The essence of displacement: A phenomenological analysis of inner-city residents' experiences in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: Gentrification has led to the eviction and displacement of many people from working-class areas around the world. However, the relationship between gentrification and displacement has sparked much debate in the literature, with some researchers downplaying displacement, while others have argued that gentrification can occur without the displacement of people. These studies have tended to be quantitative in nature. However, there are few qualitative accounts of the experience of displacement and there is little consideration of the affective or phenomenological dimensions of displacement in current debates about gentrification. This is in part because researchers have tended not to engage directly with displaced people as it is often difficult to locate them. The purpose of this article is to describe the essence of displacement from the perspective of a group of individuals who were evicted from their homes in a gentrifying inner-city area of Johannesburg, South Africa. Through the methodology of transcendental phenomenology, five interrelated themes were derived from in-depth interviews with the participants. The findings show that the essence of displacement is one of great pain, loss and trauma, which disrupts the lifeworld of those displaced and impacts their overall health and well-being.

KEYWORDS: eviction, gentrification, Johannesburg

Introduction

Many people are displaced and deprived of their homes each year for a variety of reasons, ranging from disasters induced by climate change to wars and other acts of violence. In South Africa, thousands of people were forcibly removed from their homes as a result of the apartheid policies (1948–1994). Today, inner-city residents, some of whom have lived through the devastating effects of these forced removals, are facing the threat of being evicted from their homes because of what has now been referred to as a new form of socio-spatial apartheid – gentrification. Although this process of neighbourhood change is perceived by some as rejuvenating communities and creating desirable neighbourhoods for the middle class (McKinnish et al., 2010), it brings about an affordable housing crisis for the working class (Slater, 2006), which eventually can lead to homelessness and the displacement of people (Atkinson, 2000; Newman & Wyly, 2006).

However, despite being at the centre of gentrification debates for decades, displacement has until recently been overlooked in the literature on gentrification (Wyly et al., 2010). In some cases, it has been disregarded or considered negligible in quantitative studies, such as those by Vigdor (2002), Freeman and Braconi (2004) and McKinnish et al. (2010). Furthermore, researchers have tended to focus their attention on middle-class gentrifiers (Slater et al., 2004; Paton, 2014) rather than on the effects of gentrification and displacement on working-class people (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019). Consequently, a generally positive stance on gentrification has been taken and the extent of its negative consequences has been understated (Slater, 2006; N. Smith, 2008).

It is, however, critical to challenge the view that displacement is marginal and that gentrification benefits the poor (Newman & Wyly, 2006), as "(l)osing one's place can be much more traumatic than simply changing location" (D. Smith, 1994, pp. 253–254). Calls have been made for more qualitative studies on displacement to re-establish more critical perspectives of gentrification (Slater, 2006) and to provide deeper insights into the meaning of being displaced (Atkinson, 2000; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019). Displacement, however, is difficult to research empirically and to document (Atkinson, 2000; Lees et al., 2008) because of the challenges involved in finding people who have been displaced (Atkinson, 2000). Furthermore, the fate of those who have been displaced is often not recorded in official statistics (Baeten et al., 2017). Instead of guiding researchers towards a qualitative agenda, these practical difficulties have led them away from displacement completely (Slater, 2006; Lees et al., 2008).

Displacement associated with gentrification

Displacement in the context of gentrification refers to "what happens when forces outside the household make living there

impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable" (Hartman et al., 1982, p. 3). There are different forms and dimensions of displacement. For example, it may be direct where displacement takes place through evictions, rent increases or other pressures imposed by landlords (Marcuse, 1986). Indirect displacement, on the other hand, is more subtle and may be experienced as long-time residents witness economic, social, cultural and political changes taking place in their neighbourhood, while still remaining in their homes (Marcuse, 1986; Davidson & Lees, 2010). These changes may lead to these residents no longer feeling at home in their neighbourhood (Marcuse, 1986), or experiencing what Davidson (2008) refers to as "out-of-placeness".

Working-class residents often have a stronger emotional attachment to place (Fried, 1966; Marris, 1986). Tuan (1977, p. 4) used the term "topophilia" to describe this "affective bond between people and place". For him, place signifies security and the familiar, while home is "an intimate place" (Tuan, 1977, p. 144). A place of residence is also an important focal point around which identification and belonging are constructed (Fried, 1966; Marris, 1986; Cahill, 2007), particularly for those working-class residents who have little reason to travel outside of their neighbourhood to foster social ties (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). This connection to a familiar place can be so intense that if people are forcibly removed from their homes, they may become ill and even die (Tuan, 1971). More recently, Atkinson (2015) referred to the severing of this connection as "un-homing", while in Zhang's (2018, p. 201) study on the violence of displacement associated with gentrification, older residents compared the processes of un-homing to their experience of war, describing it as "fast, stressful and chaotic".

The effects of displacement are also experienced more intensely by the working class than their middle-class counterparts, and this is attributed to their deep social ties and strong support networks (Fullilove, 2004; Kohn, 2013). Neighbours often work together on mutually beneficial tasks such as taking care of each other's children, sharing equipment or promoting safety in their neighbourhood (Kohn, 2013). These networks of mutual support and solidarity are important for survival, particularly for low-income people (Fullilove, 1996; Sennett, 2008) and it offers a form of protection which assists people in recovering from complex trauma (Van der Kolk, 2002). However, gentrification disrupts these social ties (Atkinson, 2015) and the sense of community (Marcuse, 1985) and it weakens the resilience of long-time residents to remain in their homes (Pearsall, 2012).

Several authors have noted the impact that a loss of place has on people's lives and, as alluded to earlier, displacement is closely linked to negative health effects (Fried, 1966; Marris, 1986; Fullilove, 2004), such as stress, depression and hypertension (Arrigoitia, 2014; Wilder et al., 2017). It is also associated with feelings of fear and anxiety (Fullilove & Wallace, 2011; Wilder et al., 2017; Watt, 2018), lowered self-esteem and feelings of inferiority (Valli, 2016; Wilder et al., 2017). Emotions which may be related to psychological distress, and in some instances, post-traumatic stress (Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Pain, 2019) can also be initiated by displacement. Indeed, Fullilove (2004, p. 11) likens displacement to a clinical condition known as "root shock", which she describes as a "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem". Qualitative research has furthermore revealed the sense of bereavement that displaced people experience, particularly

the elderly (Fried, 1966; Davidson & Lees, 2010). Marris (1986, p. 57) also pointed out that being displaced "can be almost as disruptive of the meaning of life as the loss of a crucial relationship".

A phenomenological approach to displacement

Davidson and Lees (2010) suggest that to address what may have been overlooked or under-conceptualised in quantitative studies on gentrification, evidence for displacement is best shown through the use of phenomenology. This means that the "structures of feeling" and the "loss of a sense of place" associated with displacement are analysed, rather than focusing on the moment of spatial displacement, as many quantitative studies do (Davidson & Lees, 2010).

Phenomenology is "...the study of things as they appear so that one can come to an essential (fundamental) understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Valle et al., 1989, p. 6). It describes the shared meaning of the lived experiences of several individuals of a particular phenomenon (Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Creswell, 2013). However, there has also been little consideration of the affective or phenomenological dimensions of displacement in current debates about gentrification (Davidson, 2009; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019). A qualitative, phenomenological approach was therefore adopted in the study on which this article is based to uncover the experience of the phenomenon of displacement associated with gentrification. This approach contributes to a deeper understanding of displacement, as it enables a researcher to explore, describe and analyse the meaning and the essence of people's lived experiences of a particular phenomenon in rich detail (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In this article, it is contended that there are common, shared experiences of displacement among individuals, even though gentrification processes are not the same in all neighbourhoods and experienced in the same way by all residents of a particular neighbourhood (Thurber, 2018). Husserl, ([1913] 1931) refers to these shared or universal experiences as "essences", which is derived from the Greek word ousia, which means the inner, essential nature of a phenomenon. According to Van Manen (1990), essence is the true being of a thing or the true nature of a particular phenomenon. It is also described as a condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is (Husserl, [1931] 1982; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Methodology

Research design
The methodology of empirical, transcendental phenomenology, as espoused by Moustakas (1994), was chosen to explore the essence of the phenomenon of displacement as it focuses on the perceptions, feelings and lived experiences of individuals. Moustakas (1994, p. 49) describes transcendental phenomenology as "a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness". It focuses on a description of the meanings and the essences of particular experiences of the participants, rather than on the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the experiencing person is brought to the fore in this methodology as the essential source for deriving knowledge about a particular experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Data collection

Before the data collection process commenced, ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics (HREC Non-Medical) Committee [ethics number H14/06/01]. The participants in the study had to be purposefully selected by using criterion sampling, as they had to have experienced being displaced as a result of gentrification. To locate potential participants, snowball sampling was used where members of the community helped to identify people who had been displaced.

The participants shared their experiences through a series of face-to-face, in-depth phenomenological interviews which focus on the subjective experiences of a particular phenomenon and the meaning that participants hold about that experience (Seidman, 2013). Before the interviews began, written informed consent was obtained from all the participants. To "facilitate the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116), two broad questions relating to displacement were asked, namely "what" was experienced when people are physically displaced, and "how" was it experienced. These questions were explored in the context of contemporary gentrification processes taking place in the inner city of Johannesburg, South Africa. In cases where the participants had not described their experience in enough depth and with sufficient meaning, additional questions were asked from a general interview guide. With their permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture the meaning of the experience of displacement in the participants' own words.

Data analysis

Before analysing the interviews, I engaged in epoché, which means "to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). By doing this, I attempted to approach the phenomenon of displacement with an open and non-judgemental attitude, so that a new perspective of the experience could be gained (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013). However, as some researchers have found, this pure state of mind was not easy to achieve (Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). It was nonetheless a valuable exercise as it helped to reduce the influence of biases and preconceived thoughts and judgements (Moustakas, 1994) about the experience of being displaced.

To derive the essence of displacement associated with gentrification, a simplified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method was followed, as it presents a structured approach to the data analysis procedure used in transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013). Figure 1 represents a summary of these steps of analysis which were also used as a template for "coding" the interview data (Creswell, 2013). Significant statements were extracted from the verbatim transcripts and recorded. Repetitive and overlapping statements or those not relevant to the study were discarded. This resulted in a number of "horizons", which indicated "the unique qualities of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 128). This process is called horizonalisation. By clustering these horizons, five interrelated themes emerged. These themes and the horizons were then used to write a textural description ("what" happened) of each of the participant's experience of displacement. This was followed by a structural description ("how" the experience happened) of each individual experience. This description of the context or
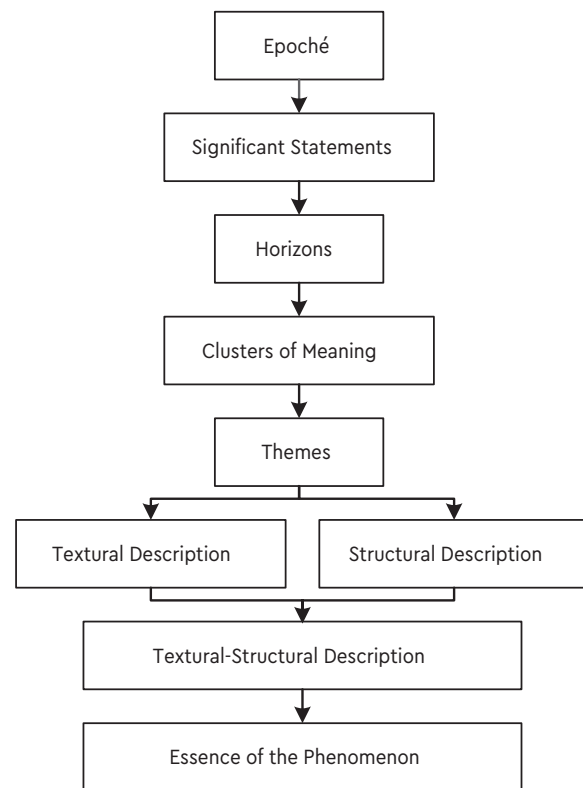

FIGURE 1 Summary of the steps in the process of transcendental phenomenological analysis (after Moustakas, 1994)

setting that had an effect on how the participants experienced displacement is also known as imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). From these individual textural and structural descriptions, a composite textural description and a composite structural description were written. The essential, invariant structure or essence of displacement was then derived by integrating these composite descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants

Nine individuals, who were physically displaced from their homes in the Maboneng precinct in Johannesburg's inner city, volunteered to participate in the study. Three were male, while six were female. Their ages ranged from 27 to 62 years old. All the participants were black South Africans who had migrated from the eastern parts of the country in the hope of improving their economic prospects. Most of them were Zulus from Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), while two participants were Xhosa from the Eastern Cape. The participants' level of education ranged from primary school to tertiary education, with nearly all of them having a high school education. However, two participants chose not to disclose their educational qualifications.

The participants lived in poverty and represented some of the most vulnerable in society. Most of them were unemployed and dependant on government's social grants. Two participants were employed as part-time domestic workers, while another participant, who was a full-time student, received financial support from his parents. The level of income was low, with some reporting that they had no regular source of income. The highest income earned was approximately R2 000 (USD 150) per month.

Prior to their eviction, a dilapidated industrial building, opposite the new developments in Maboneng, was their home. In the late 2000s, this area once known for "crime and grime", started to undergo gentrification. Old, disused industrial and office spaces were converted into commercial and residential spaces for the middle-class. Unlike several cities in the Global North, the development of Maboneng was not driven by the spontaneous attempts of a few middle-class "pioneers" to transform a working-class area. Instead, it was initiated by a single private developer's efforts at attracting artists and other creative people to the area, with the support of government policy.

The participants lived in Maboneng for periods ranging from one to seven years. Rental of R400 (USD 30) to R600 (USD 45) per month was regularly paid to a man purporting to be the owner of the building. Subsequent to their eviction, they learnt that the building had been "highjacked". In other words, it had been illegally taken over from the owners who had abandoned their property. The building has since been renovated into "industrial chic" loft apartments, with rentals of up to R6 500 (USD 490) a month (Block20 Property Group, n.d.).

At the time of the study, the participants lived at a shelter for homeless people in another part of Johannesburg's inner city. They were therefore de facto homeless people. Although South African municipalities are legally bound to provide temporary accommodation to people in cases where an eviction will lead to homelessness, through the Prevention of Illegal Eviction and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act 19 of 1998, the participants were unaware of this at the time of their eviction. Consequently, they were forced to seek refuge under a freeway on-ramp in the Maboneng precinct following their eviction as they had nowhere else to go to. After spending approximately two months on the street, the City of Johannesburg provided them with temporary accommodation at the shelter.

Findings

A traumatic experience

While reflecting on the day of their eviction, feelings of great pain and anguish were evoked in the participants. Words such as "emotionally stressful", "traumatic" and "very bad" were used to describe their experience. It was particularly difficult for one of the participants:

> It was a terrible day for me...I was at the flat preparing to go to the clinic. I was pregnant with my last child. I felt like I was risking my new-born's life. It was a very horrible time. I did not know what to do.

The prospect of not having a home for her baby was daunting and it felt as though "everything was shattered" and the world as she had known it had come to an end.

The trauma of the eviction was exacerbated by the callous and aggressive way in which the Red Ants, a private security company which executes eviction notices on behalf of the owners of a building, forcibly removed them from their homes, as one participant stated: "The Red Ants treated us very harshly. They gave us no reason for why we were being evicted. They did not care about us or our belongings...". Another participant mentioned that "[t]hey just came in with no questions asked and no explanation...They just told us to take our IDs [identity documents] and to take the things that were important and

nothing else". Some participants described the pain and humiliation of seeing all their possessions dumped on the pavement "for all the world to see". As their impending eviction dawned upon them, some participants fought for their right to stay: "We had to fight back...We were pepper-sprayed. Our eyes hurt and we coughed, but we didn't back down. We weren't prepared to leave...". However, despite their resistance, they were eventually forced to give up and abandon their homes.

Loss

The participants experienced a deep sense of loss because they were displaced (Ah Goo, 2018). They lost their physical place of residence and although it was in a state of disrepair, it was "home", as one participant expressed: "The memory of having a home was taken away from us. It is very difficult. We stayed there for six years...". The participants suffered other material losses as many of their possessions were either damaged or stolen during the eviction: "It was very painful. We lost things that took a lifetime to get".

The participants had a strong sense of community with their friends and neighbours in the building where they had lived. They pooled their resources and assisted each other in times of need, as one participant described:

> We lived quite nicely...We were a unit over there...if one of us was away at our jobs, those that stayed behind could look out for our things and you were even able to trust them to look after any of the children.

However, these social networks were disrupted, as some residents were forced to relocate to other parts of the city (Ah Goo, 2018) and in some cases these friendships and social bonds were difficult to maintain as they did not know their whereabouts. Consequently, the positive feelings engendered by belonging to a community were eroded, as well as the benefits the participants derived from these relationships.

Impact on well-being

The trauma of the experience had an impact on the participants' physical and psychological well-being. Almost all of them described the mental stress they were under, while some mentioned their bodies' physical response to being evicted: "I was very stressed...I actually got sick, and I ended up at General Hospital...as the BP [blood pressure] was quite high and they weren't able to bring it down". This participant was still suffering from hypertension long after the eviction, as she repeatedly worried about her children who were forced to live with relatives. Feelings of stress and anxiety affected their sleeping patterns too, as one participant explained: "I slept peacefully before without any problems. I didn't have stress. But here [at the shelter]...there's no peace...". The uncertainty of her future, along with the fear of not finding an alternative place to stay, contributed further to her sleep difficulties. Being homeless also influenced the way that they perceived themselves, which in turn resulted in a low self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

A common feeling that ran through all the participants' accounts was that they had been treated unjustly, as they "did not get notice" to vacate the building. Consequently, they were unable to prevent themselves from becoming homeless, as they could not arrange alternative accommodation at such short notice. One participant highlighted that it was not an opportune time to find a place to stay as they were evicted in

the middle of the month, while another explained: "We had just finished paying, before we got evicted...but they didn't return our money". In response to the perceived unfairness of their eviction, some participants reported having feelings of anger and resentment, particularly towards the landlord.

Increased hardship and suffering

This theme focuses on the vulnerable situation that the participants were in following their eviction. They endured extremely harsh conditions while living on the street. One participant described how she constantly lived in fear of criminals: "Staying under the bridge was the worst experience ever! It was not safe. I had a lot of fear. Just thinking about it now makes me want to cry". Another participant recalled: "We didn't get proper sleep. Your sleep was on and off...You would... wake up just to check if there were criminals lurking or not. You would fear something would happen to you...".

The participants were destitute as one participant described: "We very much struggled...We survived by people passing by who came to help us...Life was very difficult for us...We tried to survive day by day". Another participant explained how they survived without access to basic services: "I would ask for water...from the security guards...The children would bath there under the bridge...We used paraffin stoves to cook...". Some participants disclosed that tourists and other visitors to Maboneng assisted them, rather than the existing residents: "The white people that came to Maboneng...would offer us money to buy food and paraffin for cooking...We knew usually on Saturdays and Sundays, they would offer us money [and] on some occasions...food". Despite these adverse conditions, the participants were kept from harm and "survived" while being homeless, which one of them attributed to "the will of God".

Reflecting on their present circumstances at the shelter, the lack of space and privacy was mentioned as one of the most difficult aspects of living there (Ah Goo, 2018). One participant, who was a student, explained that he "suffered a lot" because he was unable to effectively prepare for his examinations, while another bemoaned being forced to study in the communal bathroom. Not having their own space was extremely hard for participants with families, particularly since they did not live together as a family unit (Ah Goo, 2018). This had an impact on their personal relationships and their families' overall welfare. One participant described how it affected her relationship with her husband: "I feel like I don't even know him anymore. We don't spend time together anymore...We don't have our own private space anymore...We just don't connect anymore, like we used to".

The participants did "not feel at home" or at ease in their new surroundings. Their daily routines were disrupted, and some felt that they always had to be on guard against the perceptions and feelings of the other residents. In other words, they could not be themselves at the shelter. One participant described the undue stress she was under: "...it's not nice at all...especially living with people...which makes life difficult. I'm not fond of noisy environments...". In addition, the participants described feeling confined: "...the problem here is...there's no space to move. It gets hot...It's everything...I can't explain it...It's like a prison...The only good thing is that we are not outside. We are not affected by rains...". A lack of familiarity of place also affected their feelings of safety in the neighbourhood.

Being displaced to another part of the city added to the participants' hardship and suffering as they lived further away from their workplaces and the schools their children attended. They were also at a greater distance from public transport systems and the shops they used to frequent. Consequently, the time spent commuting to work and school increased, as well as the costs. This in turn reduced their incomes which meant that they were financially worse off than before.

Thoughts and feelings about the future

The final theme pertains to the participants' thoughts and feelings as they contemplated their future. One participant remarked: "I have nothing. I have no husband...I have no home. I lost hope". Many participants felt forsaken and "let down" by the municipality (Ah Goo, 2018) as one participant stated: "Waiting in the hope that the city people will help us...Up until now, they haven't done anything. It's been quite some time since they've made the promise of getting us a place to stay". Another participant expressed her disillusionment by stating: "I feel hopeless...So many people have come to speak to us...but nothing ever happens. I feel so helpless about our situation".

However, the participants slowly adjusted over time to living in unfamiliar surroundings and difficult circumstances. Some began to accept their fate, as one participant put it: "I had to adapt to a new place. I have to accept that I have to stay here". Words such as "we got used to this life eventually" and "it is tough here, but I am getting used to it" further demonstrate their willingness to tolerate the situation. Furthermore, the prospect of finding a suitable home in the future seemed bleak, as many believed that they would never be able to afford it. Consequently, they felt limited and powerless in changing their current circumstances. This, together with the fact that they had become used to living at the shelter, seemed to diminish the urgency of finding a place of their own.

Some participants described the severe emotional strain and the on-going pressure they felt because of the difficulty in finding a home. Feelings of fear and anxiety was exacerbated by the uncertainty of the period that they would continue to be accommodated at the shelter. However, some participants were optimistic about the future: "It is so hard, but I have to hope that everything will get better". For some, their yearning for a home was accompanied by the longing to be reunited with their children: "Getting a decent place to stay...being able to be with my children. I think that will make me feel better. If you're with your family, you feel like all is okay". Another participant stated: "I wish they could get us a decent place to stay...as it's not really safe over here...Life isn't good...So even with a year's timeframe...if they could get us a flat in the region of R400...". These participants, therefore, faced the future with a sense of cautious optimism.

The participants also expressed a sense of nostalgia, a yearning for their past lives before their eviction. Reminiscing about this time stirred up feelings of sadness: "It is very painful when I think about that place. It felt like home. I was happy there". Another participant described how she felt while walking past her previous home: "I saw that the flat now had glass now at the stairs. It's been designed in a different way. My heart pains when I look at it...just to think we used to live there". All the participants expressed a deep desire to return to their previous home, as one participant stated: "I wish that I could go back...I prefer to be on that side...The location is better... and it was

safe...and secure". They also longed for privacy: "I wish I had my own space again...we could be alone...have time on our own". Another participant missed having the freedom to do the things that she enjoyed in her own space "without bothering anyone". However, one participant felt that it was unlikely that they would be able to return because "the flat is more expensive. It's changed. It's been redone".

The essence of displacement associated with gentrification

By drawing on the individual, personal experiences of the participants, a composite description of the experience of displacement of the group as a whole was derived. This represents a synthesis of the qualities, meanings and essences of the experience of displacement.

Displacement associated with gentrification is a traumatic experience that inflicts considerable hardships on the experiencer. It deprives people of a place to call home and it renders poor and vulnerable people homeless. The displaced end up in spaces and situations that are worse than where they were before, which increases their vulnerability. Displacement is therefore seen as an act of deep injustice.

Painful feelings and emotional suffering are associated with the experience, along with anger and anxiety. Displacement is a stressful event in which the body is affected, which in turn has an impact on the overall well-being of those displaced. One of the most difficult aspects of displacement is related to the self. The humiliation and degradation suffered as a consequence of the experience affects self-esteem and self-worth.

Displacement affects the everyday lives of those displaced, disturbing the set patterns and routines of daily life. Needless to say, it also impacts people's relations to others and it disrupts family as people are forced to relocate elsewhere. Displacement destroys the familiar and it leads to an unfamiliarity of place, situations and people. Being situated in an unfamiliar structure, such as a homeless shelter and a new neighbourhood, leads to discomfort and unease, which in turn creates greater insecurity.

Time appears to diminish feelings of anxiety associated with displacement, but these feelings quickly resurface again. The possibility of being displaced again is not far from the minds of those displaced. It engenders a state of uncertainty and discontent in life. Thoughts about the future, particularly of finding a new home, evoke feelings of fear and anxiety, which at times lead to despair, hopelessness and a sense of powerlessness.

The experience of displacement is associated with a longing for the past, a longing to be reunited with family and friends and a longing for what seemed to be impossible at that time – a new home. Slowly, the displaced begin to accept their fate, but there is still a sense of hope in them – an expectation that one day things will change for the better. Therefore, despite their past experiences and their dire present circumstances, the participants were still orientated towards the future.

The essence of displacement associated with gentrification is therefore one of a profound sense of loss – a loss of home, family, friends and a sense of community. It is also the loss of a past life which may lead to a loss of self, that is, of who an individual once was. Displacement therefore results in dramatic changes in the lifeworld of the experiencer.

Discussion and conclusions

By using the methodology of phenomenology, this article has uncovered the essence of displacement from the perspective of individuals who had first-hand experience of the process. It has demonstrated the profound effect that socio-spatial restructuring can have on the lifeworlds of already vulnerable people living in precarious situations. The findings have confirmed previous research that the experience of displacement is deeply traumatic and it affects people physically, psychologically, emotionally and materially. The participants were deprived of their homes, a lived space where they could feel safe and be themselves and follow their own routines (Silfverberg & Ternestedt, 2007; cited in Ness et al., 2014). The findings also show that displacement disrupts social and familial networks and community bonds, which is consistent with Atkinson (2015) and Marcuse's (1985) research. Although words such as "grief" or "mourning" were not used, the participants nonetheless conveyed a deep sense of sadness and loss in their personal narratives.

The physical trauma and the emotional and social costs of displacement had an impact on the health and well-being of the participants, which in turn disrupted their everyday lifeworlds. Similar to Wilder et al. (2017), Fullilove and Wallace (2011) and Watt's (2018) findings, the participants reported experiencing negative emotions such as fear, anxiety and feelings of injustice. Displacement was also found to harm the participants' self-confidence and self-esteem. They were broken in spirit, and some had a noticeable "sense of dejection" (Atkinson, 2015) where they conveyed feelings of hopelessness and helplessness about the future. Many participants' narratives were reminiscent of the psychological pain and the deep emotional toll that people suffered during apartheid because they were forcibly removed from their homes to the periphery of cities (Hart, 1988).

A striking omission in the participants' narratives was that they did not articulate an emotional attachment to their previous neighbourhood or a connection to the wider community. Instead, they felt attached to the building where they had lived and its inhabitants. It was "home" and a place where they experienced a sense of community and belonging. The finding of an absence of a deep emotional attachment to the area is aligned with what Martin (2005) found, where working-class residents in a gentrifying area were more concerned about the material aspects of their life such as facilities, safety and shopping conveniences. Although some participants did express a desire to return to their previous neighbourhood, there was a much deeper desire to have their own private space again, irrespective of its location in the inner city. For the participants, losing their home was a more pressing issue than losing their neighbourhood. This may be attributed to the fact that the participants were relatively recent migrants to Johannesburg and as such strong connections to the neighbourhood had not yet been established.

Despite their strong desire for a home, the participants' confidence in securing a place of their own seemed to wane with the passage of time. There was a "sense of fatalism" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 381) in that they seemed to accept that they were going to still live at the shelter for some time. This diminished sense of agency was due to their dire financial situations, the lack of suitable, affordable housing in the inner city and their calls for help being ignored by the municipality. Therefore, the outcomes of gentrification were not positive. Instead of benefitting the

poor, as some have argued, their everyday lives were made worse, particularly since they were left destitute and homeless. Displacement therefore contributes to the reproduction of urban poverty (Desmond, 2012) and increased inequality in society (Desmond, 2016).

As South African inner cities become more populated with middle-class people, long-time residents are likely to experience increased housing affordability pressures, displacement anxiety and a loss of a sense of place and belonging. Policies therefore need to be developed that meet the needs of all people, particularly those who were once denied the right to dwell in the inner city during apartheid and were relegated to the most undesirable land on the periphery of cities. It is hoped that through this article a greater awareness is created of the implications of gentrification for low-income households. Future research has a key role to play in exposing the injustices of gentrification and providing further evidence that it is not a benign process as some have suggested. Moreover, further research is needed on the effects of displacement on people's health and well-being (Hyra et al., 2019) as poor and vulnerable communities are at increased risk of the negative health effects of gentrification (Wilder, et al., 2017) and are also less likely to cope with these challenges (Pearsall, 2012).

In closing, Marcuse (2010, p. 87) reminds us that the issue of displacement and its affective dimensions need to be at the forefront of research on gentrification, if we are to fully understand this process and the harmful effects that it has on people:

> If the pain of displacement is not a central component of what we are dealing with in studying gentrification… we are not just missing one factor in a multi-factorial equation, we are missing the central point that needs to be addressed.

Therefore, as gentrification progresses and becomes more entrenched in South Africa, alternatives need to be proposed and action taken to mitigate the displacement of the most vulnerable in society, as having a place to call home is critical to maintaining one's dignity and chances in life (Madden & Marcuse, 2016).

Acknowledgements

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