Older persons’ experience of respect from middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable environment

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PREFACE

The author elected to write an article in partial fulfilment of the degree Magister Scientiae in Psychology, with the permission of his supervisor. The article is presented in three chapters, namely:

A literature review of the relevant constructs of respect and of international as well as national research to illustrate the gap in literature and the need for this study.

A separate article for publication.

A critical reflection on the study.

This study set out to contribute to literature about intergenerational relationships by exploring how older persons in a specific economically vulnerable community experience respect in their interactions with middle adolescents. The findings may be used to develop programmes aimed at enhancing intergenerational relationships between older persons and middle adolescents. It is recommended, however, that further studies across different demographic areas be undertaken to obtain a broader understanding of older persons’ experience of respect in their relationships with middle adolescents.

The article included in this study is intended for submission to the Journal of Intergenerational Relationships. The journal publishes research related to the interactions between different generations. This study falls within the journal’s scope by addressing the interactions between older persons and middle adolescents.
SUMMARY

Literature on intergenerational relationships has indicated the importance of respect in these relationships. To date, research has focused mainly on defining the construct of respect or looking at how it presents itself within intergenerational relationships. Little attention has been paid to the experience of respect, leaving a gap, more specifically in the study of the way in which older persons experience respect within intergenerational relationships.

Respect has been defined in current literature as a combination of behaviours, attitudes and feelings. Respect is always experienced in relationships between people and accordingly the self-interactional group theory (SIGT) was used as a theoretical framework for understanding older persons’ experience of respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. The focus was specifically placed on their relationships with middle adolescents because of rifts relating to their experience of relational interactions that have been found to exist in these relationships in studies focusing on older youth.

Research was conducted in the economically vulnerable community of Vaalharts, situated in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, in which the importance of supportive relationships for older persons is especially relevant. The findings of the study could potentially lead to the development of programmes to strengthen these relationships. Twelve participants (9 female and 3 male) over the age of 60 took part in Mmogo-method® sessions in order to gain an understanding of their subjective experience of the construct of respect. By using the Mmogo-method®, visual data (photos of their presentations made for the Mmogo-method®) and textual data were obtained. In addition, self-reflective journals containing open-ended questions (completed voluntarily by the participants) added to the trustworthiness of the study by using more than one data-gathering method. All data were analysed to derive themes that painted a
vivid picture of the older persons’ experience of respect. The photos taken during the Mmogo-method® sessions were visually analysed while textual data were analysed thematically.

Findings indicated that the older persons linked respect to the constructs of care and love. It was also seen that certain behaviours, such as using appropriate language and appropriate forms of address, were important aspects of respect. Respect in the relationships between the older persons and middle adolescents has a reciprocal nature and the older persons portrayed attitudes of mutual respect in these interactions. They also expressed their need for middle adolescents to demonstrate their gratitude and, for their part, to have opportunities to model respectful behaviour to middle adolescents. Respect as a construct is experienced by the older persons as an interactional manifestation of the current definitions and forms of respect as presented in literature.

It is recommended that similar studies be done with other groups of older persons in order to obtain a broader view of how members of economically vulnerable communities experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. The data in this study demonstrate what current literature says about respect, and adds to previous research by achieving an understanding of how older persons’ experience the construct rather than exploring only the definition of respect or how it presents in intergenerational relationships.

(Keywords: Economically vulnerable community, middle adolescents, Mmogo-method®, older persons, respect)
Literatuur oor intergenerasionele verhoudings het die belangrikheid van respek in hierdie verhoudings uitgelig. Tot op hede het navorsing hoofsaaklik gefokus daarop om respek te definieër en die maniere waarop dit binne intergenerasionele verhoudings voorkom te ondersoek. Min aandag is aan die ervaring van respek geskenk, wat ’n gaping, meer spesifiek in die studie van die manier waarop ouer persone respek binne intergenerasionele verhoudinge ervaar, gelaat het.

Respek word deur onlangse literatuur gedefinieer as ’n kombinasie van gedragspatrone, houdings en gevoelens. Respek word altyd ervaar in verhoudings tussen mense, gevolglik is die self-interaksionele groep teorie (SIGT) as ’n teoretiese raamwerk gebruik om ouer persone se ervaring van respek in hulle verhoudings met middel adolessente te verstaan. Die fokus is spesifiek geplaas op hulle verhoudings met middel adolessente weens vorige studies wat op ouer adolosente en jong mense gefokus het wat aantoen dat onenighede wat verwant is aan hulle ervarings van interaksies binne hierdieverhoudings bestaan.

Navorsing is aangepak in die ekonomiese kwesbare gemeenskap van Vaalharts, geleë in die Noord Kaap Provinsie van Suid-Afrika, waar die belangrikheid van ondersteunende verhoudings vir ouer persone veral relevant is. Die bevindinge van die studie het die potensiaal om te lei tot die ontwikkeling van programme wat hierdie verhoudings kan versterk. Twaalf deelnemers (9 vroulik en 3 manlik) bo die ouderdom van 60 het deelgeneem aan die Mmogo-metode®, om sodoende ’n begrip van hulle subjektiewe ervarings van respek te verkry. Deur die Mmogo-metode® te gebruik is visuele data (foto’s van die voorleggings wat gedoen is vir die Mmogo-metode®) en tekstuele data verkry. Daarbenewens het self-refleksie joernale wat oop vrae bevat het (wat vrywillig deur die deelnemers voltooi is) bygedra tot die vertouenswaardigheid van die studie deur die gebruik van meer as een data insamelingsmetode.
Alle data is geanaliseer om temas af te lei wat ‘n duidelike idee geskep het van die ouer persone se ervaring van respek. Die foto’s wat geneem is tydens die Mmogo-metode® is visueel geanaliseer, terwyl teksuele data tematies geanaliseer is.

Bevindings dui aan dat die ouer persone respek heg aan die konstrukte van omgee en liefde. Dit is ook gesien dat sekere gedragspatrone, soos om gepaste taal en gepaste aanspreekvorme te gebruik, belangrike aspekte van respek is. Respek in die verhoudings tussen die ouer persone en die middel adolessente is wedersyds in aard en die ouer persone beeld houdings van wedersydse respek uit in hierdie interaksies. Hulle dui ook hulle behoefte aan dat middel adolessente dankbaarheid moet demonstreer en, op hulle beurt, om meer geleenthede te hê om ‘n model te wees vir respekvolle gedrag vir middel adolessente. Respek as ‘n konstruk word deur die ouer persone as ‘n interaksionele manifestasie van die huidige definisies en vorme van respek ervaar soos dit in huidige literatuur voorgestel word.

Dit word voorgestel dat eenderse studies gedoen moet word met ander groepe ouer persone sodat ‘n breër blik verkry kan word van hoe ouer persone van ekonomies kwesbare gemeenskepe respek in hulle verhoudings met middel adolessente ervaar. Die data in hierdie studie demonstreer wat huidige literatuur sê oor respek, en dra by tot vorige navorsing deur begrip te kry oor hoe ouer persone die konstruksie ervaar eerder as om slegs die definisie van respek en hoe dit voorgestel word in intergenerasionele verhoudings te ondersoek.

(Kernwoorde: ekonomies kwesbare gemeenskap, middle adolessente, Mmogo-metode®, ouer persone, respek)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, my family has to be thanked for their contributions throughout my 29 years of life. Without their support and guidance I would not have been able to complete a Master’s Degree in Research Psychology. Most importantly, my mother, Dina Hayes, deserves a special shout-out. Her motherly instincts have made me the man I am today.

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“No man is an island” – and this became very true in my life while I was writing up. Without my friends, and especially one very special person, Drikus Knoetze, none of it would have happened. Your love, dedication and commitment gave me the courage to pursue the degree and to complete my dissertation.

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“It is in the moments when we think we can’t, that we discover that we can.”

Celine Dion
DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

I, Jacobus Michael Hayes, hereby declare that this manuscript (Older persons’ experience of respect from middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable community) is my own work. All sources used for this study are referenced in the manuscript and acknowledged.

Furthermore I declare that this manuscript has been edited by a qualified language editor, as required by the university. The manuscript has also been submitted to Turn-it-in and a satisfactory report was obtained.

__________________
J.M. Hayes
DECLARATION BY THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

I hereby declare that I have language-edited the manuscript Older persons’ experience of respect from middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable community by J.M. Hayes for the degree of Magister Scientiae in Psychology.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

This study forms part of a larger multi-disciplinary initiative to explore the intergenerational relationships between older and younger persons, and specifically on care and respect within these relationships. This research focused on how older persons experienced respect in relation to middle adolescents. In accordance with the definition in the Older Persons Act (Act 13 of 2006) older persons referred to in this study refers to anyone above the age of 60.

Defining Respect and Theoretical Framework

Respect is an abstract construct and there is no consensus about the precise meaning of the construct (Koskenniemi, Leino-Kilpi, & Suhonen, 2012). There is agreement that respect is experienced in social interactions (Middleton, 2004) and current literature indicates its importance in intergenerational relationships (McCabe, Mellor, McNamara, & Hill, 2010; Middleton, 2004). In international literature respect has been defined in different ways by various researchers. Lysaught (2004), Sung (2004), Sung and Kim (2003) and Sung, Kim and Torres (2010) view respect as specific actions or behaviours, but also as showing a kind way of caring for other people. Dillon (2010) agrees with the behavioural part of respect, but adds that respect is also associated with attitudes and feelings. In the African context, Van der Geest (1997a, 2004a) found respect to be associated with the treatment of others as well as with inner qualities such as admiration and love. Van der Geest (1997a, 1997b, & 2002) also states that respect gives an indication of how people should behave in social settings. All these definitions relate to an intra- and an interpersonal component.

Self-Interactional Group Theory

Self-interactional group theory (SIGT) will be used as theoretical framework because it makes provision for intra-individual, inter-individual and group level of experiences of respect.
According to SIGT, people behave according to the meaning they attach to their interpretation of interactions (Roos, in press).

The intra-individual level explains the feeling involved within the interaction between the two generations (Roos, in press). These feelings can provide important information about how the different generations react to certain situations, depending on how they interpret the situation (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Hill, Watson, Rivers, & Joyce, 2007). The inter-individual level looks at the definition the generations attach to the relationship, the relational qualities observed in the relationship, the needs that motivate the interactions within the relationship, and the interactional processes that take place between the different generations’ members (De Wet, 2005; Roos, in press). Relational definitions can be either complementary (one generation emerges as the leader and the other generation simply follows), parallel (both generations are seen as equal contributors) or symmetrical (the generations are in a power struggle with each other in order to obtain the leadership position) and generations customarily define their relationships with each other as one of these (Haley, 1963; Jackson, 1965; Roos, in press; Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 2011). Relational qualities vary between different relationships (Voster, 2011) and refer to the observable behaviour that manifests between people. Relational qualities can include: empathy, unconditional acceptance, congruence, locus of control, to name a few (Voster, Roos, & Beukes, 2013; Watzlawick et al., 2011). According to Roos (in press) the interactions between generations in their specific environments are motivated by the needs of the different generations and can include specific needs, such as being cared for. On a group level the generations will attribute certain characteristics to one another as a result of their own perceptions of the members of that generation (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995; Roos, in press). The common categorisation of the generations will inform the types of interactions between them and how they define their relationships with each other (Roos, in press). The
levels explained by SIGT should not be viewed as separate, but rather as different components included in one process (Roos, in press). All these levels are interlinked and dependent upon one another for this process (Hogdson, 2007).

SIGT is a relational theory that is underpinned by the interpersonal communications theory, which proposes that interactions between people are reciprocal (Hill et al., 2007). It is a process in which ideas, thoughts and feelings are shared (Hill et al., 2007). People engage with each other on an interpersonal level and they gain and share information. Vorster et al. (2013) and Hill et al. (2007) state that people will react differently to social interactions based on their own personal experience. Intergenerational interactions display an action-reaction type of quality defined by the different generations and they will react according to their own interpretation of the effects of these actions (Roos, in press).

According to SIGT, interactions between members from different generations “always take place in a particular interpersonal context that is embedded in different environments” (Roos, in press, p. 17). The interpersonal context explored in this study consists of respect within the relationships between older persons and middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable community where resources are often not available (Coetzee, 2011). In accordance with SIGT, respect will thus be defined as the subjective experience of interpersonal interactions between the two generations.

**Literature Review of Respect and Intergenerational Relations**

Sung (2001) identified a number of modern forms of respect for older persons from studies in East Asia (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtiencer, 1999; Metha, 1997; Palmore & Maeda, 1985; Silverman & Maxwell, 1978). These modern forms of respect (as labelled by Sung, 2001) include: care respect, as in taking care of older persons' physical and other needs; victual respect, which has to do with serving older persons food; gift respect, whereby gifts as well as
certain favours (for example chairing important meetings) are given to older persons; presentational respect, which has to do with the appearance of the young and how they present themselves in the company of older persons; linguistic respect, which can be seen in the specific way in which the young address older persons; spatial respect, in which certain areas (such a special seat) are allocated to honour older persons; celebrative respect, whereby older persons’ birthdays and special events are celebrated in their honour; public respect, which has to do with acts of public service to help older persons; acquiescent respect, which is seen in the young obeying older persons; consultative respect, which holds that older persons can advise on subjects in which they are knowledgeable; precedential respect, which accords older persons priority, such as being served first; funeral respect, which demands that older persons are buried with dignity according to specific requirements; and ancestor respect, whereby older persons are still celebrated and honoured after their death.

Sung and Kim (2003) also noticed a move away from the earlier traditional or inherent type of respect to a more reciprocal mutual respect. Although the way in which the young respect elders is changing, Sung (2001) found that respect for older persons is still valued and important in East Asian countries. Respect is represented as certain actions that indicate respect and certain representative displays of respect that have more to do with attitudes or feelings (Sung 2001).

Bird (2004) looks at the concept of equal respect, stating that even within the inherent form of respect based on hierarchical systems there can be some sort of equality. Respect as defined by early philosophers, including Kant, holds that it is deserved by all, but that certain people are respected more by society because of their specific attributes (Bird, 2004). Kantian respect further posits that respect has to do with certain social behaviours and expectations, but also notes that certain ways of thinking or attitudes are involved in the process of respect (Bird,
Darwall (1997) distinguished between recognition respect (respect earned due to status) and appraisal respect (respect earned due to some kind of accomplishment). This again links with the notion that respect has a social, interactional nature in which it manifests either because of an inherent sense of socially acceptable behaviour or out of admiration for achievements. This leads to attitudes or behaviours that depict people’s respect for others, in this case between older persons and middle adolescents.

Dillon (1992) sums up the inherent nature of respect by stating: “When we respect something, we heed its call, accord it its due, and acknowledge its claim to our attention” (p.108). This inherent respect differs from the form in which we choose to respect someone based on certain characteristics or achievements. Here it is rather an assumed position – we ought to respect certain individuals because it is the right thing to do. Our inherent respect for certain people and the behaviour shown toward them is a way of responding to socially acceptable standards (Card, 1990). Dillon (1992) also refers to the behavioural components of respect and notes that we show respect in various ways, such as taking into consideration older persons and their needs, by honouring them, by allowing them their space and by listening to them or obeying their wishes. Respect comes from the belief that there is something about a person that makes them worthy of receiving treatment different to that of others (Cranor, 1975). This links into the reciprocal nature of respect discussed earlier. In his further explanations of the construct, Dillon (1992) also mentions that respect has a universalising theme in the sense that humans expect others to respect the same things they do. It seems people will find a way to generalise respect. For example, respecting older persons becomes the socially acceptable thing to do and differing from this norm is seen as shameful.

Many researchers (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 1999; McCabe, Mellor, McNamara, & Hill, 2010; Middleton, 2004; Sung, 2001; 2004) have focused on
intergenerational relationships and highlighted the importance of respect in these relationships. Younger children studied in the United States showed mixed feelings or attitudes toward older persons and based these evaluations on physical experiences or memories of previous interactions (Meshel & McGlynn, 2004) with their elders. In the South African context a rather more negative view of older persons can be observed, according to which the younger generations feel disconnected from the older persons and even harbour negative thoughts about them (Van Dogen, 2005). Both the older persons and the younger persons (late adolescents and young adults) indicated certain difficulties in these relationships. The young felt that the older persons viewed them in a negative way, did not listen to them and were difficult to communicate with (Giles, Dailey, Sarkar, & Makoni, 2007). Mabaso (2012) states that the younger adults felt obligated to respect older persons, which placed them in conflict with their own desire to be individualised from the older persons. For the older persons, their relationships with the young failed to fulfil their relational needs, for example having conversations or the opportunity to give advice and feedback to the younger generation (Chigeza, Roos, & Puren, 2013; Mabaso, 2012). They also reported negative emotions, such as frustration, that could be linked to their own overestimation of the role that they play in the lives of the young (Wei-Qun & Chi, 2008).

Older persons also felt that the new freedom human rights legislation in South Africa affords the young, taken together with the differences in their viewpoints, led to the young not respecting older persons as they used to do (Lombard & Kruger, 2009). This idea is confirmed by Van der Geest (1997b), who saw that respect is no longer something that older persons can expect from the young as a matter of course. In his study in Ghana, Van der Geest (1997b) found that both the young and the older persons saw the importance of reciprocity in relationships, also when it comes to respect. The participants in his study reported that respect could no longer be expected automatically, but that older persons should realise that the way
they treat young people would have an impact on how the latter relate to them and whether they treat them respectfully (Van der Geest, 1997b).

Another important aspect of respect and reciprocity that Van der Geest (1997a) noted was the involvement of money. It appears that money can be associated both with the deserving and the giving of respect. Reciprocity becomes relevant again when Van der Geest (1997a) notes that older persons who are seen as having money and taking good care of their children were more respected and that their children gave them gifts of money to indicate their respect for their parents.

A further important link to respect that Van der Geest (2002) makes is the concept of reciprocity in care. The participants in his study referred to care as a way of showing respect, which must be earned and not expected by the older persons as a matter of course (Van der Geest, 2002). Van der Geest (2004a) continued to explore the issue of respect and reciprocity and states that respect may have become a compromised version of reciprocity. In his studies in Ghana it seemed as if both the younger and older persons were using socially respectable behaviour to hide the fact that reciprocity in the relationships might no longer exist (Van der Geest, 2004a). Although many of the young people in Van der Geest’s study (1997a) felt that older persons should be respected because of their age, they also pointed out that respect should be deserved and that an older person’s accomplishments enhanced the level of respect he or she deserved. This indicates two different forms of respect – one that is inherent and another that is earned. Bird (2004) also states that respect has its roots in hierarchical status – it is something that is expected. In this sense a person’s status will prescribe the type of respect they receive from other people (Bird, 2004). All Van der Geest’s research (1997a, 1997b, 2002, 2004a, & 2004b) has been carried out in Ghana and it cannot be assumed that the same observations would apply to an economically deprived community in rural South Africa. This research will therefore
be guided by the following question: How do older persons experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable community?

**Intergenerational Relations in Broader Socio-Economic Environments**

Other important factors influencing the interactional nature of the relationships between older persons and middle adolescents are the unique economic, social and family structures in South Africa. This study took place in the economically vulnerable and rural community of Vaalharts that is situated just outside of Jan-Kempdorp in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Families in rural areas of South Africa no longer have the resources to support or care for older persons, and in some cases the situation has become reversed, so that older persons are now the primary caregivers of their grandchildren (Lombard & Kruger, 2009). Economically vulnerable communities, like Vaalharts, where there are limited resources in terms of income, job opportunities and health care (Coetzee, 2011), provide a very specific context in which to study intergenerational relations. Literature shows the importance of social and intergenerational relationships for older persons (Aboderin, 2006; Williams & Howard, 2006) and this becomes even more evident in communities where older persons have reduced resources and means to support themselves. In rural South African areas the old-age pension older persons receive from the state is often the main income for their households even though it is barely enough to support their own needs (Kimuna & Makiwane, 2007). Literature has noted that the government pensions older persons in rural South African communities receive often have to support multi-generational families (Lombard & Kruger, 2009). When we take into account that many older persons will find themselves living in multiple-generation households (Attar-Schwartz, Tan, & Buchanan, 2009; Lombard & Kruger, 2009; Wei-Qun & Chi, 2008), it becomes clear that this specific context needs to be explored further.
In this study an important historical consideration that impacts on the interactions between the generations is Apartheid. Apartheid in South Africa ended in 1994, which places the two generations studied in different spheres. The older persons were born, and lived a part of their lives, in the Apartheid era, while the middle adolescents were all born after Apartheid had officially ended. The period before 1994 was characterised by racial inequalities and many older black South African people, including the participants in this study, did not have access to basic resources such as education and work (Lombard & Kruger, 2009). After 1994, the country adopted a developmental approach towards older persons, realising that they could still be active participants in the community (Lombard & Kruger, 2009). The role played by Apartheid cannot be divorced from the relational interactions in this study and it plays a vital part in forming the socio-political context. The young have not been as directly affected by Apartheid as the older persons, but they are still very much aware of the lasting impact it has on the country. Van Dogen (2005) noted that older persons remind the young of a time in their history that they would prefer to forget and want move away from. This could have a severe impact on the type of interactions that take place between the older persons and the middle adolescents because the former may expect recognition of their contribution to establishing a democratic society which the young do not accord them.

Older persons in South Africa form part of a unique context that needs to be addressed in order to gain a fuller understanding of their needs. In this context the majority of black older persons are classified as poor and live in multigenerational households (Lombard & Kruger, 2009) allowing for more interaction with members from other generations, including middle adolescents. International literature indicates that older persons are expected to live longer (Wei-Qun & Chi, 2008; Attar-Schwartz, et al., 2009) and thus have more opportunities for interaction with the young. These interactions are important for the present study because respect take place
within the interactions between the two generations. The socio-cultural context in which this study was conducted is important. In this context, generations that are both familial and socially related will be included.

**Intergenerational Relationships and Psychosocial Development**

Intergenerational relationships refer to the interactions between members of different generations (Pilcher, 1994; Roos, in press; Wadensten & Carlson, 2003). Because in this community the members did not distinguish between familial and non-familial, the relationships studied can be either familial or social (Roos, Kolobe, & Keating, 2014). The authors use the term family broadly, as a concept not confined only to relatives. To clarify this: non-familial relationships can be seen as relationships between generations who are not related as family, but who share the same time period – they are bound together by certain historical events (Scabini & Marta, 2006).

Erikson’s (1950, 1968, & 1982) lifespan approach looks at different psychosocial developmental phases for people and developmental tasks that need to be accomplished during these phases. In order to fully understand the interactional nature of the intergenerational relationships, attention must also be given to the psychosocial development of these two generations.

Older persons enter the last phase in Erikson’s model for psychosocial development. During this phase they are expected to obtain ego integrity by self-reflecting on their lives (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). It also involves an evaluation of one’s life in order to accept it, as well as death – a struggle between ego integrity and despair (Erikson, 1982). This phase should enable older persons to gain insight into the meaning of their lives within the broader social context (Papalia et al., 2009) and helps them to accept their lives in the here and now, rather than longing for their past (Erikson, 1982). They come to accept their own imperfections
as well as those of other people, including their children and grandchildren (Papalia et al., 2009). For this phase of life to be successful, older persons need to stay actively involved in society, including maintaining relationships with their grandchildren and other members of their communities (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986).

Staying actively involved can also help grow the support network of older persons as they become increasingly dependent on social relationships. Older persons lose physical strength and cognitive abilities and often lack the financial independence to support themselves fully (Louw & Louw, 2009). This is even more important in a context that is challenged with scarce resources and in which the older person’s income is often the sole means of support for themselves as well as for other family members. A situation develops in which instead of the older persons’ being dependent on the younger generation they are actually in some cases the main source of their families’ income or social support. This could have significant consequences for their social relationships.

Relationships play an important role in what researchers define as successful ageing (Papalia et al., 2009). For an older person to maintain psychological well-being in later life, he or she needs to remain actively involved in social and productive activities (Papalia et al., 2009). Because people are now living longer (Wei-Qun & Chi, 2008) and will have more exposure to possible relationships with the younger generation (in this case middle adolescents), it is important to look at these relationships.

The emotional support that older persons can obtain from relationships enhances their health and well-being (Papalia et al., 2009). According to social convoy theory (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980), older persons will be more inclined in later life to rely on emotionally supportive relationships and will spend less time with people they perceive as being non-supportive. As reported in previous studies (Chigeza, Roos, & Puren, 2013; Mabaso, 2012),
there appears to be a tension in older person’s relationships with late adolescents and early adults. The aim of this research is therefore to explore older persons’ relationship with middle adolescents. The findings are important to determine how older persons view these relationships and to give an indication of whether interventions could be created that aim at facilitating more effective intergenerational relationships.

Adolescence is viewed as the period between the ages of 11 and 19 years (Papalia et al., 2009). During this time it is expected that adolescents should move from identity confusion to creating a sense of self (Erikson, 1950) in order to be able to play valuable roles in society in their adult lives (Papalia et al., 2009). Achieving identity will enable adolescents to adopt the values that they will live by in later life and ensures the value of fidelity (Erikson, 1968). Fidelity accords a sense of belonging to either familial or social groups and underlies the way in which adolescents will choose or identify with their value sets (Papalia et al., 2009). Adolescents will have value sets that resemble those of their close families rather than those of peers and friendship groups (Offer & Church, 1991). According to Allen et al. (2003) and Laursen (1996), adolescents need supportive relationships with their families in order to be able to deal effectively with emotional stressors in their daily interactions with other people. It is important to note, however, that adolescents spend less time with their families and more time with peer groups (Papalia et al., 2009).

Adolescence can be divided into three stages: early adolescence, from 11 – 13 years, middle adolescence, from 14 – 16 years, and late adolescence, which includes the ages between 17 and 19 (Barret, 1996; Worthen, 2012). Adolescence is also characterised by the further development of trust, but here it encompasses a social as well as an interpersonal element (Flanagan & Stout, 2010). Interpersonal trust forms the foundation for social trust and develops through own experience and knowledge gained through interactions with familiar people.
Higher levels of social trust will enable adolescents to be supportive of other people and take responsibility of their well-being, whether in familial or social relationships (Flanagan, Gill, & Gallay, 2005). In their study with adolescents from early till late adolescent phases, Flanagan and Stout (2010) found that social trust decreases over this period. This means that adolescents older than 16 will have a less naïve view of other people and will be less likely to trust them simply on the basis of their previous experiences with familiar people. Late adolescents will find it more difficult than early or middle adolescents to trust and have a positive regard for strangers. Peer relationships and age differences thus seem to have an impact on social trust and how adolescents will view other people, in this case older persons.

Accordingly, the aim of this research is to explore and describe the experience of respect from the perspective of older persons in relation to middle adolescents.

**Article Format**

The study will be presented in Chapter 2 in the format of an article for publication. The study is informed by the literature review and will aim to address the gap in the literature on older persons’ experience of respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. The context is a specific, economically vulnerable, community and findings could be used to develop specific programmes aimed at enhancing intergenerational relationships in this community. Chapter 3 will consist of a critical reflection of the study that will look at how the findings impact on current literature.
References


ARTICLE

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Intended Journal's Guidelines for Authors

The intended journal for publication is the *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*.

**Guidelines for Research Papers**

**Manuscript content:** All research papers should include relevant literature, research question(s), methodology, and results. Any and all implications for practice, policy and further research in an emerging multidisciplinary field of study must be discussed. The conceptual, theoretical and empirical content of the study should be included as well.

**Manuscript length:** Approximately 15-20 typed pages (5000 words, including abstract and references). Under special conditions, a paper with 6000 words could be considered.

**Manuscript style:** References, citations, and general style of manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the APA Publication Manual, 6th ed. Citations in text to include author and date and an alphabetical reference list should be included at the end of the article.

**Manuscript preparation:** All parts of the manuscript should be typewritten, double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch on all sides. Authors should also supply a shortened version of the title suitable for the running head, not exceeding 50 character spaces.

**Abstract:** All articles should be summarized in an abstract of no longer than 100 words. The use of abbreviations, diagrams or references to the text should be avoided. Include 3-5 relevant keywords in alphabetical order below the abstract.

**Tables, figures and illustrations:** All tables, figures or illustrations should be clean originals or digital files. Digital files are recommended for highest quality reproduction and should be 300 dpi or higher, sized to fit on journal page, EPS, TIFF or PSD format, and must be submitted as separate files. Tables and figures (illustrations) should be included as separate sheets or files (addendums). A short descriptive title should appear above each table and any
footnotes suitably identified below. Figures should be completely labelled, taking into account necessary size reduction. Captions should be typed, double-spaced, on a separate sheet.
Abstract

The importance of respect in intergenerational relationships is documented in current literature and the impact of these relationships on the well-being of older persons is becoming more evident. This research explores older persons’ experience of respect in relation to middle adolescents within an economically vulnerable environment. The research took place in the Vaalharts community, where limited resources underline the importance of intergenerational relationships. Twelve participants (nine female and three male) over the age of 60 took part in the study and data obtained through the Mmogo-method® and self-reflective journals were analysed by means of thematic and visual analyses. The findings indicate that intergenerational respect in this community is linked to behaviours such as caring and appropriate verbal communication as well as inner qualities such as love. Respect is instilled by one generation into the next through teaching and behaviour modelling. These findings support international studies that define respect as combinations of behaviours, attitudes and feelings.

Keywords: intergenerational relationships, middle adolescents, older persons, respect, self-interactional group theory, economically vulnerable.

Introduction

This study formed part of a larger research project to explore the intergenerational relational experiences of respect and care from members of different generations. The aim of this article is to explore intergenerational respect from the perspective of older persons (persons 60 years and older) (Older Persons Act of South Africa, 2006) in relation to middle adolescents.

Research into intergenerational relationships has received a great deal of attention in recent years (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 1999; McCabe, Mellor, McNamara, & Hill,
The importance of respect is particularly emphasised in this research (Middleton, 2004). Respect has been defined as certain actions or behavioural cues in an interpersonal context (Lysaught, 2004; Sung, 2004; Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, Kim, & Torres-Gil, 2010), and as an attitude and feeling (Dillon, 2010). Van der Geest (1997, 2004a, & 2004b) described respect in the African context as referring to the manner in which a person treats other persons as well as to inner qualities such as admiration and love.

Respect, as an interpersonal phenomenon, is informed by the principle of reciprocity, which means that persons act and react in relation to others (Roos, in press). The nature of these interactions between persons is based on the history of the relationship as well as the persons’ subjective interpretation of the interaction (Smith-Acuña, 2011; Vorster, Roos, & Beukes, 2013). Based on Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT) to explain the interactions between generations, respect is defined as the subjective experiences of members of different generations who interact in a specific interpersonal context as well as the behavioural manifestations in the interaction (Roos, in press). For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on older persons.

Intergenerational relationships are defined as interactions between members from different generations and can be familial or social (Pilcher, 1994; Scabini & Marta, 2006; Wadensten & Carlson, 2003). Familial intergenerational relations refer to persons who are familialy-related, while social relationships refer to persons from different generations who are unrelated (Scabini & Marta, 2006). Both familial and social intergenerational relations will be used in this research to explore how older persons experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents, because the participants did not distinguish between familial and non-familial intergenerational relations (Roos, Kolobe, & Keating, 2014).

The experiences and practice of respect varies from one culture to another (Holmes & Holmes, 1995; Sung & Kim, 2003) and should be defined within a specific context (Honneth,
International research on respect in intergenerational relations focused mainly on the description of respect and how younger persons as well as older persons perceived the construct of respect (Holmes & Holmes, 1995; Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, 2004). In his research in Asia, Sung (2004) focused on how young adults perceive respect in relation to older persons. Silverman and Maxwell (1978), Palmore and Maeda (1985), Metha (1997) and Ingersoll-Dayton and Saengtienchai (1999) identified 13 forms of respect for older persons that can all be grouped under either attitudinal or behavioural cues. In a study with Korean and American students, Sung (2004) identified two major groupings of different forms of cross-cultural respect, namely engaging behaviours and symbolic displays of respect for older persons. McCabe et al. (2010) and Sung and Kim (2003) noted that there had recently been a shift in how respect exists between different generations. Previously it was expected that older persons should be respected by younger persons and children, but now it would appear that respect includes a reciprocal aspect with a move towards mutual respect between different generations (McCabe et al., 2010; Sung & Kim, 2003).

In the African context, Van der Geest (1997) also observed how respect had changed in Ghana. Van der Geest (1997) found that older persons experience disrespect in relation to younger generations. These findings were confirmed by Mabaso (2012) and Nathan (2012) in their research on intergenerational relational experiences in South Africa.

The focus of this research will be on young persons in the middle adolescent developmental phase. In previous research, older persons reported that they did not experience relationships with young persons in the late adolescent and young adult developmental phase (20 – 35 years of age) as being capable of fulfilling their needs (Chigeza, Roos, & Puren, 2013; Mabaso, 2012). Findings of this research can be used to plan and implement appropriate interventions to promote social cohesion between members of different generations.
Adolescence is described as the phase between the ages of 11 and 19 and is divided into early, middle and late adolescence (Barret, 1996). Early adolescents are aged between 11 and 13 years, middle adolescents between 14 and 16 years, and adolescents in the later phase are aged from 17 to 19 (Barret, 1996; Worthen, 2012). As an individual passes through the stages of adolescence he or she becomes increasingly self-conscious and sensitive to evaluation by others (Barret, 1996). It is also found that levels of social trust decreases with age while the levels of interpersonal trust remain unchanged (Flanagan & Stout, 2010). In this developmental phase, adolescents’ main psychosocial task is to develop an identity; if they do not master it successful, identity confusion develops (Erikson, 1968). Young persons in this developmental phase are also busy developing an individual sense of the self as well as the role the individual plays in a larger society (Barret, 1996; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). The positive outcome of resolving the issues between identity and identity confusion is the virtue of fidelity (Erikson, 1982). Fidelity enables trust and the sense of belonging to a larger community, which can include friends and family (Papalia et al. 2009). Erikson (1982) also further states that fidelity presents when adolescents are able to relate and identify with certain value sets or groups. Adolescence is also a period in which more time is allocated to friends or social groups and increasingly less time is spent with the family (Papalia et al., 2009). Although the adolescents spend less time with their parents, they still need supportive relationships with their parents and wider families (Allen et al. 2003; Laursen, 1996) and their values in most cases remain similar to those of their parents (Offer & Church, 1991).

Older persons, according to the lifespan approach, find themselves in the phase of having to deal with the end of their lives as a psychosocial task (Papalia et al., 2009). Persons in this life phase typically develop generativity characterised by a drive to find integrity in their sense of self, accepting their reduced roles in society, investment in the lives of the younger generations
(like grandchildren), or experience feelings of despair about lost opportunities (Papalia et al., 2009). Investment in the younger generations could take different forms, such as involvement with younger persons on different levels or volunteer activities in the community (Provencher, Keating, Warburton, & Roos, 2014). The relationship between older persons and middle adolescents is important because literature indicates that older people are now living longer (Attar-Schwartz, Tan, & Buchanan, 2009; Wei-Qun & Chi, 2008) and they are expected to experience increased interaction with younger persons.

In terms of SIGT, relational interactions are embedded in broader socio-economic and political contexts (Roos, in press). This research should also be contextualised in the socio-political context of South Africa. The older generation in this study lived during the harsh Apartheid years, whereas the middle adolescents were born after Apartheid ended in 1994. Van Dogen (2005) noted that older persons remind the young of a time they would prefer to forget and want to put behind them. This could have a severe impact on the nature of interactions between older persons and middle adolescents. Furthermore, the broader socio-economic context informs interactions between members of different generations (Roos, in press). The socio-economic context in which this research was conducted is characterised by severe poverty and literature indicates the importance of social and intergenerational relationships as a source of support for older persons living in economically vulnerable communities (Aboderin, 2006; Williams & Howard, 2006). The question that emerged from the above is: What is the experience of respect of older persons in relation to middle adolescents in an economically vulnerable environment?
Methodology

Research Method and Design

A qualitative research method was used, based on the assumption that persons experience the world differently, from his or her own point of view (Krauss, 2005). Niewenhuis (2007a; 2007b) describes qualitative research as a means by which rich data can be collected about a phenomenon, in this case, respect. The research was conducted from an interpretivist, descriptive paradigm. Interpretative description is used to understand how social groups behave and to describe the nature of respect from the perspective of older persons’ (Thorne, 2008).

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted with a group of older persons currently living in the community of Vaalharts just outside Jan-Kempdorp in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Rural South African communities, such as Vaalharts, are faced with high rates of unemployment, difficulties in obtaining health care, large numbers of persons living together under the same roof (familial and non-familial), absent parents and HIV/AIDS-related illnesses (Mayosi et al., 2009; Wolf & Ballal, 2006). Couple this with the physical aspects regarding ageing, such as decreasing strength, sensory abilities and endurance, declines in memory, and greater susceptibility to illness and it becomes clear why older persons need support from their social relationships in order to age successfully. Vaalharts is for the most part an impoverished community where 70.2% of the residents are dependent on government grants to be able to make a living and a 75.4% need for job opportunities exist (Coetzee, 2011).

The participants were selected by means of a nonprobability, purposive sampling and the Mmogo-method® consisted of twelve (3 men and 9 women) participants above the age of 60. All the participants were supplied with self-reflective journals which they could take home to complete and return to the gatekeeper at an agreed upon time. Most of the participants preferred
to conduct the Mmogo-method® in Afrikaans and in instances where participants could not understand or express themselves they were allowed to use another language, which was translated by the other members of the group.

Data Gathering and Procedure

North-West University is involved in a multi-disciplinary project (the WIN Project) in the Vaalharts Community, of which the psychology subject group forms part. Permission for this study was obtained and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North West University (reference number NWU-00053-10-S1). The participants were selected with the help of a WIN Project coordinator who advertised the research at venues where older persons usually gathered to invite them to participate. Posters asking for volunteers for the study were put up at various sites throughout the community. The volunteers were contacted by the researchers and informed about the necessary arrangements regarding transport and venues.

The Mmogo-method®. The participants were asked to take part in a Mmogo-method® session (Roos, 2008; 2012) in which they were expected to make visual representations of their understanding of respect with regard to children around 16 years of age. The researcher asked the participants to “make something to show us how you experience respect in relation to any person around the age of 16 years”. In order to do this, each participant was provided with the necessary materials, which included a round piece of cloth, clay, and a collection of colourful beads and straws (Roos, 2012). The participants completed their visual presentations in about 45 minutes and afterwards engaged in a discussion during which they told the research team what they had made and why. At this stage the researcher also open-ended questions, for example “Tell us what you made?”, “How does this show us respect?” and “How do the children around 16 years of age respect you?” in order to enrich the data. The entire Mmogo-method® session,
which was recorded and transcribed, was treated as textual data. The visual representations that were made were photographed and served as visual data.

**Self-reflective journals.** Participants were given journals that included open-ended questions they could complete voluntarily. These served as a means to gather more data about the phenomenon of respect in order to enrich the information (Pratt, 2006; Skinner, 2007). According to Alaszewski (2006) it gives participants an opportunity to write down their own experiences of respect. These will contribute to the data already obtained from the other methods (Borg, 2001). Questions such as “What is your definition of respect?”, “How will you describe respect towards a person younger than you?” and “Describe an occasion when you did not experience respect?” focused on their understanding of the construct of respect. Not all the participants in the study were literate and in such cases the journals were given to them as a gift which they did not have to return. They were allowed to ask neighbours who were literate for assistance in completing the journals.

**Data Analysis**

The data obtained were analysed by means of thematic and visual analysis.

**Thematic analysis.** The transcribed data obtained through the Mmogo-method® and the self-reflective journal entries were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which allowed the researcher to identify certain patterns and recurrent themes. This gave the researcher two sources of data from which to derive the themes, which in turn contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings (Ellingson, 2009). By reading and re-reading the data, the researcher was able to familiarise himself with the data. During this phase initial ideas about patterns or themes were generated. Recurrent themes were then identified, reviewed and named by the researcher and written up with appropriate examples and quotes from the participants.
**Visual analysis.** The photos of the representations taken during the Mmogo-method® sessions were analysed together with the recording of how the participants described their representations. Roos and De Jager (2010) describe this process as one in which the visual representations are explained by the participants and which enables the data to be seen as visual projections of the participants’ experiences. The participants explained during the discussion how their specific representations related to respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. These representations were analysed in terms of the research question and linked to the textual data to enrich the descriptions provided by participants. In other words, the value the participants added to their own creations (representations) was linked to the research question (Roos, 2008; 2012).

**Trustworthiness**

Guba’s (1981) guidelines were used to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility refers to how accurately the results reflect the actual research context. Morse et al. (2002) recommend that all data also be checked with participants to detect any discrepancies. This was achieved by reflections during the Mmogo-method® to ensure that the researcher’s summaries of what was being said were a true reflection of what the participants had intended to say. A prolonged engagement with the data over more than 15 months contributed to credibility (Morse et al., 2002).

Transferability addresses whether or not the findings of a study are applicable to different contexts. The results obtained in this study were obtained in a specific context, which is clearly explained in the methodology section of this study to address issues of transferability (Ellingson, 2009). Ethical considerations ensured that their participation was voluntary and not pre-determined (Krefting, 1991).
Dependability is a way of ensuring that the results obtained are consistent. This means that similar findings could be generated if the same process of data gathering and analysis is used on the same participants in similar settings over a period of time (Shenton, 2004). This can be achieved by means of rich descriptions of how data gathering and analysis took place. Krefting (1991) describes the process of coding and recoding as an effective way to enhance dependability. Themes generated from the data were coded by the researcher at two different time intervals and these codes were compared with each other to check for discrepancies. An expert qualitative researcher also checked to coding to ensure further dependability.

Confirmability, which indicates how objective the findings are, can be enhanced by the process of crystallisation. Crystallisation is a framework in which theory is combined with the data presented (Ellingson, 2009). More than one method of data analysis was also used which, according to Ellingson (2009), could offer an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Checking this data against existing literature also enhanced the trustworthiness of the research. Finally, peer review served to ensure that data analysis was properly done and presented a true reflection of the collected data (Morse et al., 2002). Another way in which the researcher tried to enhance the confirmability of the research was to reflect constantly on his role in the process to avoid any possible personal bias (Ellingson, 2009). This was done by means of a personal journal the researcher kept in order to record the entire process and his role throughout.

**Ethical Considerations**

The researcher at all times adhered to the requirements of the Health Professions Act (Act No 56 of 1974), the Professional Board of Psychology’s Ethical Code of Professional Conduct (2002) and the guidelines provided by the Health Professions Council of South Africa for Psychologists.
Informed consent was obtained from all participants after a thorough explanation of everything involved in the research process and after they had had some time to consider the option of participation. The participants’ rights were explained by emphasising that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the research project at any given time during the process without any consequences. Moreover, all participants were made aware of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity and that the research findings would be published. However, participants were informed that only partial confidentiality could be ensured if they participated in the Mmogo-method®, and were requested to keep all information that had been shared in the course of the session confidential. Their right to confidentiality was protected since raw data were only to be seen by the research team, and the names of the participants would not be associated with anything they had said throughout the process of data collection. When reporting the findings, participants’ identities would be protected by using participant numbering, thus ensuring anonymity. All data collected are stored at the North-West University in a locked room under secure control of the Department of Psychology, while all electronic data are password-protected.

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge there was a favourable risk-benefit ratio. The possible benefits participants could have gained from the research project are twofold. On a personal level participants gained an opportunity for interaction with other participants as well as an opportunity to tell their deeply personal stories to others. Furthermore, on an academic level new information about intergenerational relationships could be gained. This new information could assist in improving quality of life by developing intergenerational programmes and enhancing intergenerational cohesion. There were some emotional risks involved for the participants because sharing personal experiences can evoke emotional turmoil. For this reason, a clinical psychologist was available for debriefing if required and participants were invited to
approach the research team if they experienced any concerns or upset as a result of the research process.

**Results**

Four themes and two subthemes were derived from the Mmogo-method® data and are displayed in Table 1 below. They are supported by data from the self-reflective journals. Data-saturation had already been obtained from data gathered from the Mmogo-method® and self-reflective journals and visual analysis served as supportive data.

*Table 1.*

Themes and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Respect vs. care and love</td>
<td>Use of specific words and respectful titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect is conveyed in interactions through communication</td>
<td>Verbalisation of gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect has a reciprocal nature</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect is instilled through education, demonstration and rewards</td>
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**Respect vs. Care and Love**

Respect and care are closely associated. Participants were asked about respect and associated it with physically caring for younger persons, particularly to address their needs for food. The participants described it as follows:
“[I]f you see the child is hungry, you are a mom. You are a mom. When you see that child is hungry, give him food. Don’t say food is expensive. Don’t say this food is for my kids.” (Participant 1, Mmogo-method®).

“Oh, you are hungry my child? Let me go look if I can find you some food.” (Participant 7, Mmogo-method®).

“I cook for them, those children.” (Participant 10, Mmogo-method®).

In all the visual representations, the participants made objects that reflected these aspects of caring. The image below is an example of how the participants made items related to providing food. It also shows older persons interacting with middle adolescents around these objects.

![Visual representation of respect (Participant 6).](image)

Participants in this study linked the construct of respect to that of love; some even used the two words interchangeably as synonyms for each other, which is illustrated in the dialogue below.
One of the participants gave an explanation of how she is respected by her children through their acts of caring, after which Participant 4 said: “That is love, now that is love.”

Participant 6 (Mmogo-method®) also linked respect and love by explaining how she used love in her interactions with the middle adolescents:

Researcher: “How do you give respect?”
Participant 6: “I talk to them. I talk to them with love. If I don’t talk to them with love, they won’t respect me.”

Researcher: “Do you feel that respect and love go together?”
Participant 6: “Yes, They are similar things. Love and respect, they are similar.”

The participant views respect and love as similar constructs.

**Respect is Conveyed in Interaction through Communication**

The participants made a strong connection between respect and the appropriate forms of verbal communication between the two generations.

**Use of specific words and respectful titles.** The words used in the presence of another as well as the way in which they conveyed their messages to members of the other generation play an important role. One of the participants summed this up: “I give them respect. I talk to them in a nice manner, I don’t swear, I don’t use foul language in front of them. They will think ‘why do they talk like that I front of us’. I must not use foul language in front of my children.” (Participant 4, Mmogo-method®).

The way in which the two generations talk to each other or in front of each other indicates respect. “I respect my mother and I respect my father. You know what, a mother can, when talking to a child, say ‘pick up the plate’, in such words. How will other words affect the child or how will the child feel about the words I use?” (Participant 6, Mmogo-method®).
Using foul language is a sign of disrespect and also sets a bad example for the middle adolescents. Participant 12 (Mmogo-method®) felt that the middle adolescents honoured her by not using foul language in her presence or when talking to her: “I say they honour me; they don’t use funny language around me. Me too, I don’t speak foul language around them.” Another participant adds that: “You must not speak those words that are wrong in front of the children. You must stop when your mother and father are in the house. When you speak your words, they [should be] respectful to the children.” (Participant 3, Mmogo-method®).

The older persons would like to be addressed by their titles, for example “mother” and “father”. The following dialogue between the researcher and participant 6 illustrates the importance of the titles “mother” and ‘father’ to these participants.

Participant 6: “They will show it [referring to respect] to me because I talk to them nicely; they know how I talk to them. They will know it is our mother and father; we seek their respect because they are grown-ups and they raised us.”

Researcher: “So they show you respect by calling you mother or father - that is how you get respect?”

Participant 6: “Yes.”

Some of the other participants felt that forms of address such as “older persons” or “mother and father” entitled them to respect: “They know that one is the mother and that one is the father and [to show] the respect for them. They know those are the grown-ups and when we are children we know we must respect them.” (Participant 3, Mmogo-method®).

**Verbalisation of gratitude.** The older persons expect the middle adolescents to be grateful for the care they receive. This gratitude should be expressed through words as a sign of respect. Expressing gratitude was very important to the participants: “The words ‘thank you’
show very good respect. It lets us, the older persons, also feel good. We talk to the children about why they say thank you, because we are not used to receiving gratitude. There are kids who don’t even say thank you after you do something for them.” (Participant 7, Mmogo-method®). Participant 9 (Mmogo-method®) says: “I don’t like children who don’t say thank you. It’s not nice.”

There is a need for middle adolescents to tell older persons that they appreciate their efforts.

**Respect has a Reciprocal Nature**

The older persons realised that their interaction with the middle adolescents was likely to elicit a similar response. Participant 2 (Mmogo-method®) said: “If I respect those children, if I give them respect, they will also respect me. Yes, if I don’t respect them, they won’t give me respect.” This notion was confirmed by the whole group. When the researcher asked if they agreed with this statement, they all said yes. Participant 4 (Mmogo-method®) says: “You must respect the children like they respect you.” To the self-reflective journal question of whether or not respect should be earned, one participant replied: “Yes, because if I don’t respect others, they won’t respect me. Everyone deserves it.” Another participant stressed the importance of reciprocity by answering the question as follows: “They must treat her well, and then she will treat them well.”

The older persons allude to certain behaviours and ways of communication that show their respect for the younger generation: “I talk to them with love. If I don’t talk to them with love, they won’t treat me with respect.” (Participant 6, Mmogo-method®). Participant 3 (Mmogo-method®) said: “When you sit with the children, you must also respect them. You shouldn’t use words that are not proper in front of them. You must sit in such a way that when you talk it will be respectful for the child. It’s not words that I would use in front of children.”
It seems as if there is a give-and-take approach to reciprocal respect. The older persons expect the young to respect them, but it appears that this respect is a response to certain behaviours and actions. They feel that if they behave in a certain way middle adolescents will respect them. This respect is not just freely given, but has to be earned by certain actions from the older generation.

Respect is Instilled through Education, Demonstration and Rewards

It seems as if respect is downwardly instilled: “[M]y father taught me like this. Then you show your child, what he must do when he grows up [referring to the provision of food and taking care of the livestock that provide the food]. The same way I grew up.” (Participant 1, Mmogo-method®).

![Visual representation of respect (Participant 1)](image)

Figure 2. Visual representation of respect (Participant 1).

Respect is taught from one generation to next. Older persons sat down with younger persons to teach them and to demonstrate things that should be done that will demonstrate respect. Aspects that are taught and demonstrated included aspects such as religion, longevity, preparing food and caring for animals so that they can provide food. A participant said in reference to her father: “He showed me how to believe. What I must do in order to grow old and have a longer life, what he did to get more years. He showed me that you cook, you have cattle
and goats. You feed them, you milk them and then they give you food.” (Participant 1, Mmogo-method®).

The older persons talk about how they were taught by their parents to behave respectfully. This respect for older persons then becomes something that was expected by their parents and in turn they also expect it from the middle adolescents and their own children.

Another aspect of this generational transfer occurs when older persons talk about how they have to set an example for middle adolescents. “Other moms, they do the same as the young children. And they go to the funny places [referring to places where older persons and middle adolescents go to drink alcohol]. So we stop them, we try to bring them closer. Those parents, we stop them from making mistakes. When we are grown-up, children can’t see that we drink, that we can do funny things [referring to the modelling of inappropriate behaviours]. Their children [the children of other parents in the community] shouldn’t see it from us.” (Participant 1, Mmogo-method®). The older persons feel they have a responsibility to model the appropriate behaviours to the middle adolescents. In this community parents are not always there to teach or instil appropriate behaviours in their children and in such instances the older persons feel the need to intervene. When the researcher asked the group about this, Participant 1 (Mmogo-method®) said “They [referring to other adults in the community] don’t teach the child, but the child sees. The child’s eyes are deep. And the child sits here. The child’s head works fast. You think he didn’t see, but he did.” Although parents do not want their children to learn inappropriate behaviours from them, their actions still model these behaviours to the children. The older persons believe they cannot allow this to happen. They have to step in and prevent the middle adolescents from following the example of parents who model inappropriate behaviours.

Respect was also learned by modelling appropriate behaviour. When participant 9 (Mmogo-method®) was asked how she showed respect, she responded as follows: “He sees me,
I respect him, I don’t do bad things in front of my child, I don’t use bad words in front of her, I talk to my child in a nice manner. I want to teach my child, just like my mother taught me.”

Another participant also noted the matter of talking to children in certain ways: “I also don’t speak bad words in front of them [referring to children in general].” (Participant 12, Mmogo-method®).

The older persons in the study mentioned giving the middle adolescents a monetary reward if they portrayed respectful behaviours, such as caring for the older persons or helping them with their tasks. Participant 4 (Mmogo-method®) states: “So, every month if you have a little something, you tip him. Give him, my child you helped me. You tip him R2, give him a little.” She was referring to her own child helping her with household chores. She sees this money as a sign of gratitude for the help he gives her. By rewarding this respectful behaviour, the older persons hope that it will lead to similar behaviours in the future. She adds: “We take him, we pay him. He must also clean tomorrow. We cannot buy him. We can only take care of him. He must know that money it comes from the hand. We must give him love.”

**Discussion**

This study aimed to address the gap in literature regarding older persons’ experience of respect within intergenerational relationships. Literature has indicated the importance of respect in these relationships, and studies within the South African context have highlighted rifts relating to how the two generations perceive and interact with each other in relationships between older persons and late adolescents as well as young adults. This study sought to explore what these relationships look like by trying to gain an understanding of older persons’ experience of receiving respect from middle adolescents. Respect for the purposes of this study was defined as the subjective experiences of members of different generations who interact in a specific interpersonal context as well as the behavioural manifestations in the interaction (Roos, in press).
The older persons’ experience of respect in this study encompass the international (Lysaught, 2004; Sung, 2004; Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, Kim, & Torres-Gill, 2010) and African context (Van der Geest, 1997; 2004) definitions of respect as well as several forms of respect towards older persons that were identified in intergenerational research (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saegtenchai, 1999; Metha, 1997; Palmore & Maede, 1985; Silverman & Maxwell, 1978). Older persons experience respect as certain acts or behaviours, such as caring, the appropriate use of language and respectful titles, and behavioural modelling.

Literature about respect for older persons (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saegtenchai, 1999; Metha, 1997; Palmore & Maede, 1985; Silverman & Maxwell, 1978; Sung, 2001) identified care respect, linguistic respect and acquiescent respect as forms of the phenomenon. Care respect refers to the physical care of older persons; linguistic respect to the way older people should be talked to and addressed; and acquiescent respect refers to obedience and appropriate behaviour in the company of older persons (Sung, 2001).

The older persons in this study indicated these forms of respect in their descriptions of how they experience respect. Caring represents the way in which the older persons show respect to the children; the appropriate use of language when talking to or in the company of older persons indicates that the middle adolescents respect them; and setting a good example for the middle adolescents of how to behave is the way in which respect is transferred from the older persons to the middle adolescents.

Respect is also experienced as feelings of love and gratitude. Van der Geest (1997; 2004a) and Dillon (2010) described respect as a construct that includes feelings such as love. In the context of this study the older persons experience respect and love as similar constructs that cannot be separated from each other.
Gratitude is expressed as a relational need by older persons. They believe this is not being met by middle adolescents. Van der Geest (2002) has found that older persons experience gratitude as a reward for their acts of caring. Similarly, older persons in this study also indicated a need for middle adolescents to show gratitude for the care they showed or gave them.

Older persons in the study indicated that the attitude towards respect within their relationships with middle adolescents had a reciprocal nature. Respect is obtained and given through certain acts or behaviour. Respect cannot be expected as a matter of course from the middle adolescents; it should be seen as integral to mutual interaction. If the older persons do not respect the middle adolescent, the interaction will not be returned. McCabe, et al. (2001), Sung and Kim (2003) and Van der Geest (1997b; 2004a) also observed this move from expected respect to a more mutual, reciprocal nature in their studies in Asia and Africa. Respect in this study is mutually beneficial to both generations.

**Self- Interactional Group Theory (SIGT)**

SIGT was applied to obtain an understanding of the phenomenon of respect in the relationships between older persons and middle adolescents. This theory, proposed by Roos (in press), looks at the intra-individual, inter-individual and group level of intergenerational interactions. Respect was defined for this study as the subjective experience of interpersonal interactions between the two generations. These interactions take place within a very specific interpersonal context (Roos, in press).

Respect can thus be explained in terms of the three levels of SIGT. On an intra-personal level older persons have an intrinsic need to experience respect from middle adolescents and feel that they are entitled to this respect because of their status as seniors. This transcends to the interpersonal level where the realisation comes that respect is reciprocal and cannot be expected without some sort of reciprocal interactions. The older persons realise how their actions and
attitudes towards the middle adolescents will affect the outcome of these relationships. Their own interpretation of these relationships will inform their viewpoint of middle adolescents as a whole, making them ascribe certain characteristics to the younger generation as a group (Roos, in press).

**Respect vs. Care**

Older persons associated respect with care in this study and at several points used care interchangeably, almost synonymously, with respect. Their specific resource-poor environment (Coetzee, 2011) and their dual role as older persons and primary caregivers (Lombard & Kruger, 2009) could influence how they define respect for themselves. In a community in which people sometimes struggle to survive (Coetzee, 2011), emotional needs such as respect may take second place to more practical necessities such as nutrition and somewhere to live (as displayed in their discussions about the importance of such basic care elements). In the South African context many older persons and their extended families have only their small pensions to sustain them (Lombard & Kruger, 2009; Van Dogen, 2005). These limitations can influence their types of interactions and how they relate on interpersonal levels. All of the above contributes to the way in which they view respect.

**Implications and Recommendations for Further Study**

From the literature it is clear that respect is an abstract construct for which researchers struggle to find a single definition. The Mmogo-method® assisted the participants in this study to represent their experiences of respect visually (Roos, 2008; 2012), rather than asking them to define it. This gave the researcher a deeper insight into their subjective experience of respect.

It is recommended that larger samples of older persons from different communities and demographical groups should be included in future studies to provide a broader understanding of
how older persons in economically vulnerable environments experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents.

**Conclusion**

Older persons experience respect as a manifestation of definitions and forms of respect identified in current literature. Respect is experienced as manifestations of behaviour, feelings and attitudes. Respect as a behaviour is represented through acts of caring, using appropriate language in communication, addressing older persons through respectful titles as well as modelling respectful behaviour toward the younger generation. On a feelings level respect is associated with love and gratitude. Attitudinally, respect tends to have a reciprocal nature which allows both generations to draw benefits from their interactions.
References


Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 *See South Africa (1974).*


CRITICAL REFLECTION

Previous studies (Holmes & Holmes, 1995; Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, 2004) and current literature (Dillon, 2010; Lysaught, 2004; Sung, 2004, Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, Kim, & Torres-Gill, 2010; Van der Geest 1997; 2002; 2004) has placed the focus of respect on manifestations thereof and looked more at how youth and children perceive respect for older people. This study adds to current literature by looking specifically at the experience of respect and, more so specifically at the experience from older persons’ perspectives. In the South African context, studies (Chigeza, Roos & Puren, 2013; Mabaso, 2012; Nathan, 2012) have found relational difficulties between older persons and young adults. This studies’ focus on their relationships with middle adolescents, gives insight into how these relationships currently look and where possible interventions can be developed to promote relationships between older persons and older youth.

The themes derived from this study reflect what current literature, internationally (Dillon, 2010; Lysaught, 2004; Sung, 2004, Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, Kim, & Torres-Gill, 2010) and in the African context (Van der Geest 1997; 2002; 2004), says about respect. It is seen that respect as an interpersonal, interactional experience (Roos, in press) manifests as combinations of the definitions and forms of respect cited in the literature. Older persons in the context of this research paper experience respect as behavioural components such as care and appropriate language use; respect is presented through feelings such as love and gratitude; and finally respect is also experienced as attitudes relating to reciprocal interactions.

Little attention has been given to older persons’ experience of respect; indeed, most studies (Holmes & Holmes, 1995; Sung & Kim, 2003; Sung, 2004) have focused on describing respect or the ways in which respect is presented in intergenerational relationships. This study gives insight into how the literature is expressed in reality.
Sung (2001) identified 13 forms of respect for older persons from studies (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saegtienchai, 1999; Metha, 1997; Palmore & Maeda, 1985; Silverman & Maxwell, 1978) carried out in Asia. Three of these forms of respect, namely caring respect, linguistic respect and acquiescent respect, emerge in the findings of this study. Although the studies in Asia focused on how youth perceived respect, we see that older persons in the context of the present study also experience some of these forms of respect in their relationships with the young, specifically middle adolescents. This study accordingly confirms that these forms of respect as identified by the authors are present in intergenerational relationships within the South African context as well.

It is observed that the older persons in this study continue to experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. Literature indicates the importance of respect in intergenerational relationships (Middleton, 2004). Because of the reported relational rifts in older persons’ perception of and interaction with late adolescents or young adults (Chigeza, Roos & Puren, 2013; Mabaso, 2012; Nathan, 2012), the findings of this study could prove valuable in creating programmes that focus on strengthening these relationships.

Participants in this study drew a strong association between respect and care. It would almost appear as if the two constructs are interrelated. International literature (Sung, 2001) acknowledges the link between care and respect, and current research (Aboderin, 2006; Lombard & Kruger, 2009; Roos, in press; Williams & Howard, 2006) indicates how important intergenerational care is for older persons. The context of the study was an economically vulnerable community in which older persons often live in households with more than one generation sharing few resources (Coetzee, 2011) and this could contribute to the strong link perceived between respect and care. Caring for the middle adolescents is one of the older persons’ responsibilities and this becomes their way of showing respect, but also informs how
they want the middle adolescents to reciprocate. This is very evident from the older persons’ need for the middle adolescents to be grateful for their acts of caring as well as from their need to pass on to the younger people the things they were taught about providing care to younger generations.

**The Mmogo-Method®**

The Mmogo-method® uses visual representations with personal stories to gain understanding of the experiences of individuals and groups of people (Roos, 2008, 2012). Using this method enabled the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the older persons’ experience of respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. Their visual representations clearly indicated the link between respect and care, while their stories and explanations gave further insight into their subjective experience.

**Limitations of the study**

The study explored how a group of older persons within an economically vulnerable community experienced respect from middle adolescents. Although the participants opted to conduct the data collections phases in Afrikaans, at two points in the process other participants had to explain the instructions to other participants who did not grasp what the researcher was asking. During these translations some of the instructions may have been distorted by the explanations. During the data collections when participants discussed their Mmogo® representations, one of the more talkative candidates also translated to the research team what two of the participants were saying. This could limit the data that was obtained from the two participants and in both cases the discussions by them were minimal, which could be a result of the translator summarising what they told her. Care was taken during the data analysis phase of the study when interpreting these two candidates’ representations with their discussions and
more attention was given to how their visual data supported the other textual data obtained in the study.

**Concluding Remarks**

The rich descriptive data obtained from this study paint a vivid picture of how older persons in an economically vulnerable community experience respect in their relationships with middle adolescents. The data-gathering methods and theory used to explore this phenomenon enabled the researcher to draw rich inferences from the data that contribute to the field of intergenerational relationships. It is recommended that similar studies should be conducted in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of older persons’ experience of respect. It may also be necessary to explore the strong link between respect and care in economically vulnerable environments.
References


