that by a number of indicators are contributing and respectful members of society, actively promoting non-violence. Several major issues stem from this argument, not the least of which is the fourth connecting point, which this dissertation cannot make. Such a question is not meant to be answered by the kind of research undertaken in this study, even though the broad argument, the response to the general ‘so what’ question of research, implicitly rests on that very point. With three of my four claims substantiated by the literature and the research findings discussion in chapters five through seven, I will briefly summarise these three chapters, and then conclude by addressing two major issues that stem from this dissertation’s argument.

The case study churches’ members seem to consider themselves a supportive community for members, within a potentially dangerous, or at least distracting, urban environment. Members are by and large ‘temporarily’ living in Johannesburg for work and while they do not have the same resource access as many other religious communities in Alexandra, the church does present a kind of urban

\(^{38}\) To review, these structural aspects include: 1) the leadership/membership structure of each church; 2) the highly participatory nature of worship and meaning-making; 3) their pervasive presence in the impoverished townships in South Africa; and 4) their historic anti-politics stance.
family and resource, supporting one another through times of sickness, family struggle, and matters relating to ‘home’. According to members, the problem of xenophobic violence stems from greed and corruption, thus while members’ rhetoric of foreign nationals working for lower wages and paying officials for RDP houses were consistent with the 2008 attacking crowd, members differentiated guilty from non-guilty foreigners, placed blame on corrupt politicians and government workers, and volunteered a different analysis of how to address the larger problem in a way that rejected violence. Yet while church member and leaders’ rhetoric was by-and-large expressly supportive of foreign nationals, the community’s focus on trust and non-divisiveness have shaped the way that they take action outside of the church building, largely rejecting engagement with the local political system. In addition, the structure of the church itself, as a sort of regional transplant from within South Africa, reifies ‘known’ ways of dealing with conflict, promoting leadership, and guiding gender relationships within the church’s membership.

*What good is a social institution that doesn’t engage in the (broadly defined) political system?*

I could even stretch this question further by asking, what are the consequences of a social institution that encourages its members not to engage in the system that governs them? Part of the argument is that religious institutions shape the way people think and act, and both case study churches’ members spoke fluently of the kind of rhetorical complaints heralded by the May 2008 attacking crowds against foreign nationals, which was also echoed as the cause of the violence by several post-2008 reports. For some members, these complaints came from personal experience and members’ agreed with the analysis, and for others, these complaints are widely cited but the speaker disagreed with them. In both cases, members offered a sharp distinction between these causes of scarcity issues and the use of violence against foreign nationals as a means toward ameliorating that experience of scarcity. These positions were established through experience, although the explanations took on moral and religious language; the explanation for the rejection of violence and party politics gathered a sense of unconscious strategic planning as members and leaders interviews began to echo one another. The church leaders and members did not reject engagement with politics because they believe that God dislikes politics, but because their experience of empty promises, political leaders who became wealthy at their expense, and the manipulation (and bloodshed) of individuals for political power, were effective lessons in the futility of engaging; regardless of the ‘truth’ of these claims, it will be interesting to observe a new generation of religious membership and leadership who are growing up in a post-Apartheid context, which must in some ways shift that perception and experience. With a keen
sense of whom to trust and how to build effective relationships, members managed to live in Johannesburg, support their families, and often earn money to send back home.

Do leadership structure and physical proximity matter?

In a functional sense, a large percentage of the church’s congregation plays a leadership role within the church. In response to the practical needs of a congregation highly dependent on available employment, a variety of members can fulfil each role (preaching, leading the service, healing, counselling) within the church and regularly do so throughout the year. In fact, it is through this pragmatic means of organisation that new official or named leaders are recognised within the congregation, climbing their way up the ranks. Thus while there is no externally accredited training required for any level of leadership in the church, the performative nature of leadership as well as membership in the church ensures that no one person’s ideas dominate, and hold the titled leadership accountable to the congregation as a whole. Leaders must speak to two systems of tradition and authority (Christianity and ancestors) and their ideas and their capacity, to heal or prophesy for example, are regularly tested immediately and directly in every worship service. All attendees are required to participate in the production of meaning and ritualistic aspects of worship. Individuals literally speak to one another during the service, challenging something that is taking place then and there.

The worship style of these churches not only positions each speaker in an increasingly authoritative role, but also lends itself to the evolution of concepts and moral lessons within the worship service. Even before an individual selects the Biblical scripture, which that day’s testimonials will address, as early as the opening confessional members begin referencing one another’s (present and past) statements in a way that build meaning in an often highly moral and behaviour-oriented way. Through the selection of scripture, preaching from a variety of people and perspectives, and a final summary by the bishop or the top leader present (positioning the messages of the day in his own way and emphasizing what he chooses), individuals have a high level of influence in shaping what is said within and what is taken away from the worship service.

Physicality and proximity play multiple, but important roles in the interrogation into the role of meaning-making and action shaping institutions. In the experience of these case study churches alone there are several influential proximity-dynamics at play in the experience of the May 2008 surge of violence: in several instances, church leaders and members tried to protect their own neighbours; members perceived the church as a safeguarding space in the midst of the violence although the liminal
spaces between home and church were often perceived as too dangerous to cross; some individuals knew that violence was happening outside of their homes but they only watched on TV; the head of the majority Xhosa church called all of his congregants during the attacks and told them to pray in their own homes at midnight, thus presenting a unified action amidst dangerous circumstances; and multiple interviewees were very aware of attacks happening in other informal settlements or townships, even around the time of the interviews. Physicality brings both hidden-ness and exposure to church communities. Worship spaces are hidden from plain sight, they exist in annexes to people's homes, off any paved road or named path. However, in a space like Alexandra in which corrugated tin shacks sideline one another, the long and audibly spirited worship on Sunday afternoons and occasionally through the night make the church's presence known, while secret or shrouded by not fully understanding and not seeing the actions and meanings that match the sounds.

So what?

Forced Migration Studies specifically, and ethnographic research generally, share a pronounced understanding of the same ethical mandate that all research shares: it must contribute to knowledge. The privilege and price of opening people's lives, while it can be a positive experience for all involved, still must contribute to knowledge and, if appropriate, benefit the participating or studied communities in some way. This research holds itself to that standard, so I will conclude the conclusion by answering the 'so what' question of research. While we know that the local political economy was integral to whether places would erupt in xenophobic violence or not during the May 2008 violence (which is different than but related to ongoing xenophobic violence around the country), in areas where South Africans and foreign nationals live, Apostolic Zionist Churches are a unique set of small communities interspersed within exactly those poorest parts of South Africa's urban population with a particular type of resistance to this violence. This resistance is based on a history of communal assessment of what would best serve the church community, and while it means precisely a rejection of the local politics, these churches have never been invited to participate in more broadly political civil society coalition initiatives, either of which may be able to more fundamentally change the systems of wide-scale xenophobic violence in townships and beyond. These churches carry a similar, pragmatic message of tolerance in places with and without other accountable local leadership, and thus should be considered for their meaning-making influence as it undercuts much of the public discourse. There may also be potential wider collaboration with these pervasive churches if the political or social context presents new possibilities for churches’ migrant populations.
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### Appendix A

*Interview Schedule*
There are two primary groups that will be interviewed for this study: Group 1 will include pastors or elders from a geographically and denominationally balanced representation of churches in Alexandra; Group 2 will include pastors, leaders, and 15% of the congregation of the two case study churches. The first group will be secured through walking around Alexandra with a local research assistant on Sundays, locating congregations, asking for contact details of pastors or elders and scheduling appointments for the week or Saturdays. If scheduling such interviews poses a problem and individuals are available for interview on the spot, a shortened version of the interview will be conducted. The second group will be selected from the congregations that I have visited previously in the mapping exercise of Group 1. The case study congregations will be selected after reviewing the breadth of factors such as geography, denomination, congregation demographics, and the willingness of the pastor/elder to share information and access to the congregation with me as a researcher.

Each group will be asked a set of biographical questions such as birth date, occupation, residence, etc. This section will vary for each group. For example, interviewees within Group 1 will be asked about their history of church leadership and how they came to serve their current post, which may not be relevant for Group 2. The remaining questions will be conducted within an in-depth semi-structured interview. The questions below will provide the basis of the interview, but may not represent all of the questions that will be asked. The objective of the semi-structured interview is to secure information regarding the primary themes of research without stifling the style of response and rich related content by eliciting single sentence responses.

*Guiding Questions for Group 1*

**Church Demographics**
How many members do you have? How many attend every Sunday?
Do your congregants mostly live in Alexandra or do they come from elsewhere to go to church?
What language(s) is the service in?
Do you have South Africans and foreign nationals in the church?
How does the church finance itself? Is there a standard tithe for a working family? A family out of work?
Do you partner with local NGOs, government, police, or business?

**Pastors’ biography & connection to the community**
How long have you served this church? What brought you here? Where were you serving prior?
What is your job at the church? How would you define success in relation to the church?
How long have you lived in Alexandra?
Do you have relationships with other pastors in Alex? Protestant? AIC?
Do you have relationships with ward leaders, politicians, the police?
Do you have any prominent or well respected leaders in your congregation?
How do you think the church is viewed by others in the community?

**Leadership Structure**
How many pastors serve this church?
Is this a paid position? Does the pastor have another paying job during the week?
What is the extent of pastor’s role in matters of:
- marriage concerns
- congregant conflicts
- access to services
- jobs (for whom, how)
- funerals, weddings
- exorcism
- miracles
- prayers
- training new leaders
What is the leadership structure and responsibilities between the head pastor, elders, and others?

**Church’s programs for the community and the congregants**
What is your congregations’ greatest needs? What are Alexandra’s greatest needs?
Does your church have programs aimed at helping the community? The congregation? Certain segments of the congregation?
Do the church members meet during the week for prayer meetings, Bible study, etc?

**Messaging to the congregants**
How do you determine what you will preach every Sunday?
If congregants spoke to you about concerns that they won’t have enough – enough food to feed the children, enough money for school fees, enough space to live, what kind of message would you preach?
If congregants spoke to you about their concerns about foreign nationals taking resources away from South Africans in Alex, what kind of message would you preach?

**Guiding Questions for Group 2**

**Congregant bio**

Do you work?
Please describe your family and your home. Do your kids go to school? Schools in Alex? Does your family access health facilities? How often in Alex?
Do you have family living elsewhere in South Africa? In another country?
What is your first language?
When did you start coming to this church? Why did you pick this church? Had you gone to church before? If so, where?
How long have you lived in Alex?
Do you have family and friends in Alex? At church?
Were you raised going to church? If so, what church? If not, when did you become a Christian? Where do you live, approximately? How long does it take you to get to church? How do you get here? Do any members of the church live around you?

Church demographic
Please tell me about church. About the service. About the people. In what language(s) do you communicate with different people at church? Do most of the congregants come from Alexandra? Do any live outside of Alex? Are all of the congregants South African? Any international migrants? Are there any community leaders in your congregation? Politicians? Police officers?

Church Relationships
How often do you attend church? Who from your family attends with you? Do you attend any mid-week meetings or events? Do you spend time with people from church during the week? Once a week? Twice a week? Have you gone to the church for:
- marriage concerns
- conflict with a neighbour/congregant
- access to services, jobs
- funerals, weddings
- exorcism, miracles, prayers
What are the challenges you face that the church has helped you with? Has the pastor or a deacon or elder ever visited you in your home?

Outsiders, Scarcity & Alexandra
Does your church have programs to benefit its members here? Other people in Alex that are struggling? What other churches exist in Alex? How is your church different than those other churches? Do the pastors ever speak about outsiders? How we should treat those that are different from us? Even internationals? When you or the church doesn’t know where your rent money will come from, or food, what message does the church have for you? Do you remember the violence in 2008, which they now call xenophobic? Can you tell me about that? Was anyone from your church attacking/attacked? Why did it happen?
INFORMATION SHEET

I, Becca Hartman, am a Masters student at the University of Witwatersrand’s African Centre for Migration and Society. My master’s research project is “South African and Immigrant participation in Churches in Alexandra”. The objectives of my study are 1) to learn a general overview of South Africans’ and immigrants’ participation and leadership of churches in Alexandra, 2) to understand how church members and leaders think and talk about the experience of violence, outsiders and the potential experience of not having enough (food, money, space, etc.), and 3) to compare the descriptions between congregants and leaders and between churches.

I invite you to participate in this research through a 15-60 minute interview. You are being invited to be interviewed because you are a leader or a member of a church in Alexandra and are over the age of 18. Participation in this interview is voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty to you. If at any time you want to stop the interview, I will stop the interview without any penalty to you. If there are questions that you do not want to answer, I will not pursue those questions. We can conduct the interview at any location of your choosing and with any people present or absent, according to your preference. I would like to record our interview in order for me to concentrate on the conversation now and return to listen to your responses at a later time. This recording helps me to accurately reflect your words. If you want no recording or parts not recorded, I will be happy to comply. If you want to talk about the interview to others, that is your choice.

Your anonymity will be secured to the extent that I will not name you as a participant to other people or use your real name or identifying characteristics in any write-up of my research. If you choose to hold the interview at a public place or with other people present, you will no longer be anonymous to those people and I cannot control their subsequent actions. My translator adheres to the same strict anonymity policy that I do.

There are no foreseeable risks, benefits, discomforts or side effects from your participation in this research. I will give you the opportunity to ask questions before we begin and at any time throughout the interview. If you have any additional questions please contact me Becca Hartman (0721385491; becca.hartman@gmail.com) or my advisor, Dr. Lorena Nunez (0824728679; Lorena.NunezCarrasco@wits.ac.za). Again, I would like to invite you to participate in an interview.

Thank you for your time,

Becca Hartman
MA student,
University of Witwatersrand, ACMS

PO Box 76, Wits 2050
South Africa

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION & SOCIETY
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg, February 2011

INFORMED CONSENT

This document is to confirm my voluntary participation in the research conducted by Becca Hartman entitled “South African and Immigrant participation in Churches in Alexandra.” The research is being conducted as a master’s research project at the African Centre for Migration & Society at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

My participation in this research is voluntary and at my own convenience. I understand that neither I nor my church will receive any benefit from this interview and understand that there are no foreseeable risks in participating in this interview. I also understand that I am free to stop the interview at any time, without penalty and that I can choose to not answer any question I do not want to answer without penalty.

I had the opportunity to ask questions, the responses given to me are satisfactory, and I agree to participate in the research. If I have any additional questions I know that I am free to contact Becca Hartman (0721385491; becca.hartman@gmail.com) or her advisor, Dr. Lorena Nunez (0824728679; Lorena.NunezCarrasco@wits.ac.za).

Participant’s signature: ____________________

Researcher’s signature: ______________________________

Date:  _____________________________________________

Place: _____________________________________________

PO Box 76, Wits 2050
South Africa
t: +27 11 717 4033 f: +27 11 717 4039

http://migration.org.za
Appendix D

Recording Consent Form

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION & SOCIETY
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg, February 2011

RECORDING CONSENT

I grant Becca Hartman,(0721385491; becca.hartman@gmail.com) who is conducting research under the guidance of her advisor, Dr. Lorena Nunez (0824728679; Lorena.NunezCarrasco@wits.ac.za), as part of her Masters research in the African Center for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, permission to record my participation in this interview. I am also aware that I can request the recording to stop at any moment if I prefer sections of this interview not being recorded. I have been assured under no circumstances will this recorded interview be made public.

Participant’s signature: ______________________________

Researcher’s signature: ______________________________

Date:  _____________________________________________

Place: _________________________

PO Box 76, Wits 2050
South Africa

Appendix E

Church Participation Form

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION & SOCIETY
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg, February 2011

CHURCH PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

This document is to confirm that this church, by the choice of a leader, several leaders, a committee, or the entire congregation, gives permission to Becca Hartman and her translator to sit in on our church services and to invite our church members and leaders to participate in interviews.

I/we understand that this research conducted by Becca Hartman is part of a Masters degree at the University of Witwatersrand’s African Centre for Migration & Society. I/we understand that her research project is entitled “South African and Immigrant participation in Churches in Alexandra.”

I/we understand that our church’s participation in this research is voluntary and at our own convenience. I/we understand that no individual will receive any benefit from this interview, and neither will the church as a whole. I/we understand that there are no foreseeable risks in participating in this research either for the group or the individual. I/we also understand that I/we free to stop participation in the research at any time without penalty.

I/we had the opportunity to ask questions, the responses given to me are satisfactory, and I/we agree to participate in the research. If I/we have any additional questions I/we know that I/we am/are free to contact Becca Hartman (0721385491; becca.hartman@gmail.com) or her advisor, Dr. Lorena Nunez (0824728679; Lorena.NunezCarrasco@wits.ac.za).

Participant’s (1) signature: ______________________________
Participant’s (2) signature: ______________________________
Participant’s (3) signature: ______________________________
Researcher’s (1) signature: ______________________________

Date: _____________________________________________
Place: _____________________________________________

PO Box 76, Wits 2050
South Africa
Appendix E

Basic rubric for discourse analysis

In this tool “discourse” includes rhetorical choices (included/excluded); how statements are organised; drawing out conventional images and ways of talking; broader narratives drawn upon; and how the individual positions themselves in relation to the discourse (Wetherell et al, 2001).

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Structural</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Scarcity/abundance</td>
<td>Entitlement/work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical choices</td>
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<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(included and excluded)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statements are organised</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self in relation to church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional images</td>
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<td>Church in relation to community</td>
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<td>and ways of talking</td>
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<td>Broader narratives and</td>
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<tr>
<td>texts drawn upon</td>
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<td>Position</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New themes</td>
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