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# Exploring the relationship between geographies of cultural participation and sense of belonging in Parkmore South Africa

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**2021**
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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GEOGRAPHIES OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND SENSE OF BELONGING IN PARKMORE SOUTH AFRICA

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Policy and Management, to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Braamfontein

April, 2020

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DECLARATION

This research report represents original, unaided work by the author and has not been submitted before in any form, in part or in whole, for any degree or examination in any other university. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Policy and Management. The use of work done by others has been duly acknowledged in the text.



Jessica Anne Glendinning

April 2020

To My Family

and in particular

My Grandfather,

Cyril Arnold Bullock

1927 – 2019

A teacher and a scholar

ABSTRACT

Studies show positive relationships between cultural participation, sense of belonging, and place, however there is little research which looks at these connections in the global South. A deeper understanding within a local context is important for South African cultural policy as they relate to social cohesion and nation building.

Using mapping and narrative analysis to analyse individual experiences and practices of a small participant group from Parkmore, a middle-class suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa, the study uses narrative inquiry to illustrate each participants' sense of belonging in connection with their suburb, city and country; and explore the relationship between their sense of belonging and cultural participation.

The study was able to identify a number of connections between participants' belonging and participation, but this was rarely linked to place. Further research is needed to identify which forms of cultural participation enhance belonging and connection to place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With gratitude I would like to acknowledge the following:

Wits University for the support of a Postgraduate Merit Award

The members of the Parkmore community who gave their time to participate in my research

The staff and board of the PCA

My supervisor, Zayd Minty.

Avril Joffe and the staff of the School of Cultural Policy and Management

Sao Mendes, who is unfailing calm and kind

My family and friends who have offered support and encouragement, made me laugh, let me cry, brought me meals and taken care of me

in particular

Davis and Oliva Chisi

Bridget Pool

My parents, Sara and David Glendinning

My sisters, Phillipa and Susan Glendinning and Lynn Warburton

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

This research explores the relationship between place, participation, and belonging among residents of Parkmore; a small, middle-class suburb on the edge of Sandton, Johannesburg. Using narrative inquiry, the study analyses five participants' narratives of belonging and place framed against maps of their cultural participation footprint.

The study is of interest because while international studies (Lewicka, 2005; Loobuyck, 2012; Gilmore, 2013; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Blessi et al., 2016; Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018; Ploner and Jones, 2019 among others) have proved various relationships between the elements of place, participation, and belonging there are no local studies and few (Gilmore, 2013; Miles and Ebrey, 2017, are among the growing number) look at how the relationships play out within everyday practice. The relationships could have implications for achieving social cohesion and nation building; an objective of national South African cultural policy and an outcome of the National Development Plan. South Africa is a widely diverse society, not simply in terms of identity but also in terms of living conditions, social structure, and access to cultural opportunities. Illustrations of how these connections, which have been theorised in international literature, exist in our own societies will give us better guidelines to employ what tools we have towards the united society we wish to achieve. My study looks at only one small section of our society, namely a middle-class community in Sandton, through the experiences of five of its members.

The research report begins by providing the rationale for the study as well as the aims and objectives.

In chapter two, I review the literature on the elements of place, belonging, and participation, demonstrating the connection between them to arrive at my conceptual framework which provides a visual demonstration of the key links I have found in the literature.

In chapter three, I look at the methodology, narrative inquiry, and lay out the methods used in the study.

Chapter four constitutes the body of the research. Employing narrative inquiry, I present my findings as a piece of creative nonfiction in which I play the part of the narrator. Switching between narrator and academic, I interrupt the text with discussion of the literature relevant to connections found in the stories.

In the final chapter, I conclude with a meditation on the outcomes of the study and the recommendations it suggests for further research.

## Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between place, participation, and belonging through individual experience and practice. Various studies have established relationships between these elements which will be discussed in detail in my literature review.

Belonging is defined as ‘To be part of and to experience a sense of affiliation to the community and the larger society’ (Cloete and Kotze, 2009 in DAC, 2012:32) but also ‘the extent to which individuals feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in their social environment’ (Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018:2).

Cultural Participation is when people engage in cultural activities and use cultural products (Murray, 2005:32). Multiple studies have concluded that participation has a positive influence on sense of belonging (Loobuyck, 2012, Ploner and Jones, 2019, Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018) while Stickley (2010) suggests that the relationship is one of possibility rather than inevitability.

Cultural participation also has a strong influence on sense of place (Ploner and Jones, 2019, Anton and Lawence, 2014) and place attachment (Lewicka, 2005, Blessi et al., 2016).

Place, defined by Cilliers and Timmermans as ‘Spaces with meaning’ (2014:414), is in turn intimately linked to belonging (Antonsich, 2010,Tomaney, 2015) and influences participation (Gilmore, 2013), through emotional factors such as attachment (Anton and Lawrence, 2014) and more practical considerations such as access (Delrieu and Gibson 2017:19).

The relationships between these elements in South Africa are likely to be complicated by the disruption to sense of belonging prevalent in our society which I discuss in my literature review.

My own experiences searching for opportunities for cultural participation within my neighbourhood and my community, as well as the difficulty of integrating into a community without the social network naturally developed over childhood, have guided me to this area of research.

As well as my professional background, working in arts and culture development, and my education in cultural policy, I feel I offer a unique perspective as a South African who grew up outside of South Africa. This insider/outsider position gives me a slightly detached lens through which to view my communities.

If cultural participation can increase social cohesion as argued by the literature, and I believe it can, then this suggests that the potential of cultural participation to contribute towards national policy objectives is not being realised. I believe that understanding the lived experience is the first step towards understanding how to use these experiences effectively.

**The Literature Gap**

The degrees to which belonging, cultural participation, and place influence each other is inconclusive, and how they interrelate and are experienced in the daily lives of individuals has not been explored. A deeper understanding of how existing cultural participation habits are affecting sense of belonging and commitment to place is important if participation is to be leveraged to achieve socio-economic policy aims, which Loobuyck (2012) argues is both possible for a diverse population, and necessary for a developmental state. Furthermore, most of these studies are located in the global North, while the global South remains under-researched. My study aims to contribute to a growing body of knowledge located in the global South while at the same time examining an established relationship at a microlevel, within the context of the everyday, which may have relevance globally.

## A Cultural Policy Concern

Over 80% of South Africans believe that arts and culture 'promote nation building' and 'improve you as a person' (NAC, 2010:15). Nation building and social cohesion are part of the core mandate of national cultural policy and a key aim of South Africa's 2030 National Development Plan, expressed in Outcome 14 (DPME, 2014:1). Nation building operates at a national level while social cohesion operates at a community level, 'underpinned by a national sense of belonging' (DAC, 2012:36).

In the revised White Paper social cohesion is referred to as a 'core mandate' (DAC, 2017:6), 'a mission' (ibid:8) and a 'national intergovernmental project' driven by the Department of Arts and Culture (ibid:14). Despite this focus on social cohesion and the promotion of participation in the DAC's own policy, within the Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2014 – 2019 Programme of Action the responsibilities of the DAC is focused on symbols, national holiday celebrations and community dialogues, while the role of sports is used to encourage and develop participation (DPME, 2014:6-24). This division of responsibility shows that the potential of cultural participation, aside from sports, is underappreciated and suggests that cultural participation could be used more effectively to achieve the aims of Outcome 14.

Belonging is the first of the eight components of social cohesion listed in the Department of Arts and Cultures National Strategy for Social Cohesion (2012:33).[1]

In a recent study on students at the University of Johannesburg Amoateng (2016:96) found South Africans lack a sense of national belonging. This is unsurprising. As Burns, Jacobs and Zuma (2015:85) note, 'the pre-conditions for a sense of belonging are largely absent in the rainbow nation'. During apartheid, race and ethnicity were used as a basis for a nationalist narrative (DAC, 2012:20) which deliberately fragmented our society. Attempts to build a new national narrative that includes all South Africans are hindered by the inherited social and material separation.

Belonging exists on multiple levels from a national scale to smaller geopolitical scales (region, city, suburb) or formed through social groups, such as a culture, religion, common

[1] The eight dimensions of social cohesion are belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, legitimacy, shared values, cooperation, and belief (DAC, 2012:33)

interest or family. The individual need for belonging may be satisfied at a social level where national or geopolitical belonging is lacking but this has repercussions for the state.

Lack of belonging has a negative effect on public participation in both political and social dimensions, characterised by a lack of trust in political institutions and low voter turnout (Burns, Jacobs and Zuma, 2015:86). Citizens become disinvested and disengaged in social and political activities. This means that, cultural participation can serve as both an indicator and means of addressing a lack of belonging, and cultural policies which facilitate cultural participation are necessary.

Miles and Gibson (2016:151) call for policy to be underpinned by understanding the everyday practices of the people it will serve. Only by understanding how cultural participation is engaged in, can it be effectively leveraged to achieve the policy objectives. In addition, without understanding how people practice culture, policy makers are vulnerable to their own biases, beliefs, and practices, crafting policy which serves themselves rather than the wider population.

As the revised White Paper is committed to facilitating opportunities for community arts participation and is the main driver of social cohesion and nation building, this research is well situated within this department.

**Choosing a Site**

In middle class suburbs, private security augment the local police force, private health care negates the need to depend on government services and even road maintenance is occasionally carried out at the expense of community associations. This is referred to by Ballard (2004, 60) as ‘semigration’, the practice in which, particularly white South Africans but increasingly a multi-racial affluent middle class, are able to retreat into separated enclaves in which they can maintain a zone of security and comfort. Most visible in the rise of gated communities and secure estates, it has led to criticisms of the reproduction of apartheid-like spatial segregation (Hook and Vordjak, 2002). However, it is part of a broader disengagement from the overall politics from citizens who feel that their exclusion is inevitable (Ballard 2004:60).

One such neighbourhood is Parkmore; a small suburb on the border of Sandton, segmented by gates and patrolled by armed security guards. About half of the 1200

households are members of the Parkmore Community Association (PCA) who employ a suburb manager to coordinate the private security contracts, liaise with security teams, and attend weekly police sector meetings. They have recently consulted a marketing firm about developing a ‘One Parkmore’ branding strategy, aimed at unifying the separate segments of the suburb and creating a sense of belonging (PCA, 2019).

The impulse to turn to a branding strategy in order to influence residents' experience of the suburb appears to be in line with global trends in placemaking, which is characterised by a top down approach to making place rather than organic processes which begin with the community (Lew, 2017). The two approaches will be explored more fully in the literature review but an example of a more organic approach to increase belonging is given by Loobuyck (2012:560) who argues that participation in ‘shared activities and projects’ can create a sense of belonging.

While the focus of the PCA is heavily on security and coordinating support for closures, it has also developed a few cultural activities, such as their annual Halloween walk, and are looking to increase these (C. Evans, personal communication, 25 February, 2020).

Rosenstein (2011:13) argues that residents should take responsibility for driving the cultural development they want where formal drivers, such as policy, are lacking, but the exclusionary nature of these communities, and the potential of such self-governance to further entrench broader social divides, is a cause for concern.

Nawa (2016:759) argues that culture is yet to be taken seriously as a tool for development in South Africa due to the lack of a strong policy framework and ignorance about the potential culture holds outside the artistic realm. This has allowed existing culture structures to drive a development agenda at a local level (Sirayi and Anyumba in Nawa, 2016:759) which may exacerbate existing social structural problems (Nawa, 2016:759). The continued spatial segregation, further entrenched by gated and secure estates, clearly illustrates this.

Parkmore, therefore, provides a site where there are signs of both detachment, from the broader city and nation-state, and attachment, to the neighbourhood. It also offers the potential for a development agenda which could contribute to or undermine the aims of a democratic South Africa.

## Aims/ Objectives

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between place, cultural participation, and sense of belonging through individual experiences and practices.

Working from the assumption derived from the literature that, there is, or is the possibility of, a relationship between place, cultural participation, and sense of belonging I was able to explore the ways in which that relationship existed or did not through the study of individual experiences in a small sample group.

The study had three objectives.

The first was to map the cultural participation of the participants in order to get a visual footprint of their cultural participation in relation to space.

Secondly, to gain an understanding of the participants' sense of belonging in general and in particular to places whose geographically based communities they could be said to be part of, namely Parkmore, Johannesburg, and South Africa.

Thirdly, to explore how the two elements related to each other through an analysis of the texts produced by the data collected.

### Research Questions

The following questions were posed;

How and where do residents of Parkmore participate in culture?

What places and communities do residents of Parkmore feel a sense of belonging to?

Is there a relationship between where people participate in culture and their sense/s of belonging?

Having laid out the rationale behind my study as well as the aims and objectives, I will now turn to exploring the literature which informed my study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

### Introduction

In this chapter I explore the existing bodies of literature relevant to my research around the three elements of place, participation, and belonging. I begin with place, followed by sense of belonging, and end with cultural participation.

### Place

Places are, on the one hand, specific physical locations and on the other, a symbolic imagining made up of ideas, emotions, memories, and experiences (Tuan, 1975:152). As Cilliers and Timmermans put it ‘Places are spaces with meaning’ (2014:414). It therefore follows that spaces are transformed into places by the construction of meaning. My task is to understand how participants are constructing meaning through their sense of belonging and cultural participation, and how this may transform the neighbourhood, city, and national spaces into the places of Parkmore, Johannesburg and South Africa

Making Place

Meaning is constructed by both concrete and abstract experiences, ‘directly through the senses and indirectly through the mind’ (Tuan, 1975:153). The larger the place becomes the less it can be known through direct experience and the more it is constructed symbolically (ibid). Our homes are easily constructed by direct experience; the smells, sounds, images, and senses. Our cities are constructed by direct experience of a few places, as well as associations, stories, and other peoples’ relayed experiences which shape its identity in our mind. Our nation state, on the other hand, is largely a symbolic project built with flags, anthems and political speeches (Tuan, 1975) but also through representations and constructed narratives.

Tuan writes that ‘[N]ew nation-states aspire to supplant older loyalties to village and tribe’ (1975:160). The question of how to build a new South Africa which supplants the loyalties

to racial and ethnic groupings encouraged by the Apartheid state is the focus of many scholars; in particular, the tension between creating a unified belonging in a diverse national population and maintaining a space for group identities (Bains, 1998:5; Brown, 2001:763; Chipkin, 2007:189). An appeal to democratic ideals and values expands the collective beyond the nation state towards humanity (Agnew, 2005, in Chipkin, 2007:189) and does not create an identity which South Africans can hold as uniquely theirs.

Despite suggestions that globalisation does away with the need for more localised attachments, the need to belong remains (Savage et al, 2005:1; Antonsich, 2005:651). Antonsich (2010:651) rejects the idea of 'belonging to the world' as too simplistic. Wood and Waite (2011:201) argue that issues such as globalisation, migration, as well as modern ways of living, have both disrupted our sense of belonging and increased a desire for it. Similarly, Tomaney (2015:507) argues that although belonging seems outdated with the global trend towards mobility, Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2005) research shows that attachments to place remain important as people seek connection in 'an unstable world'.

Following this argument, practical questions need to be answered to enable communities to connect and engage with their communities and places. In the democratic society citizenship should only begin with having a vote. Active engagement in local issues and participation in society should follow naturally.

## A Case for Civic Citizenship

In diverse societies we are less likely to share a sense of sympathy with each other and therefore less likely to 'support a generous welfare state' (Goodhart 2006, in Loobuyck, 2012:569). In a South African context, this suggests that our diversity could be holding us back from the transformation and redistribution of wealth necessary to reduce the inequality in our society.

South African national cultural policy is aligned with the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) (DAC, 2017:7), both of which promote cultural diversity as essential to global sustainable development. Goodhart's statement seems at first to undermine this however on reflection I suggest that it depends on the level of social cohesion achieved.

A socially cohesive society in which different groups feel themselves to be equal and recognised parts of a whole is likely to feel the benefits of a diverse society. However, in a society in which groups feel excluded, they are more likely to respond as insecure children do, jealous of any attention shown to another child. This only strengthens the need for fostering a strong sense of belonging under our nation state banner.

Brown (2001:763) suggests the construction of a South African identity based predominantly on civic citizenship, building on Appiah's writing on African identity (1980), which he paraphrases as an argument for a shift 'from a metaphysical essence to a shared problematic as the basis for a common commitment'.

The call for civic citizenship at a city and neighbourhood scale, as a necessity to address problems in urban living, is taken up by authors in the cultural and creative fields such as Landry (2018) and Mbaye and Dinardi (2019). Landry (2018) defines civic as 'that which we do together' and it connects to the idea of a 'polis', a group of people who felt themselves as part of a whole and who subscribed to the idea of a shared fate (Miller, 1957:2). Mbaye and Dinardi suggest that attention should be paid to the 'cultural polis'; a 'body of citizens and a citizenship embodied by an informed capacity to engage processes of practical and symbolic *re-imaginings* of the city' (2019:579, emphasis added). Such a collective has the ability to remake a place by changing the meaning of the space.

One of the difficulties Landry identifies in encouraging civic participation, is that the increase in the scale of our human existence, which has gone from communities of thousands to communities of millions, brings with it a sense of disconnectedness, which makes it difficult to feel that an individual can effect change (Landry, 2018).

The result is a society which sees people as commodities, where those surplus to economic requirements are pushed out to the edges (Friedman, 2010:151). Friedman suggests the answer is to reclaim our own humanity by connecting ourselves to others through place, combating what he refers to as the 'horror of placelessness' (ibid, 2010:152). The term 'placelessness' echoes Lefebvre's concerns that commodification of space has devoid itself of meaning (1991 in Savage, Bagnall and Longurst, 2005:79).

These images resonate strongly in South Africa, where large portions of our population live in informal settlements on the edges of the city, but in comfortable middle-class suburbs, it can feel like those belong to another country. The problems which face us, both social and economic, at a national level are overwhelming; so how can we address these problems at

a manageable scale while maintaining a connection with the greater population of South Africa?

Making Place to Place Making

Friedman argues for a pedestrian scale for what is called place making (2010:154). Place making is making spaces into places by attaching meaning (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014:414) and has evolved from urban design and planning to a focus on ‘adapting spaces to people’ (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2010:415).

Lew (2017) differentiates between place making, as the overall umbrella term, placemaking as a top down planned approach and place-making as a bottom up, organic approach.

Placemaking, which has generated criticism due to its role in commodification of space through meaning, is therefore the opposite side of the coin to place-making, which is in line with civic participation and ‘everyone’s job’ (Friedman, 2010:191).

A key idea in place-making is that of ownership; Cilliers and Timmerman (2014:417) refer to the need for communities to be involved in the planning of their neighbourhoods in order to empower the residents and ‘to make [the neighbourhood] their own’ (ibid:415). Involving residents can increase their attachment to both the place and the community. In this way place making can positively affect sense of belonging (Pollock and Paddison, 2015 in Ploner and Jones, 2019:3).

Through remaking the meaning attached to our spaces, we can forge a greater or more positive connection to place, which can increase our sense of belonging in a nation and a shared sense of citizenship. I wanted to explore the meanings that already exist for my participants by understanding their sense of belonging.

**Sense of Belonging**

Sense of belonging is, at its core, ‘the extent to which individuals feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in their social environment’ (Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018:2) however the South African Department of Arts and Culture use a different definition.

> Belonging: To be part of and to experience a sense of affiliation to the community and the larger society. It involves processes of identification and acceptance within a

> community and larger society. In a diverse society such as South Africa, it requires identification with and acceptance of groups.
>
> (Cloete and Kotze, 2009 in DAC, 2012:32)

The DAC's definition resonates with Landry's idea of civic citizenship and speaks more to the needs of the country than the needs of the people, but belonging is an important individual need, first identified in the field of psychology (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:521).

The 'belonging hypothesis' was developed by Baumeister and Leary from Maslow's identification of Sense of Belonging as a fundamental human need (1968, in Baumeister and Leary, 1995:497). It states that '[H]uman beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:497).

Both definitions focus on the need for acceptance from others. This 'politics of belonging' has become the focus of most studies on belonging but there is another aspect which deserves equal attention (Antonsich, 2010:647).

### Place Belonging vs. Politics of Belonging

Antonsich (2010) suggests that sense of belonging has two interrelated forms. The first is what he refers to as 'place belongingness', a personal feeling of connection, of being at home in a place. The second is the 'politics of belonging' which is how people claim, and are acknowledged or rejected as, belonging.

The two are interlinked as being accepted is a key part of feeling 'at home' (Antonsich 2010:649). However, 'politics of belonging' does not guarantee 'place belonging' (ibid:650). They are linked in 'complex and uneven ways' dependent on 'definitions of who belongs' (Tomaney, 2015:508). This complexity is shown in a study done on sense of belonging in South Africa.

### Belonging in South Africa

In a study of students at the University of Johannesburg, 73% of respondents felt that they belonged in South Africa, but only 23% felt included in democratic South Africa (Amoateng, 2016:109). Reading this in terms of Antonsich's division of 'place belonging' and 'politics of belonging', this suggests that belonging is high in the first sense but very low in the latter.

Anant (1966 in Haggerty et al, 1992:173) states that belonging depends on a person feeling that they are ‘an indispensable and integral part’ of the social system to which they belong. This suggests that the politics of belonging depends less on your political right, after all the constitution of South Africa states that ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it’ (South African Government, 2020), and more on feeling acknowledged as an ‘indispensable and integral part’.

Belonging in South Africa is further complicated by the difficulty in forming a national identity in people who have none of the ‘traditional unifying principles’ (Chipkin, 2007:189). Brown (2001:763) likewise suggests, that the challenge faced in South Africa, is the difficulty in maintaining a very necessary ‘sense of national belonging’, while allowing for the multiplicities of identity.

Identity and belonging are intimately connected as belonging and self-formation are mutually implicated processes (Antonsich, 2009 in Antonsich, 2010:646). Therefore, a multiplicity of identities suggests multiplicities of belonging. Tomaney (2015:508) states that ‘belonging is formed in an intersectional context’, which is to say that multiple connections may exist and interact with each other and multiple belongings do not necessarily undermine national belonging. However, multiple belongings may call into question where loyalty lies. As Tuan (1975:160) writes ‘[N]ew nation-states aspire to supplant older loyalties to village and tribe’. The challenge then facing the nation building project is how to build the necessary loyalty to state while allowing citizens to maintain the differences in which the constitution claims we are united. Adding to this is the fact that those differences were previously used to construct a sense of belonging for some, based on the exclusion of others.

## The Dark Side of Belonging

Our sense of belonging may depend as much on who is excluded as who is included (Antonsich, 2010:650). Dominant groups may impose conditional membership, forcing conformity to certain behaviours and practices (ibid:650). In addition, when newcomers do not conform to existing behaviours and practices it can create uncertainty and discomfort among existing members, causing a withdrawal from shared spaces and a loss of sense of belonging (Wise, 2005:175).

Belonging can therefore be a problematic concept. It can increase social cohesion but it can also increase conflict in a society (Wood and Waite, 2011:201). Belonging built on exclusion was the foundation of the apartheid state along explicitly racial lines (Ballard, 2004:55). Griffiths and Prozesky (2010:31) suggest that the breakdown of that exclusion disrupted white South Africans' sense of belonging, 'causing them to be existentially homeless, as they were now strangers in their own land'. As a reaction to this 'homelessness', many white South Africans engaged in a process of 'semigration', building exclusionary areas and disengaging from the political project of a new South Africa (Ballard, 2004:60). This is exemplified in the rise in gated communities across South Africa, a trend which has been criticised for re-enacting Apartheid like segregation (Hook and Vordjak, 2002).

Landman (2012:61) suggests that it is a simplification to look at these segregations along racial lines. The rise in gated communities is not unique to South Africa, nor are the criticisms that it promotes exclusion and segregation (Landman, 2012:1). Supporters of gated communities suggest that they addresses the issues of 'increased alienation and insecurity in cities worldwide' (ibid). In the South African context, this debate is heightened by the tension between the need to promote social integration and the need to address residents' legitimate fear of crime (2012:61).

## Belonging in Neighbourhoods

It is impossible to ignore safety as an aspect of belonging. Feeling safe is a key part of feeling at home (Yuval-Davis, 2006:197, in Antonsich, 2010:467). Fears around security may discourage residents from interacting in shared spaces (Young, Russel and Powers, 2004:2628). This can prevent residents from forming social networks (ibid) which are important to facilitate a sense of belonging.

Baumeister and Leary (1995:517) argue that a sense of belonging depends on a small number of intimate relationships, and Antonsich (2010:647) therefore concludes that weak ties do not contribute significantly to a sense of belonging. However, Wise found that small acts of recognition and familiarity do create a sense of belonging. She states that 'inhabitants do not need to know neighbours intimately… gestures of care and recognition, however fleeting, can create a feeling of connection' (Wise, 2005:182). I would argue that Wise's conclusion is more pertinent when discussing community belonging. It is familiarity and recognition which makes us feel a part of larger communities.

So What?

Sense of belonging is an important psychological and social need, its loss bringing negative implications to the individual (Hagerty et al, 1992, Young, Russel and Powers, 2004) and to society (Burns, Jacobs and Zuma, 2015, Loobuyck, 2012). How people experience sense of belonging in relation to places, in particular the neighbourhood, city, and nation state to which they belong, impacts their commitment to the success of the communities in those places. It therefore needs to be understood, in order to be increased in a way which will facilitate an inclusive construction of place, rather than one based on exclusion.

Cultural participation has been suggested as an avenue for increasing sense of belonging (Loobuyck, 2012; Ploner and Jones, 2019; Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018; Stickley, 2010).

## Cultural Participation

What is Culture?

Cultural participation 'denotes activities of individuals and groups in the making and using of cultural products and processes' (Murray, 2005:32). It has become a key informant of cultural policy for many nations in order to align with international practices, however there is no international consensus on what activities should be measured in cultural participation studies (ibid:32-33). Miles and Gibson argue that there is a serious limitation in the way cultural participation has been viewed because it is based on a narrow understanding of what participation is worth studying (2016:151). This is due to conflicting ideas of which definition of culture to use. Miles and Ebrey argue for the use of a broad definition of culture; a 'particular way of life, which expresses meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour' (Williams in Miles and Ebrey, 2016:61). This moves away from elitist understandings of culture which ignore more popular forms of cultural participation (Jeannotte, 2003:44).

The Importance of Context

Murray discusses the need to measure participation in the context of everyday life, to avoid a 'culture-centric world view' (2005:33) which ignores the complexities of how participation interacts with other areas of our lives. Cultural participation does not happen for its own sake (Mercer, 2002:7 in Murray, 2005:33) or in isolation. It is a by-product of people's

desire for social interaction or enjoyment and impacts how we engage in the spaces and communities it takes place in.

Miles and Gibson use the concept of a ‘cultural ecosystem’ in order to understand the dynamics involved in cultural lives:

> A historically wrought, physically situated assembly of the formal and informal cultural resources, participation contexts, practices and communities, which reflect the interplay of local structures of investment, supply and demand, such constitute distinct economies of participation. (Miles and Gibson, 2016:153)

The factors that influence, and those which are influenced by, cultural participation are multiple and complex. Place, participation, and belonging are three elements of the cultural ecosystem which can affect and be affected by each other and other elements in the ecosystem.

Using Participation

Many studies have identified positive effects of cultural participation, however some suggest that the relationships are more ambiguous. Loobuyck (2012:560) argues that participation in ‘shared activities and projects’ can create a sense of belonging, however Stickley (2010:31) concludes that cultural participation may increase belonging but that it is not ‘inevitable’. This suggests that the participation has to be used in a deliberate way.

As well as the impact on belonging, cultural participation has been identified as having an influence on civic behaviour. Jeannotte finds a positive correlation between levels of cultural participation and volunteering (2003:44). This may be because cultural participation increases belonging which increases a sense of ownership and responsibility which leads to higher rates of volunteering. On the other hand, Miles and Ebrey suggest that volunteering is itself ‘a form of participation that can be understood as free labour exchanged for a kind of belonging’ (2017:63). This makes sense as volunteering increases the feeling of being ‘an indispensable and integral part’ which Anant (1966 in Haggerty et al, 1992:173) identified as necessary for belonging.

While the exact nature of these relationships may not be understood, it is clear that cultural participation is a tool which can be used to increase sense of belonging and through that achieve socio-economic aims in cultural policy. Unfortunately, localised cultural policy

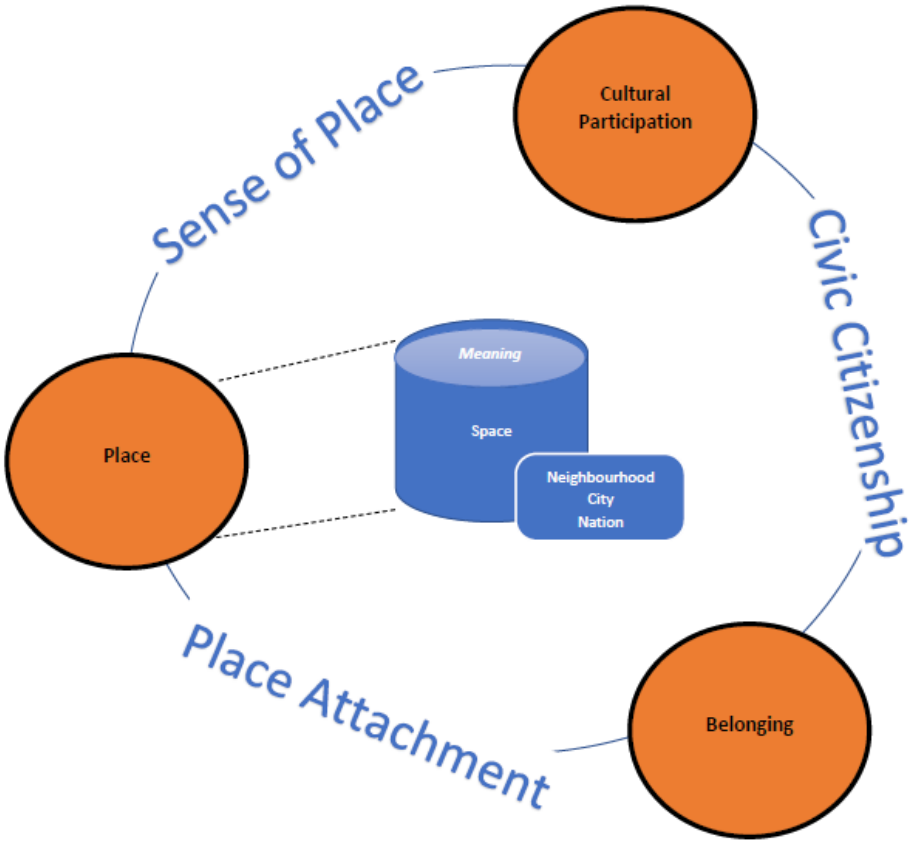
research has been overly occupied with the development of creative industries and cultural economic production (Miles and Ebrey, 2017:58) rather than understanding ‘the cultural lives of urban neighbourhoods and their residents’ (Rosenstien 2011:9). If cultural policy seeks to use culture to improve the lives and society of its citizens, the first step should be understanding how it is engaged in. This is why I chose to focus my research on cultural participation within the cultural lives of my participants.

**Conclusion**

In this section, I have traced the connection between cultural participation, which influences sense of belonging, which in turn affect citizens’ attachment and loyalty to place, this having important implications for creating a polis, whose civic action will move us towards the socially cohesive society envisioned in our cultural policy. This inspires my conceptual framework by identifying the key relationships between the three elements.
These exist as part of a complex ecosystem which make up peoples’ cultural lives, and while these relationships have been established, the degree to which they may influence each other and the conditions under which they can flourish are not as clearly explored.

Thus, my research, which I present in Chapter Four, explores how these relationships exist within the cultural lives of my participants in order to illustrate their connections.

## Conceptual Framework



# CHAPTER THREE

## Methods

The literature, having convinced me of the symbiotic relationship between place, participation, and belonging, my aim was to explore how these influences play out in an everyday setting. As I was seeking to understand, rather than measure, I naturally turned to qualitative methods. Qualitative inquiry suggests that there are aspects of human experience which cannot be measured through quantitative methods, but that are important to understand (Polkinghorne, 2007:472).

I selected two methods; narrative inquiry and mapping, which I felt were complementary. Writing and mapping are both a method and an artistic practice (Duxbury and Saper, 2015 in Longley and Duxbury, 2016:3), but mapping allows for breadth of understanding and representation, while narrative inquiry allows for depth.

### Mapping

Mapping was an obvious choice in looking at geographies. Maps are a useful tool to convey large amounts of information and can give shape to abstract ideas (Dorling, 1998:278). Cultural mapping has become an important way to document, not only the physical cultural assets of a community, but also the intangible assets, such as the stories and practices, which belong to a community. However, my research explores individual experiences rather than looking at the community as a whole. While most mapping projects are bounded within a geographic area, individual community members' cultural lives are not necessarily contained within those borders. In creating maps of individual practices, each map is bound by the individual experience, and therefore allows me to draw a wider understanding of the cultural life of residents and where it takes place.

## Narrative Inquiry

Polkinghorne (2007:479) argues that narrative inquiry is the best method available for understanding human experience. Narratives, stories of experience, are how individuals, groups, communities, and nations construct their identities (Riessman, 2008:7). Bell phrases it perfectly when she says:

> Narrative inquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures. That is, we select those elements of experience to which we will attend, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories available to us (Bell, 2002:207).

This process of 'imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected' is referred to as narrative shaping (Salmon in Riessman, 2008:5) and we, as humans, are constantly drawing connections between events, personal and public, and through them constructing our identity (Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220).

### Placing ourselves in the World

Narrative inquiry seeks to locate the story within the world in which it exists. It acknowledges the contextual nature of stories (Riessman, 2008:13). An ontological narrative, that is the individuals' personal story (Somers,1994 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220) is not constructed in a vacuum. Individuals' narratives are constructed in relation to broader social narratives (Bell, 2002:208) termed public narratives (Somers in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220).

As individuals use narratives to construct their identity, storytellers can edit their identity through emphasising different events (Georgakopoulou, 2002 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220), or create different identities by telling different stories (Benwell and Stoke, 2006 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220), and stories are restructured in light of new events (Bell, 2002:208). Thus, identity should be seen as a fluid rather than a fixed construct. It is interactional and dependent on the social context of its telling (Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:220). The identity of the researcher comes into play as it is part of the social context of the telling.

## Big Stories, Little Stories

Big stories are the grand narratives which shape events into a 'life story' (Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22) and the traditional focus of narrative inquiry, elicited through an interview setting (Watson, 2007 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22). Storytellers are reflecting on events in retrospect in order to construct a narrative in light of the interviewers' focus. This suggests that they are more consciously constructed and more subject to narrative shaping.

Small stories are told during interaction, not necessarily in a formal interview setting (Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22). Georgakopoulou, (2006:123 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22) describes small stories as 'fleeting moments of narrative orientation to the world'. While big stories offer the 'what' of narratives, small stories often show us how those narratives are constructed (Watson, 2007 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22).

Bamburg (2006 in Phoenix and Sparks, 2009:22) argues that small stories are revealing and should be given serious attention. Rather than linking multiple events into a narrative they offer a snippet of information, which may or may not be consistent with the big story being presented. While small stories 'do not necessarily create a coherent sense of self' they show us the diverse identity positions in everyday interactive practices' (Norton and Early, 2011:421).

Phoenix and Sparks (2009:23) argue for the complementary use of both big and small stories. Small stories offer a useful tool in analysing the construction of big narratives and the meaning behind them.

I found this approach helpful as the nature of belonging is complex, and participants were often contradictory when they discussed it. The space between the big story they told and what the small story suggested provided as rich a source of data as the narratives they conveyed. This is especially important when analysing the data through the lenses of researcher and participant identity.

## Presenting the Data

Polkinghorne (1995, in Kim, 2016:196) makes a distinction between 'analysis of narratives' and 'narrative analysis'. The former refers to the process of critically analysing the narratives found in our data; the latter, the process of presenting our data and interpretation

in a narrative. Narrative analysis moves into arts-based research where it can include creative non-fiction, fiction, and even visual narratives.

There is a more obvious presence of mediation in narrative analysis and it employs more narrative smoothing. Narrative smoothing is how a researcher makes a participant's story 'coherent, engaging and interesting' (Kim, 2016:192). It involves choosing which pieces of data are important and which can be omitted, and making choices to create a coherent account and conform to stylistic choices.

This presents obvious difficulties in how to remain faithful to the research data within the form of presentation. Each narrative researcher must make their choice as to how to address them. I address these difficulties by blending an element of autoethnography which makes the process of narrative smoothing more visible to the reader. I present my findings in the style of creative non-fiction, positioning myself as the narrator and blending my own experience with the stories of the participants.

Where I paraphrase participants' words, I use reported speech and make clear the presence of a narrator. Where I use direct quotes, I edit them for length and clarity. This is necessary in the translation of oral speech to written speech however I try to keep the idiosyncrasies and verbal patterns of the speaker.

### Layers of Interpretation

Central to the process of narrative inquiry is an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of experience (Polkinghorne, 2007:479) and the impossibility of understanding the elemental truth of an experience or practice (Riessman, 2008:22).

In the first place, the reliability of the narrative itself is flawed. In constructing their narrative, storytellers exclude information which contradicts it, therefore narrative analysis seeks to understand what lies underneath the surface (Bell, 2002:209). The 'truth' of the events is not the interest of the narrative researcher but rather what meaning can be drawn from the storytellers' construction of the event (Polkinghorne, 2007:479).

In the second place, the researcher is themselves a lens through which the meaning is filtered. As Polkinghorne (2007:483) states '[O]ne cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness; thus, textual interpretations are always perspectival'. We bring

our own social positioning and assumptions to the table when we seek to understand others.

As we seek to understand the meaning behind the construction, we ourselves position the events, stories, and narratives within a broader context and draw connections between them. In doing so, the researcher is imposing a certain meaning (Bell, 2002:210). In addition, the stories we present 'are simulations of participants' meaning, and not the meaning itself' (Polkinghorne, 2007:482). If we were to take a picture of a picture, something would be altered from the original no matter how expert we are or how much care we take. While the researcher can go some way to minimise the impact of these barriers, they can never be fully transcended.

## The Role of the Researcher

The acknowledgement that a researcher cannot completely shed their own perspective is a particular position known as the philosophical hermeneutic position (Polkinghorne 2007:483) and this is my personal conviction. In trying to understand peoples' experiences I have to be aware of my own position and how my own identity shapes my understanding of their experience. This is especially key given my identity as a white South African in a highly racialised society. I have to constantly guard against the assumptions I hold due to my white privilege. Therefore, one of the key aspects which drew me to narrative inquiry was that it acknowledges the contextual nature of how stories are interpreted as well as the role of the researcher (Riessman, 2008:13).

## Introducing the Researcher

We are driven towards our field of research by the events of our own narratives and these narratives frame our interpretation as well (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:121). As Bell (2002:210) states '[T]he constructed narrative and subsequent analysis illuminates the researcher as much as the participant'.

I have come to recognise in myself a habitual unbelonging and so I approach belonging from a position of ambivalence.

When I left Gaborone, Botswana, at eighteen to attend university in Johannesburg, a place I had only been to on holiday visiting family, my life history was reshaped. It was extended in one direction beyond my birth and in the other beyond my childhood and the place I

called home. When I ceased to be a legal dependant of my father, I lost the right to spend more than three months of a year in that country. The sense of belonging that I had taken for granted dissolved. The meanings of both of these places were transformed. My own feelings of belonging, both a longing for it and a suspicion of it, may colour my interpretation of other people's stories of belonging.

I am both South African (father) and English (mother) but apart from my birth, an event I do not remember, I grew up in Gaborone, Botswana; a country with a completely different history and social structure to South Africa.

This places me in a position of being both an insider and an outsider. In many ways I am a typical white South African, living in a predominantly white community in the northern suburbs, in a gated and guarded neighbourhood. However, I have not had a typical white South African upbringing. The communities I grew up belonging to were not South African, nor predominantly white.

I think this makes me more aware of the racial lens with which South Africans view the world, while not being immune to the assumptions of 'whiteness as neutral' which occur in a society built on structural racism.

I guess I have become a Joburger although I never think of myself that way. There is a familiarity with it, my part of it at least, and a feeling of insiderness when the jokes are told. But there's an awareness, an inheritance of an old Joburg, I can't ignore and a Northern suburbs existence that sits uncomfortably in the Joburg narrative. I am most aware of it when other white South Africans make the kind of remarks I am sure they would not in the company of people of colour, but almost every interaction is governed by our racial identities as well as others, such as age, gender, sex, language, education and wealth.

This is an element which can't be ignored in the interactions between researcher and participant. The way I am perceived, as a young, white, educated, English-speaking female, affects the way the participants tell their narratives depending on the alignment or difference between their identities and mine.

Acknowledging the presence of the researcher may raise ethical questions as to how much artistic licence the researcher has employed and lead readers to question the validity of the research. These two elements are addressed below, however the most important tool to mitigate the limitations of narrative inquiry is reflexivity. Reflexivity involves placing your

own actions and judgements under the same critical scrutiny that you do your data (Kim, 2016:105).

## Validity

A major criticism of narrative research is the question of its validity as a method of academic inquiry. Polkinghorne addresses this question in his paper *Validity issues in Narrative Research* and argues that it stems from trying to apply inappropriate protocols of validity for the knowledge claim (2007:473). According to Polkinghorne (2007:474) validity 'concerns the believability of a statement' and is achieved to a degree rather than an absolute. The degree to which it is achieved is dependent on the persuasiveness of the researchers claim (Polkinghorne, 2007:474). As there is no set of standards with which to validate the data validity relies on trustworthiness of the researcher (Riessman, 2008:186 in Rose and Granger, 2013:219).

In order to produce an argument which is persuasive and trustworthy, narrative researchers need to make the process clear (Polkinghorne, 2007:479) and show how they deal with the barriers between meaning and representation discussed above (Polkinghorne, 2007:482).

## Ethical Considerations

Using narrative inquiry demands specific ethical considerations because researchers are responsible for representing the personal stories of participants. As Riessman (2008:9) points out, stories can mislead people.

The researcher must be sensitive to the power that exists in this role, and the responsibility which comes with that, as well as the limitations. It is important to acknowledge that 'stories are simulations of participants' meaning and not the meaning itself' but that the task of the researcher is to 'lessen the distance' between them' (Polkinghorne, 2007:482).

Zylinska (2005 in Adams, 2008:178) and Eliss (2007, ibid) both argue for researchers to use flexibility, vigilance, and judgement, rather than hard rules, which cannot cover every situation and may cause harm in being applied to a situation they were not designed for. Kim (2016:105) refers to this as phronesis; using moral judgement, which should be developed through reflexivity.

Phronesis and reflexivity should be employed through each step of the research process. It is important to be aware of how each encounter is shaping our understanding. By keeping notes of my first impressions, and recognising my personal connections, I was able to go back later and examine my impressions and actions from a more critical perspective. This has been an invaluable tool.

## Data Collection

### Instruments

My data collection included a face to face questionnaire and a semi structured interview.

Interviews are the most common data collection method in narrative research (Cresswell and Poth, 2018:69). It allows the participants to tell their story and share their feelings, and it is an attempt 'to understand the world from the subjects point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015 in Cresswell and Poth, 2018:164).

While Cresswell and Poth (2018) do not include questionnaires as a data collection tool for qualitative research, McGuirk and O'Neill (2016:12) argue that questionnaires can be valuable for gathering data in qualitative analysis as they are a flexible tool which can be easily combined with other data collection methods.

McGuirk and O'Neill (2016: 22) note that, while questionnaires fall short compared to interviews in allowing for depth in exploring narrative, they hold multiple advantages. The advantage most relevant to my research design is that they allow the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a limited time. The questionnaire allowed me to gather enough information to construct the maps, while conducting it face to face enabled me to gather smaller stories along the way.

The questionnaire was constructed using the UNESCO Guidelines For Measuring Cultural Participation (Morrone, 2006), which gives a framework of activities which can be included in the vague term 'cultural participation'. The UNESCO guidelines recommend a broad approach to defining culture and cultural participation. The questionnaire includes activities from a very narrow definition of cultural participation, which could be referred to as arts participation, such as art, drama, dance, and music, but it also includes activities involving historical sites, monuments, parks and zoos, as well as sports.

For my questionnaire I selected all the activities listed that are both physically situated and have a social or community element. For example, attending a book launch is included but reading a book is not, singing in a choir is included but singing alone is not. I also included a space for participants to add activities which they felt qualified as a cultural activity which I had not mentioned.

Participants were asked to give the locations of each cultural activity they had participated in for three periods: in the last year, in the past five years, and as a child. I asked them to be as specific as they could, an exact address if possible, or more often, a vague city identification.

This was followed by an interview in which participants were asked to reflect on their sense of belonging – which communities and places they feel connected to. Although I allowed space for the participants to lead the conversation in their own direction, I began each interview by asking the participant to tell me what 'sense of belonging' means to them. I also asked each participant to tell me about their sense of belonging in relation to three geographic locators, Parkmore, Johannesburg, and South Africa. The entire interaction took between 60 and 120 minutes and was recorded on an audio device and transcribed.

### Ethics

Participants were given a comprehensive information sheet which gave an explanation of the research to be conducted and explained their right as a participant. I spent a few minutes before each interview explaining in more detail aspects of narrative research which are uncommon as it is a less widely known method and giving the participants a space to ask questions. After this the participants were asked to sign a consent form indicating their consent to participate in the study and my recording of our interviews. They also had the option to use a pseudonym. Where this is used I have placed an asterisk after the name in the first instance of its use.

### The Site

I chose to situate my research in Parkmore because I saw potential for a number of phenomena mentioned in the literatures. Parkmore is a small, middle class suburb bordering the Sandton CBD. It was developed in the late sixties and early seventies and is a typical South African middle-class suburb in that it is now gated and security patrolled. Although the residents are predominantly white English-speaking South Africans it is a

steadily diversifying suburb with a balance of age ranges. The majority of new buyers are under thirty-five but a number of older residents have been there for more than thirty years (D. Pillay, personal communication, 6 November, 2019).

## Participants

The selection of participants was a combination of purposive and self-selection sampling. I intended to select my participants from among Parkmore residents but had no other restriction in terms of demographics. I hoped to get a small number across a broad spectrum of age, race, and residence. As narrative analysis looks at individual stories in depth rather than seeking common trends only a small number of participants is needed.

### *Self-selection Sampling*

I sought participants at the Parkmore Community Association AGM and at the local recreation centre. While most of the people I spoke to said they were willing to help when I later followed up many of them declined, or in some cases avoided responding.

I sought participants at the local recreation centre by visiting classes on two separate days and introducing myself and my research project. I found very few residents who made use of the recreation centre and none who wished to be part of the project.

### Alistair Stead

Alistair, thirty-two, is an engineer. He is a white, English-speaking South African. He has lived in Parkmore for four months. He grew up in Edenvale and has lived in Johannesburg all his life except for a five-year period when he worked in Ellisras (Lephalale), Limpopo.

### Bridget Makhuvele*

Bridget Makuvele is forty-five and works in community development. She is a black South African of Tsonga ethnicity. She has recently completed her honours in social work. Originally from Blinkwater in Limpopo, she has lived in Johannesburg for twenty years and seventeen of those in Parkmore.

### Mike Williams*

Mike is seventy-eight and a white, English-speaking South African. He runs private tours in and around Gauteng. He has lived in greater Johannesburg all his life, originally in Melrose, and has lived in Parkmore for thirty years.

*Purposive Sampling*

While the study was open to anyone, I particularly included two key members of the communities in Parkmore.

Dr Danny Pillay, the chairman of the PCA, was a key person whose narrative I planned to explore due to his active role within the community, as well as remarks I had heard him make about a desire to make Parkmore a more altruistic and open community.

Danny is fifty years old, Indian South African and a homeopathic doctor. He was born and grew up in a rural town in Kwa-Zulu Natal called Umkomaas. He moved to Johannesburg about thirty years ago and has lived in Parkmore for the last fourteen.

Mrs Rose Johnson, the chair of the Friends of Field and Study, a registered NPO and membership organisation which oversees the management of the Field and Study park, has been closely involved in the Field and Study Recreation Centre and the Park for many years. Owing to her role in the Field and Study Park, an important community asset in Parkmore, I felt that she was a key participant to include.

Rose is a white English-speaking South African, seventy-eight years old. Rose was born in KZN but grew up in Johannesburg in Edenvale and Observatory. Although not currently a resident in Parkmore she lived there for a period in the seventies before moving to the neighbouring suburb where she has lived for the past forty years.

**Data Analysis**

Riessman (2008:6) points out ‘three nested uses of the term’ narrative. The first, *narratives,* interchangeable with story, refers to how people construct their own series of events and meaning. The second, *narrative data*, is our empirical data collected as researchers. The third, *narrative analysis*, is ‘the systematic study of narrative data’. Having collected our narrative data, we now turn to the analysis.

According to Polkinghorne ‘[N]arrative researchers assemble storied texts that they analyse for the meaning they express’ (Polkinghorne, 2007:479). This suggests that the first step is in preparing the data for analysis, or ‘assembling the stories texts’. Following the analysis of the data, the researcher gives an interpretation of the data.

An interpretation is not simply a summary or précis of a storied text, it is a commentary that uncovers and clarifies the meaning of the text (Polkinghorne, 2007:483).

## Preparing the data

### *Mapping participation*

In order to analyse the data collected in the questionnaire, I began by locating each activity on a map using Google Maps.

I created a map for each participant, placing a colour coded pin at each location given. I separated the activities into two categories, as suggested by the UNESCO Guidelines For Measuring Cultural Participation (Morrone, 2006), attending/receiving, such as visiting museums, or watching performances and sports games, and production, such as taking part in a performance or sport, or attending a class. These were colour coded into blue and orange respectively, and then further coded by using a different shade for each time frame.

### *Assembling the Narratives*

I then turned to the text of the interview transcript; repeated readings allowed familiarity with the text.

The central narrative I was looking to examine was the narrative of belonging. I therefore identified the stories and events which made up the big story, the grand narrative participants had constructed of belonging.

Additionally, I identified other narratives within the text that were relevant to the elements of my research; place, participation, and belonging.

This included the participants place and participation narratives as well as small stories such as those that were around belonging but rejected from the central narrative.

Some of the key elements that made up the stories were plot points, linkages, and modes of belonging.

Plot points. Narrative analysis requires the researcher to identify plot points within the interview text and through these points construct a story. While some narrative researchers argue for a very structured plot others reject this notion. My first readings sought to identify plot points which were relevant to the subjects' narrative of belonging.

Linkages. As my research aims to explore the ways in which geographies of cultural participation and sense of belonging relate to each other I looked for evidence in the text that linked my three aspects of study; geographies, cultural participation, and belonging. This means that I looked for links between cultural participation and sense of belonging, between belonging and geographies and between geographies and cultural participation.

Elements of Belonging. Through the readings I began to identify different elements of belonging which came through in the participants' discussion. These may or may not have been mentioned in their initial definition and some were more common across multiple participants than others. Although identifying concepts is more common in other methods such as grounded theory, which uses coding to find themes which repeat across the data, narrative analysis does make space for this, but a key distinction is the focus on the individual experience (Riessman, 2008:13).

Having completed my preparation I then had four texts through which to begin my analysis; the participant maps, the layered transcripts, my personal reflections written up after each interview, and the audio of the interview itself.

## Analysing the data

The data was analysed using a mix of narrative analysis techniques, predominantly thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allows for data to be 'interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator' (Riessman, 2008:54). This was important as it allowed me to focus on those aspects which were relevant to my research question. Thematic analysis focusses predominantly on the content of the text (ibid).

I also drew on visual analysis, as some of my data had been prepared into a visual text, and dialogic/performance analysis. Visual analysis, like thematic analysis, focusses on content. Dialogic/performance analysis, which focusses on the context of the telling and the way in which it is told (Reissman, 2008:105), is especially key in interpreting small stories.

Riessman (2008:18) makes the point that these analysis techniques are not mutually exclusive and can be adapted and combined. In addition, according to Polkinghorne (2007:483) '[T]he development of narrative interpretations is less rule derived and mechanical than that often found in conventional research'. Instead, the researcher must use a process of interpretation and argument in order to produce a valid reading of the text.

Narrative researchers who use narrative analysis, face a choice of treating their participants texts with ‘faith’ or ‘suspicion’ (Josselson, 2004, in Kim, 2016:194). This refers to whether we take the texts at face value, or whether we seek underlying meanings or subtext. Suspicion suggests a rather antagonistic relationship in which you view the participant with distrust, but this is not the case. It is simply acknowledging an awareness that all experiences are filtered through our own perceptions, including our own as researchers. Kim (2016:194) suggests that both ‘faith’ and ‘suspicion’ should be used in tandem rather than seeing them as mutually exclusive.

**Limitations**

Each method and study inevitably have limitations, and recognising them is an important aspect of making a valid interpretation (Polkinghorne, 2007:478).

A key limitation in narrative inquiry is that the findings cannot be generalised. They remain explorations of a singular experience, even if certain themes appear across many or all of the participants.

Race

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), in her now famous talk *The Danger of a Single Story*, highlights the power of single stories to become representative narratives of entire groups when multiple narratives are not present. While narrative inquiry emphasises the individual nature of the experiences explored, I feel a note of caution to readers is in order in terms of race. These are singular stories and should be treated with the caution Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) suggests.

Dolby (2001:118 in 43) notes that race continues to be a powerful factor in South Africa, and ‘a critical point of voluntary and involuntary identification’. Therefore, while it is important to stress this limitation generally, it is even more so with the stories of Bridget and Danny.

Firstly, because they are the only participants of each of their race in the participant group, which means there is no story alongside it to disrupt the assumptions of representation.

Secondly, because of the structural racism which continues to give power to whiteness, and my own position as a white South African.

Data

Many of the limits of narrative data are discussed earlier, and were present within this study. Interpretations can only be made on the data that is available.

Memory

The study relies on the memory of participants in their cultural activities. For many, especially the older participants, childhood activities are all but forgotten.

Frequency

It was beyond the scope of the study to do a more detailed measurement of participation and to include frequency but it would have been a useful element in judging the level of activity the participant engaged in.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the methods I chose to use, and laid out the reasons for my choices. Most notably, the affinity of narrative inquiry to explorations of personal experience, and the philosophical hermeneutic position, which holds that a researcher can never completely transcend a level of subjectivity, and therefore the position of the researcher should be acknowledged.

In the following chapter, I present my findings as a piece of creative non-fiction, interrupted by my discussion.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Introduction

When I set out on my research journey, I began broadly with an interest in cultural participation, becoming more closely concerned with how it influenced sense of belonging, and which led me finally to consider how sense of belonging makes place.

Having lived in a suburb neighbouring Parkmore for the last ten years, I had noticed a number of changes in Parkmore, and the Parkmore Community Association (PCA).

The recent activity of the PCA suggested to me a desire to create a real sense of community, which necessarily means increasing a sense of belonging within its residents. There are many challenges in trying to do this in a historically white middle-class suburb, not least the potential for belonging to be built on exclusion, and disconnection from the greater Johannesburg and South Africa, rather than inclusion and connection.

A high number of cultural assets in the neighbourhood presented potential for the community to be involved in localised cultural activities, and therefore, develop a strong sense of belonging through cultural participation. For these reasons, I felt Parkmore was an ideal area to conduct my research.

## Parkmore

### In the Beginning

Parkmore's story began in 1907 when the suburb was established in, what was then, an area of farm land. Just the year before, the Whilhelmi family had built their 'new' farmhouse, now a heritage building on the eastern boundary of the suburb. There was a school, a post office, and shop, but little of that remains. I remember a few years ago, there was an outcry about an old thatch cottage being torn down. My mother and I were suitably outraged, but the memory has faded, and now, when I try to remember the details, I can't quite piece it together.

There is even less to tell us what was here before Parkmore. On the edge of the park there is an overgrown path; a sign nearby, erected by the Braamfontein Spruit Trust, says ‘1800’s African Graveyard’, and requests readers not to move the stones, as they are helping to protect the area from redevelopment. Are these people who worked on the early farms? or who lived in the area before European settlers arrived and drew out their boundaries? No other information is given.

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Stephaniak et al (2017) conducted a study which showed that interest in local history leads to greater place attachment, and through that, increased social engagement. Although their study considered attachment at city and town scale it seems feasible to suggest that similar positive effects would be seen on neighbourhood attachment.

Stephaniak et al (2017:218) also note interest in local history indirectly increases civic engagement and that it can increase acceptance towards minorities (Stefaniak & Bilewicz, 2016; Wojcik, Bilewicz, & Lewicka, 2010; Wojcik, Lewicka, & Bilewicz, 2011 in ibid. 218).

There are rich opportunities to explore local history, and stimulate place attachment through local history knowledge, in South African suburbs, and to do so in a way which is potentially more inclusive of black South Africans, who remain a minority in such suburbs. The dominant narratives in our history of settlers, colonisation, and apartheid, and the erasure of precolonial history, offer little opportunity for shared connection with residents of different races. Exploring smaller individual histories could offer opportunities to connect on a more human level.

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Changing Times

Parkmore remained a rural suburb up until the seventies, when portions of the surrounding farms began to be sold off. Rose Johnson, who lived here at the time, remembers the sense of community.

*When we first moved to Parkmore it was a wonderful community, because we didn't have high walls. You were all young families so that all the kids played with each other, and you got to know your neighbour.*

*And the local shops, you got to know them. If anything in the house went wrong you went to Chris and Ron. He fixed things, and she was a mother hen who could give you advice. And there was a hairdresser, and a butcher, and Mr Davis, who was the chemist…*

When the neighbouring farms began to be subdivided, she and her husband built their house on one of the newly available acre plots nearby. My own house was built in 1978 on the last piece of the Driefontein farm to be sold off and developed.

In the 1990's, with the rapid growth of the Sandton CBD due to the 'white flight' from Johannesburg, the suburb became at risk of redevelopment. Rose was part of the team that resisted the spread of the Sandton CBD.

*One hearing went on for two years, because we won the case so they appealed. I was opposing Stocks and Stocks. Every application that Stocks put in I looked at with a fine-tooth comb, and I opposed him, I think four times, four big developments. In fact, if we hadn't opposed him, the CBD would be halfway down West Road South now.*

An Uncertain Future

Today, the threat of redevelopment remains present. Especially at the top of Parkmore, where a palisade fence along Grayston Drive marks the boundary from the CBD. Houses stand empty up there, bought not as family homes, but as speculative investments, waiting for the pressure of Sandton to push the land value up. Residents like Mike are philosophical about it, '*you know when I was a kid Braamfontein was a residential suburb and look at it now'*, but I am dismayed when I think that someone might come and plonk a high-rise building over my home, or rip up my favourite tree. I am not the only one. The PCA successfully challenged the last attempt to rezone, a huge jump from the current three-story, residential use, to ten stories, mixed use. A new committee is solely concerned with keeping up to date on new zoning proposals, with a fund to employ expert advisers.

The empty houses are also seen as a security issue; an invitation to vagrants and squatters, or weak points which might allow criminal activity to breach the suburb defences. Like most middle-class suburbs, the residents here are extremely concerned about security. Almost every house sports high walls, electric fencing, and a sign advertising the private security company they employ. Most of the roads are sealed off at each end by gates. The gates come at a large cost to the residents, and rely on collective action. Danny Pillay,

resident and chair of the PCA, thinks that they have both brought together and divided the community, and is trying to bring the community together again.

*I was getting involved and I just backed away, because there was an element of selfishness. Because only some people could be under road closures.*

*So those things sort of brought together, and also divided, the community, and that's what I'm trying to build again. How to frame, effectively, a 'One Parkmore'.*

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Landman (2012:61) notes similar contradictions in the rise of gated communities. While criticisms that it promotes exclusion and segregation are valid. so too may be the suggestions that it increases feelings of belonging to a community (ibid).

There is a tension between the need to promote social integration, and the need to address residents' legitimate fear of crime (ibid.). This suggests that community organisations, such as the PCA, which negotiate and maintain the barriers, should have obligations to promote inclusivity, and could be utilised in the nation-building project. Specific policies, which offer guidelines to residents or community groups on how they can do this, would assist the associations in enhancing community cooperation, while leveraging an existing structure to achieve important development aims.

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A Cultural Hot Spot

There is a high number of cultural assets in the suburb. I notice more all the time since I started my research. I had never seen, for example, the ornate Gurudwara Sahib, the first Sikh temple in Johannesburg, tucked away on a quiet road in Parkmore. Just the other day, I noticed a small sign advertising an Indian dance studio among the businesses of what, at a stretch, could be called the high street.

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I have labelled Parkmore a cultural hotspot following Gibson's (2013) study on a UK town, labelled a 'cold spot' based on a 2004 report which measured the number of cultural assets per square kilometre. There is no comparative study done in South Africa, so I have based

mine on my own observations, and the fact that historically white suburbs benefitted from an unequal share of cultural assets during apartheid.

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The two key community assets are the Sandton Field and Study Centre and Park, and the Sandton Sports Club, situated in George Lee Park.

The Field and Study Centre is itself a heritage building, a 1930's farmhouse purchased by the Sandton Town Council in 1974, with the adjoining farm which is now the park.

Rose was the chair of the recreation centre for many years, before the board was made redundant by the legislation which centralised the administration of community centres. In her time, they were building new additions to keep up with demand for classes and space. Nowadays the centre advertises classes in art, cooking, sewing, etc, but it's never very busy. The beautiful old parquet floor in the main room is usually covered in gym mats.

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The decline of the recreation centre highlights the challenges which arise from moving the ownership and responsibility of these types of community assets from the local community to a centralised body. The Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage advocates for arts and culture centres to be run by independent bodies, which bring together the interests of multiple stakeholders, including the local community (DAC, 2017:38). This is another area of potential collaboration with local associations.

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Rose is now Chair of Friends of the Field and Study Centre, which looks after the park. It was split from the recreation centre to fall under City Parks, and she takes charge of overseeing daily maintenance and badgering City Parks about grass cutting. It takes up most of her time, and, by her account, is a thankless task, but worth it. *'That park is, to me, the most priceless piece of land in Sandton. You can restore your soul there',* she says.

She was terrified that it would be hijacked by developers, and has rallied the community against at least one attempt to turn it into a formal park, covered with concrete paths, instead of the relatively natural woodland and fields it is now.

In complete contrast, the Sandton Sports Club at George Lee Park has recently been upgraded with a huge investment from Discovery Insurance. At one of the community

meetings I attended, which are held at the club, Mark, a PCA board member, asked me if I remembered it before. ‘Vaguely’, I replied, ‘I remember there were chickens and some dilapidated buildings’. With a satisfied nod, he went on to tell me about a coup enacted by a group of Parkmore residents to oust the old board and clear the way for the investment, accusing them, the old board, of deliberately letting it go to ruin to make it easy to sell off the land for development. It all seems very dramatic, and things are rarely as clear cut, but balancing multiple interests is one of the struggles of community existence.

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In a study conducted in a small town in Scotland, Miles and Ebrey (2017:66) found a similar dispute regarding the Village Hall. Tensions arose between an affluent ‘incomer group’, who pushed for the hall to be upgraded to make it more marketable, and an older, established group, who wanted it to remain ‘an open, free and familiar resource for the whole community’. Miles and Ebrey note that this dispute was ‘centred on the value and values of everyday participation, about what kinds of activities were to be prioritised, who could get access, and on what terms’. The true facts behind the dispute and development of the Sandton Sports Club are not as clear, however both examples show that community assets are subject to conflicting ideas of how they can best serve the community, and can become sites for wider political agendas.

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You certainly couldn’t compare the old sports club with the brand-new nets and courts, floodlit fields, and trendy restaurant, however Danny feels that the Club has not proved itself to be the community asset that it was intended to be.

*They're not running as a cultural asset for the community. It's just another pub in Sandton. The whole idea was that they got this support of the community, they've got to involve the community a bit more. And it's a Catch-22, the community must also be more involved. But you know, this is my personal feeling, once they've got licences, they just run it as a business.*

The PCA

I’m not sure that criticism couldn’t be applied to the PCA. Their website reads like a sales brochure. It describes Parkmore as ‘the residential suburb of the Sandton CBD – the last

affordable family space in *Sandton'* (PCA, n.d.) and boasts of its convenience and amenities, such as proximity to private hospitals and good schools, local shops and restaurants, and recreation facilities.

And if it were a business, it would have at least one disappointed customer.

*'I had higher expectations for [Parkmore], or maybe just unrealistic expectations, before moving in, in terms of the amount of noise in the suburb and the amount of traffic through the suburb'* Alistair Stead, a new resident, tells me.

Despite his disappointment in the area, his interaction with people in the community has been positive.

*There does seem to be a common purpose of people wanting to come together as a community and look out for one another.*

The PCA has certainly stepped up their game. They now talk about arranging welcome baskets with information to help new residents through the stress of unpacking and make them feel welcome. They've changed their name, from Parkmore Residents Association, to Parkmore Community Association and describe themselves as "an NPO made up of residents working together to build Parkmore into a happy, secure, and upmarket 'hood'".

I pick up conflicting ideas about the purpose of the PCA. Its main aim is definitely coordinating security and keeping the neighbourhood tidy, but there are indications that they would like to act beyond that, not least of which is the changing of their name from 'residents' association to 'community' association. Coll, who handles the membership of the PCA, says that there is definitely an interest in community events, and they're trying to plan more of those.

Danny is very keen on community activities, but he also talks about arranging group discounts, like some sort of neighbourhood Groupon, and of course he's looking into a branding strategy. I can't help feeling that a branding strategy is a bit of a typical corporate response to lack of interest. I imagine the PCA bringing in a suitably dressed team to present PowerPoint slides explaining how they can improve Parkmore's image.

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Placemaking refers to the top down approach in which planners try to reinvigorate an area through professional marketing practices in order to attract investment, often in the form of

tourism, whereas place-making refers to a bottom up approach in which the identity of a place is naturally shaped by the community through their daily practices (Lew, 2016) which encourages a greater sense of belonging.

Placemaking draws criticism for many reasons including the disenfranchisement of residents as they do not play a part in the decision-making process. In this situation the impulse to approach professionals to create a branding strategy seems to me to go against the need to engage the community and give them a sense of ownership which is a key purpose of effective place-making (Cilliers and Timmerman, 2014; Rosenstein, 2011; Freidman, 2010). This is especially important as not all households in Parkmore belong to the PCA.

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Parkmore Community

Only half of the Parkmore households are members of the association and membership doesn't come cheap; R200 a month just to be part of the association, before security fees and road closure contributions.

If more households joined the fees would decrease, but the committee would also like more members to become actively involved in the association and give time and skills. I picked up a definite sense of resentment towards the apathy of those who do not get involved.

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Miles and Ebrey (2017:66) found tension and resentments where a small group felt 'the burden of responsibility' which was complicated by a sense of disconnection between the older, long standing residents, and newer, more affluent residents. In Parkmore I sensed a similar separation. Only about 600 of the 1200 residents are members of the PCA, which may be due to a large aging population who cannot afford the fees on a fixed income (C. Evans, personal communication, 25 February, 2020).

One of the main criticisms of placemaking is its tendency to encourage gentrification, the process whereby existing residents are priced out of an area by increased demand and rising prices. If cost is indeed the reason that many residents are not a part of the PCA, it is effectively excluding them from having a voice in the community. Other factors, such as race and ethnicity, may also influence whether residents feel comfortable join the PCA.

This shows the negative potential of such privatised organisations to further entrench divides and exclusion. Deliberate action needs to be taken to ensure that they are able to mitigate the effects.

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My conversations with the PCA gave me important insight into the politics and potential of the neighbourhood, but my aim was to understand how individuals in the community use the cultural assets around them and experience a sense of belonging. I was looking for participants who would talk to me about their experiences and cultural activity.

My research brought me to five different members of the community who displayed different experiences of belonging and patterns of cultural participation.

## Alistair Stead

Introducing Alistair

Alistair is a young engineer. I say young because he's my age, early thirties, but as his wife is seven and a half months pregnant, he has firmly stepped into adulthood in a way that I don't think I have.

I met him at the PCA AGM soon after he had moved into the suburb, and he was immediately willing to participate. With sandy hair and large glasses, he has an air of seriousness and comes across as rather earnest.

He is happy to go through my list of cultural activities but I get the impression that he thinks it's a bit silly. Or maybe he is just self-conscious because he answers 'no' to most of my questions.

'*My wife would be really good to interview for this*,' he says, and then a few questions later, '*I'm not the most social person so I don't know if I'm a good candidate for this*.'

*'Everyone's a good candidate*,' I say.

Alistair's Belonging Narrative

Alistair is more comfortable in the second half of the interview. Belonging seems to be something he has thought about deeply on a personal level. Although he has a tendency towards self-deprecation, he answers my questions in a thoughtful and contemplative manner.

About half way through, as I'm asking about his belonging to Johannesburg, he gives a neatly summarised story of belonging.

*I grew up here, but I never really had a sense of belonging in my own family so it was hard to develop a sense of belonging in wider circles. And then I lived in Ellisras, and then I moved back to Johannesburg and got married. I then had a family that I felt I belonged in.*

The neatness with which he summarises it, and the repetition of elements he mentions elsewhere, suggests that the narrative has been constructed prior to the interview, illustrating his own interest with the question.

His childhood lack of belonging is repeatedly referenced. He puts this down to growing up in a '*typical English-speaking family'* which *'wasn't part of a tight-knit group or community of people'.* Earlier, he had answered one of my questions with an air of self-deprecation, '*I'm a white South African so I don't really have a cultural heritage you know'*.

I'm reminded of a Christmas party a few years ago when friends came over to help me decorate my tree, and I was surprised to find out they'd never done it before. I was surprised because Christmas is so ubiquitous, Christmas trees and decorations so inescapable for two and a half months of the year it didn't seem specifically cultural. I had assumed that those who celebrated Christmas celebrated it the way I did.

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Salusbury and Foster (2004) identify a public narrative in which White English Speaking South African's (WESSAs) see themselves as cultureless and detached from communities. However, in claiming a lack of culture, they are reproducing a global public narrative which positions whiteness as neutral or normal (Salusbury and Foster, 2004:93) and which therefore contributes to the maintenance of existing racial power structures (ibid:98). Because so many elements of our culture are rendered indistinct by their dominance it doesn't feel like they are ours, rather part of a global western culture dominated by American representations. At an individual level, we feel robbed of the identity of cultural expressions and practices rather than recognising the way it maintains 'white privilege' and relegates less dominant cultures' expressions and practises to special days and celebrations.

The self-deprecation with which Alistair delivers his claim, and the implied criticism of his belongingless upbringing, suggest that he is unaware of the way this plays into white privilege. For me this illustrates that the work that needs to be done in order to achieve real cultural diversity is not only in promoting non dominant cultures but in making dominant cultures distinct and visible.

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Alistair will not identify a place when I ask him where he feels he belongs. '*I guess my sense of belonging is more with people as opposed to a specific area',* he explains. And the way he describes experiencing belonging confirms it:

*[In] daily life with my wife [and] spending time with our close friends and family. I know that they know exactly who I am, there's no pretence, there's no masks. The love we have for one another is very authentic.*

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Alistair's definition of Sense of Belonging as *'being amongst a group of people who truly know you'* is very close to the way that Baumeister and Leary (1995) theorised belonging as based on a small number of intimate relationships. It is an individual oriented definition rather than the more community oriented definition used by the DAC of 'To be part of and to experience a sense of affiliation to the community and the larger society' (Cloete and Kotze, 2009 in DAC, 2012:32). Salusbury and Foster (2004:98) suggest that it is because white South African's see themselves as cultureless that they can see themselves as exclusively individual. And by that reasoning it may also follow that this narrative is a barrier in being able to feel themselves part of a community.

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But there is another side to this. The reason he doesn't connect to any place seems to be that he hasn't found "the one". He sees belonging to a place as a choice. '*I don't think in terms of a suburb and a city I've ever lived somewhere I really felt like, "I really want to be here and I really want to have roots here". I can't say I've ever consciously or subconsciously put down roots in an area'.* Parkmore has too much noise and traffic, and of Joburg he says, '*there's a lot of aspects about Joburg that I don't like and kind of make me want to leave'.*

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Evoking the stereotypical suburban dweller, referenced by Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005:78) as 'rootless, mobile and instrumental suburbanites', Alistair presents belonging to place as something you choose to do based on the positive attributes of an area, or in his case choose not to do based on the negatives. Ballard states that to identify a place as home you must be 'sufficiently comfortable with the values, practices and words spoken within its boundaries' (2004:51) but this need for comfort would hinder us from identifying any area connected with any but the smallest, most homogenous group of people. Sparks (1990, in Salusbury and Foster, 2004:95) is critical in his suggestion that White English Speaking South Africans have avoided group identity in order to avoid political complicity.

Seeing belonging as a choice may similarly release residents from the responsibility of the systems they reside in.

Like Savage et al., I am sceptical of the validity of the image of carefree, instrumental attachment. Certainly in Alistair's case, it does not present the whole picture.

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His relationship to South Africa is more complicated. At first, he shows the same hesitation to connect

*I really love South Africa, and I can't think of another country I'd want to live in, because we really have it good here, [but] there's so many things about it that unsettle me in terms of the possibilities of a future.*

but then he qualifies it with another narrative.

Being Part of the Solution

*But I would love to stay in South Africa and be a part of solving those problems, so I guess that is a sense of belonging, because I want to be a part of the solution instead of running away from it.*

"Be part of the solution" is a phrase I've heard often before. Even a billboard on William Nicol, not a kilometre from where we are sitting, calls us to be part of the solution. In South Africa that means don't be part of the problem; moaning about the government, keeping quiet when your uncle makes racist comments, or planning to emigrate to Perth. Instead, stay in South Africa and be a part of solving those problems.

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In the 1990's people were derided for contemplating emigration, but a decade later it had become more acceptable, even 'sensible' (Griffiths and Prozesky, 2010:28). This is often framed as a particularly white phenomenon however, Amoateng's (2016) study shows that the desire to emigrate is not restricted to white South Africans. Amoateng also demonstrates that, the desire to emigrate is correlated with a lack of sense of belonging.

Anton and Lawrence's (2014:453) argument shows a similar correlation, noting that, increased awareness of place can stop people leaving (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), and decrease the perceived risk to a place (Billig, 2006).

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The popularity of the #I'mStaying movement has shown how many people want to be part of the solution, but I often wonder how far their pledge to self-sacrifice goes. Self-sacrifice brings its own rewards as Alistair experienced during his time in Ellisras.

*I was working on a project that was quite important to the country. So while I was there, I poured everything I had into the project. I basically had no friendships, no contact with family. I lost all my hobbies. My whole life revolved around trying to make this project work. So there was a lot of blood, sweat and tears poured into it. And that sort of like 'sacrifice of self', to be a part of something bigger than me, really affected my sense of having offered myself to South Africa, and because of that, wanting to see it succeed as a country and to be a part of that success.*

*There's a definite brotherhood of people who were in that together and trying to be part of the solution, as opposed to just going with the momentum of the problems, and they're people I'll probably stay in touch with my whole life*

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Alistair has framed what was a very personal, and almost spiritual, experience of sacrifice within the broader public narrative of 'being part of the solution'.

Working together with others towards a shared purpose can encourage a sense of belonging (Loobuyck, 2012:569), and this is demonstrated by Alistair's experience. In addition, this experience may be what has prompted Alistair in his desire to '*stay in South Africa and be a part of solving those problems'* which would fit in with the point Anton and Lawrence (2014) are making that an increased connection to place increases the willingness of residents to take on responsibility.

Of course, not all citizens are able to participate in vitally important engineering projects, but they do not have to be on such a grand scale. Loobuyck (2012) suggests that governments should be proactive in promoting such activities that give participants an experience of working together as a way of increasing sense of belonging. This is an avenue for cultural policy to promote cultural activities which enable citizens to work together.

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Mapping Alistair's Cultural Participation

Reviewing the maps on which I have plotted Alistair's participation, it becomes clear that he is a very active cultural consumer, despite his concern that he was '*not a good candidate'*. His participation pins appear clustered around Johannesburg city and to the east, and scattered through the northern suburbs up beyond the edge of Johannesburg. However, the neighbourhood map shows that Parkmore is devoid of activity except for one pin, he visits the park with his wife.

A Wish for Community

Alistair's narrative illustrates many of the complexities of belonging in South Africa. His desire for a sense of community is clear. He explicitly states it, *'to not have a strong community around your children is to rob them of… a full life experience'*. It also comes across in the end of our interview as he reflects on community as a tiered concept, *'like there's the grand what it could be, but very few people ever get to be a part of that'*.

I sense that he feels powerless to make that happen. He seeks out ways to give and to be a part of, but he is hindered by the fragmentation of South African society and inherited narratives of disconnection.

Despite his active cultural participation map and his desire for a sense of community, it has not facilitated a sense of affiliation. This clearly points to the fact that, not all cultural participation is created equal when it comes to fostering a sense of belonging.

However, he also illustrates, with his story of Ellisras, the potential to develop a sense of belonging through being part of a cooperative project. Cultural programming could offer citizens a way to engage with each other and work towards something, even if it is not 'for the good of the country'.

## Bridget Makhuvele*

Meeting Bridget

I met Bridget at the Field and Study Recreation Centre when I went to put up a flyer calling for participants. Only flyers for classes at the centre are allowed on their notice board but she suggested that as she is a Parkmore resident and would be happy to help my trip has not been wasted. She also took the time to go through the list of classes and note those likely to have a number of Parkmore residents in them to assist me in my search. She has recently completed her honours in social work and she knows how difficult it is to find participants.

Bridget was born and grew up in Blinkwater, Limpopo. She laughs as she spells it for me and every time I try to pronounce the Afrikaans word. She has lived in Parkmore for seventeen of the twenty years she's been in Joburg.

Bridget is Tsonga, and her traditional home remains a place of belonging. '*It's where my umbilical cord fell',* she explains, although she later tells me that her Christianity limits her participation in traditional cultural events. '*During the family gathering when they do an event or sort of rituals, as a Christian, I don't get involved*'.

Bridget's Belonging Narrative

Bridget defines belonging as, when you '*take part or [are] engaged [with] what is happening in the community',* and she has no problem stating a belonging to Parkmore, Johannesburg, and South Africa. But while she gives me brief answers to my question about Parkmore and Johannesburg, when it comes to South Africa she responds at length.

*For me, the sense of belonging I can say is to help each other. Help each other in the way of, if you come to me and have a problem, for me to just listen to you. Even if I can't say anything. As long as, at the end of the day, you feel better by going to someone to talk to, for me it's like you belong to South Africa.*

Bridget's narrative of belonging is simple. She lives here, she belongs here. She helps people, she is part of the community. She even seems a little confused by my attempt to complicate it.

*I belong in this community. I'm not sure whether I'm answering exactly what you …? I live there, I work there, it's my home. 24/7 I'm in Parkmore.*

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Bridget's definition of belonging correlates strongly with the definition used by the DAC. This is not surprising for someone who has been studying social work and is employed by the City of Joburg. But I think that her own sense of belonging reflects Anant's (1966 in Haggerty et al, 1992:173) definition, in that she can see herself to be 'an indispensable and integral part' of the social system to which she belongs. This is illustrated more fully in the story which follows.

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Looking Out for Each Other

*There was a certain lady whom she's living at Parkmore, at 12th Street. She used to come here every Thursday, 9 o clock, with the Sandton Chronicle paper. Every Thursday.*

*So it happened that that day she didn't came, and I look at the time, and I said, "No, it's almost half past nine, we haven't seen Margaret". I called her and then she didn't respond, and then I told my colleague, you know we have to find out why Margaret, she didn't phone, she didn't come.*

*We went to her house and found out that the door is locked. We called her security to open the door. We also called the police. And then we found out that she fell. And it was a very, very cold day. The whole night she fell and been there. She was unable to stand and unable to do anything.*

*So we call an ambulance and from there, because she was living alone, we arranged an old age home where she is as we speak. For her, coming to Field and Study, giving us a Sandton Chronicle, it was a way of exercise and showing her love, that she's not on her own.*

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Prieto-Flores et al (2011) found that residential satisfaction, which included connections with neighbours, increased sense of belonging and helped to protect against loneliness in elderly residents. They also note that aging in place, being able to remain in your own home

rather than moving to a care home, allows the elderly to maintain important social relationships with family and friends (Rojo-Perez et al., 2007; Wiles, 2005 in Prieto-Flores et al., 2011:1183).

Bridget's story illustrates the importance of community to elderly residents in providing social interaction, however it also highlights the more practical role of having a social network around you, especially for the vulnerable members of our society.

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Bridget mentioned that Margaret's children had emigrated to the USA. It seems so easy to think technology will solve all our problems. Video calls look and cost the same whether someone is down the road or on another continent, but there are things which have to be done IRL (in real life).

I'm not really one to talk. I live alone, don't know my neighbours, and, with my parents in Botswana and sisters in the UK, the people I speak to on a daily basis are all thousands of kilometres away. But I'm all too aware of the difficulties this can bring.

My grandmother lived with me for the last ten years of her life. She didn't want to live in a care home, and we were lucky to be able to make that choice. But It was certainly made more difficult by the fact that, I didn't grow up in the close relationship with my extended family that my father did with his.

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Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005:103) note that, belonging in community studies is understood as having social and place attachments to the people around you and being 'involved in the local community'. They did not find much evidence of this kind of belonging in their widely referenced study on belonging in the globalized world however, it is very compatible with Bridget's narrative.

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Bridget's story shows a rather old-fashioned idea of community, the kind that mention nostalgically, when you could go and ask your neighbour for the proverbial cup of sugar, and everyone looked out for one another. I am not immune to its allure, but I'm sceptical about the possibility of achieving it in a modern world.

Bridget's job puts her at the centre of a very real community built around the Recreation Centre, but it seems to me that this is not the community of Parkmore. While she assures me that lots of Parkmore residents use the centre, only in the seniors' exercise group does anyone admit to living in Parkmore.

### Bridget's Map

Bridget's map shows two distinct clusters. Her childhood participation took place in Blinkwater, Limpopo. Her adult participation is centred around Johannesburg, with clustering in Johannesburg city and the Sandton area. At a Parkmore level, there is activity in the last year, and last five years, at the Field and Study centre, and at the Sandton Sports Club.

Bridget's cultural participation is limited. During childhood her participation was centred around her school and church. As an adult, it is centred around her work and her church. She happily gets involved in initiatives offered and is willing to try out new things, but she does not go out of her way to explore or take on new activities.

### Part of the Community

Bridget's sense of belonging in Parkmore and Johannesburg is clearly facilitated by her cultural activity, through her church, and her work. Perhaps, as her church and work facilitate engagement with people she associates with her wider community, but who are outside her personal society, she is able to feel a strong sense of community connection.

In addition, by living and working in Parkmore, she is able to build up a relationship with the people around her and benefits from a real sense of community through that. She embodies the pragmatic belonging suggested by Probyn (in Antonsich, 2010:652), who proposed a more inclusive form of belonging could focus on proximity, rather than identity.

## Danny Pillay

Introducing Danny

Danny is the chairman of the newly reformed PCA and a self-professed believer in community. He was very willing to talk to me because he is trying, through the PCA, to build a real community and sense of belonging in Parkmore. He's a homeopathic doctor and very busy. We arranged to meet at his practice straight after work, but it is quarter past five before his last patient leaves. He hasn't paused all day, and he only returned the day before from a holiday in Columbia.

*'It's quite funny,'* he says*, 'my life is so different from where I grew up'.*

Danny grew up in a rural town called Umkomaas in KZN. '*I was this rural kid … who grew up in the sticks'*, he says, and he laughs when I ask him about his childhood cultural activities.

Professional theatre?

'*There's no such thing'*

Art galleries?

*'We didn't know what an art gallery was'*

But he was surrounded by a strong community with a vibrant cultural life centred around tradition and arts, and it has turned Danny into a voracious cultural consumer.

* * * * *

Gilmore (2013) and Miles and Ebrey (2017) are among many authors looking beyond the formal arts participation measured by policy makers, suggesting that a better understanding of participation can be derived by the informal and everyday. In the global South, Mbaye and Dinardi (2019) also suggest looking beyond the formal provision of arts.

Danny's story highlights the importance of community engagement with arts and suggests that this is more important than access to formal arts, such as galleries and professional theatres. While this should not detract from the value of having access to professional arts, it suggests that policy should focus on promoting opportunities for communities to engage in arts at a community level.

* * * * *

Danny’s Belonging Narrative

Danny has a very community focused idea of belonging.

*It's not just family. I don't identify belonging just as a member of a family. Part of a social group and a community. So there's an altruism, that’s for me what community should be.*

But he is reticent about his own sense of belonging.

*Where do I feel like I belong? That sounds like an existential question. I think I belong anywhere where I'm comfortable. Where there's an interaction of people with a general care and concern for each other, a sense of community, that's where I belong.*

I have to push him for more definitive answers. Not in Parkmore, not in Johannesburg, and while he thinks South Africans in general have a better sense of community than European countries, ‘*there's still far more care and concern’,* he sees a wide gulf between different areas.

*If I compare myself from an Indian community of Durban to white suburban South Africa, it’s chalk and cheese.*

His narrative is strongly focused on this comparison; the difference between an under resourced Indian community in apartheid South Africa coming together to organise neighbourhood watches, and the selfish attitude of Parkmore residents towards the rest of the suburb once they have had their own streets gated, between the old neighbours who recognise him after thirty years away, and the current neighbours he barely knows.

*I've lived 14 years in Parkmore [and] you'll still not know a lot of people. Where Umkomaas, I’ve moved away from twenty-five, thirty years ago, I was down there recently, so you know someone will stop by and say hello. Even though you're 30 years ago…*

It is a deeply entrenched narrative. He repeated, on the two occasions we met at PCA meetings as well as in the interview, a story of his neighbour in Umkomaas who keeps his house in order and will leave him a home cooked meal when he is expected; an act of ‘*good neighbourliness’* you'll be ‘*hard pressed to find in Johannesburg’.*

Working Together

Key to his understanding of community is working together and sharing risk. He tells two stories of the disadvantages faced by an Indian community in apartheid South Africa which illustrate this. In the first, a lack of police resources drove the community to work together, *'the community comes together and says … we'll all divide the workload and we'll all do neighbourhood watches'*.

In the second, the community refused to pay their rates because they were disproportionately high.

*The community came together and said we will not pay our rates until they resolve our issues. If everybody made a stand [they] share the same risk. If only some people do it only some people will be injured*.

In contrast, when he discusses the collective action of Parkmore residents to arrange road closures he focuses on the attitudes of self-interest.

* * * * *

Both Loobuyck (2012) and Brown (2007) argue for communities to be built on cooperation towards a common purpose. This links to the importance of ownership in successfully creating place (Rosenstein, 2011; Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014) and the need to be a recognised as 'integral' and 'indispensable' to the community in order to have a positive sense of belonging (Anant. 1966 in Haggerty et al, 1992:173).

* * * * *

Were the residents of Umkomaas so happy to work for each other's good or has Danny forgotten any dissenting voices in the passage of time? People may lament the closure of local shops but forget that they went to the supermarket because it was cheaper and more convenient.

There may be many factors involved which are hard to recreate in a globalised world and an individualistic society. However, Danny is determined to build a semblance of that sense of belonging and community in Parkmore. His suggestion of a branding strategy seems at odds with his experiences of communities working together and his personal belief in culture as a way to bring people together.

* * * * *

Danny's community shared a strong sense of 'fellow feeling' (Goodhart, 2006:16 in Loobuyck, 2012:569) through shared religion, shared culture, and shared activities which might make them more generous towards one another and illustrate Loobuyck's arguments for citizen cooperation. The suggestion to employ a branding strategy, which falls firmly within the top down *placemaking,* undermines the role of residents in making their community. Once they are simply picking up the bill for experts to direct the change they are no longer participants but consumers.

* * * * *

Danny's Map

It also seems at odds that he has no cultural participation in Parkmore. He is well aware of the power of cultural participation to foster a sense of belonging. He attends events at Melrose temple; '*I'm not religious but I go and do all of these things, it's more for the kinsmanship'*. Most of his social activity is at his golf club, and he displays his pride and sense of ownership. '*I can gladly say … my name is on the board.'*

His participation takes place across the world. He regularly engages in cultural activities in Johannesburg but also travels extensively and is keen to seek out cultural experiences elsewhere.

Far From Home

Danny is by far the highest cultural consumer of my participant group. He shows how important his participation is in giving him a personal sense of belonging, but it hasn't helped him to feel a connection to any place other than his childhood home.

I suggest that this is because his cultural participation happens outside of his neighbourhood and does not foster social interaction with his fellow residents. His civic participation is very high and should give him a strong sense of belonging, but it seems to remind him of the lack of cooperation and community spirit in contrast with his memories.

## Mike Williams*

Introducing Mike

Mike has lived in Parkmore almost thirty years, and he's going to stay here, *'unless someone comes along and makes me a fantastic offer'*, or the country gets worse off, *'this new land grab act … to me that's a death knell for the country'*.

Mike's Belonging Narrative

Sense of belonging to Mike means '*security, friendship, and participation',* but he talks about his own belonging largely in terms of positives and negatives. Johannesburg - positives, '*the weather is generally pretty good, the people are generally friendly',* South Africa - negatives, *'the politicians play the race card all the time. I think they screw up all the relationships'.*

He says he belongs here, *'all of my friends are here'*, '*I've lived here all my life'*, but he doesn't feel a sense of inclusion, *'there isn't for whites'*.

* * * * *

In a study on students at the University of Johannesburg Amoateng (2016:109-110) found that sense of belonging in South Africa was lowest among white and coloured South Africans and that this correlated with intentions to leave the country after completing their tertiary education. However, across all races less than a quarter of respondents felt they were included in democratic South Africa, meaning that the feeling of exclusion is not necessarily limited to white South Africans.

* * * * *

Mike presents himself as completely disconnected from place; despite his longevity in the area he seems unattached to his home and to Parkmore. *'There's been a lot of changes and there's going to be a lot more because as Sandton expands it's going to be like Braamfontein.'* I get the feeling that he's rather hoping that Sandton will break its banks and send the value of his property soaring so that someone does come and '*make him a fantastic offer*'. He tells me that the community has become more open to development. '*I think they're starting to realise that it's inevitable,'* he explains. However, as they have a

town planning committee in the PCA squirreling away money to fight unwanted development, I am slightly sceptical of this.

* * * * *

Ballard (2004:60) suggests that many white South Africans engaged in a process of 'semigration' which, while demonstrated by moving into fortified enclaves or gating off residential areas, also involved a process of disconnection from political and civic life to forestall the exclusion they felt was inevitable. 'Many of these whites are convinced – and who can convince them otherwise? – that they can never be anything other than second class citizens in the present governments' eyes' (Barrell, 2000 in Ballard, 2004, 60). This is illustrated by Amoateng's findings on the lack of inclusion felt by white South Africans (Amoateng, 2016). However, it also has an uncomfortable resonance with Sparks' (1990, in Salusbury and Foster, 2003:94) idea that voluntary disconnection allows people to enjoy the benefits without having to take responsibility.

* * * * *

No man is an Island

Mike tells me he doesn't feel a need to belong outside of his family unit. '*I don't really have many great feelings of wanting to belong'* he says. Despite this, he speaks almost with envy of the sense of community he perceives in black areas.

*You know if you go into Soweto, I deal quite a lot with various guys that live there and I get them involved with my tour and they know everybody. You know, walk around Baragwanath taxi rank, I go with a guy called Percy and Percy knows everyone and everyone knows Percy and there's a strong sense of community. In Soweto, you know, when a guy gets money he stays in the same community and builds a smart house, he doesn't move to a smart area. Whereas in the white areas, we do. You know, if I had a lot of money I'd go and live in Bryanston, on a big property, and I'd be even more isolated.*

And it has certainly not stopped him from being an active member of his neighbourhood community although he qualifies this, *'I put a reasonable amount of effort in for the community but I certainly don't go overboard'.*

He makes a direct connection between his belonging and his participation in his clubs.

*I've always felt a sense of belonging in the clubs that I've been in, because we participate you know. I belong to the club, I get actively involved, I've been on various committees from time to time, so I belong there.*

* * * * *

It is the engagement in the governance of his clubs, a form of civic participation, which facilitates Mike's belonging rather than the cultural participation. Volunteering can become a form of moral currency which can be exchanged for belonging (Miles and Ebrey, 2017:63) which resonates with the way Mike describes his belonging. It also speaks to the sense of ownership which is an important outcome of being involved (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). Taking responsibility for the running of the club brings rewards which are not available to those who are simply consumers.

* * * * *

Mike's Map

Mike's participation is spread in the eastern quarter of South Africa, in particular the northern half of Gauteng. It's mostly centred around social sports and his work as a tour operator. There is no participation in Parkmore. He tells me he looked into joining the tennis club at the Sandton Sports Club but decided against it. '*The social aspect wasn't there and that's really what I'm interested in.'* He describes the offering at the recreation centre as *'repetitive and not really what I'm looking for'*.

* * * * *

Social infrastructure is more important than physical infrastructure although this is much harder to develop (Fonseca et al., 2019:231). Likewise, the revised White Paper emphasises the importance of programming over infrastructure (DAC, 2017:38). Mike illustrates the validity of this view. Despite having two facilities within very close proximity to his home, he does not use them because they lack the social infrastructure and programming which would entice him.

* * * * *

Renting not Buying

Mike seems to be renting his place in society. He is a civic citizen; he gets involved and pays his dues, but he seems to be unwilling to commit. Despite his assertion that he does not wish to feel any more sense of belonging than he does with his family, the exclusion he feels from his country clearly bothers him.

His civic participation, which is facilitated by his cultural participation as his sports clubs offer opportunities to take responsibility, help him to feel connected to communities, but they do not offer him a sense of belonging to place.

## Rose Johnson

Tea with Rose

Rose Johnson is the Chair of the Friends of the Field and Study (FoFS), an NPO she set up to protect the park. She has a long history with it, having lived in the area for almost fifty years, and she has fantastic stories which she shares.

She spent a large part of her life fighting off development on the edge of Sandton. One town planner, she tells me with relish, dismissed her when she entered the courtroom as a *'little housewife*. *I thought Buster, that's the biggest mistake you've ever made.*' She successfully opposed him, not once but four times.

She answers the phone twice while we are talking with a practised, '*Can I call you back, I'm in the middle of an interview'*.

Rose Johnson reminds me of my aunt. It's in the way she speaks, her clothes and make up, and in her attitudes. They'd have been about the same age and growing up in neighbouring suburbs, my aunt in Kensington, going to Jeppe Girls, Rose in Observatory attending St Andrew's.

She'd asked if we could meet at her home adding, '*then we can have a cup of tea while we chat'*. It all feels very familiar. Her home is in a complex and though small is beautifully curated with antique furniture and paintings. She had to move from '*the big house'* when her husband died five years ago but she's getting used to it.

Rose's Belonging Narrative

When I ask Rose to define belonging, she struggles.

*'Well it's quite something. It's not like you're in a place that everything is the same and you're so used to it you belong here. When you've lived like I have, in the middle of the veld, and then suddenly everything changed, you belonged to a changing environment. But of course, once it's all developed then you belong too because you've been here since the beginning.'*

Her narrative of belonging is largely determined by longevity. Of Johannesburg she says '*I've lived here most of my life so I remember … I remember all the buildings that have gone, and so it's home to me.'*

And when I ask in relation to South Africa she responds:

*Well you know I've always been here*.

But then she continues in a completely different vein.

*I have, in fact if you look at my phone, I've got so many African numbers you'd think… Well I do have a lot of black, not friends, in that a few will come to tea, like the lady at the head of the parks department, she and I have a good relationship, but I get along very well with black people.*

She goes on to explain how she misses seeing black faces when she travels overseas; how she thinks one man who works at the park is '*dangerous*'; that she gets along very well with the gardener at her complex while other residents bitch and moan; her irritation with the new government, '*in 25 years what've they done? ruined it!*'; how the staff at the depot all call her '*gogo*'; how she has a particularly good relationship with one '*dear old boy*', and ends with this advice:

*If you just treat people the right way, to me a lot of it is how you approach them. I just find that if you stop if you say "How are you this morning?" or "Good morning" – It's African custom to say "hello, how are you?" – and I make a point of doing that and it makes the difference.*

I find this response fascinating and I'm thrown for a while to understand a belonging framed by the number of black friends and acquaintances.

* * * * *

After 1994 white South African's found themselves 'strangers in their own lands' (Griffiths and Prozesky, 2010:31). Perhaps this is why Rose defines her belonging in South Africa in relation to black South Africans. While Ballard (2004) discusses the attempts to assimilate black South Africans into European culture, Rose seems to demonstrate her right to belong by her acts of assimilation into what she views as African culture. This shows how 'politics of belonging' causes a disruption in 'personal belonging' and the complexities of cultural

inclusion. It seems that, instead of undoing the dominance of western culture and white privilege, we have simply made white citizens feel equally excluded.

* * * * *

Holding on to the Landscape

While Rose struggles with her sense of belonging, she is clearly attached to the area of Parkmore.

*Certain things that never change, the river always was there, is there, so those sorts of landmarks give you a sense of belonging, they're always the same. People change.*

I can't help but feel compassion for Rose. Like Alistair she sees belonging as a choice, a decision to put down roots and invest.

*You put your roots down and you feel "This is forever. I belong here". You never had any inclination to go anywhere else.*

*We built the house as we could afford it. That made it that we belong there even more, because we'd waited and added and waited and added.*

And I remember my grandmother saying bitterly *'they don't understand what it meant to us, we built that house*' when my uncle sold the home she and my grandfather had built as a newly married couple.

* * * * *

Rose's attachment is driven by place rather than people and fits Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2005:103) concept of elective belonging, where residents frame their belonging 'by mapping their own biography through places dear to them'. However, key to the definition of belonging is acceptance by others (Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018:2; Cloete and Kotze, 2009 in DAC, 2012:32), so I would suggest it is more aligned with place attachment, 'bonds to a physical place' (Anton and Lawrence, 2014:452).

Disruption to place attachment can lead to 'severe and negative consequences' (Stephaniak et al, 2017:218). While this disruption can be in the form of political changes, as Griffiths and Prozesky (2010) discuss, it also refers to disruption through changing landscapes and the loss of familiar scenes.

Place attachment can be negative; residents can perceive newcomers as a threat and react with hostility towards those who want to change the place (Anton and Lawrence, 2014:451-452).

Rose's narrative seems almost entirely bound up in the park, the river, and her fight to protect and preserve it. It is also very exclusionary; she stresses the need to keep the park from becoming overcrowded, and she complains that other park users don't contribute and take her work for granted.

* * * * *

Rose's Map

Rose's cultural participation in recent years is limited. Without her husband, she feels she can't do many of the things she used to. *'It's no fun when you're on your own'*, she says, and she is uncomfortable going out alone at night.

In addition, her work at the park keeps her very busy. Her one regular commitment is her painting class, *'that's the one day I take off and go and paint for my soul'*, although its move from the Field and Study recreation centre to Parktown means *'it's a bit of a schlep to get there'*.

Preserving a Piece of the Past

Rose's narrative shows the power of a strong place attachment, in the way she has worked tirelessly to preserve and protect it, and the negative element, in that she is resistant to anything that might bring change. She is frustrated that the Parkmore community seems uninterested in the park, '*they're really not interested in the park because they knew we were looking after it, they've done everything in George Lee'*, and that they don't seem to realise the value of the park.

This reaffirms the value of a sense of ownership. Her participation in the park is a process of place making and has given her the sense of ownership, however a real sense of belonging is not achieved because she does not share this with a community.

## Conclusion

Each of the participants' participation maps are unique, but they share some marked similarities. Despite the number of cultural assets, very few of the participants engage in the measured activities within their neighbourhood.

Their participation, which appears concentrated locally to their residence at a global and national scale, becomes dispersed at a city scale. It is almost non-existent, with the exception of Bridget, at a neighbourhood level.

Likewise, many of their stories of belonging share similar elements which reflect the complexity of belonging in our young nation. All of the participants showed a marked difference in their response to belonging to South Africa than to Parkmore and Johannesburg. This may be due to the meaning of a nation state being created conceptually more than through personal experience (Tuan, 1975:153).

While a relationship between participation and sense of belonging was evident in many stories, the connection to place was rarely seen with two notable exceptions. Bridget engages in cultural participation in her neighbourhood which facilitates her attachment to Parkmore. Alistair's participation in an important project for his country increased his attachment to South Africa. I have disregarded Rose's bond to the Field and Study Park; to me it is place attachment rather than belonging as it has no element of connection to a community.

This suggests that place must be a key element to the participation in order for belonging to be facilitated. Alistair is working for the good of South Africa, and Bridget equates the community which she bonds to with the community of Parkmore.

Goodhart (2006: 16 in Loobuyck (2012:569) states, 'the more diverse our ways of life … and the less we share … a sense of fellow feeling, the less happy we will be in the long run to support a generous welfare state'. Yet we need our citizens to 'support a generous welfare state' in order to achieve the economic transformation which is necessary and just.

Some participants' stories showed a perception of irreconcilable differences between South African groups, even over trivial elements like sports preference. Cultural differences should not, and in many cases do not, preclude 'a sense of fellow feeling', but they are used to

reinforce and justify an existing sense of separation. Deliberate work needs to be done to erode the separation and promote common meeting points.

Lack of interaction fosters distrust (Ulsner 2009, in Loobuyck, 2012:569). In South Africa, the inherited spatial divisions of apartheid geography ‘sustains patterns of social interaction,’ (Hofmeyer and Govender, 2015:12). In Parkmore, as in many other middle-class suburbs, the racial demographics of residents are shifting, however this does not necessarily lead to increased social interaction between racial groups. More than half of South Africans report never or rarely interacting with South Africans of a different race in their homes, or at social or communal gatherings (ibid:13).

Governments need to stimulate interaction (Loobuyck, 2012:569) although this is not easy. Community property, such as parks and recreation, arts and sports centres, are a crucial element of community infrastructure. Public spaces offer ‘zones of encounter’ (Landry, 2018) which allow inhabitants to meet and mix. This cannot happen if the community does not use their property, or if it is only used by one group.

Bridget suggested that residents need to be aware that community assets are available and belong to them. I think she is right, as it reinforces a sense of communal ownership. A tendency to turn towards privatised recreation spaces undermines this potential, but it is inevitable if municipal centres do not offer what the residents want. This is a very difficult demand to balance in wealthy suburbs, where residents would rather pay for the efficiency of commercial spaces, than share the inconveniences of municipal bureaucracy and budgets.

This could be mitigated by local associations having more control, especially as programming is a bigger draw than physical infrastructure. The revised White Paper already makes provision for this, however the policy needs to be implemented.

Programming needs to be deliberately geared towards achieving the policy aims of social cohesion and nation building. My research suggests that not all cultural participation has a positive influence on social networks or connections to place.

Three of the participants are highly engaged in civic participation, which should develop a sense of belonging through ownership. Mike seems to be the only participant where his engagement fosters a sense of belonging. In contrast Rose and Danny are both led to feel alienated from the community by the disproportionate burden they assume. This suggests

that the social aspect of cultural participation may have a more important role than simply taking on ownership.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Conclusion

Introduction

I set out to understand how a number of connections I found in the literature I was reading on cultural participation, sense of belonging, and place were operating in an everyday and local context in Johannesburg, South Africa. I contend that this is an important study within the field of cultural policy as it is closely linked to social cohesion and nation building.

Belonging, affiliation to, and acceptance by, a group or community (Cloete and Kotze, 2009 in DAC, 2012), is the first component of social cohesion (DAC, 2012) as well as an important individual need.

Nation building is the construction of a place by making collective meaning at a national level. Place, a space to which inhabitants attach meaning (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014) is constructed through physical and abstract experiences. On a larger scale, such as a nation state, it relies more on the abstract (Tuan, 1975). It is closely linked to belonging (Antonsich, 2010,Tomaney, 2015) as belonging facilitates positive meaning and collective identity facilitates belonging.

Belonging can be enhanced by cultural participation (Loobuyck, 2012: Ploner and Jones, 2019: Ritchie and Gaulter, 2018: Stickley, 2010) which is an engagement in cultural activities and use of cultural products (Murray, 2005:32). Cultural participation can also have an effect on sense of place (Ploner and Jones, 2019: Anton and Lawence, 2014), and place attachment (Lewicka, 2005, Blessi et al., 2016).

These connections formed the basis of my conceptual framework.

A better understanding of these relationships in a local context could guide policy makers to use cultural participation more effectively to create the ‘inclusive, just and cohesive society in which not just a privileged few, but all members of society live in peace and prosper together’ envisioned by the Department of Arts and Culture (2012:5).

I chose to conduct my research in Parkmore, a middle-class suburb in Sandton, Johannesburg, where the community association wishes to build a stronger sense of

belonging among its residents. As a suburb, it has a large number of cultural assets so it offered potential for residents to be engaged in highly localised cultural participation. These factors, as well as the changing demographic of the residents in terms of race and age, suggested it as an interesting setting for my study.

This report is a document of my research.

## Summary

I began my report by introducing my research and laying out the rationale behind the study including its relevance in the field of cultural policy.

In the second chapter, I explored the theories on which I based my study with my review of the relevant literature and my conceptual framework. In my literature review, I traced the connections from which I developed the conceptual framework of my study. I then included a visual diagram to illustrate the framework.

In Chapter Three, I laid out my methods and the process my research had taken. I looked in detail at the relevant aspects of my chosen method, narrative inquiry, in order to show my choices and the motivations behind them.

In Chapter Four, I presented my findings and discussion. My findings are written up in the style of creative non-fiction interspersed with segments of academic discussion at relevant points. I began with the story of Parkmore, which provides the backdrop for each of the participants' stories, which I then considered in turn. I concluded this chapter with a meditation on some of the prominent themes.

I end with this chapter, my conclusion, which provides a summary of my findings, the limitations of my study, and offers some recommendations for further study.

## Findings, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Each unique story illustrated different experiences of belonging, to Parkmore, Johannesburg, and South Africa, and the complexity of belonging in our country. Through the exploration and illustration, I was able to gain a much deeper understanding of the links between cultural participation, sense of belonging, and place, and importantly the limits of those connections.

Examples of many of the phenomena I had come across in the literature appeared in the stories. Most of the participants showed evidence of links between participation and sense of belonging, although these were not consistently evident and were often not direct.

The conclusion I draw from this is that, while cultural participation does have the potential to influence sense of belonging it does not do so automatically. To take this further, my research suggests that some forms of participation are more likely to enable belonging, however there is not enough data to make any conclusion to this effect. Further research could look more closely at how different forms of participation influences sense of belonging.

Where connections between participation and belonging were evident, they were rarely connected to place. Most of the participants showed fairly ambivalent attachments to place at a neighbourhood, city, and national level beneath their claims to belonging. This is in line with Amoateng's (2016) study where most respondents were able to say they belonged in South Africa but few felt a correlating sense of inclusion leading the author to conclude a low overall sense of belonging.

Two examples illustrate cultural participation influencing sense of belonging to place which suggest that, as Stickley (2010) argued, the relationship is potential rather than automatic. In both cases the participation was linked conceptually to place or to the community associated with the place suggesting this is a necessary element. Further research could consider forms of participation directly linked to place to draw more substantial conclusions around the relationship.

Narrative research cannot give generalised findings, however, by looking closely at individual experiences, it allows us to explore nuances and contradictions which may be lost or dismissed at a bigger scale. This is useful in pointing us towards more precise parameters for larger more generalised research.

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