

Chapter 8

Theorizing from the Mmogo-method: Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT) to Explain Relational Interactions

Vera Roos

Abstract This chapter sets out to demonstrate how data obtained from the Mmogo-method, in combination with the Intergenerational Group Reflecting Technique, were used to develop the Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT). SIGT explains the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations. Relationships are viewed as the reciprocal, continuous communicative interactions between members of different generations. Thus, from a pragmatic perspective, focus or punctuation enables observation and description of different units of the relational interactions, namely the intra-individual, inter-individual, and group units of analysis. The intra-individual unit of analysis encompasses individuals' subjective experiences (emotions/feelings), and the problems or meaningfulness associated with the interactions between people. The intra-individual unit of analysis gives an indication of what takes place in the inter-individual and group units of analysis. The inter-individual unit of analysis involves (1) the context in which the interactions take place; (2) the definition of the relationship; (3) relational qualities (observable behaviour); (4) the motivation (social goals/needs) for interactions between people; and the (5) interactional processes. The group unit of analysis describes intra- and intergroup group behaviour. These units of analysis, which occur simultaneously and reciprocally, are embedded in the broader social, cultural, political and economic environments which informed them.

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V. Roos (✉)

Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research, North-West University, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa
e-mail: Vera.Roos@nwu.ac.za

Introduction

The Mmogo-method is a data-collection method for which participants use unstructured materials to construct visual representations in a group. Individual visual representations are used to “see the world as our research participants do – from the inside” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 34). Older participants (60 years and older) were sampled purposively to obtain their experiences as a group in relation to late adolescents and early adults. The Mmogo-method was applied to obtain a deeper understanding of the relational experiences, and researchers probed, reflected and summarized individual participants’ explanations of their visual representations (Roos, 2016a).

In a second round of data collection, the Mmogo-method was combined with the Intergenerational Group Reflecting Technique (IGRT) (Roos, 2011) to obtain data about the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations. IGRT is based on the assumption that a facilitated discussion of subjective experiences between members of both generations could contribute to awareness and understanding of the world of the generational other (De Wet, 2005; Nortje & Venter, 2006; Roos, 2011; White, 2000). In addition, the data obtained were used to develop the Self-Interactional Group Theory to explain the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations. Applied to this research, IGRT required participants to be selected specifically on the basis of their age, namely a generational group of late adolescents and young adults and a group of older people. In the application of IGRT, the two groups of participants were simultaneously involved in the data-collection session and a safe research context was created for participation by introducing norms of respect, trustworthiness and confidentiality (although only partial because the research is conducted with people from the same community). First, the younger group’s members shared their visual representations of their experiences in relation to older people, while the older people assumed a listening, or reflective, position. Second, older people were asked to reflect on what they had heard, while the younger people listened and reflected on the responses. In this research, the researcher’s role could be compared to that of a director, guiding the discussion among individual group members.

Constructivist grounded theory, informed both by the interpretative tradition and realism (Charmaz, 2006), was used for the purpose of theory development from the data obtained from the Mmogo-method, as well as from the combination with the IGRT. Following an interpretivistic perspective, and informed by symbolic interactionism and social constructionism, it can be assumed that intergenerational interactions between members from different generations consist of subjective experiences, relational interactions and broader structures, often with hidden positions and relationships (Charmaz, 2006). It was through processes of synthesis and interpretation of the data (Roos, 2016a, 2016b) that SIGT was developed. As a clinical psychologist with an interest in the interactional nature of relationships, I was sensitive to people’s emotions, how they interacted and what group processes emerged.

Contextualizing the Development of Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT)

In research conducted in 2011 (Roos, 2016a, 2016b) to obtain the relational experiences of older persons and children in the middle childhood developmental phase following the psycho-social developmental theory of Erikson (1963), members of both generations confirmed the relationship between them as mutually beneficial. Older persons were educating the younger people, who accepted the instructions about how they should behave in the wider environment to ensure their safety; what was regarded as responsible citizenship; and how they should relate to older persons. The relationship between the two generations was described as mutually beneficial, with both generations able to express their needs in the relationship and satisfy them (Roos, 2011).

It was also in the 2011 study that older persons described their disappointment with people in the late adolescent and young adult developmental phase. From the perspective of older persons, the younger people did not conform to what was expected traditionally and it was difficult to relate to and interact with them. Since the data obtained in the research were limited, it was decided to focus specifically on older persons' experiences of their relationships with people in the late adolescent or early adult developmental phase. Consequently, older persons were involved in the Mmogo-method, which was described in Roos (2016a).

From this research, the following findings emerged: older persons described mixed emotions such as fear, frustration and disappointment as well as feeling proud in relation to the late adolescents and young adults. The emotions of fear, frustration and disappointment were related to how younger people challenged the older persons' position as elders; when the younger people disobeyed them; and when they did not comply with the elders' expectations. Older persons felt proud of younger people because of their ability to change from being careless to being responsible or when they obeyed older persons.

Older persons expressed themselves differently in relation to younger people: some demonstrated empathy towards younger people by noting that the latter had to deal with many changes in their lives, which they might find difficult. These older persons were able to understand the views of the younger people, but others described younger people's behaviour (ill-mannered, empty-headed) from their own judgemental perspective and did not understand that there were other perspectives. Some older persons acknowledged that the way they treated younger people (providing structure, guidance and love) could elicit obedience and conformity from the younger people. Other older persons depicted themselves as helpless and dependent on the government and spiritual leaders to assist them with money, with disciplining the younger people or dealing with the illegal sale of substances. The role of the broader environment (political environment; apartheid), the physical environment (barren playground; new sports stadium; places where alcohol is sold illegally), the cultural environment (traditions of disclosure,

intergenerational respect), and the social environment (educators, peers), in informing people's emotions and their interactions was also recognized.

These findings were useful in obtaining the subjective experiences of the older persons who participated in the research in relation to late adolescents and early adults, but in order to observe the interactions between younger people and older persons it was decided to involve the younger people in the Mmogo-method and to combine it with the IGRT (Roos, 2011). The findings are described in Roos, 2016b. From this combined data collection, findings revealed the (1) subjective experiences of young adult males; (2) actions and reactions of members of both generations; (3) specific needs and strategies to satisfy these needs in relation to one another; and (4) different groups among older people and young adults as well as intra- and inter-group dynamics.

The findings of the two studies (Roos, 2016a, 2016b), showed the interactional/relational nature of the relationships between members of two generations. However, since very little literature provided an integrated theory explaining the interactional/relational nature of intergenerational relations (VanderVen, 2011), I sought to attend experiential workshops on Interactional Pattern Analysis (IPA) developed by Vorster (2011). Since the findings also revealed feelings and emotions played an important part in relationships, literature was consulted about the role of emotions in interpersonal relations (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Lazarus, 2006) and group theory (Booyesen, 2007; De Wet, 2005; Hogg, 2013). The Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT) was developed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; 2008; 2014), and by using the data obtained from the Mmogo-method and the IGRT, as well as sensitizing constructs of IPA (Vorster, Roos, & Beukes, 2013), relationship psychology (Kitching, 2010; Stacey, 2000, 2001, 2003) and systems theory in action (Smith-Acuña, 2011). SIGT explains the interactional/relational nature of intergenerational relations. In the discussion that follows, SIGT will first be described as a theory that developed from the Mmogo-method and IGRT data; and second, SIGT will be applied using the two studies from which it emerged.

Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT)

From a pragmatic perspective, relationships are viewed as the verbal and non-verbal interactions between people (Baxter, 2011; Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Hill, Watson, Rivers, & Joyce, 2007; Mitchell, 1988; Stacey, 2001). The exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages takes place continuously. In every act, people subjectively evaluate the verbal or non-verbal message and react according to their subjective experience (impact) (Baxter, 2011; Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Hill et al., 2007; Vorster, 2011).

Since relational interactions between people develop through ongoing interactive processes that are continuous, reciprocal and complex, it is not 'possible' to focus on the intergenerational interaction as a whole at one time. Focus can be

achieved through punctuation, which means paying attention to one unit of analysis of the relational interactions at a time and to observe and describe them (Vorster et al., 2013; Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 2011). Intergenerational relations/interactions are punctuated to observe and describe them in terms of the intra-individual, the inter-individual and the group units of analysis, although these three units are ontologically and analytically regarded as different viewpoints of the same process. A visual representation of the different units of analysis is presented in Fig. 8.1 below:

In Fig. 8.1, the three units of analysis are the intra-individual, inter-individual and the group, taking place in an interpersonal context, embedded in broader environments:

- The intra-individual unit of analysis focuses on (1) the subjective feelings/emotions (impact) of members or individuals of the different generations, for example G1 and G3; and (2) the problems (concerns) or meaningfulness in the relational interactions.
- The inter-individual focuses on (1) the particular interpersonal context in which interactions are observed; (2) the relational definition, which describes how participating members define control in the verbal and non-verbal messages between them; (3) relational qualities that are observed in the interactions; (4) the social goal or psychosocial needs expressed in the interactions; and (5) the interactional processes, referring to the ongoing sequence of interactions (Suchman, 2006).
- The group unit of analysis includes aspects of intra and inter-group behaviour. Intra-group behaviour deals with the processes that take place within the group, such as group formation, leadership, creating of group norms (Roos & Du Toit, 2014). Inter-generational group behaviour refers to what can be observed and described when groups compete for similar goals, or when a social identity is activated (Stets & Burke, 2000).

The three units of analysis (intra-individual, inter-individual and group) are contextualized against the broader environments in which the interactions are embedded. A summary of the different units of analysis and indicators is provided in Table 8.1.

Each level of analysis will be discussed in more detail below.

Intra-Individual Unit of Analysis

The first unit of analysis is the intra-individual and it involves an analysis of subjective experiences (feelings/emotions) of generational members in relation to problems (concerns) or the meaningfulness associated with the relational interactions. These subjective experiences (feelings/emotions) are seen as a consequence of the impact of the interactions between people (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Lazarus, 2006). Emotions are viewed as interactional productions of the individual

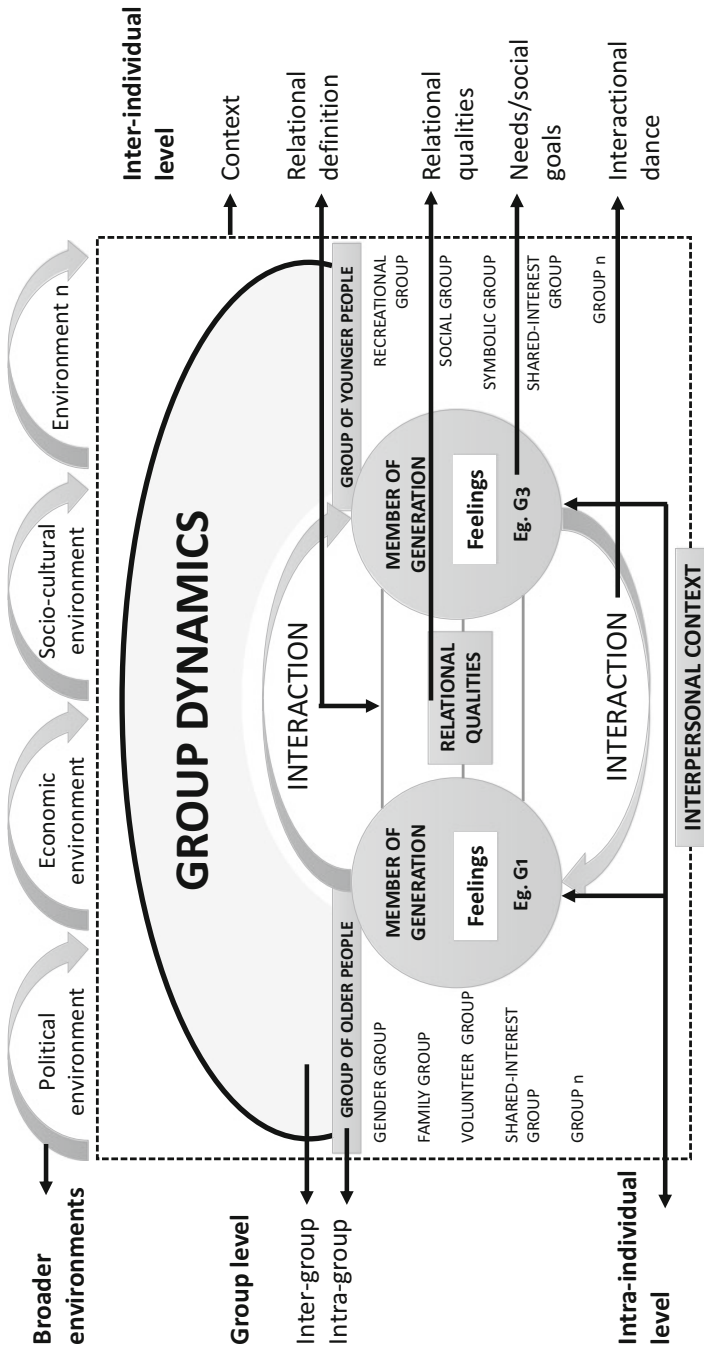


Fig. 8.1 Visual representation of SIGT

Table 8.1 Levels of analysis and indicators

Level of analysis	Indicators
Intra-individual	Subjective experiences
	Feelings or emotions <u>in relation</u> to concerns (problems) or meaningfulness in the interaction
Inter-individual	Relational context (who/where/why)
	Relational definition (control in relational interactions)
	Complementarily-defined relationship
	Parallel-defined relationship
	Symmetrically-defined relationship
	Relational qualities (observable behaviour)
	E.g. Perspective-taking
	Empathy
	Unconditional acceptance
	Congruence
	Presentation of the self
	Rigidity/Flexibility
	Locus of control
	Emotional closeness/distance
	Social goals/needs
	Specific goals/needs
Strategies to address goals/needs	
Group	Interactional processes/dance between
	Intra-individual
	Inter-individual
Group	Intra-group (within groups including the intra- and inter-individual levels of analysis)
	Intergroup (between groups including intra- and inter-individual levels of analysis)
Broader environments	

in relation to other people and the environment (Denzin, 1992; Stacey, 2000). Emotions organize verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication, which in response again organize the emotional states (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). Although people can attend to or ignore their feelings, they always register them (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Hill et al., 2007), and act (observable behaviour) on the basis of the meaning yielded by their interpretation (Hill et al., 2007). In addition, the subjective experiences of generational members are linked to what they subjectively experience as a concern or problem for them or what they experience subjectively as effective or meaningful in the intergenerational interactions (Roos & Du Toit, 2014; Roos & Malan, 2012). The subjective experiences of feelings/emotions in relation to the concerns (problems) or meaningfulness direct the focus to the inter-individual and intra/intergroup unit of analysis.

Inter-Individual Unit of Analysis

The inter-individual unit of analysis has been derived from the variables proposed by Vorster's (2011) Interactional Pattern Analysis. These variables were adapted according to literature and theories explaining interpersonal interactions and suggest the following descriptors on the inter-individual level of analysis in terms of: (1) the context in which the different relational qualities are observed and which determine the meaning of the interactions between members from different generations (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Roos & Malan, 2012; Vorster, 2011; Watzlawick et al., 2011); (2) the definition of the relationship between the members of the different generations (Watzlawick et al., 2011); (3) relational qualities (observable behaviour) (Vorster et al., 2013); (4) the motivation for the interactions (goals/needs) (Steyn, 2015); and (5) the interactional processes (moves and counter-moves) between the members of the different generations (De Wet, 2005). In the discussion which follows the inter-individual unit of analysis will be explained and the indicators will be described.

Context Describing the context requires an indication of who is interacting with whom, where, and for what purpose. Context determines the interpretation of meanings between interacting members of different generations (Vorster, 2011; Watzlawick et al., 2011). It is only within a particular context and in a particular interaction between generational members that the properties of verbal and non-verbal communication gain meaning (Suchman, 2006). It is because of the importance of context determining meaning that interacting people experience "feeling like a different person in the presence of different people" (Suchman, 2006, p. 543).

Who is interacting with whom includes a description of the interacting generational members present: for example, an employer (G1) initiates a first encounter with a graduate (G3) in the tearoom with other colleagues. The purpose of the interaction refers to the reason why people are interacting. The purpose of the interaction is initiated by the manager to discuss the graduate's reluctance to perform certain duties. The employer, sitting with one foot on the table, starts the conversation by saying: "Can you please be more sensitive towards others." The graduate, who feels confused and embarrassed, responds: "I do not understand what you mean, sir." The employer shrugs his shoulders and says to another senior colleague: "These youngsters do not know anything about respect anymore." Later that day, the graduate resigns.

This example serves to illustrate how the interaction between the employer and the graduate took place in a physical setting (tearoom) that was not appropriate for the purpose of the discussion, namely to provide feedback to a junior colleague. Furthermore, the employer did not create boundaries around the discussion. Creating a boundary around the discussion could take the form of the employer saying something along the following lines to the graduate: "This is our first opportunity to discuss your experience of the organization and to give feedback about your

performance.” The employer’s communication was ambiguous, which elicited confusion in the graduate, who eventually rejected the relationship by resigning.

Relational Definition An analysis of the relational definition implies an understanding of the way in which control emerges in people’s communicative interaction. Three relational definitions are distinguished:

- A complementarily-defined relationship is a relationship in which both participants in the relationship find it acceptable that one is a leader and the other a follower (Haley, 1963; Jackson, 1965; Swart & Wiehahn, 1979; Watzlawick et al., 2011).
- In a parallel-defined relationship, the participants in the interaction alternate in terms of adopting the leading and follower positions in different contexts.
- In a symmetrically-defined relationship, both participants convey the same message and exchange the same behaviour to compete for control (Jackson, 1965; Swart & Wiehahn, 1979; Watzlawick et al., 2011).

The relational definitions between interacting people may be accepted, qualified or rejected (Swart & Wiehahn, 1979). Questions that could be asked to describe this relational quality are:

In the intergenerational relationship, does the generational other always take the lead; usually take the lead; sometimes take the lead; or never take the lead? Taking the lead refers to taking control in the relationship and could be observed in: giving people instructions; commenting on people’s actions and giving feedback; probing and questioning; ignoring people; occupying space by talking too much; making statements of ultimate truths and giving someone permission to behave in a certain way (Personal communication, Alda de Wet, 12 April 2012).

Relational Qualities The following discussion of relational qualities does not attempt to provide a complete list of the qualities proposed by Vorster et al. (2013), but uses those that emerged in the research findings discussed in Roos (2016a, 2016b). Relational qualities are observed in the interactions between people. They are the observable behaviour of how people relate to one another, which Vorster (2011) describes as variables and Watzlawick et al. (2011) as the content and relationship components of interactions. The content component is the explicit information exchanged in the interaction, while the relationship component refers to the implicit or analogical definitions of the self and other. The examples of relational qualities discussed here serve the purpose of illustrating (1) how to identify different relational qualities; and (2) how the clusters of relational qualities emerge in the interactional processes between interacting generational members. In the next section, a discussion of the relational qualities follows.

Taking the Perspective of the Generational Other Vorster et al. (2013) describe this relational quality as the ability to incorporate the perspective of the other person involved in the interaction. Perspective-taking is, according to Grandin and Barron (2005), the most important relational quality that will determine social success. When people tend to view the interaction only from their own point of view, they

take a linear perspective of the interaction. A lack of perspective-taking can thus be seen in: the inability to adopt the perspective of another; analyzing situations from a self-centred position; and the inevitable judgement of others' behaviour and attitudes from own pre-conceived ideas and beliefs (Biggs, Haapala, & Lowenstein, 2011; Elliott, Bohart, Watson, & Greenberg, 2011; Lardén, Melin, Holst, & Långström, 2006). The inability to adopt a circular view of the interaction can result in being stuck in interpersonal conflict situations without the "possibility of working towards negotiated and sustainable solutions" (Biggs & Lowenstein, 2011, p. 1). The following questions could be asked to determine this relational quality:

- To what extent do the interacting members take each other's perspective in the interaction?
- To what extent does the generational other talk about his or her contribution to the outcomes of the interaction?

Empathy Empathy differs from perspective-taking because it implies the ability to 'feel' into the world of the other (Howe, 2013). Empathy includes both the cognitive and affective processes during the interaction that accompanies an accurate assessment of a verbal and non-verbal message (Goldman, 2006; Hill et al., 2007; Juujärvi, 2003; Segal, 2006). Empathy suggests a cognitive challenge which, if verbal and non-verbal reactions are observed accurately, is referred to as empathetic accuracy (Howe, 2013). Cognitive empathy means being able to see, imagine and think about the situation from another generation's point of view, while affective empathy refers to the communication of compassion and understanding of the generational other's emotional experience (Howe, 2013; Roos & Wheeler, 2016). Accurate empathy brings about emotional closeness as does unconditional positive regard and congruence, while the opposite creates emotional distance. This relational quality is determined by observing to what extent the generational other demonstrates listening skills that communicate understanding and the feelings of the other. This would include questions such as:

- Does the person enter the other person's frame?
- Does the person give empathy by *identifying* the emotions associated with the position of the generational other?
- When talking about/with the generational other, to what extent is the generational member able to express *accurate* accounts of the subjective experiences of the generational other, demonstrating 'affect mirroring' (Howe, 2013) to the extent that the generational other feels understood?
- To what extent does the generational other demonstrate *listening skills* that communicate understanding and feelings for the other?
- To what extent does the generational other *elicit* empathy from the other?
- Does the person blame the other, which would entail the opposite of empathy?

Unconditional Acceptance Unconditional acceptance is regarded as being totally accepting of the generational other. This refers to a deep respect for the generational other's worth and rights as a free individual and implies that the generational members may freely express themselves without fear of judgement (Swart & Wiehahn, 1979; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). Refraining from judgement means to accept people unconditionally and to understand others from their own unique perspective and situation (Lardén et al., 2006). Questions that could be used to identify this relational quality are:

- To what extent is the generational other blaming or judging the other?
- To what extent does the generational other criticize, and project expectations onto, the other?
- To what extent does the generational other create a safe space to share emotions?
- To what extent does the generational other accept the other unconditionally?

Congruence Congruence refers to the correspondence between non-verbal and verbal messages (Rogers, 1957). According to George and Cristiani (1995), it manifests when internal experiences are consistent with the messages being communicated externally. When someone is congruent, he or she is experienced as genuine in the relationship. Incongruence reflects a lack of consistency between verbal and non-verbal messages which, according to Swart and Wiehahn (1979), can contribute to feelings of mistrust and uncertainty. Incongruence in intergenerational interactions may be observed by asking the following question:

- Is there correspondence between the generational other's verbal and non-verbal messages?

Presentation of the Self This relational quality is a combination of the content and relationship component as described by Watzlawick et al. (2011). People present themselves in the act of communication through verbal and non-verbal cues. The manner in which people present themselves can elicit subjective experiences of confusion or a clear picture in the receiver. If people communicate incongruently or vaguely, using non-specific statements, or jump erratically from topic to topic, or if they lie, they elicit misunderstanding or rejection from the generational other (Vorster et al., 2013). Questions that could be asked about this intergenerational interaction are:

- To what extent is it possible to follow the generational other?
- Does the generational other create context between topics to allow for communicating a clear message?
- Is the presentation of the generational member totally confusing, confusing to some extent, or easy to follow?
- To what extent is it possible to experience the generational other as 'visible and open' (not obscured)?

Rigidity/Flexibility Rigidity/flexibility refers to the diversity of people's relational repertoire and their responsiveness in accepting change and responding to changing conditions (Grandin & Barron, 2005). This relational quality also refers to how open or closed people are to being influenced in the interaction. If generational members remain closed or "unaffected by one another, there is little opportunity for an emerging new pattern" to develop (Suchman, 2006, p. 542). Similarly, members of different generations can be over-flexible to the extent that they yield their positions for the sake of the generational other (Chigeza & Roos, 2012; Vorster, 2011). Questions that could be asked to determine this relational quality can include:

- To what extent does the person adjust his or her own communication in different contexts or settings?
- To what extent is the generational other able to move their own position in response to the generational other's messages?
- To what extent are generational members applying their own perspective/position: rigidly (not moving), or ranging from fairly flexibly to over-flexibly (giving up their personal position)?
- To what extent is the generational other able to tolerate ambivalence?

Locus of Control Locus of control can manifest either internally or externally and is based on subjective evaluations of rewards and punishments in a particular context (Ross & Mirowsky, 2002). If someone subjectively evaluates that he or she is able to influence the external environment and to determine rewards or punishments, it demonstrates an internal locus of control; but those who evaluate the external environment as beyond their control and are consequently subjected to rewards and punishments inflicted on them from outside demonstrate an external locus of control (Cherry, 2014). Questions suggested to identify this relational quality are:

- What are the subjective experiences of the generational other in relation to other people and the environment?
- To what extent does the person make his or her own decisions and act on them?
- To what extent does the generational other express feelings of being in control in interpersonal demands and/or happenings in the environment?
- To what extent does the generational other express feelings of being overwhelmed by interpersonal demands and/or happenings in the environment?
- To what extent do people and the environment respond with hostility to the generational other? Always, often, never?

Emotional Closeness/Distance In everyday social intercourse people interact on a continuum between being 'too close' and 'too far' at the extremes, and experience a certain level of emotional distance/closeness (Bell, 2013; Vorster, 2011). Different aspects influence the emotional closeness between people, such as the length of the

relationship, its type and nature, the history of interaction, and the context in which the interaction takes place (Smith-Acuña, 2011). Emotional closeness is achieved when the generational other is empathic, congruent and unconditionally accepting. Emotional distance is created when the generational other blames, is judgemental and incongruent. Emotional closeness/distance can be observed when the generational other is:

- Extremely distant and totally inaccessible.
- To a certain extent distant and untouchable.
- Reasonably distant and inaccessible
- Untouchable.
- Extremely and uncomfortably close.

Motivation for Interaction with People (Goals/Needs) People interact with one another to pursue social goals and/or to address their needs (Steyn, 2015). Social goals are generated and observed in the inter-individual domain, while needs are generated in the intra-individual domain but become visible in the inter-individual domain. A need, according to Deci and Ryan (2000), is an innate psychological nutriment. The extent to which people are able to satisfy their needs in inter-individual relationships is linked to their psychological well-being and mental health or discomfort (Roos & Du Toit, 2014; Van den Bergh, 2008; Vorster et al., 2013).

Social Goals/Needs Weimann and Daly (2011) identified critical social goals such as achieving compliance, generating affinity, resolving social conflict and offering information. Basic needs include being cared for, mastery, curiosity, attachment, recognition and confirmation (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Hycner & Jacobs, 1995). Confirmation, according to Hycner and Jacobs (1995), is the most basic human need. “Confirming the other means an active effort of turning to and affirming the separate existence of the other person” (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995, p. 24), even though some behaviour may not be acceptable.

Strategies to Pursue Social Goals/Needs The strategy people use to pursue their social goals or needs is a plan of action (Weimann & Daly, 2011), or interpersonal manoeuvres (Vorster, 2011) or goal-directed attempts to achieve a desired outcome (Hargie, 2011). The different strategies to pursue social goals and address needs can include manipulation, blaming, demanding, requesting, coercing. A person who expresses her or his needs in an over-demanding manner will most probably elicit defensiveness, rejection or withdrawal from others.

Interactional Nature of Relationships The interactional nature of the relationship becomes visible from a second-order level of observation. This level of observation involves moving to a position where both the intra-individual and inter-individual units of analysis are visible and from where the interactional processes can be observed. The interactional processes are described in terms of a circular ‘dance’ (Vorster, 2011) or a ‘joint action’, drawing on Blumer (1969).

These interactional processes take place in every interpersonal interaction: the subjective experience of the moves and countermoves elicits behavioural responses between people (Hill et al., 2007). The moves and countermoves are recognized in conscious and subconscious levels because people register the effect of the interaction on both levels. As the interaction continues, a 'pattern of interaction' develops between people, setting in motion continuous manoeuvres and subsequently impacts on the parties (Vorster, 2011).

Group Unit of Analysis

A group is regarded as a perceptual classification of individuals into discrete categories or groups involved in social interaction and interdependent goal setting and achievement (Hogg, 2013). Individuals' social identity is defined as that part of their self-concept that derives from their own categorization and group membership, and it develops through a process whereby they become part of the social group and social groups in turn become part of them (Booyesen, 2007; De Wet, 2005). Typically, individuals develop social identities while their interactional networks expand to include more and more interactions with other people (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995; Tajfel, 2010). Individuals could have as many social identities as the groups to which they feel they belong, with varying degrees of belonging (Booyesen, 2007; Hogg, 2013).

Social identity is part of individuals' self-concept and involves cognitive processes (the extent to which they have knowledge of the membership) and emotional significance (meaning and value attached to membership) (Tajfel, 1981). Cognitively, people detect similarities and differences between them and other groups, and through processes of categorization they distinguish in- and out-groups. The in-group is the social group to which individuals perceive themselves as belonging to, while all the other groups are regarded as out-groups. The emotional significance of group membership contributes to individuals' personal self-evaluation and self-esteem. Consequently, individuals will view their own self-category membership as positively as possible, as may be observed when a particular social categorization becomes activated (De Wet, 2005). Individuals then no longer respond in terms of their personal characteristics, but in terms of the category of their social identities. Social categorization distorts the intra-category similarities and differences, resulting in evaluation and discrimination, and favouring the in-group.

Inter-group behaviour is activated when a particular social categorization is cued and individuals evaluate other groups or the members of groups relative to their own groups (De Wet, 2005). The evaluation requires them to exaggerate the similarities of the in-group and the dissimilarity of the out-group or its members (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2002; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel, 2010). The need for a positive social identity creates a competitive inter-group orientation, which would generate inter-group bias, competition, stereotyping and prejudice (De Wet, 2005; Hogg, 2013).

Broader Environments

The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) puts forward the interrelatedness and circular processes between systems. Accordingly, intergenerational relations are inevitably influenced by the predominant educational, political, economic, physical and social environments (consisting of assumptions, preconceptions, meanings, and prejudices), and vice versa.

Application of SIGT to Two Studies

The following discussion will demonstrate how SIGT can be applied to observations of the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations.

Context

The context in which the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations between older persons and young adult males was investigated was a research situation in which both the Mmogo-method and the Intergenerational Group Reflecting Technique (IGRT) were applied. In this context the subjective and group experiences of generational members were observed in the Mmogo-method, while data about the communicative interactions between a group of older persons and late adolescents and young adults were obtained when the Mmogo-method was combined with the IGRT.

The context in which the relational interactions between older persons and young adult males were observed was a research setting. This means that, for the purpose of the discussion here, observations were not made of how intergenerational members create the interpersonal context among themselves outside the research setting. Data obtained from Roos, (2016a, 2016b) will be used to describe the intra-individual, inter-individual, intra- and inter-group level of analysis that emerged between two generations in the research setting (see Table 8.1). The discussion will first be punctuated on the perspective of older persons and then on that of the young adults.

Older Persons: Intra-Individual Perspective

Subjective Experiences (Feelings/Emotions) In the research, older persons described mixed emotions towards the young males: on the one hand, older persons expressed emotions of pride, which is illustrated by an older woman who spoke

about her son who had taken the initiative to organize sports teams for other younger people: “Some of the kids were brought together by my son to play soccer” (Roos, 2016a, OP 1). But on the other hand older persons expressed fear: “We are scared” (Roos, 2016a, OP 2) and “afraid” (Roos, 2016a, OP 6). The older persons were afraid to go out because of the unpredictable behaviour of younger people towards them as older persons: “You are afraid to leave your house even to go next door. Because a young child won’t meet you in the street and just pass you. They think of money, just taking your money or taking your cell phone, even killing you, raping you” (Roos, 2016a, OP 5).

Problems These subjective experiences of the older persons were associated with the problems they described in relation to the younger generation, namely the disobedience of the youth: “Most of them are not interested in listening. They don’t want to take advice from their parents” (Roos, 2016b, OP 3). Younger people disobey older person’s teachings because they no longer regard them as relevant for them. An older man expressed this: “That is very same for me. I have nine kids and three or two of them will listen, but the rest won’t take it. They are going to tell you that thing is a past thing. That time was your own time, it is not my time” (Roos, 2016b, OP 1). Older persons experience younger people who quote their civic rights as challenging when they disregard the older persons’ sharing of knowledge: “Our children, these days, have a lot of rights. They misuse the rights that they have. They are elevating their rights” (Roos, 2016b, OP 3).

Older Persons: Inter-Individual Unit of Analysis

The inter-individual unit of analysis applies to how the generational members define the relationship between them (Vorster et al., 2013); relational qualities (Vorster et al., 2013; Steyn, 2015); motivation for the interaction (needs/social goals) (Steyn, 2015); strategies to pursue their needs satisfaction in the interaction; and the interactional nature of the relationship.

Relational Definition Older persons attempt to define the relationship as complementary with themselves in a controlling position, but this is not accepted by all the younger people. An older male participant suggests that young adults should keep quiet if they disagree with older persons: “If there is some conflict between you and your parent, you are very, very angry, keep quiet and don’t say anything” (Roos, 2016b, OP 1). Older persons, irrespective of their relatedness, were regarded as authority figures for the younger people. The relational definition of older persons leading the younger people is also seen in how the latter comment on younger people and give them feedback: “It is telling the young youth that if someone is out of line, to tell them” (Roos, 2016a, OP 2).

However, older persons also describe a symmetrically-defined relationship with the younger people: “Some of our children are trying to correct them [the older

persons] but you are not supposed to speak this way to your mother or grandmother.”

Relational Qualities The following relational qualities were observed: perspective-taking; conditional acceptance; incongruence; obscured self-representation; rigidity; and external locus of control.

Perspective-Taking In the research, some older persons were able to assume the perspective of younger people who find themselves in a position of dependency and unemployment: “They are very beaten because of their living conditions. They can’t accept their current living situation” (Roos, 2016a, OP 7).

For the most part, older persons confirmed that theirs was the only valid perspective in the relationship with young adults, which is illustrated in the following dialogue:

- R: So if the children’s way of doing is different from your way of doing, is that right or wrong?
 OP 6: It’s wrong.
 R: It’s wrong. There is only one way to do that, and it’s your way.
 OP1: Yes.

Older persons refused to understand that there were other perspectives apart from their own. For example, even if younger people clearly rejected being taught about agricultural practices, older persons continued to interpret the position of the younger people from their (older persons) own perspective: “The way we understand, it appears that if they are longing for those olden times. As if they want to see the things happening the way they were in the past” (Roos, 2016b, OP 2).

Conditional Acceptance From the data, it emerged that the older persons displayed conditional acceptance because they expected the young adults to behave according to their expectations: the younger people should take part in sport for socialization, and become famous for themselves, their group and the community. In Fig. 8.2, Older Participant 1 had made a visual representation of her son who organized soccer teams. According to her, he should organize the teams, “so that they can do what is right and leave what is not right. They must be successful” (Roos, 2016a, OP 1).

Conditional acceptance was also demonstrated by older persons, who judged the younger people, as illustrated in the following quote. “This is the bad mind that the kids have right now” (Roos, 2016b, OP 4), referring to the ‘immorality’ of the younger people.

Obscured Presentation of the Self Older persons withhold information about the biological fathers of the young adults and thus present themselves in an obscure manner. In response to the researcher’s question: Why are you afraid of them (younger people)? the older participants answered: “We don’t tell them who their

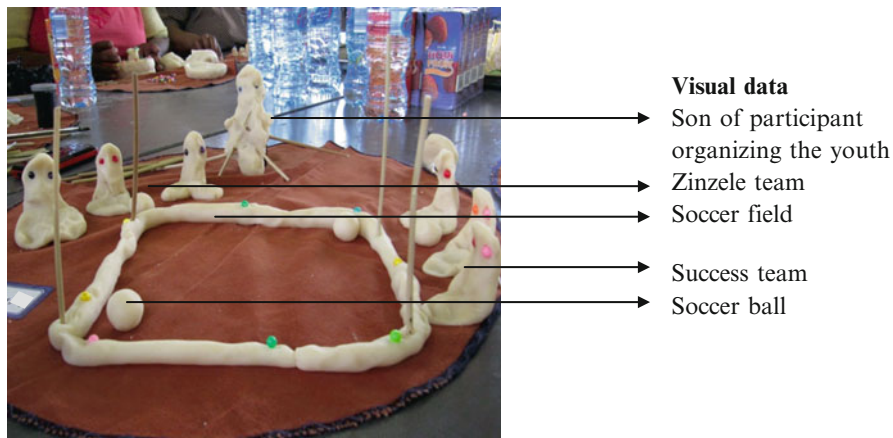


Fig. 8.2 Soccer field with two teams and an organizer

real father is. Like I don't want to tell him his real father, so he hears from the neighbour. They come out very angry from what he hears outside" [when he learns about it from other people] (Roos, 2016b, OP 5). According to the older persons, they do not share the truth of the younger people's biological parents because of cultural taboos: "In our culture we are not allowed. My parents say you must not tell them who are their fathers because they will disrespect you. Immediately they'll say: 'I see what kind of mother are you'" (Roos, 2016a, OP 7).

Incongruence Younger people described older persons as being incongruent in their interactions with them because the older persons behaved in a particular manner that contradicted what they expected the younger people to do. The younger people described this incongruence in the following manner: "We wish we could listen to them, but because they drank with us as their children, you can't respect somebody that is drinking in the tavern doing funny things and who is supposed to correct the child" (Roos, 2016b, YP 9).

Rigidity/Flexibility Intergenerationally, the older persons are always in the controlling position in relation to younger generations, even if the older persons are deceased, and irrespective of the nature of the relatedness between older persons and younger people. "In the olden times every child respected every older person, even when they weren't his parent" (Roos, 2016b, OP 4). This intergenerational relational arrangement is applied rigidly by the older persons: "We grew up and our parents did not say anything of being afraid. We were just being told. I wanted to be a lawyer and I went to school, knowing that I was going to do that. But I was told by the principal that you go for teaching. I couldn't say anything else" (Roos, 2016a, OP 5).

The older persons give instructions and educate members of the younger generation irrespective of the age of the younger people. For example, they treat young

adults in the same manner as children in the middle childhood developmental phase. “You can’t even call your own child to order, now these kids are spoiled by democracy because the democracy gives the child rights” (Roos, 2016b, OP 3).

External Locus of Control Older persons display an external locus of control in dealing with their children’s disobedience, their immorality and their lack of discipline. The older persons subjectively evaluate the lack of control over the younger generation as overwhelming to deal with and look for assistance from external sources such as the government, the spiritual community, the community and the researchers: “The father is looking at the government. What can the government do to cancel all the taverns and where they buy drugs? Do help us (parents) so that they (the children) can go to church!” (Roos, 2016b, OP 6).

Motivation for Interaction With People (Social Goals/Needs)

Social Goals The older persons want to equip the younger people with correct information: “When they go out, they need to know exactly the truth about what they know. That is what we are trying to do” (Roos, 2016a, OP 1).

Needs Older persons want to get emotionally closer to the young adults: “I want to call my child so that we can sit down” (Roos, 2016b, OP 3). The older persons also express a need for interdependency: “They 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?” (Roos, 2016b, OP 6).

Strategies to Pursue Social Goals/Needs From the data it emerges that older persons applied mainly strategies of blaming and manoeuvring for sympathy to address their needs, as illustrated in the quotation above. However, they also used strategies of validation. For example, an older woman said: “That kid who took those kids out of the street to come and play football, [they] will all benefit because they were taken from the streets. They are going to play overseas he will be a star tomorrow. They uplift the place where they stayed” (Roos, 2016a, OP 4).

Young Adult Males: Intra-Individual Level of Analysis

Subjective Experiences (Feelings/Emotions) From their perspective, the young males expressed mixed feelings in relation to the older persons. On the one hand they mentioned positive feelings associated with older persons who cared for them: “I like them. I love them so much. My granny, this is why I think of them, and this grinding stone” (Roos, 2016a, YP 1). But on the other hand they expressed feeling bad and experiencing emotional pain. A younger participant (YP 6) said: “It is a bad feeling”, when the older women called the younger people “drunken men, who rape and steal”.

Young adult males also expressed mixed feelings towards older persons by referring to outdated farming practices. Participant 2 said: “I made it (referring to the

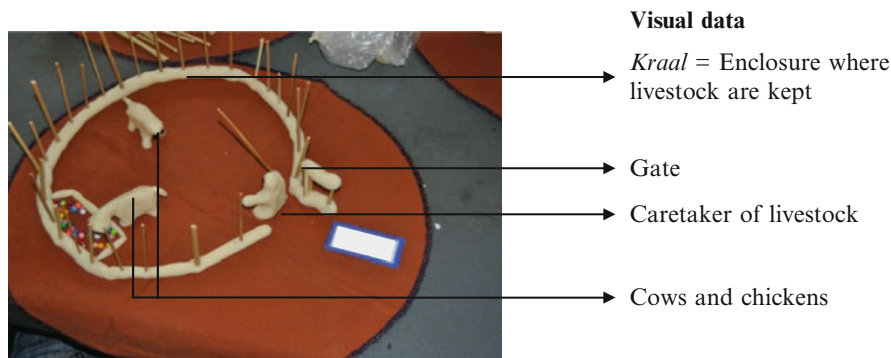


Fig. 8.3 *Kraal* with livestock and herdsman

visual representation in Fig. 8.3) because if you look at our lives, we are no longer focused on the agriculture things” (Roos, 2016b, YP 2).

This perspective was confirmed by other participants: “Most of us focus on things like computers – forgetting about animals – because we are focusing on the technology and things” (Roos, 2016b, YP 3); and “We aren’t interested in agriculture, seeing the way they lived. We wouldn’t have jobs, like we are having nowadays. If we grew up like them, we wouldn’t create jobs for ourselves” (Roos, 2016b, YP 10). Some of the young adults, however, confirm the importance of older equipment for them despite technological advances: “These things (of the past) should go on, because at the end of the day they will help us. Like in olden days, they used to take three-legged pots (to cook), because there was no electricity. Even today we see ourselves using those three-legged pots, and not only baking on electricity” (Roos, 2016b, YP3).

Problems The problems that the younger people expressed were that the older persons were withholding the truth and were always correcting them: “We want our parents to be open to us. They shouldn’t keep secrets from us. It is a hurting thing to hear from the next door neighbour that your father is so and so. Why doesn’t your parent tell you about your biological father?” (Roos, 2016b, YP 9). Older persons were always correcting them: “The grandparents always correct them [the younger people] where they go wrong” (Roos, 2016b, YP 4).

Young Adult Males: Inter-Individual Unit of Analysis

The inter-individual unit of analysis is described in terms of the definition of the relationship, relational qualities, and needs in the relationship with older persons.

Definition of the Relationship Some of the young adults agreed with the definition of the relationship between themselves and older persons as complementary,

with the older persons in a leading role and the younger people in a submissive position. “Some of us, who stays [sic] with our grannies, at the moment, they listen to them” (Roos, 2016b, YP 4). However, there was a group of young adults who moved to a more parallel-defined relationship with the older persons: “It [should rather be] about two parties who work together and show out the way [find solutions]” (Roos, 2016b, YP 3). The move to a parallel-defined relationship is described as a dialogical relationship. Young people experience older persons’ rejection of this relational definition as a symmetrically-defined relationship: “I think it is a point of communication because in whenever I want to express myself towards my parents – whenever I speak my mind they feel 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” (Roos, 2016b, YP 3).

Young adults cite their rights, disobeying older persons, rejecting their advice, and ignoring them. These strategies appeared to be actions intended to reject the older persons’ understanding of the relationship and to gain more control in the relationship. What seemingly occurred was that both the older persons and the young adults struggled for the leadership position, which is typical of a symmetrically-defined relationship

Relational Qualities The relational qualities that were observed in young adults in relation to older persons are cognitive empathy, external locus of control, and distance.

Cognitive Empathy Young adults were able to adopt the perspective of the older persons, although from a cognitive perspective, they did not react appropriately verbally or in their actions. A young adult said: “This is the house, my grandmother and this is her house. She likes to sit next to the house” (Roos, 2016b, YP 7); and “Here I made an elderly person taking a walk, taking his grandchild to church because we know that nowadays children don’t want to go to church” (Roos, 2016b, YP 8).

External Locus of Control An external locus of control was also observed when young adults blamed alcohol for their misbehaviour. “When you are hurting, you get stressed and when [you] get stressed you want to release your stress by drinking beer. As you go out to drink beer, something else happens and you end up taking out your anger on somebody else and commit crime” (Roos, 2016b, YP 9). The younger people express that they do not have control over their own lives.

Emotional Closeness/Distance Young adults create emotional distance by being ‘noisy’ and by withdrawing from the relationship with older persons. “The younger generation (pointing to the younger people in front of her) 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” (Roos, 2016b, OP 6).

Motivation for Interaction with People (Goals/Needs)

Needs Young people's motivation for interacting with older people is a need for a trusting, relationship: "We want our parents to be open to us. They shouldn't keep secrets from us" (Roos, 2016b, YP 9).

Strategies to Pursue Social Goals/Needs Young adults do not express their needs clearly and apply strategies that will not effectively address their needs. This becomes obvious if one considers their subjective experiences and the older people's reactions. Strategies to pursue their needs may be described as demanding and blaming. Older persons described how the younger people always needed money (Roos, 2016b, OP5 and OP6).

Interactional Patterns of Intergenerational Relations

By adopting a meta-reflective position towards the interactional patterns of both generations, the relational dynamics between the members in this particular context can be explained. Here, too, it is difficult to focus on the interaction of both parties at once, and the discussion is punctuated first on the older persons and then the young adults.

The older persons describe the disobedience of the younger people as problematic and they express feelings of frustration in the relationship. They define their relationship with the younger people as complementary, with themselves in the leading position (they want to correct, discipline or instruct the younger people). Some of the younger adults accept the complementary relationship with older people in the leading position, with themselves (as younger people) in the follower positions, but there are other younger people who move to a parallel-defined relationship. In a parallel-defined relationship the younger people and the older persons contribute equally to the relationship. Accordingly, a symmetrical struggle between the members of the two generations emerges. In a symmetrically-defined relationship, the relational definition is always questioned.

The older persons display a cluster of relational qualities (perspective-taking in a linear and judgemental manner; conditional acceptance; incongruence; obscure self-representation; rigidity; and an external locus of control) which are ineffective in pursuing their social goal, namely to transmit information to the younger people. Furthermore, their needs are to move closer to the young adults and to receive confirmation and acquire interdependence, but the strategies they apply to address their needs are ineffective, as is evident from the reaction of the younger people. The younger people move away to create greater distance.

Focusing on the young adults, they express feelings of frustration, anger and hurt and have difficulty with the controlling position of older people which requires them to conform to traditional ways of doing. They also have difficulties with older persons, who present themselves in an obscure manner. The younger people express

the need to have a transparent and trusting relationship with older persons. The relational qualities of the young adults include that they only display a cognitive understanding of older persons' perspectives and no more. They apply strategies to have their financial needs met, which again elicit rejection from the older persons.

The rigid interpersonal style of the older people in relation to younger people, irrespective of their developmental phase and the changing socio-economic environment in which the interactions are taking place, contributes to feelings of frustration and anger in the younger people. Consequently the needs of both participants remain unsatisfied.

From the interactional description above, the following patterns are observed:

Definition of Relationship and Symmetrical Struggle Older persons define the relationship as complementary, with themselves in the leading, and younger people in the submissive, position. This is not accepted by the younger people. They prefer to manoeuvre for a parallel-defined relational definition, which is again rejected by the older persons, i.e. a symmetrical struggle for control.

Ineffective Relational Qualities of Both Generational Members Ineffective relational qualities are observed by the members of both generations. They apply the same strategies to pursue social goals and to satisfy psychological needs.

Escalating Patterns Older persons move for emotional closeness to satisfy their needs for confirmation and interdependence. To this younger people respond by creating a bigger distance between them. As a result, the older persons try with escalating efforts to interact with the younger people, and the younger people react by increasing the gap between them. Manoeuvres for closeness are countered by manoeuvres of distance, eliciting a pattern of 'more of the same' relational interactions and more attempts at closeness followed more attempts at distance, and so on.

Group Unit of Analysis

Different perceptual social group identities may be identified among the older persons and the young adults. From the perspective of older persons, a group among them wants to exert control: "If they accept that from the beginning, it will help them learn a lot of things easily" (Roos, 2016b, OP 1); they also regard themselves as knowledgeable and want to educate the younger generation. But there is also a group of older persons who do not endorse the same values about the past or regard the transmission of knowledge intergenerationally as valid: "I don't think that in these days there are parents who still tell their children what it is that they used to do" (Roos, 2016b, OP 2).

Among the young adults there is a social identity group that is not interested in the agricultural activities and traditions of the past as a means to sustain their livelihood: "We aren't interested in agriculture. Seeing the way they lived" (Roos,

2016b, YP 4), but who would prefer to look to technology/education as a means of caring for themselves: “We are thinking of going to school – forgetting about our roots” (Roos, 2016b, YP 2). Then there are also young people who want to maintain the practices of the past in conjunction with modern technology: “Even today we see ourselves using those three-legged pots, and not only baking on electricity” (Roos, 2016b, YP 3).

Inter-group behaviour is observed in the group of older persons who claimed their group as dominant and superior to the young adults, and reject egalitarian ideologies: “I am refusing to bring the youth culture and the older people culture together. I still stand that we have to teach our children that whether somebody comes whether an older white lady, they have to know that this is my mother. Finish!!!” (Roos, 2016b, OP 1). The older persons introduced the norms for intergenerational interactions. Older persons should be respected by the young adults; and they should behave in a manner that will protect the collective well-being. However, young adults reject the norms introduced by the older persons for collective behaviour, and their moral judgements: “We aren’t interested in agriculture – seeing the way they lived. We wouldn’t have jobs, like we are having nowadays. If we grew up like them, we wouldn’t create jobs for ourselves” (Roos, 2016b, YP 10).

Typical in- and out-group descriptions are observed: older persons describe themselves favourably and regard themselves as the in-group as opposed to the young adults, whom they describe in unfavourable and judgemental terms as outsiders. See for example the response of the older women to younger people: “Drunken men! Pregnant girls at the age of twelve, with her second child! Rape! Lack of respect! Stealing!” (Roos, 2016b, Older women). Older persons behave in a manner that will maintain the advantage for their own group over the young adults.

The group of older persons perceive the younger people’s non-compliance with accepted norms and traditions as a symbolic threat. This is based on older people’s perceptions of the rules and ideologies that underpin intergenerational relationships and their conviction that the collective group should take precedence over individual interests. In this context, older people, always occupy the leading position (even if they are deceased) and members of the younger generation the follower position. The symbolic threat contributes to inter-group anxiety. The older group is concerned because their authority is being challenged and their needs for confirmation and interdependency may not be met. The older people, in the present examples, deal with their concerns about the potential intergroup conflict by claiming their dominant position and demonstrating a cognitive process of depersonalization (Stets & Burke, 2000). Older people belittle the younger people, whom they regard as the out-group: “They are empty in their heads. They have nothing in their heads” (Roos, 2016a, OP 5) (Fig. 8.4).

The two groups, older persons and young adults, also have mutually exclusive goals.



Fig. 8.4 Empty-headed youth

Broader Environments

The intergenerational relations between the members of different generations are embedded in the broader educational, political, economic and physical environments. The educational environment was described in the study as unstimulating: “There is nothing of importance, no sports grounds there” (Roos, 2016b, OP 5), and the quality of educator-learner-interactions was questioned: “At school it is only education, and it is worse. [The educators] punish the child with a stick” (Roos, 2016a, OP 5).

The political environment in which the intergenerational relations of these particular participants were embedded should be contextualized against conditions in South Africa, before and after 1994, when Apartheid ended and the country became a democracy. For approximately five decades previously, South Africa’s policies were informed by the dysfunctional Apartheid ideology which created a society that operated in terms of racial divides. An older person reflected on how the new democracy enabled freedom of speech: “At least with democracy, we are able to say what we think is right and what is wrong, we are able to talk” (Roos, 2016a, OP 5). During Apartheid, some people were forcibly relocated according to race, with severe implications for intergenerational relations (Chigeza, Roos, & Puren, 2013; Roos, Kolobe, & Keating, 2014). The political ideology demanded that non-white people were separated, excluded and discriminated against on personal, interpersonal, political, economic, judicial, educational and social grounds. People who grew old during that period were the most severely affected. Older participants in the research described in Roos, (2016a, 2016b) had also witnessed the altered political dispensation post-1994 which introduced change in every domain. Despite the new democratic society with free association and opportunities for all, older

persons would appear to be experiencing the impact of the accompanying endorsement of children's rights as negative.

The economic environment is characterized by the deprivation of the whole community studied. Many older persons had been excluded from receiving a proper education and they had also experienced the impact of job reservation, which limited their economic opportunities. Consequently, the majority of older persons in that community depend heavily on a social pension. There are high rates of unemployment among the young adults. According to the statistics, more than half of South Africa's young adults are unemployed, and they, too, depend on older persons' pensions (Altman, Mokomane, & Wright, 2014). In deprived communities, people resort to entrepreneurial activities to ensure an income, which includes the illegal selling of alcohol. The physical environment is described as a dangerous place, and people are exposed to illegal practices and a barren environment.

The broader environments inform the social environment in which interactions between members of different generations take place. The poor economic conditions, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and other socio-political dynamics of the participating community impact on the social interactions between generations. In this case study, the fact that the younger male participants are unemployed and still financially dependent on older adults places them in a disadvantaged position, with reduced social bargaining power in terms of their relationship with the older persons. The social exchange theory typically conceptualizes the exchange of power in relationships in terms of (material) resources (Zafirovski, 2005).

Conclusion

The Self-Interactional Group Theory was developed and discussed in this chapter as an example of how to theorize from data obtained from the Mmogo-method. In applying the method, a research context was created: visual representations of generational members served as a visual expression of their subjective experiences and stimulated group discussions about the social reality of intergenerational relations. As a multidimensional data-collection method, the Mmogo-method revealed data on multiple levels. These were used to describe the intra-individual, inter-individual, and group units as a pragmatic analysis of intergenerational relations. When the Mmogo-method was combined with the IGRT, rich data were generated. Apart from generating visual representations that evoked associated subjective experiences and problems of generational members, the method in its application also stimulated discussions within and between generational groups. The patterns that evolved between generational members could also be observed. Rich data enabled the development of SIGT as a theory to explain the relational/interactional nature of intergenerational relations. Theories that illuminate intergenerational relations are important because the extent to which members of different generations steward their relationships effectively is directly related to their survival and well-being.

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