

**Exploring the sense of belonging of Setswana-speaking older women in Ikageng who  
were forcibly relocated during apartheid**

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## **Preface**

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

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Prof. Vera Roos

## Summary

### **Exploring the sense of belonging of Setswana-speaking older women in Ikageng who were forcibly relocated during Apartheid**

**Keywords:** older people, experiences, forced relocation, Apartheid, crystallization, optimism, sense of belonging.

The social displacement enforced by the South African Group Areas Act between 1954 and 1955 was understandably experienced as a destructive process with physical and emotional consequences arising from various types of losses, separation and feelings of helplessness. Although the forced removals affected all the people in the community – also in later years and generations, it seems as if older people are affected the more as they still remember the losses they experienced when they were removed from their homes and their communities, when their heritage and their culture were displaced. The sense of belonging being experienced by older people, who were subjected to these forceful removals, is therefore unclear. In this study the sense of belonging is defined as the effective participation, involvement, contribution and immersion of people when relating to their social, physical, spiritual, emotional and cultural places. In this study older (aged 60 and above) Setswana speaking residents of Ikageng, a community just outside Potchefstroom in the North West Province, South Africa, who were also forcibly relocated from Kloppersville to Ikageng, 10 kilometers away from Kloppersville, were asked to identify places that are important to them in Ikageng and to describe the meanings they attach to these places. In the research, no one identified any places of importance in Ikageng, instead throughout the research they kept on referring to their lives in Kloppersville, their former place of residence, the place where they were forcibly removed from - giving purpose and direction to this study and leading to the question: What are the experiences related to the sense of belonging of Setswana speaking

older women who were forcibly relocated during Apartheid in South Africa? The older persons' experiences of their sense of belonging in the place where they were forcibly relocated to must be understood in relation to the past.

A qualitative research approach was used and a narrative research design followed. Two sets of data were gathered and are reported on in this article that focuses on the narrations of 11 older Tswana people from the Day Care Centre for the Aged in Ikageng. Narrative data collection and analysis, as well as a variety of qualitative research methods and media, were used to collect data. These include: focus group discussions, the Mmogo-Method<sup>TM</sup>, videos, audio, photographs and observational notes. The thematic analysis of textual data, narrative-oriented inquiry as well as visual data, established trustworthiness of this research through crystallization.

By drawing on the deeper symbolic meaning derived through the use of the Mmogo-method<sup>TM</sup>, the study has revealed that the sense of belonging is a relational phenomenon that cannot be understood in absence of the different relational environments. In an African culture the relationship with the current environment resonates with the effects that historical processes, structural abuses, discrimination, racism and devaluation had on individuals whose lives have been uprooted. This study has shown that the older women have a micro-organic relational sense of belonging to the place of relocation and not to the whole context and other relational environments and that they revealed more sense of belonging towards the place where they were relocated from.

## Opsomming

**'n Onderzoek na die sin van samehorigheid onder Setswana-sprekende ouer vroue in**

**Ikageng wat tydens Apartheid onderwerp was aan gedwonge verskuiwings**

**Sleutelwoorde:** ouer mense, ervaringe, gedwonge verskuiwings, Apartheid, kristallisering, optimisme, sin van samehorigheid.

Die sosiale verskuiwings wat van 1954 tot 1955 deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Wet op Groepsgebiede afgedwing is, is verstaanbaar ervaar as 'n destruktiewe proses met fisiese en emosionele gevolge wat uit verskillende soorte verliese, skeidings en gevoelens van hulpeloosheid gespruit het. Alhoewel die gedwonge verskuiwings 'n invloed op al die mense van die gemeenskap had, ook in later jare en generasies, blyk dit asof ouer mense meer daardeur beïnvloed is aangesien hulle steeds die verliese kan onthou wat hulle ervaar het toe hulle uit hulle huise en gemeenskappe verwyder is en hulle van hulle erfenis en kultuur onthoem is. Die sin van samehorigheid wat deur ouer mense, wat aan hierdie gedwonge verskuiwings onderworpe was, ervaar word, is dus onduidelik.

In hierdie studie word die sin van samehorigheid gedefinieer as die effektiewe deelname aan, betrokkenheid by, bydrae toe en na vore kom van mense wanneer hulle in interaksie tree met hulle sosiale, fisiese, spirituele, emosionele en kulturele plekke. In hierdie studie is ouer (60 jaar en ouer) Setswanasprekende inwoners van Ikageng, 'n gemeenskap net buite Potchefstroom in die Noordwes-provinsie, Suid-Afrika, wat deel was van die gedwonge verskuiwing van Kloppersville na Ikageng, 10 kilometer verder, gevra om plekke in Ikageng wat vir hulle belangrik is, uit te wys en om die betekenis wat hulle aan hierdie plekke heg, te beskryf. Tydens die navorsing het niemand enige plekke van belang in Ikageng aangedui nie, maar konsekwent vir die duur van die navorsing bly verwys na hulle lewens in Kloppersville, waar hulle tevore gewoon het – die plek waarvandaan hulle onder dwang verskuif is. Hierdie

gegewe het sin en rigting aan die studie gegee en gelei tot die vraag: Wat is die ervarings wat verband hou met die sin van samehorigheid van Setswanasprekende ouer vroue wat gedurende Apartheid in Suid-Afrika aan gedwonge verskuiwings onderwerp is? Die ouer persone se ervaring van hulle sin van samehorigheid met betrekking tot die plek waarvandaan hulle onder dwang verskuif is, moet in verband met die verlede verstaan word.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is gebruik en 'n narratiewe navorsingsontwerp is gevolg. Twee stelle data is ingesamel en in hierdie artikel, wat fokus op die vertelling van 11 ouer Tswana-mense van die *Day Care Centre for the Aged* in Ikageng, word daarvoor verslag gelewer. Narratiewe data-insameling en analise, asook 'n verskeidenheid kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes en media is gebruik om die data in te samel. Dit sluit in: fokusgroepbesprekings, die Mmogo-Metode<sup>TM</sup>, video's, foto's en waarnemingsnotas. Die tematiese analise van tekstuele data, narratief-georiënteerde navrae, asook visuele data, het deur kristallisering die navorsing se geloofbaarheid gevestig.

Deur te steun op die dieper simboliese betekenis wat gespruit het uit die gebruik van die Mmogo-Metode<sup>TM</sup>, het die studie onthul dat die sin van samehorigheid 'n relasionele fenomeen is wat nie sonder die verskillende relasionele omgewings begryp kan word nie. In 'n Afrika-kultuur resoneer die verhouding met die huidige omgewing, met die uitwerking wat historiese prosesse, strukturele misbruike, diskriminasie, rassisme en die stroop van waardigheid had op daardie individue wie se lewens ontwortel is. Hierdie studie toon dat die ouer vrouens 'n mikro-organiese relasionele sin van samehorigheid het tot die plek waarheen hulle verskuif is en nie tot die hele konteks en in alle relasie omgewings nie; en ook dat hulle 'n groter sin van samehorigheid openbaar het ten opsigte van die plek vanwaar hulle verskuif is.

## Author's Guidelines

### Journal of Community Psychology

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**MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION**

Exploring the sense of belonging of Setswana-speaking older women in Ikageng who were  
forcibly relocated during apartheid

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## Abstract

Older Setswana-speaking residents (60 years and older) of Ikageng were asked to identify places of importance to them in Ikageng and the meanings they attached to the places. However, none of the residents identified any places of importance in Ikageng but repeatedly referred to their lives in Kloppersville, the location they had been forcibly removed from in terms of the South African Group Areas Act of 1950 more than 57 years ago. The responses of these older people led to this research whose aim was to explore their sense of belonging in the two locations. A qualitative research approach was followed, and the participants were purposefully selected. Eleven older Setswana people from the Day Care Centre for the Aged in Ikageng, a location outside Potchefstroom in the North West Province of South Africa participated in the research. A narrative approach was followed for the data collection and analysis, and various qualitative research methods were used to collect the data including the Mmogo-Method<sup>TM</sup>, videos, focus group discussions, photographs and observational notes. Thematic analysis of the textual data, a narrative-oriented inquiry and visual data established the trustworthiness of the research through crystallisation. The results of this study revealed that the older people in this study express their sense of belonging as a relational phenomenon: people have relationships with the physical environment, close interracial connectedness as well as intergenerational cohesion. Forced removals disrupted the relational connections. The older people coped with the relational disruptions by displaying dispositional optimism and agency and by creating micro-communities.

**Keywords:** older people, experiences, forced relocation, apartheid, crystallisation, optimism, sense of belonging

In 2010, research was conducted to develop a framework for the formulation of heritage policies for rural areas (Puren, Drewes, Roos, 2008). The older Setswana-speaking residents (people 60 years and older) of Ikageng, a location or community just outside Potchefstroom in the North West Province of South Africa, were asked to identify places that were important to them in Ikageng and to describe the meanings they attached to the places. In the 2010 research, no one identified any places of importance in Ikageng but, rather, repeatedly referred to their lives in Kloppersville, the location they had been forcibly removed from more than 57 years ago in terms of the South African Group Areas Act. This Act was promulgated in April 1950 to segregate communities in South Africa according to their race (Coloureds, Blacks and Indians were classified as non-whites) (Turton & Chalmers, 2002). Whole communities were forcibly moved to new, segregated locations.

The forced social displacement was understandably experienced as a destructive process with physical and emotional consequences due to different losses, separation and feelings of helplessness (Ferreira & Van Dongen, 2004; Nkadimeng, 1999; Mazundar, Mazundar, Docuyanan & McLaughlin, 2000). Although the forced removals affected all the people in the community (Pirie, 2001), it seems that the older people were more affected because they still remembered the losses they experienced as a result of being removed from their homes, their heritage, their culture and their communities (Bowman, Duncan & Sonn, 2010; Bloom, 1996; Van Dongen, 2005) – thus losing their sense of belonging. In this study, sense of belonging refers to being part of a place, feeling accepted, belonging culturally, and having historical ownership as well as ancestral attachment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Sense of belonging is therefore defined as the effective participation, involvement and contribution of people in their social, physical, spiritual, emotional and cultural places

(Hagerty, Williams, Coyne & Early, 1996). Sense of belonging includes the perception of people's personal involvement in an environment and the extent to which they feel part of the environment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, & Bouwsema, 1993; Puren et al., 2008). The sense of belonging of the older people, who were forcibly relocated, is not clear, and therefore this study was guided by the question: "What are the experiences related to the sense of belonging of Setswana-speaking older women who were forcibly relocated during apartheid in South Africa?"

South Africa has a history of wars of liberation, conflicts and destabilisation (Macaringue & Magano, 2008; Omari & Macaringue, 2007). For example, between 1950 and 1991, over one million hectares of urban land were rezoned along racial lines, and over a million non-white people were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands to locations near towns according to the segregation policy (Bennett, 2005; Christopher, 1997). Land in African culture is viewed as an ancestral dwelling and a place of consultation and worship in times of crisis and thanksgiving. Land also has spiritual connotations because it is believed that the spirits of the forefathers are inherited from previous generations and transferred intergenerationally (Oosthuizen & Molokoe, 2002). Detaching African people from their land therefore has wider implications than merely the physical rearrangement of people and places. Apart from the economic consequences of detachment, such as loss of employment, the intergenerational disconnections between the living and the dead have a major bearing on people's well-being and their adjustment to the new context (Kaltenborn, 1998; Oosthuizen & Molokoe, 2002). The relationship between people and places therefore not only develop in relation to the physical properties of a place but is also constructed around relationships of the people who inhabit it (Fortier, 1999; Kaltenborn, 1998; Tabane & Human-Vogel, 2010). This study was based on the assumption that people's

relationships with places are informed by the prevailing cultural, social-political and economic contexts (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001; Oosthuizen & Molokoe, 2002). People and places are in a reciprocal relationship with each other, and it constitutes their sense of belonging (Birkeland, 2008). Older people's experiences of their sense of belonging in a place they were forcibly relocated to therefore need also be understood in relation to the past in order to understand the present (Ferreira & Van Dongen, 2004). The aim of the study was then to explore the sense of belonging of older people who were forcibly relocated during the apartheid era.

### **Research Methodology and Design**

Qualitative research was used to explore the older people's sense of belonging after they had been forcibly relocated. The value of qualitative research in this study was that it afforded in-depth understanding of the experiences of the older people regarding their sense of belonging (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2009). The research design used in both data collection processes was based on the narrative approach (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The narratives allowed the researcher to access the older people's socially and culturally grounded experiences of their sense of belonging (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Murray, Davidson & Schweitzer, 2008). The older people in the study told their stories about the forced relocations and their present life on the basis of which the researcher constructed an integrated narrative of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). The narratives were reframed and reconstructed for personal exploration, personal experimentation and a collective resolution (Hiles & Čermák, 2008).

## **Research Context and Participants**

The research was conducted in Ikageng, a location just outside Potchefstroom in the North West Province in South Africa at a day care centre for older people. The forced removals took place between 1954 and 1955 during which time people were moved from Kloppersville to Ikageng, 10 kilometres away from Kloppersville. The different racial groups who had lived together in Kloppersville, and who were forcibly relocated, were black people who were moved to Ikageng, Indian people who were moved to Mohadin and coloured people who were moved to Promosa. The removals were carried out without consulting the people concerned or involving them in the process (Oosthuizen & Molokoe, 2000).

This article focuses on the narrations of 11 older Setswana people from the Day Care Centre for the Aged in Ikageng. The participants were purposefully selected based on their ability to provide rich information and their availability during the data collection. It was decided to involve older people who had experienced the forced removals, who visited the day care centre regularly and were therefore still mobile, and who were able to engage in discussions about their experiences without having any visible cognitive impairment. On the day of the data gathering, only women visited the centre, and all of the older women willing to participate in the research were Setswana speaking. All the women who participated were older than 70 years.

## **Procedure and Data Gathering**

Ethical permission to conduct the research was obtained from the ethics committee of the university. The manager of the day care centre was contacted and the aims of the research projects were explained to her. She subsequently invited the older people to participate in the data-gathering processes to obtain a greater understanding of their sense of belonging. The participants were provided with malleable clay, beads and straws and the following request was

made to the participants: *During the previous data-gathering session when you were asked to make models of places and everything that was important to you and your community in Ikageng, you kept on referring back to Kloppersville. We would like to ask you today to make a visual image (model) of where you feel you belong.* The participants and the researcher used Setswana as medium of communication. The data were translated in English.

After 30 minutes, the participants completed their visual representations, and the following questions were asked: *What did you make? What made you to come up with this representation in relation to the question?* Each participant described her own visual representation or model, and then the other participants were asked to verify, add to or modify the description. This enabled the researcher to better understand and clarify essential information given by the participants and, at the same time, link their feelings to the models and their verbal interpretation of the models. These individual explanations lasted an hour. The older women were given lunch after which the group engaged in a spontaneous focus group discussion about the information that had been shared about the individual visual representations.

The explanations of each visual representation were digitally recorded and transcribed, and the representations were photographed to ensure accuracy during the analysis of the data. Video recordings were also made during the research process to help ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Photos and videos were taken during the building of the models and after the models have been completed. Each member of the group was asked follow-up questions as a means of gleaning information about the different models.

**Mmogo-method<sup>TM</sup>**. The Mmogo-method<sup>TM</sup> is a projective research technique that allowed unconscious meanings to emerge from the participants' reflections on their sense of

belonging (Roos, 2008, 2012). The researcher had to access and clarify the symbolism behind the visual representations within the participants' cultural context.

**Focus group discussion.** A focus group discussion was held to stimulate group interaction and to widen the range of responses thus activating forgotten details of the experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Creswell, (2007), focus group discussions are beneficial when the interaction between participants yields in-depth information and when participants give each other time to speak and listen respectfully to each other.

**Observations.** Observation is a way of gathering data by watching behaviour and noting observable feelings. The older people were observed during the data collection in order to monitor their behaviour and interactions and thus gain an in-depth understanding of their sense of belonging, which was not revealed through their verbal expressions (Atkinson & Hammersely, 1994). Field notes were taken during the data collation, and a video recorder was used so that the data could be examined intensively. In this research, the researcher used the observation field notes and video observations to gain a deeper understanding of the older people's sense of belonging.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analysed using narrative analysis, thematic analysis, visual and audio-visual data analysis, and the findings were presented in an integrated manner.

**Narrative analysis.** Narrative analysis was subsequently done to break the text down into segments, and various interpretive techniques were employed to make sense of the raw data. The researcher used a three-dimensional space approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) whereby data are analysed for three elements: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's places). The narrative analysis was

carried out by collecting stories of personal experiences during the interviews, Mmogo-method<sup>TM</sup> observations and the retelling of the stories. Data were collected twice, and then the participants' stories were rewritten in chronological sequence incorporating the setting and places of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007).

**Thematic analysis of textual and observational data.** Thematic analysis was used in the study to yield knowledge and new insights and to organise facts under themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as capturing the key ideas in data that relate to the research topic. The researcher conducted thematic analysis to link the older people's beliefs, settings and meanings by identifying salient themes arising from their ideas and language and the patterns embedded in the data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005). The observational data were analysed with the help of the field notes and video clips so that the findings could be compared with the textual data.

**Analysis of visual data.** The visual data were analysed on different levels. During the data collection, the participants contributed to the analysis by talking about what they had made, which is regarded as 'external narrative' (Roos, 2008). Then the implicit meanings were analysed by asking the participants about the deeper meanings attached to the visual representations (Roos, 2012). The photos of the visual representations were looked at together with the meanings clarified by the participants. According to Stanczak, (2007), video recordings can reveal meanings and emotions, such as feelings of sadness, happiness, anger and hurt, which may not be revealed in other forms of data.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

Crystallisation reflects reality from different angles (Ellingson, 2009). Crystallisation also provides researchers with a deeper understanding of studied phenomena. The combination of multiple methods of data collection – focus groups, the Mmogo-method<sup>TM</sup>, in-depth interviews and visual representations – in a single study means that crystallisation adds vigour, breadth and depth to the study (Lincoln, 1991). Crystallisation was therefore an appropriate strategy to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Ellingson, 2009).

Table 1

*Strategies for enhancing the rigor of data through crystallisation*

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Application in the research</b>
Complex interpretation	Data collection	A variety of qualitative research methods were used: focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and the Mmogo-Method <sup>TM</sup> .
Analysis	Mmogo-method <sup>TM</sup> , member confirmation and in-depth individual interviews	After the data collection, the researcher went back to the participants and discussed with them the meanings attached to their visual presentations.
	Variety of methods	Thematic analysis of the textual data, narrative-oriented inquiry and the analysis of the visual data derived from the Mmogo-method <sup>TM</sup> were used to analyse the data. These methods enabled the researcher to access rich data to create a holistic picture of the findings.

Variety of presentation	Paradigms	The findings were constructed as themes and patterns to enable the researcher to interpret the participants' accounts on multiple levels and thus reveal multiple ways of understanding the research topic.
	Multiple texts	After the data had been collected through videos, photographs, observational notes and discussions, the researcher integrated the findings of each collection strategy and then presented the story in an interlinking manner.
Reflections	Reflexivity	The researcher made field notes for each part of the research process in order to keep track of any contributing factors or variables.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University under the overarching project title: An exploration of enabling contexts (05K14). Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the older women, and access to them was obtained from the manager of the day care centre. The consent form was read out to the older women in their own language. They were told that their participation was voluntary, that the data would be treated with confidentiality and that they could withdraw at any stage of the research. The older women were informed about the possible benefits, risks and limitations of their participation in the study. The researcher ensured that the participants understood every step of the research and the reason for the research. The collected data were kept securely.

## Findings

The findings are visually represented in table 2.

Table 2

*Themes extracted during the narrative and thematic analysis*

THEME	SUBTHEME
Sense of belonging in the former place	Attachment to physical environment Closely connected relational environment Practicing of cultural customs
The forced removal	Psychological and emotional impact Relational disconnections
Sense of belonging in current place	Dispositional optimism and agency Micro-communities of elders - <i>Relational connectedness with peers</i> - <i>Spiritual connectedness</i>

### **Sense of belonging in the former place (Kloppersville/Makwateng)**

The sense of belonging is expressed in relation to the physical- and relational environment; as well as cultural customs.

**Attachment to physical environment.** In relation to the former place, the participants mentioned that they felt safe and that they have privacy. The feelings of safety were also accompanied by relaxation, which is illustrated in the following quote: *the way we were relaxed there because, it was nice there. Nicely! We would ride our bicycles without fear of anything.* The place gave them a sense of freedom from fear as they could move around in safety.

In this physical environment, people owned big plots and they enjoyed privacy with their own families. They explained it as follows: *In Kloppersville, there we had big yards. You couldn't even hear others when they are fighting; if the man is fighting with the wife next door,*

*you couldn't hear a thing because the house is far there in the middle of the big yard, you had your own privacy.*

**Closely connected relational environment.** The relational environment refers to the way the community members related to each other, and the way they interacted and stuck together as a community, despite racial or intergenerational differences. The findings corroborate with literature that when individuals have positive relations with one another that enhance warmth, satisfaction and trusting relationships, they are psychologically well (Ryff, 1995). Interracial collectivity was observed through the participant's descriptions of togetherness, assistance, support and oneness experienced among the neighbours across colour and race lines. People lived one common life together as Indians, coloureds and blacks. There was seemingly no discrimination, which meant they lived happily together. *We were together there. We lived together, happy that time.* Another participant said: *They (coloureds) would be with us and we stayed next to them and we used to play together as we grew up. We attended the same schools, [and went to the same church]: You would be welcome and you would worship freely with these people, whether coloureds or black.*

The research revealed that at the core of their sense of belonging in the former place was the oneness of the residents regardless of race and colour. There was thus an environment of intimate relational networks for families and their neighbouring community members, as also attested to by the literature (Lee & Newby, 1983). A sense of community interracial collectivity was a major element in making the participants feel part of the place.

The relational collectiveness of the group was also revealed through the sharing of food and providing care and support to homeless orphans despite not knowing whose children they were. There was a sense of oneness which is emphasised in the following quote: *You would*

*take such a big thing and pour out milk for the neighbours or those that are poor and some orphans so that their children do not sleep hungry.* In this place, the intergenerational environment was described as one of interconnectedness, relatedness and mutual care and support between the elderly people and the younger community members. The young people respected and took care of their elders as a matter of course thus revealing an intergenerational relationship bond: *There was respect for one another.* Another participant added: *You would help an elderly person to carry his or her things to go home ... you would help her buy and give her change.*

The old generation took care of the young. The participants reported a one-family, one-body community, where all the children belonged to every parent. Every parent took part in the upbringing of the new generation: *A parent was a parent to every child not only to his or her children.* One participant said: *Every child was rebuked when making a mistake.* All the parents had one motive for raising a well-behaved future generation: *Each and every child when making any mistake, any parent and not actually his or her biological parent sees him/her, that parent or elder would discipline him/her and there was no how I would as a child stand there and insult this parent.*

Intergenerational relationships were mentioned as a symbol of this community's interactions, respect, care, responsibility and belonging. Psychologically, these relationships provided community members with interactional support and care as the elderly looked after the younger members, and the younger members respected and also helped and supported their elders which is supported in literature (Rusbult, Kubacka, 2009). This intergenerational care and support led to intergenerational participation and a sense of belonging in the place.

**Practicing of cultural customs.** Cultural customs refer here to the way the people behaved culturally, how they loved their cultural meals and enjoyed preparing them, and how they took care of their kitchen utensils and animals according to their norms and beliefs. The older women talked about taking care of their cattle as part of their culture and something they liked doing. In terms of their culture, cattle were part of their lives since they used them for milk and other food. The photo and the extracts below confirm this connection. Talking about her visual representation, one participant said:

*The cattle were part of our lives where we were born. We used them for various purposes like ploughing and milking. We had some cattle, we reared some animals.*



*Figure 1.* Cattle and traditional utensils symbolising the cultural activities of the older women in the past

The utensils and the meals were also part of the older women's cultural way of living.



*Figure 2.* A traditional mortar used to grind wheat for making mabele pap and other utensils for sieving and storing the wheat and the flour

Preparing her own food (pap) was an enjoyable cultural activity that made her feel part of her community: *This is the stick we use, and this is what we use to separate the flour from the grain. I am separating the two so that from there I go to 'lelwala' grinding stone. We would grind the wheat, then sieve it, then use the finely ground meal to make mabele porridge. We could also make use of the ground flour for different styles of cooking. This was part of my tradition and our community's traditions.*

Another participant added: *We used a bowl for washing dishes (not zincs); a big zinc dish was used for bathing and washing clothes. After washing we would pick it (the bath) up and throw the water outside. We would stamp sorghum, and then from there we would make sour porridge using sour milk. I would grind 'pone' mealies that have been soaked overnight. Then mix it with milk and eat using hands.*

The way the food and the utensils are placed neatly together reflects the care (and affection) with which the utensils were looked after. The participants related how they packed away their (durable) utensils and even demonstrated how they drank beer in the old cups. A sense of cultural belonging was observed in their mood and tone and in their facial expressions, which radiated happiness and enjoyment.

In this context, the people value their relationships with the deceased and spiritual rituals were performed, which is illustrated in the following visual explanation: *With this ceremony we were pleading or asking from God and the ancestors. In the old days they would call it 'Dikuku tsa molora' (cakes of ashes). You called your family, your relatives, and friends all to come and speak to your forefathers. In other words you call people who will help you pray for some help and guidance if one had problems.*



*Figure 3. Ritual candles and cakes*

A strong relational attachment to the cultural and spiritual activities in the place was evident, as confirmed in literature (Bloom, 1996; Van Dongen 2005). Practicing spiritual and cultural activities together in their big homes and churches promoted mutual understanding and helped unify the community.

### **The Forced Removal**

The forced removals happened quickly as the people were separated from their place of origin and neighbourhoods with severe implications for all their relationships.

**Psychological and emotional impact.** People were abruptly disconnected from their familiar surroundings. They were not given time to make arrangements, prepare or pack: *It happened quickly*, one participant said and continued, *One day as I was sitting in the house and three white men in a car came and told me to move to Ikageng.* Another added: *Sometimes the kids were coming from school ... only to find that their... their... their houses were not there and parents have been moved from the sites.* [Repetition of words and a sense of unwillingness to continue talking as well as sadness in the voices and faces was observed]. *People are coming, hearing when you are going to move ... some of them were just taken like that.* Many similar stories were recounted in sad tones and with sad facial expressions. The disruptions and the disconnections from the place of origin had led to a totally new environment for these participants.

In the present case, almost overnight, the people's relationships with their former place were ended, and the people had to adjust to new cultural values, new neighbours, new traditions, a new lifestyle and a new place. All this devaluated the functional symbolic meaning of belongingness in the new place (Hagerty et al., 1993; Tabane & Human-Vogel, 2010) and led to psychologically affected involvement and member participation.

Different losses were experienced. People lost their properties without any compensation: *People just left their properties there. We had buildings there and we abandoned them and were promised we will be compensated.* Their living conditions were degraded: *They moved us here ... into shacks, they called them hondehoks.* People lost their privacy and their safety: *Our houses are so close to one another as if they are for chickens ... No! When your plate falls down or you fight in your house, next door they are listening to you. Not because they are inquisitive, no, it's because the houses are attached to one another.*

The older women also reported that they had been detached from their original community where they belonged together. Their former community consisted of blacks, coloureds and Indians living together, but, during the relocation, the three races were separated and each given its own new place. *They made different locations ... they created Promosa where coloureds are ... Mohadin, at the Indians ... Ikageng for us the black ones, but when we were in Makweteng, we were staying together as mixed races.* When asked whether “this separation was deep”, the participant responded sadly: *It is a scar ... coming here has caused division ... we were separated.*

The women expressed a feeling of loss of control over the younger generation, an intergenerational disconnection and a sense of helplessness:

*If I sit down with my children, I tell them about where I come from ... I tell them that as old as I am and still being disciplined and send around. For them they will tell you that were during the old times, we were not there and we were not with you when you were young, leave us alone. And if you try to beat him, twenty police vehicles will come after you.*

The disrespectful behaviour of the younger generation was reported by some of the participants:

*(I) like Makweteng because there was respect there, here you will find an old person being oppressed by just a young person, here! You take out your money, it is theirs!*

The literature confirms that the memories of older people, rather than bringing generations together, may widen the gap between the older and younger generations and result in intergenerational misunderstandings (Ferreira & Van Dongen, 2004).

The participants also experienced a sense of ancestral disconnection as they could no longer identify the graves of their grandparents: *And down there we can't find the grave of my grandfather because we were just removed, for the black people, it is culture that you must always remember and visit the grave of an older person and pass on ...* The participant then stopped talking – there was sadness in her voice, and her face and eyes became moist with emotion.

Changing one's location involves shifts in place of residence, social life, friends, neighbours and culture (Omari & Macaringue, 2007). Relocations following war or political conflict, for example, intensify the individual's loss of control and sense of threat (Nuttman-Shwartz, Dekel, Tuval-Maschiah, (2010). Traumatic experiences such as human rights violations, threats to life, traumatic loss, dispossession and eviction become part of the victims' lived experience (Murray et al., 2008). Dwelling on sad events and allowing earlier disappointments and disconnections to preoccupy their thoughts also gave rise to pain, sadness and feelings of disdain and little interest in the current place on the part of the participants (Newman & Newman, 2003).

### **Sense of Belonging in the Current Place (Ikageng)**

Despite the trauma, loss, pain, anger and disruptions the older women had experienced, there was some sense of community and belonging in the current settlement. The women

reflected a sense of resilience from a dispositional optimism, agency and by creating micro-communities.

**Dispositional optimism and agency.** Dispositional optimism here refers to the manner in which individuals anticipate a positive outcome to a situation (Watkins, Roos & Van der Walt, 2011). It is an overall positive psychological mindset (Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2004) that counteracts any possible future depression (Giltay, Zitman, Kromhout, 2006). The findings revealed that although there had been disruptions in the older women's lives, they had found a way of maintaining hope.

The older women regarded the name of their current community Ikageng, a Setswana word meaning 'build yourselves', as a name that comforted and encouraged them to forget their setbacks and rebuild themselves: *They said ok let us call it Ikageng, we are going to start a new life here so let's build ourselves ... but I can make a conclusion that maybe it is a sort of you comfort yourselves, even though I am removed from there I'm going to build myself up here because the name Ikageng is what it means in Setswana.*

The older women's dispositional optimism also gave meaning to the old age centre and ancestral as well as Christian worship. The activities there strengthened their personal sense of humour, which led to a sense of belonging as it influenced interpersonal interactions by fostering respect and equal treatment of one another. A socially cohesive relationship contributes to shared values and aspirations underpinned by the need for affirmation, friendships and membership of the group and hence belonging (Tabane & Human-Vogel, 2010).

**Micro-communities of older people.** A micro-community of older people refers to the connectedness between older people as peers.

***Relational connectedness with peers.*** In the centre for the age community the older people shared interests, and common experiences. *The only thing that makes me happy about Ikageng is Mme Bonnie's place (old age centre) only. It is interesting to me and it relaxes the mind and takes out loneliness everyday as we are laughing now. We always stay happy here but when you are out there at home in the location there are many things happening ... leaving this place late helps ... no life, not all, there is no life out there!* Another participant added: *Older persons usually enjoy coming together as oumas [grandmothers] singing, laughing and enjoying themselves.*

In this micro-community, the older women use humour to celebrate their experiences of belonging together within a larger community. This was seen in the shared jokes and songs of the older women. The following extract illustrated the researcher's observations:

[I have been observing you. When you talk about these old times, I see you being filled with ...] (interrupted by the participants)

*With joy!* (talking loudly with general laughter)

[You are so happy I can see, very happy and you enjoy talking about these things.]

*Yes we do and we are full of joy and very happy, very happy and thinking of those times. It's like we are touching them with our hands now* (all talking at the same time).

In response to another observation: [Now when you are all alone by yourselves and we are not in here, do you ever talk about these things and laugh as you are talking about them now?] one participant responded, *Yes! Even the songs of that time we have them, we sing, we sing them!* (They stood up immediately and started singing a traditional wedding song, dancing, laughing and ululating)

The sense of belonging among the older women in the old age centre could be attributed to the fact that the place had warmth and humour for them. According to Fortier (1999), psychological well-being in adult life is promoted when people have some positive relations with other people. They were motivated to be part of the small community where they shared similarities, desires and values. This research indicated that similar morals, beliefs, capabilities, knowledge, understanding and tolerance can motivate a strong sense of belonging even in a remorseful environment (Hargerty et al., 1992). In meaning to this, despite the fact that one may have a disrupted background, there is always a positive element within an individual that will help him or her to cope and form a relationship with a new environment. The older women of Ikageng who had been forcefully removed from their former place shared similar values and identities, which, they believed, did not match the new place (Tabane & Human-Vogel, 2010). There is a dimension of social cohesion and relations in a sense of belonging that allows one to be and act as part of a community of shared values and aspirations based on the need for affirmation and the relational aspects of life (Tabane & Human-Vogel, 2010).

***Spiritual connectedness.*** The older women also expressed a spiritual connectedness between them, their ancestors and their God. They said that the worship and rituals brought them together as a community. They added that ancestral worship was their support system and gave them a sense of belonging. This can be seen in the figure below:



*Figure 4. A picture of candle stands and one bigger one with a light candle on it*

*This are 'magobe', and rituals ... with this we are pleading ... it is culture, we are still practicing them even today ... even though they are not the same as it was done in Makweteng.*

Van Dongen, (2004) maintains that older people are dependent on religious ideas and practices and that they regard religion as a means of achieving reconciliation with a superior power. The study confirmed that their sense of belonging increased where they felt there was respect for their God and their ancestors and where they shared common values, attitudes, skills and background (Stewart, 2002; Ferreira & Van Dongen, 2004). Ancestral worship also acted as a spiritual relationship with the deceased that gave the participants hope and a reason to belong to the community. The older women also perceived the church as a source of spiritual support in their community where they interacted together as different generations: *In the churches ... when you arrive there as a visitor they will say that there is a visitor ... maybe she has brought something special and nice to share. They will be happy.*

## Discussion

The principal finding of the study was that sense of belonging has close links with relationships and attachment. In the previous settlement, Kloppersville, a sense of belonging was expressed through the multiple integrated relationships with the physical and relational environment as well as the cultural customs. Although the forced removals disrupted the relational environments and their former sense of belonging, the participants developed dispositional optimism resilience that enabled them to create their own micro environment of the one they were forcibly removed from.

Previous studies have shown that sense of belonging is the experience of personal involvement so that people feel themselves to be integral part of the system or environment they find themselves in (Choenarom, Williams & Hagerty, 2005). It has been confirmed in this study that a disrupted place, environment and cultural relationship and cultural background can affect the well-being of a person and cause some form of rejection of the new environment leading to less involvement and minimal integral participation. The results of the study are also fairly consistent with those of other studies with regard to social, physical, spiritual, cultural, psychological and historical background as factors contributing to sense of belonging (Bloom, 1996; Bowman et al., 2010; Choenarom et al., 2005; Halpenny, 2006; Patusky & Bouwsema, 1993; Van Dongen, 2005). However, in this research, sense of belonging was expressed as a relational phenomenon. The sense of belonging to a neighbourhood or place was the result of complex processes involving objective qualities of neighbourhood relationships and the person's own subjective definition of such relationships. Because these older people did not have some original attachment – psychologically, physically and historically – with the new place (Bailey & McLaren, 2005), their sense of belonging with the current place was minimal with the former

place and restricted to a small part of the community. According to the social-ecological systems theory, which regards people's relationship with their environment as more explicit when linked to their ethnicity and cultural background (Van Dongen, 2005). African people's sense of belonging cannot have any value in isolation from their original environment, intergenerational, and socio-cultural connections.

### **Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study were limited to the older women of Ikageng and therefore cannot be generalised. We also cannot deny that gender, age and language may have influenced the results. Based on the results of this research, more studies should be conducted on sense of belonging among all people (men and women, young and old) who have experienced forced removals. Attention should be paid to the relational issues that play a role in the sense of belonging to a place. A comparative study should be conducted on the sense of belonging to places between people who have been forcibly relocated and those who have not been forcibly relocated. Psychological intervention based on trauma counselling and community therapy should be implemented by community psychologists to build on the natural optimism in people. They can thus be assisted and encouraged to let go of the past and extend their sense of belonging to the whole community.

### **Conclusion**

Sense of belonging is a relational phenomenon that cannot be understood outside the different relational environments. Forced removals disrupt people's sense of belonging because it disrupts relationships between people and places, intergenerational relationships as well as cultural customs. However, people cope with the relational disruption by displaying dispositional optimism, agency and by creating micro-communities.

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