

MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION

An exploration of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in the Khuma community

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by

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Summary

An exploration of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in the Khuma community

Intergenerational research aims to promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational relationships form part of our social make-up as they affect social interactions, the use of local spaces, opportunities to take part in public life on an equal basis with others, the degree to which people participate in community life as well as efforts to improve such life. Research indicates that what matters most for young adults and older people is the quality of the interactions taking place between them. Very little is known about the nature of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in an African context. The aim of the study was therefore to explore the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in a rural African community.

A qualitative research method was used in the study. Two groups of participants were selected through availability sampling method. The group consisted of 11 male participants between 20 to 35 years of age, 6 participants were over the age of 60 (one male and five female). The younger participants were asked to make visual representations of how they perceive the older generation by means of using the Mmogo-methodTM. After the younger participants described their visual representations, the older participants were asked to reflect on the descriptions given by the younger participants. The older people assumed an active listening position while the young adults shared their representations. Informal group discussion was used to facilitate a process of sharing and comparing of perceptions among the participants. The data obtained from the group discussions and applying the Mmogo-methodTM were analysed on the basis of thematic and visual analysis. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through crystallisation.

The results indicate that the relationships between young adults and older people consist of the ambivalent perceptions of the young adults and mostly extreme negative perceptions of older people. As a result, the relationships between the young and old generations seem to be dissatisfying for both generations. Both young and old discover essential tensions in the relationships they create and sustain across generations. Intergenerational tensions may not be

so easily identified or concretely observable in everyday behaviour, attitudes, and emotions. But, consistent with the dialectical framework, it is part of all intergenerational relationships at some level. Identifying these underlying tensions is important so that we do not glorify or idealise the interactions of young and old whenever and wherever they occur. Solidarity is not the only outcome of intergenerational relationships; ambivalence as well as conflict is a part of the theory that has often been neglected.

In view of the importance of intergenerational relationships between the young adults and the older people, intergenerational interventions should be planned to promote the effective negotiation of intergenerational relationships between older persons and the younger generation.

Keywords: Young adults, perceptions, older people, community, intergenerational relation

Opsomming

'n Onderzoek na die tussengenerasie-verhoudinge tussen jong volwassenes en ouer mense in die Khuma-gemeenskap

Sleutelwoorde: gemeenskap, jong volwassenes, ouer mense, persepsies, tussengenerasie verhoudinge

Tussengenerasie-navorsing het ten doel om beter begrip en respek tussen verskillende generasies te bevorder en om by te dra tot die bou van gemeenskappe met groter koherensie. Tussengenerasie-verhoudinge is deel van ons sosiale mondering aangesien dit sosiale interaksie, die gebruik van plaaslike plekke, geleentheid om op gelyke voet met ander aan die openbare lewe deel te neem, die graad waarin mense aan die gemeenskapslewe deelneem, asook die pogings om so 'n lewe te verbeter, beïnvloed. Navorsing toon dat die kwaliteit van die interaksie tussen jong volwassenes en ouer mense die hoogste aangeslaan word. Baie min is bekend oor die aard van die tussengenerasie-verhoudinge wat tussen jong volwassenes en ouer mense binne 'n Afrika-konteks. Die doel van die studie is dus om die tussengenerasie-verhoudinge tussen jong volwassenes en ouer mense in 'n plattelandse Afrika-gemeenskap te ondersoek.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode is in die studie gebruik. Met behulp van die beskikbaarheidsteekproefmetode is twee groepe deelnemers gekies. Die groep het bestaan uit 11 manlike deelnemers tussen 20 en 35 jaar oud; en ses deelnemers ouer as 60 waarvan een 'n man en vyf vrouens was. Die jonger deelnemers is gevra om met behulp van die Mmogo-metodeTM visuele voorstellings te maak van wat hulle gewaarwordinge van die ouer generasie is. Terwyl die jonger deelnemers hulle visuele voorstellings bespreek het, is die ouer deelnemers gevra om daaroor na te dink. Terwyl die jong volwassenes oor hulle voorstellings gepraat het, het die ouer mense aanvanklik aktief geluister. Informele groepsbesprekings is gebruik om 'n proses te fasiliteer waartydens persepsies tussen die deelnemers gedeel en vergelyk is. Die data wat tydens die groepsbesprekings en die toepassing van die Mmogo-metodeTM ingewin is, is met behulp van tematiese en visuele analise geanaliseer. Die studie se betroubaarheid is verseker deur kristallisasie.

Die resultate het aangedui dat die verhoudinge tussen die jong volwassenes en die ouer mense 'n bron van ontevredenheid is. Die jong volwassenes het ambivalente persepsies oor die ouer mense uitgedruk en oor die algemeen het die ouer mense uiters negatiewe persepsies oor die jong volwassenes uitgeruk. Beide die jonger en die ouer deelnemers het aangedui dat wesenlike spanning in die verhoudinge tussen die generasies bestaan. Dit is nie maklik om tussengenerasie-spanning in alledaagse gedrag, houdings en emosies te identifiseer of konkreet waar te neem nie, maar in ooreenstemming met die verhoudingsraamwerk maak dit wel op een of ander vlak deel van alle tussengenerasie-verhoudinge uit. Dit is belangrik om hierdie onderliggende spanning te identifiseer ten einde te verhoed dat mense die interaksie tussen generasies idealiseer. Die spanning in die intergenerasionele verhoudings ontstaan in die definisie van die verhouding en die vermoë om 'n empatiese posisie in die intergenerasionele verhoudings in te neem. Die ouer persone definieer die verhouding met die jong volwassenes as in beheer wees oor die jong volwassenes, terwyl die jong volwassenes oënskynlik vir 'n meer komplimentêre verhouding beding. Die ouer persone in hierdie studie gebruik waarskynlik hul eie verwysingsraamwerk in hulle interaksie met die jong volwassenes en in die interpretasies van die jong volwassenes se visuele voorstelings, terwyl die jong volwassenes 'n bewustheid oor die kulturele invloede op die ouer persone se lewe, en hoe dit verander het, uitdruk.

As gevolg van die belang van die tussengenerasie-verhoudinge tussen jong volwassenes en ouer mense, behoort tussengenerasie-intervensies beplan te word met die doel om effektiewe onderhandelings binne tussengenerasie-verhoudinge te bevorder.

Preface

The candidate opted to write an article, with the support of her supervisor.



Prof. Vera Roos

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT THIS ARTICLE FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES

I, the supervisor, hereby declare that the input and the effort of Thato Mabaso in writing this article reflect research done by him on this topic. I hereby grant permission that he may submit this article for examination purposes in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Research Psychology.

Signed on this day _____ at the North-West University.



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Abstract

This article explored the nature of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in a rural African community. The study was conducted qualitatively and an availability sample was applied that consisted of 11 young adults and 6 older people. Data was collected by using the Mmogo-methodTM and group discussions by means of the intergenerational reflecting group technique. Data were analysed by using thematic and visual analysis. The results indicate that the relationships between young adults and older people consist of the ambivalent views of the young adults and extreme negative perceptions of older people. Intergenerational interventions should be planned to promote the effective negotiation of intergenerational relationships. Future studies should explore issues such as barriers and gaps in more depth to increase the knowledge base in this area.

Keywords: Young adults, perceptions, older people, community, intergenerational relations

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational research aims to promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities. Larkin (2010) states that “regardless of where we live or what our economic circumstances are, every generation needs the next” (p. 99). A generation is a cohort of young adults and older people who share a particular relationship in the social environment according to their ‘social age’ (Sánchez, Sáez & Pinazo, 2010, p. 130). The young adults in this research refer to people in the age group 20 – 35 and older people who are 60 years and older.

Young adults and older people are central to sustainable communities and to the development of more inclusive public environment (Hatton-Yeo & Watkins, 2004). Intergenerational relationships form part of our social make-up as they affect social interactions, the use of local spaces, opportunities to take part in public life on an equal basis with others, the degree to which people participate in community life and efforts to improve such life. Research shows that what matters most for young adults and older people is the quality of the interactions that take place between them (Moore, Wilkie & Alder, 2001). Very little is known about the nature of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in an African context while both generations participate in a joint research effort. The aim of this article is therefore to explore the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in their community.

Although the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people have aroused considerable scientific interest in recent years, the research contributed mostly to describe the typology of these relationships and does not focus on the nature of the intergenerational relationships between the generations (Orel, Dupuy & Wright, 2004). The typology of the intergenerational relationships focuses on one aspect of the relationships within the family context, such as intergenerational co-residence. The complexity construct of the construct that also include differential norms, interest, and power relationships is excluded in the research. The nature of intergenerational relationships can be described as the social contact between generations – transmission of resources and support within intergenerational relationships. Existing intergenerational research can be divided into four inter-connected areas. First, a lot of attention has been given to issues of transfer and transmission between generations in relation to, for example wealth, the risk of social exclusion, health, educational attainment, consumption habits, violence, abuse and attitudes to environmental issues (Litwin, 2004, Moore et al., 2001; Schulz & Kingston 2003).

Secondly, the literature focuses on personal relationships, and the degree, nature and implications of contact between generations, especially between those whose members are related (Brannen, 2003; Luescher & Pillemer 1998; Ng, 1998; Noller et al., 2001). Thirdly, a small number of authors have sought to examine issues of social identity among and between generational groups at micro- and macro-levels (Edmunds & Turner, 2002a, 2002b; Kerns, 2003; Walker, 1996). Fourthly, there is a growing interest in the evaluation of intergenerational policy and practice (Kaplan, 2002b). Studies on intergenerational relationships have focused on the differences in needs and resources of the younger and older generations and are advancing our understanding of the variability in the ties between the generations (Roberto & Stroes, 1992). In these contexts, young adults often view older people as feeble, egocentric, incompetent, abrasive, frail and vulnerable. Older people are also often perceived as less efficient and overly controlling (Williams & Giles, 1991). In research about younger and older adults' perception of the availability of support from specific members of their social support network along with the perceived cost of seeking support from such members, it was found that in close relationships, the young adults as well as the older people reported to receive support if it was needed (Morgan, Tonya, Shuster & Butler, 1999). These findings indicate that intergenerational relationships within communities bring about mutual benefits for the young adults and the older people. This promotes greater understanding between the generations and builds more cohesive communities. However, previous research suggests that young adults wanted to achieve their individuality at the cost of their relationships with older people (Roos, Maine & Khumalo, 2008). This tendency seems contradictory to the value of collectivity in the African context (Roos, Maine & Khumalo, 2008).

Different theories explain intergenerational relationships. For example, Bengtson's theory of intergenerational solidarity (Mangen, Bengtson, & Landry, 1988) covers the many ways in which generations relate to one another in terms of living arrangements (*structural*), shared values (*normative*), norms (*consensual*), contact (*associational*), closeness (*affectual*) and instrumental support (*functional*). According to this theory, older generations are generally perceived to invest in younger generations (*generational stake*) as resources are often seen to flow down from an older to younger generations. Luescher and Pillemer (1998) described ambivalence as a theory to explain the intergenerational relationships between older people and young adults. They firstly identify structural ambivalence which emanates from an individual's location in the social structure, which in this article refers to the young

adults' position in relation to the older people in the community as both generations hold different positions within the community. Secondly, an individual ambivalence which refers to the feelings experienced by individuals when faced with structural ambivalences. The intergenerational theories of solidarity, conflict and ambivalence thus seem to describe positions in which the generation find themselves, but does not provide an explanation of the nature of the intergenerational relationships while both generations participate in a joint research effort.

To understand the intergenerational relationships between younger and older generations, we need to be familiar with the psychosocial developmental tasks faced by both generations is needed. According to Erikson's (1963) psychosocial developmental phase, young adults have to establish close relationships with other people, develop their own frame of reference and engage in work contexts. The establishment of relationships with others means that young adults are able to form intimate, reciprocal relationships which include a willingness to make sacrifices and compromises for the sake of the relationships. Isolation often results when young adults fail to develop intimate relationships (Erikson, 1963). At this stage of their lives, older people are faced with the task of cultivating the proper balance of generativity and stagnation. Generativity is an extension of love into the future by contributing to the welfare of future generations. Stagnation on the other hand, is a trait of overextension where one is concerned with themselves rather than other people (Erikson, 1963).

Intergenerational research has generally concentrated on familial intergenerational relationships while little research (Brannen, 2003; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Noller et al., 2001) has focused on the historical relationships between generations at community level in an African context. The research is relevant because, in previous research, older persons said that they perceived young adults as disobedient and that they express their disappointment with the relationships younger adults (Ferreira, 2011; Mabunda, 2011). Such perceptions could jeopardise the intergenerational relationships between older people and young adults and ultimately have implications for social support. The question that guided this article therefore is: What is the nature of the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in an African community, while both generations participate in a joint research effort? The findings of this research can be used to facilitate relationships between younger and older generations. The study will hopefully contribute to the understanding of intergenerational relations, which could be used to inform intergenerational interventions

aimed at promoting effective interactions and meaningful relationships. The theoretical approach followed in this article is in line with what Sánchez et al. (2010) suggests namely that intergenerational relationships are social relationships and therefore should focus on the relational characteristics of the generations. Currently there is no integrated intergenerational relational theory that could be used as background in this article.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research method was used to explore the intergenerational relationships between young adults and older people in their community. A qualitative design was appropriate for the study as it provided an opportunity to explore the participants' contextually embedded experiences of intergenerational relationships (Ritchie, 2009). A phenomenological research design was used in the research. A phenomenological approach is considered appropriate as it enabled the researcher to understand and interpret the participants' experiences through reflective group discussions and projection techniques (Creswell, 2007).

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted in. Khuma, a former township of Stilfontein, situated between the town of Stilfontein and the R502 road that leads to Orkney. It is a medium-sized community consisting of approximately 5 000 households. It has no banking facilities or formal transport system linking it to the rest of Klerksdorp. Khuma is thus an extremely poor community with very high levels of unemployment among young adults.

Two groups of participants were selected through availability sampling method on the basis of their availability during the research period and their ability to give in-depth accounts of their perception of the older people in their community (Creswell, 2007, Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2009). The first group consisted of 11 male participants between 20 to 35 years of age. The second group consisted of 6 participants who were over the age of 60 (one man and five women). The participants were not related but they were members of the same community. The young adults in the Khuma community are mostly unemployed owing to the lack of formal businesses in the area; while the older people are mostly retired and on pension.

Data Gathering

In this research the intergenerational group reflecting technique was used (Roos, 2011). Initially the younger generation was asked to make visual presentations of how they

perceive the older generation by using the Mmogo-methodTM. After the younger participants described their visual presentations, the older participants were asked to reflect on the descriptions of the younger generation. Initially the older people assume an active listening position, while the young adults shared their perceptions (Roos, 2011). This method is useful as it contributes to the understanding of the intergenerational relational dynamics while members of both generations are present in the research context. The Mmogo-methodTM provided participants with the opportunity to not only reflect on their interactions with the current social context, but also to use symbols from other contexts to communicate their experiences (Roos & Klopper, 2008). It is considered a useful research tool for gathering cross-cultural data as it can provide crucial information on the social and interpersonal aspects of community relationships (Roos & Ferreira, 2008).

The Mmogo-methodTM

The Mmogo-methodTM is a research method in terms of which participants present their own data by making visual representations that project the subjective perceptions of the young adults (Roos, 2008). The method allows researchers to access unconscious meanings of participants' lived experience. As part of the Mmogo-methodTM, an inductive-exploratory and contextual approach formed the basis of the study with the aim of collecting rich, descriptive, exploratory data (Roos, 2008). The participants were given the Mmogo-methodTM building material which included modelling clay, dry grass sticks and coloured beads. The following instructions were given to the participants: *Please make a visual presentation of what comes to mind when you think of the older people in your community.*

When the visual presentations were completed, each young adult was asked the following questions:

What did you make?

Why did you make it?

What does your visual representation tell us about your perception of older people?

The rest of the group was asked if they were in agreement with what was discussed. From this question, both the young generation and the older generation then joined in the discussion informal group discussion and enriched the individual participants' responses.

Informal Group Discussions

The informal group was used to facilitate a process of sharing and comparing of perceptions among the participants (Andersen, 1990, Bless & Smith, 1995; Creswell, 2007). The confirmation of information by the participants also served as the first verification of the

provisional themes that emerged from the group discussion and contribute to ensure the integrity of the findings. These group discussions allowed the participants to reflect on their own and other participants' visual representations which provided an opportunity to collect more data and contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings (Ellingson, 2009).

The data that was obtained from the explanations of the individual participant as well as the informal group discussions were recorded using voice recorders, then transcribed verbatim at a later stage.

The intergenerational group reflective technique was used to facilitate active listening positions while members of bookend generations participate in a joint research endeavour. As the members of one generation share their subjective experiences of how knowledge on important issues is transferred, the members of the other generation actively listen (White, 2000). The members of the listening generation thus find themselves in a reflecting position (Andersen, 1990). This technique is based on narrative sharing, which, according to White (2000), is a definitional ceremony that guides the telling of some of the relational stories between two generations. This technique was applied by requesting the young adults to sit in the inner circle while the older generation sat in an outer circle around them listening to what was said. After the young adults shared their perceptions of the older generation in their community, the participants switched positions with the older generation who then commented on what they heard from the young adults. The intergenerational group reflective technique extracts information that provides insight into how information between the two generations is transferred and also into the relational dynamics between the grandmothers and the grandchildren (Roos, 2011).

Data Analysis

Two sets of data, visual and textual data were obtained and analysed by using visual data analysis as well as thematic analysis.

Visual data analysis. The visual data analysis followed an inductive form of analysis. The analysis began with detailed observations and explanations of the visual representations, and the visual data was then analysed by means of denotation and connotation (Marvasti, 2004). Roos (2008) suggests a detailed data analysis strategy following the subsequent stages that occur in sequence. After the data collection, analysis is done on different levels as the data consists of different layers. The visual representations represent the first, explicit layer on the basis of which meaning is explained by the participants' explanation of their own models and making their own analysis about what they have made. A second level hones in

on the implicit meanings by means of individual and group narratives reflecting on how the participants' models relate to the research question. During this stage, the participants are encouraged to give meaning to the symbols of their models. A third layer links the visual data with their descriptions and the researchers then create themes and sub-themes that show how the data relate to each other. As Roos (2008, p. 662) puts it, the Mmogo-methodTM aims to go beyond the isolated individual when trying to understand human functioning, and studies social life through exploration and inspection.

Textual data analysis. The textual data were analysed using thematic content analysis which, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is appropriate for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes in particular data. The analysis started with a detailed observation and explanation of the representations and proceeded to deductions and abstract generalisations about the representations. The researcher read through the data, made notes, marked words and sentences to produce initial codes from the data. Themes were identified by sorting the different codes into potential themes, and the themes were reviewed and refined to tell a coherent story about the data. The essence of each theme was determined and presented as a final report. Vivid extracts that captured the essence of the themes were included to demonstrate the analytic narrative story (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Trustworthiness

For the purpose of this study, the thoroughness of the data was enhanced by using diverse qualitative data-gathering methods namely visual representations and focus groups, which facilitated understanding within the context of the participants (Janesick, 2000). Various qualitative analysis methods were also used in the present study, namely thematic analysis and the Mmogo-method analysis – in a process known as crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009; Janesick, 2000). Crystallisation involves the use of multiple strategies to create a holistic picture of a specific phenomenon in such a way as to include the multiple representations presented by participants. This enables the researcher to create more detailed, rich interpretations of data revealing different points of view that could otherwise be overlooked. Drawing on different ways of expression, crystallisation also allows, “interweaving, and blending” to discover the underlying meanings from different data sources (Ellingson, 2009,11) and multiple constructed findings that reveal aspects of and relationships between phenomena on a deeper level than just contrasting findings from multi- and mixed methods.

Table 1, below, has been adapted to show how these strategies were applied throughout the research process to enhance the thoroughness of the data.

Table 1: Strategies for enhancing the thoroughness of the data

Strategy	Application in the research
Data gathering	The researcher used a variety of qualitative research methods including focus groups, visual representations, the Mmogo-method and the intergenerational group reflecting technique. Throughout the focus groups, the researcher collected dense descriptions by probing for information through open questions, checking understanding from the participants, and explaining questions where this was requested. The focus groups took place at the pace of the participants and were recorded using a video and voice recorders. This assisted in providing context, together with the opportunity to search for meaning in the dialogue and the actions before and after any specific utterance. Field notes were taken to capture the essence of what was observed during the data collection process.
Data Analysis	The researcher demonstrated that the multiple realities of the participants had been represented adequately by including verbatim quotes and visual data (photos).
Multiple text	Data were collected as representations of different expressions – visual representations and conversations. Through the inclusion of multiple texts, the researcher could combine and interweave accounts of the phenomenon to express the particular phenomenon in various ways.
Researcher reflections	The researcher kept field notes in which the recorded experience of the research process, observations and assumptions – forming an important part of being aware of personal ideas. By keeping track of emotions, observations and notes, the researcher could evaluate any possible bias towards a particular finding or response. The field notes enhanced the analysis by providing a source of the recorded events that took place during the data collection phase of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The participation of the young adults and the older people was voluntary, and the participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time if they no longer wished to participate in the research and that there would be no negative consequences for them in the event that they decide to withdraw. The researcher conducted herself professionally throughout and acted under supervision. The researcher ensured competence in using the qualitative research techniques (Harell & Bond, 2006) and also that all the participants participated in the research on the basis of fair, willing and informed consent. The participants were informed of any possible risks, benefits and limitations of their participation. All records were kept safe and treated as private and confidential within the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

Findings

Thematic Analysis. To apply content analysis the researcher read the data several times to make sense of the meanings and patterns that emerged in the data. The data was coded according to the identified main features which were relevant to the topic (Braun & Clarke (2006). The coding was done by marking chunks of the incidents in the transcripts and field notes and placing them in appropriate categories' (Alvermann et al., 1990). To continue refining the codes the researcher had to move back and forth between the steps as new insights and understanding emerge from the data sources. The coding enabled the researcher to understand relationship between the categories as well as to understand the phenomenon to which they relate (Niewenhuis, 2007). Thirdly categorized codes were combined into themes. Fourthly themes were defined to present the essence of what was captured. Lastly subthemes were identified to give structure to your main themes. The subthemes were supported with the verbatim quotes of the participants. Main themes and subthemes were then organized into a coherent pattern.

Table 2:**Example of a coded transcript**

Data	Coding of data	Themes
<p>Researcher: Why did you make this? <i>Participant 1:</i> I have made a grinding stone. I love them so much... my granny...this is why I think of them...and this grinding stone. It is because I grew up eating that corn that was grinded with that stone...made by the grandmother.</p>	<p>Positive emotion towards older people Affectionate relationship with older people</p>	<p>Positive perceptions of older people Subjective experiences of feeling affection</p>
<p><i>Participant 2:</i> I made it because if you where to look in our lives...we are no longer focused on the agriculture things...we are thinking of going to school... pursuing positive care...forgetting about our roots...you know that is the motivation for this.</p>	<p>Conflict experienced towards older people because they experience feelings of wanting to pursue other things in their lives</p>	<p>Negative perceptions of older people</p>
<p><i>Participant 3:</i> Some of us they want to forget, but some of us who stays at our grannies at the moment they listen to them and the grandparents always correct them where they go wrong.</p>	<p>Feelings of entrapment and frustration by their dependency on the older people Demands to conforming to the rules set by the older generation</p>	<p>Negative perceptions of older people</p>
<p><i>Participant 4:</i> Whenever I want to express myself towards my parents...whenever I speak my mind they feel like I am being disrespectful...so I have to watch how I talk to them...</p>	<p>Need to express own opinion Experience that it is not acceptable.</p>	<p>Negotiating for a complementary relationship by the younger generation with the older generation</p>
<p>Researcher: What did you hear? <i>Participant 5:</i> Before we can go on with the question I want us to make it clear that what they know what they have made, or what it is they have told us... some of the things are wrong.</p>	<p>Noticeable dismissive style that the older people talk to and about the young adults. Emphasis on who has control and knowledge</p>	<p>Controlling definition of the relationship by older people</p>
<p><i>Participant 6:</i> Most of them are not interested in listening. They don't want to take advice from their parents. Our children, these days, have a lot of rights. They misuse the rights that they have.</p>	<p>Asymmetrical relationship between the older people and young adults. Assume the role of educators in a forceful way Demand a position of control in the relationships. Instructive and dominated by correcting wrong behaviour</p>	<p>Ability to assume a meta-reflective position Intergenerational Relationships Intergenerational Relationships</p>

<p><i>Participant 7:</i> Drunken men! Pregnant girls at the age of twelve, with her second child! Rape! Less of respect! Stealing!</p>	<p>Expression of dissatisfaction with young adults Negative perceptions about young adults</p>	<p>Negativity of Older people towards young adults</p>
<p><i>Participant 8:</i> (Stands up) Our kids are corrupt. We should not defend them. My kids do not work. Tomorrow morning when I wake up, my 2 boys they put the money here (showing to the table in front of him). I don't know where they go or what they're doing outside. They had to kill that boy to bring the money. People are corrupt to their mother and father.</p>	<p>Demand a position of control in the relationships Expression of dissatisfaction with young adults</p>	<p>Negativity of Older people towards young adults</p>
<p><i>Participant 9:</i> The younger generation is very noisy. They don't have time to sit down with us to tell them what's wrong. They are always going out, always running around; never have time to sit down, maybe to ask: what are you doing today? Can I help you? Can I peel the potatoes?</p>	<p>Negative perceptions about young adults Disengagement from the relationship with older people</p>	<p>Negativity of Older people towards young adults</p>

The findings of this research is presented visually in table 2 and then discussed thematically.

The themes were grouped in the nature of the social bond between generations and the relational qualities that have emerged in the relationship between older persons and young adults.

Table 3: Research findings

Nature of the social bond between generations		Intergenerational relationships
Young adults	Older people	Definition of the relationship
Ambivalence	Negative perceptions	Ability to assume a meta-reflective position.
<div>Positive perceptions</div> <div>Negative perceptions</div>		

Ambivalence of Young Adults towards Older People

Ambivalence in this article is regarded as both positive perceptions associated with affection, attraction and warmth (Katz & Lowenstein, 2010) and negative perceptions which are associated with conflict and negative emotions towards the older people. In this research the positive perceptions of young adults is related to being cared for by older people and particularly by their grandmothers. An example of this affectionate relationship of a young adult in relation to his grandmother is illustrated in Figure 1. In this visual representation a

young male made a grinding stone which his grandmother used to grind mielies (maize) which was used to make porridge to feed him.



Figure 1: Grinding stone and grandmother

The visual presentation in Figure 1 and the subsequent discussion about the visual presentation reflected the positive emotions that this participant expressed in relation to his grandmother and other older people.

Researcher: Why did you make this?

Young participant: It is something that reminds me of the older people.

Researcher: Why?

Young participant: I like them; I love them so much... my granny...this is why I think of them...and this grinding stone.

Researcher: Why is it that everything about them...you think about the grinding stone... when you think about them?

Young participant: It is because I grew up eating that corn that was grinded with that stone.

Researcher: Did you like it?

Young participant: I liked it so much... then that is what reminds me of the elderly people.

When you think of elderly people I think of that kind of corn...when he use to eat it...made by the grandmother, who is here.

This example illustrated that the feelings of affection, warmth and positive sentiments are experienced by the young adults in relation to older people.

However, conflict is also expressed by a young adult towards older people, which is illustrated in the following discussion:

Young Participant: I made it because if you where to look in our lives...we are no longer focused on the agriculture things...we are thinking of going to school... pursuing positive care...forgetting about our roots...you know that is the motivation for this.

Researcher: So, you don't think about the past anymore... You want to go to school... You want to do their own thing. Is that true for all the young people? Is that how it is? You don't want to be reminded of the past. Or how is it for you?

Young Participant: Some of us they want to forget, but some of us who stays at our grannies - the grandparents always correct them where they go wrong.

The conflict that emerged in this finding seems to be associated with the limited options that the young adults in this context have to pursue their own interests and careers, because they are still financially dependent on their grandmothers. According to Erikson (1963) young people of this age have the developmental task to develop their own identities by adopting the values thought by the older generation to their own social environment. This is done by developing their careers and showing their independence by living on their own (Erikson, 1963) but due to limited financial opportunities which prevent young adults to be economically independent on the older people. The young generation can feel entrapped and frustrated by their dependency on the older people and that they still have to conform to the guidelines set by the older people.

Negativity of Older people towards young adults

The older people were noticeable negative and dismissive towards the young adults. For example, the older people responded in the following negative manner towards the younger adults.

Researcher: Can I ask the older people? What did you hear? What did the young people make [in their visual representations] that remind you about how they are thinking of old people?

Older participants: Drunken men! Pregnant girls at the age of twelve, with her second child! Rape! Less of respect! Stealing! Our kids are corrupt. We should not defend them. My kids do not work. Tomorrow morning when I wake up, my 2 boys they put the money here (showing to the table in front of him). I don't know where they go or what they're doing outside. They had to kill that boy to bring the money. People are corrupt to their mother and father.

Some of the other older people confirmed this negative perception about young adults by saying: *The younger generation is very noisy. They don't have time to sit down with us to tell them what's wrong. They are always going out, always running around; never have time to sit down, maybe to ask: what are you doing today? Can I help you? Can I peel the potatoes? What are you going to cook today? They are always out.* Noisy in this research relates to what Hargie (2011) refers to as an interference with the attempt to communicate.

The young adults disengage from the relationship with older people and keep themselves occupied in order to avoid conflict.

The impact of how the older people expressed extreme dissatisfaction and disapproval should be borne in mind when considering the reaction of the younger adults as it is noticed as an attempt to make further communication impossible (Hargie, 2011). The impact of the older people's negative comments about the young adults can result in them withdrawing from their relationship with the older people.

Intergenerational Relationships

The intergenerational relationships between the older people and the young adults will be discussed in terms of the definition of the relationship and the ability to assume a meta-reflective position in interpersonal relationships.

Defining the relationship. In the relational context between the older generation and the younger generation it seems as if the older people define the relationship with the young adults as them being in control over the younger generation, while the younger generation seemingly negotiate for a more complimentary relational definition (Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 2011).

Controlling definition of the relationship by older people. The controlling position that the older people took in the relationship with the young adults was noted in the continuous corrections of the younger adults' explanations of their visual representations, which is illustrated in the following dialogue:

Researcher: Can I ask the older people? What did you hear? What did the young people make that remind you about how they are thinking of old people?

Older Participant: Before we can go on with the question I want us to make it clear that what they know what they have made, or what it is they have told us... some of the things are wrong.

Researcher: We want to know their perception, whether it's right or wrong. We want to know what you heard. What did they tell us?

Older Participant: Our idea behind this is. They need to know exactly the truth about what they know. That is what we are trying to do.

Seemingly the older people define the relational context with the younger from a one-up position. The controlling definition of the older people is also noted in assuming the role of educators with a forceful way of wanting to impart knowledge on the young adults and to evaluate their visual representations. For example, when the older people were asked to

reflect on the responses of the young adults, an older male participant stood up and with emotive hand gestures, pointing out what he approved and what he regarded as wrong from the young adults visual presentations. He said for example: *I want us to go back to his project* (showing to one of the young adult's visual representation). *His project... is very good because even if the family wasn't able to provide, the maize was always there. There will be flour that comes out of that...that can be made into something. We would make something like bread but initially it is not bread it is what people call dumplings at times.*

One of the older people evaluated a young adult's presentation in the following manner: *Some of the things are wrong. I want us to make it clear that they know what they have made.* From this it emerges that communication from the young and old generation is instructive and dominated by correcting wrong behaviour.

Negotiating for a complementary relationship by the younger generation with the older generation. The young adults seem to negotiate for an equal relationship but fear that this relationship will be interpreted as disrespectful, which was illustrated in the following quote: *I think it is a point of communication. Whenever I want to express myself towards my parents - whenever I speak my mind they feel like I am being disrespectful. So I have to watch how I talk to them. [It] doesn't matter how I feel as individual. In most cases it is about parents being right and you being wrong. [I believe] it is about two parties hand in hand. You can work together and show out the way: you know my child you are doing this and this is wrong. You are out of line. So that is how I feel.*

An asymmetrical relational definition exists between the young adults and the older people. This type of relationship can create barriers between the two generations. According to Connidis and McMullin (2002), certain generations within the structured sets of intergenerational relationships are privileged to hold higher positions than other generations in the social structure. In this context, the older people seem to hold a higher position than the young adults. This type of power position makes it difficult for the young adults to negotiate the ambivalences that take place through social interaction as they withdraw from the relationship with older people.

Ability to assume a meta-reflective position. The difficulty as suggested by Biggs (2008) lies in trying to put oneself in the position of the other generation. The older people in the study seemingly used their own frame of reference to interact with the young adults and to interpret the young adults' representations. In contrast, the young adults' visual representations reflected awareness of the culturally informed lives of older people and how

it changed. For example, in figure 2, an older person is herding the animals in a traditional “kraal” and although the young adults do not want to adhere to the same lifestyle, they have the ability to put themselves in the position of the older generation by showing their awareness of how the older generation has live.

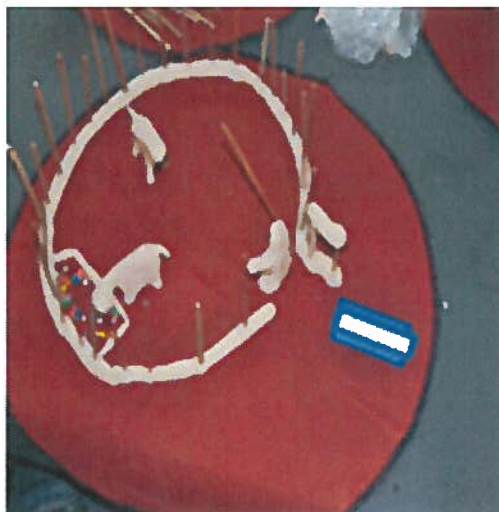


Figure 2: Kraal where cows were kept

The young adults showed sensitivity to how older people lived. Their awareness of what is important for older people to survive was displayed in their visual presentations and included agricultural items such as kraals, rondavel, grinding stones, etcetera.

Discussion

The relationships between young adults and older people consist of the ambivalent perceptions of the young adults and mostly extreme negative perceptions of older people. The intergenerational relationships between the young and old generations seem to be dissatisfying for both generations. In a study conducted by Giles and Williams (1994) young people reported perceptions of uncomfortable interactions between themselves and older people. There are also reports of older people being under-accommodative, patronizing and frequently associated with dissatisfying communication (Williams, 1996). In these interactions, young adults tended to describe themselves as reluctantly accommodating and obliged to show respect to older people. Furthermore, young adults frequently felt defensive in response to such conversations and sought to avoid such interactions as they cited a tendency of older people to not listen and be non-supportive (Giles, Ballard & McCann, 2003). Older people reported similar uncomfortable interactions between themselves and young people. Reports of young adults' interactions with the older people are likely to

include both under – and over – accommodating towards older people (Giles, Fox, Harwood & Williams, 1991) to be patronizing and to ignore signs of the older people's independence (Hummert, Garstka, & Shaner, 1995).

Relationships are not similar for all young adults and older people; it depends on the history, network of relationships and context that they find themselves in (Hargie, 2011). Intergenerational tensions may not be so easily identified or concretely observable in everyday behaviour, attitudes, and emotions. But, consistent with the dialectical framework, it is part of all intergenerational relationships at some level. Identifying these underlying tensions is important so that we do not glorify or idealise the interactions of the young and old whenever and wherever they occur.

Limitations of the study and recommendations

A more diverse group of young adults, from different socio-cultural contexts, including females could have contributed to a deeper understanding of the relational experiences of young adults.

The research findings indicate that intergenerational interventions should be planned to promote the effective negotiation of intergenerational relationships between older persons and the younger generation. Further research is therefore recommended that focuses on the exploration of both generations' needs and expectations. In addition, future studies should explore issues such as barriers and gaps in more depth to increase the knowledge base in this area. The aim of such research and interventions should be to facilitate the social networks, interaction and support between the young and old generations.

Conclusion

The relationships between young adults and older people are informed on the one hand by young adults who have ambivalent perceptions about older people and on the other hand older people with extreme negative perceptions about young adults. The interaction between the two generations seems to be dissatisfactory because the young adults and the older people define the relationship differently and the older generation demonstrate an inability to assume a meta-reflective position. In view of the importance of intergenerational relationships between the young adults and the older people, intergenerational interventions should be planned to promote the effective negotiation of intergenerational relationships between older persons and the younger generation.

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