



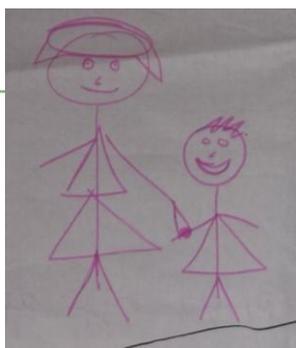
# Unsung heroes: Religious coping of grandmothers who foster children

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It all starts here

OPTENTIA RESEARCH PROGRAMME  
Enabling optimal expression of individual, social and institutional potential



## Introduction

- Phase 1: Psychology honours students of 2012
  - dual purpose research project with FAMSA
- Phase 2: The role religious-spiritual experiences and religious coping in the life of gogos
  - World café
- Purpose: The role and impact of religious coping and spirituality on the quality of life of gogos
  - Christian
  - African Indigenous Religion (AIR)
- Religiosity, spirituality and well-being
- Religious coping

## Introduction

- World café questions
  - How does the church help you?
  - How is religion part of your everyday life as a gogo?
  - Sometimes we pray and we feel as if God does not listen. If that happens to you what do you think and how do you feel?
  - Are there any traditional (or spiritual) things that you do that help you?



## Findings



- Religiosity and spirituality : A way to live
  - Faith: Their basic ingredient
  - Hope: Assurance of God's promises = Religious Coping  
*“You keep on praying...” “...you don't lose faith”*
  
- The church as a personal and community resource
  - Important social institution
  - Benefits such as...
    - Teaching = Social order = Structure
    - Safety and a sense of security  
*“A gogo who goes to church is safe”*
    - **Belonging**: A “togetherness”
    - A community that **supports** one another
      - Sharing and normalising of burdens and responsibilities

*“And then church also teaches people to comfort others when others have troubles...to help one another”*

## Findings



- Indigenous ontology: uBuntu
  - Well-being: Individual and community
  - Biblical and African Indigenous Religious (AIR) values: **Overlap**
    - Respect: core value
  
- African indigenous religious rituals
  - **Strengthen** belief and hope
  - Find **counsel**: **Ancestral** ceremony: i.e., “Mpho ya Badimo” (Gift to the God's)
  - Pathways: Increased **understanding** and **social order**

## Findings



- Religious coping
  - Religion strengthens gogos
  - Religious practices: Align gogos with God
  - Prayer has benefits of reducing stress:
    - Helps gogos interpret experiences
    - Enabling: Acceptance, peace & renewed strength

*“[When] you feel pain you cry, and you read the Bible, you keep on praying, you don’t loose faith, also to fast, you pray, you sing. ...[When] you’re sad, maybe you cry and then you keep reading the word of God”*

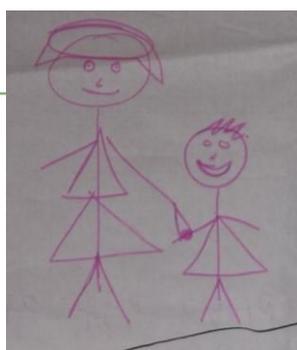
## Implications



- Participants’ religion plays a pivotal role in their lives
  - Contributes to their religious-spiritual **reality and identity**
  - The lack of resources and options on the one side and their religious commitment on the other is the foundation for **religious coping**
- The vital role of the church is highlighted
  - Safety in **belongingness** and security
  - The church is shown as a vehicle through which community empowerment and building is achieved
- The influence of African ontology
  - Visionary service to kin and community
  - Cultural practices inculcate **uBuntu values**... thus forming the foundation for well-being.

## Implications

- Individual well-being and healthy functioning contributes to healthy families and communities
- The gogos' find meaning which enables them to fulfil their duties towards the children in their care and the broader community
- Their faith gives them hope, courage and strength to do what they perceive as **"God's work", work of lasting meaning**
- Limitations
  - Limited sample from an urban area, thus findings can't be generalised
  - Language barrier: Participants spoke in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> languages
  - Not all people are religious/spiritual; religious coping thus forms only one way of dealing with life's difficulties and other alternatives are possible.



## Questions



## Thank you

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