

**The Meaning of *Ukuthwasa*:
Urban Youth Perspectives on Social Change
and the Persistence of tradition in the
Eastern Cape**



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Declaration

I, Ziyanda Claire Xaso declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has been not submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university, and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in African Studies at the University of Fort Hare, East London

Signature _____



Date _____

15 APRIL 2016



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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my parents, Mr and Mrs Sigidimi Harold Xaso who have been there for me every step of the way and unwavering in their support and to Sive, Nandi, Liyema and Lolwethu, the future of South Africa.



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Abstract

This study looks at the continued persistence of precolonial cultural practices that thrive despite social, political and economic changes. It looks specifically at the process of “*ukuthwasa*” (the calling to be traditional healer or diviner) of urban youth in post-apartheid South Africa and how “*ukuthwasa*” impacts their psychosocial identity formation. The investigation is done through semi-structured interviews that focus on the life experiences of the initiate and the transformative nature of the practice that is able to redirect the psychosocial identity formation of the urban youth and invariably reorder a social systems. This invariably ensures the continuity of the practice even though it exhibits signs of integration with other influences such as Christianity. It shows that cultural changes that stem from economic development are extensive but are path dependent and have an imprint of the cultural heritage of the society, hence persistence. This is contrary to the prediction of a homogenised modernity by early modernization theorists. This highlights the relevance of persistent practices in modern society which can be used to deal with issues of youth identity.

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Firstly I would like to thank God for the series of events that have led to this moment, only he could have gotten me here despite the fact that sometimes I was unable to see the forest for the trees.

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Definition of Terms

Term

Igqirha; umntu omhlophe, isangoma
(Zulu)

Meaning

Diviner or healer is a hereditary ability to divine and or diagnose what cannot be explained through a process that is called “*ukuvumisa*” which is a word meaning to agree in Xhosa. The “*ukuvumisa*” or consultation of ancestors can be done by the throwing of the bones, inducement of a trance state or the interpretation of dreams. Diviners act as a link between the living world and that of the living dead (ancestors). They are initiated into this work through a process called “*ukuthwasa*” that can use the medium of the river people or the animals of the jungle.

Idlozi (Zulu), Izinyanya (Xhosa)

Intlombe; umgidi; xhentsa

Intonjane

Intwaso; inkathazo; ingulo emhlophe

Ixhwele – amaxhwele (pl.)

Ancestors

Ceremony; dance

Female initiation

Trouble; cultural madness; white sickness; ancestral sickness; noun of *ukuthwasa*

Herbalist/herbalists is a person that is skilled in the use of the different parts of herbs, plants or trees in the healing of others. They use the roots, leaves and bark of a wide variety of medicinal plants in the form of infusion, decoctions, pastes, powders or steam; certain part of animals (mammals and reptiles) are also used. The medicines are drunk, usually as purgatives, applied externally as washes or as plasters, used for gargling or as enemas or rubbed into incisions in the skin. Besides treating people herbalists also treat kraals, homes, livestock, and crops to protect them from evil influences and to make them prosper.

	The knowledge of these medicines may be obtained from relatives or directly from ancestral spirits who reveal them in a dream.
<i>Ubizo</i>	Calling
<i>Ubugqwirha; ubuthi; ubugqi</i>	Witchcraft; magic
<i>Ukuthwala</i>	Gaining powers for wealth
<i>Ukuthwasa; thwasa</i>	To emerge, to be initiated as an <i>igqirha</i> ; accept <i>ukuthwasa</i>
<i>Umprofethi/umthandazeli – abathandazeli (plural)</i>	Faith-healers are diviners who are Christians and believe that their powers come from God and use Holy Spirit, holy water, laying of hands, prayer and ash to heal.
<i>Ingcibi</i>	Traditional surgeon Is a person who performs traditional circumcision for the cultural practice of initiation of boys into manhood.
<i>Ababelekisi</i>	Birth Attendants or Traditional Midwives Is a person who helps women before, during and after the birthing process?

Chapter One: Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter puts the research into context through an outline of the background of the study and its relevance in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter outlines the research problem, question and objectives of the study as well as the significance of this study.

1.2 Background to the Study

The end of apartheid in South Africa came with political, social and economic changes that impacted the social identity of all South Africans. The post-apartheid government has had a clear strategy for the national identity with the Mandela era's focus being on the new South Africa which gave birth to the Rainbow Nation metaphor (Bornman, 2010:239). The Mbeki era brought with it a supranational identity discourse which focused on the African Renaissance which used the speech he gave at the passing of the new constitution of South Africa "I am an African" as part of its campaign. The Zuma era has been criticised as having brought back a focus on sub-national identity that has been blamed for the flares of xenophobia and tribalism in the country. This coupled with the changes that have occurred in the country has had an impact on culture and social identity of South Africans resulting in identification with multiple social groups (Bornman, 2010:239). This can have the implication of reducing a person's attachment to their ethnic group if there is a stronger identification with another social group such as nationality (Ascher & Heffron, 2010:2). This can lead to an essentialist view of the culture that was a driving force behind 19th century eugenics (Papastergiadis, 2000:169). This breeds a perception of culture being destroyed by change and leading to the marginalization of the social group that identifies with it, eliciting the need to defend it (Papastergiadis, 2000:105; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:57).

The historical definition of culture as a territorial and bounded whole with distinct characteristics of the social group it belongs to is partly to blame for this (Papastergiadis, 2000:103). This created a separate "us" and "them" attitude that territorialized culture and did not acknowledge the porous nature of the cultural boundaries and viewed hybridization as a threat to cultural purity (Papastergiadis,

2000:169). Cultural purity is itself an illusion as cultures continuously evolve and integrate through porous cultural boundaries that are increasingly permeable due to globalization (Papastergiadis, 2000:109 & 169). Yet there are cultural rituals and practices that predate colonialism which continue to exist and thrive through social, political and economic changes. This research looks at the example of "*ukuthwasa*" (the calling to become traditional healer or diviner) (Papastergiadis, 2000; Ascher & Heffron, 2010; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Westerlund, 2006).

"*Ukuthwasa*" is the calling from ancestors to undergo training and become a traditional healer (Mlisa, 2009: xxv). "*Ukuthwasa*" and its training consists of a number of rituals that the novice healer goes through before they graduate and become fully fledged healers. The calling initially manifests itself during adolescent years in the form of "*inkathazo*" or troubles. These troubles plague the life of the person with the calling until they acknowledge it. This is a practice that predates colonialism and survived even though it shows some signs of evolution. The changes that have occurred in South Africa have had an impact on "*ukuthwasa*" which had had the implications of some members of its community viewing these as a threat to its survival. What the research shows is the fact that despite the changes, the practice is surviving and thriving and is showing signs of evolution.

This research looks at cultural continuities in an environment that has had significant social, political and economic changes and is currently being impacted by globalization. This is an area that has been extensively researched by scholars and the consensus is that the persistence of cultural rituals is path dependent and that survival of traditions are unique in each changing environment (Papastergiadis, 2000; Ascher & Heffron, 2010; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Westerlund, 2006). They also agree that this is not a phenomenon that is unique among developing nations but also occurs in developed nations. This research is an addition to the existing literature from the perspective of "*ukuthwasa*" of urban youth.

1.3 Research Problem

As human beings we have an inborn need to be recognised; it affirms for us our identity which is why the two are so interconnected (Taylor, Appiah, Haberman, Rockefeller, Walzer, Wolf, 1994:25). Our identity is our understanding of who we are at the core.

It is these core characteristics that define us as human beings (Taylor, et al, 1994:25). We are not the only shapers of our identity; the society we live in plays a more prominent role than we think (Taylor, et al, 1994:25). How we are viewed, ignored or incorrectly labelled by others and our society is part of what shapes our identity (Taylor, et al, 1994:25). This is why individuals and/or groups of people that have people or society around them that reflects back to them a confining, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves suffer from a damaged and distorted image of who they are (Taylor, et al, 1994:25). This leads to an essentialist view of group identity such as cultural identity which translates to there being a group that is excluded from the inner circle (Rudwick, 2008: 113). The urban South African youth and especially those that attend former model c schools are seen as westernized and are labelled “coconuts” because of their use of English as their main language for communication (Rudwick, 2008: 113). A “coconut” is a label that is given to individuals that are perceived as “acting white”, are too westernised and rejecting their culture (Rudwick, 2008: 110 - 111). This is why the research focuses on post-apartheid youth who have been impacted by the changes in South Africa and globalization from a young age. Their identities are shaped by their experiences and their core beliefs and values are put into question when they go through “*ukuthwasa*” while dealing with essentialist views regarding their training and conduct (Mlisa, 2009:234).

Identity has been established by scholars as being non-static, multifaceted, and context-dependent; as being in a perpetual state of negotiation and renegotiation; and as having a similar approach to culture (Rudwick, 2008: 108; Taylor et al., 1994:34; Côté & Levine, 2002:37; Marcia et al., 1993:100). But elders of societies that are thought of as custodians of culture become reluctant to allow the youth space for cultural innovation as they perceive this as an erosion and destruction of the culture (Rudwick, 2008: 108). They argue that the loss of the mother tongue or the non-use of it is a major indicator of this culture loss (Rudwick, 2008: 108). To them not speaking a mother tongue is seen as the rejection of one’s culture, heritage and ethnicity and this is why language, culture and identity are interlinked (Rudwick, 2008: 108). This type of attitude from elders is one that fuels the marginalization of those that are labelled “coconuts” and traps them in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being (Taylor et al., 1994:25). By labelling them this classifies them as “not normal” and negatively represents their identity which is mirrored back to them by their society in a

confining and contemptible picture that lead to further marginalization and exclusion from what one can classify as the inner circle (Taylor et al, 1994:26). These are some of the challenges that these modern initiates have to deal with during their training and throughout their practice.

The process of "*ukuthwasa*" is an extremely cultural and language based process. It has its own language that includes a list of terms and sayings that are part of the process of initiation and which will be used by the initiate during and after their training to full practitioner status (Mlisa, 2009: xxii - xxvi). The training and the experiences of the initiate depends heavily on their connection with their ancestors (Wreford, 2007:831; Ngcobo, 2013; Ntombela, 2013; Hlatshwayo, 2012). They guide, direct and drive the process through the dreams of the initiate (Mlisa, 2009: 136; Wreford, 2007:831; Ngcobo, 2013; Ntombela, 2013; Hlatshwayo, 2012, Bernard 2010). This is why the training can be distinct from one initiate to another and can be challenging to distinguish the different stages of the process (Mlisa, 2009: 136; Wreford, 2007:831). Although the initiate normally receives training under an experienced healer, the training is mainly driven by ancestors (Mlisa, 2009; Wreford, 2007; Bernard 2010). They are the ones that inform the initiate when the time is right for them to move to the next stage and how the ceremony should be performed (Mlisa, 2009; Wreford, 2007). Some ancestors even tell their initiates what they must wear and whether they can be involved in other life activities during their training such as going schools or having a jobs (Mlisa, 2009; Wreford, 2007; Nkosi, 2011; Hlatshwayo, 2012).

1.4 Research Questions

This research will address the following questions;

- a) How does the precolonial practice of "*ukuthwasa*" thrive and persist in an urban society?
- b) What is the impact of "*ukuthwasa*" on the identity of westernized urban youth?
- c) How is "*ukuthwasa*" able to persist and thrive despite the social and political changes of South Africa?

1.5 Research Objectives

Through the experiences of urban youths, the research aims to do an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of “*ukuthwasa*” demonstrating the persistence of this pre-colonial practice despite the changes that have occurred in the country and the westernization of urban youth. Therefore the objectives of this study are as follows;

- a) To explore the experiences of urban initiates before and during “*ukuthwasa*” focusing on how they are able to reconcile their westernization with such a precolonial and traditional practice.
- b) To investigate how “*ukuthwasa*” impacts the identity of the young urban initiates and the challenges they face due to the western traditional dichotomy.
- c) To critically analyse the persistence of “*ukuthwasa*” in light of the social and political changes of South Africa.

1.6 Significance of Study

As stated in the introduction the social and political changes in South Africa have had an impact on the group identity dynamics of the country. These changes have had a major impact on the generation born after the first South African elections, called the born-frees. This generation has been accused of being too westernized and of taking their freedom for granted due to their perceived lack of involvement in the political and socio-economic issues of the country. They have been compared to the youth of 1976 who were at the forefront of the fight against apartheid. The situation was further exasperated by a parody picture that went viral in 2011 of youths mimicking the famous picture of Hector Pieterse with a drunken Hector holding two beer bottles (see **Picture 1**) and another version in 2015 (see **Picture 2**) (Louw, 2014). The disdain and disapproval further heightened by the lack of participation by the born-frees in the 2014 elections. There is a school of thought that believes that this generation is a lost generation that has lost touch with who they are and therefore lacks identity and purpose.

Picture 1 - 2011 Parody of the photograph of Hector Pieterse



Source 1 - Northglen News (2014)¹

¹ The photograph was circulated in social media on June 16, 2011 and went viral. (<http://northglennews.co.za/47871/trivialising-national-youth-day-funny/>, 2014).

Picture 2 - 2015 Parody of the photograph of Hector Pieterse



Source 2 - Twitter Account (2015)²

This research shows that persistent practices such as “*ukuthwasa*” are a crucial part of identity formation. It shows that these practices are important and relevant tools of identity formation especially in an era where there are so many options available for youth when constructing their identity.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

Delimitations of a study are the characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study which are in the control of the researcher (Creswell, 2014:325). The main focus of the study is on youth that were born or grew up in post-apartheid South Africa because they grew up in a period of change that impacted on and influenced their identity. The scope of the study was restricted to include the denial, acceptance and training stages of the calling because they were the stages that the initiates had gone through or were still going through at the time of the research. For ease of access and to ensure entry initiation schools were targeted rather than individual initiates outside the school. This allowed for a large pool of candidates to be accessed in one place but could have the implication of restricted

² (<https://twitter.com/taunyanar>, 2015)

conversations with the initiates. This was countered by focusing on their lived experiences and lessons learned, steering away from any questions about the trainer and details of the training.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

Limitations of the study are characteristics of design or methodology that sets parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study which can include constraints on generalizability and utility of findings (Babbie, 2007:357). The use of purposive sampling has the possible implications of limiting the study with respect to wide generalizability (Berg, 2001:32). In the study multiple collection methods and triangulation are used to minimise this.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 - Provides an overview and scope of the study by providing the background and objectives.

Chapter 2 – Outlines the literature used to explore the research and outline the theoretical framework that the study is based on.

Chapter 3 – Provides details about the design and methodology applied in the study as well as the data collection method utilised.

Chapter 4 – The results of the research are presented and analysed.

Chapter 5 – The research results are put into perspective with respect to the challenges faced by initiates and South African youth.

Chapter 6 – A summary of the study is done with conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Conceptualising Culture, Custom and Identity

2.1 Introduction

The section covers the literature review and theoretical framework of the study by looking at *“ukuthwasa”* with respect to its impact on identity formation. It outlines the theories of identity formation that are applicable in a modern society and juxtaposes them against rites of passage which are practices that originate from a precolonial era and were an integral part of the attainment of personhood and cultural identity. This is to illustrate the relevance of both when it comes to the identity formation and importance of persistent practices in augmenting modern lifestyles that lack essential tools for identity formation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Anfara & Mertz (2006) define theoretical framework as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social science and/ or psychological processes, at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of a phenomena. This definition is not exhaustive and excludes definitions of some scholars that relate it to paradigm of research and those that link it to methodological issues or approaches (Givens, 2008:871, Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xxvii). Despite this the qualitative researcher still has a plethora of options when it comes to choosing a theoretical framework as they can emerge from different fields of study (Givens, 2008:871, Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xxvii).

The central theories of this research are those of identity formation and of cultural change and persistence. With respect to identity formation, the research will look at the psychosocial theory of identity formation initially proposed by Erik Erikson (1956, 1977). The reason for using Erikson's theory is because views both the social and psychological aspects of identity as integral to identity formation. Erikson (1956, 1977) maps identity in terms of the psychosocial developmental stages of human life cycle. Marcia (1993) then expands on Erikson's (1956) theory by identifying three aspects of identity formation namely, structural, phenomenological and behavioural. They both agree that identity formation occurs in late adolescence which marks the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood and this is the stage where troubles *“inkathazo”* begin in most initiates. I propose that the timing of these troubles is not coincidental because adolescence this is the only stage whereby any radical changes

to identity that are contrary to past views can be changed. This implies that even if a novice had no familiarity of traditional practices or had negative views of “*ukuthwasa*” it was possible for them to be changed. This is the identity-identity diffusion stage that Erikson (1956, 1977) refers to and states that if a balance is not achieved, then the individual experiences an identity crisis that will persist until balance is restored. This also has the implication that the individual will not be able to move on to the next stage of life if this one is left unresolved.

Erikson (1956, 1997) defined “identity crisis” as a severely conflicted and confusing stage in young lives because of the internal war they experience during this time. The stability of one’s identity lies in the ongoing interplay between the social and the psychic. Once a viable social identity that is based on the commitments and roles that integrate you to a particular culture, and psychological sense of the ego identity is nurtured then one is able to deal with outside forces and there is continuity in their sense of self (Côté & Levin, 2002; Erikson, 1956; Marcia et al, 1993; Moshman, 2005). Côté and Levin (2002:177) view Erikson’s (1956, 1997) view on the stability of identity in the context of 3 forms of continuity which are;

- “A sense of sameness of the self within itself (ego identity). This the ego identity and the sense of self-sameness over time”.
- “Inter-relationship between the self and the other. A person’s relationship with others that maintains the stability of personal and social identities and discontinuity threatens stability of identities but a strong ego helps to get the person through”.
- “Functional integrations between other and other. The stability of relations in a particular community or group. Problems here can cause challenges in the transition to adulthood”.

When all these are stable and continuous, people’s personal and social identities within a community are safeguarded. When they are unstable as in crisis mode then people’s personal and social identities come under pressure and may undergo revision.

Malinowski (1945) states that cultural change can occur through cultural evolution or diffusion, with the former occurring through innovative new ideas from within a culture and the latter through the integration and influence that occurs when two cultures meet. Post-apartheid South Africa has had political, social and economic changes that were part of the democratization process of the country. This process modernized the country and had a marked impact on culture (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:1).

Looking at the South Africa context, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that 80% of South Africans use traditional healers³ and a significant portion of the population performs cultural rites of passage (Gqaleni et al, 2007:176). Even though these continuities exist, there is evidence that these rituals are impacted by change and influenced by what happens in their environment. The values of a society change as socioeconomic development takes place and this leads to noticeable changes that affect policies of governance, gender issues, good governance and democracy (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:1).

Through technology, internet and social media the world is part of a global village that is knowledge based. This knowledge society is affecting the value of human to human contact and is fostering a sense of individual autonomy, self-expression and free choice. Inglehart & Welzel (2005) state that these emerging self-expression values are transforming modernization into a process of human development, giving rise to a new type of humanistic society that is increasingly people-centred. They state that;

Modernization is evolving into a process of human development, in which socioeconomic development brings cultural changes that make individual autonomy, gender equality, and democracy increasingly likely, giving rise to a new type of society that promotes human emancipation on many fronts" (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:2).

2.3 Identity Formation

Adolescence is a crucial stage in human development because it is the identity formation stage (Erikson, 1977; Côté & Levin, 2002; Marcia et al, 1993). Marcia (1993) states that;

The formation of an ego identity is a major event in the development of personality. Occurring during late adolescence, the consolidation of identity marks the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood.

In layman's terms, identity is our ongoing search for the answer to the question, "Who am I"? In the past who you are was pre-determined by the role you held in that community or society. Your identity, its different stages and time frame of each stage, were pre-determined by the role and obligations you had within that society (Côté & Levin, 2002; Marcia et al, 1993). Rituals and rites of passages were the tools that were used by societies to assist individual with the transition from one stage of life to the next with minimum stress (Asante & Mazama, 2009:570). This meant that there was

³ www.who.org & www.hst.org.za

less confusion or “crisis” when it comes to identity formation as there was already a blueprint mapping your life. This blueprint gave individuals the tools they needed to navigate through possible identity crisis with minimum turmoil (Erikson, 1977; Côté & Levin, 2002; Marcia et al, 1993).

In our modern society the shift has been to a more individualised sense of identity which goes hand in hand with freedom of choice and a diminished role of culture in identity formation. Individuals now are able to forgo some of the obligation that went with identity formation and freely form their own autonomous identity (Côté & Levin, 2002; Hall & du Gay, 1996). This is true in the case of South Africa. The political change that came about in 1994 also influenced all areas of life and brought about change that had a direct impact on culture and cultural practices such as “*ukuthwasa*”. The move from apartheid to democracy opened doors for South Africa to become part of a global community. The diminished role of culture in identity formation, the autonomy and choice that comes with modernity has meant that the modern youth lacks the tools they need to deal with the physical and psychological changes that come with adolescence leading to this period being one filled with turmoil, stress and emotional angst termed by Erikson as an identity crisis (Erikson, 1978:277; Côté & Levin, 2002:15; Marcia et al, 1993:48; Bosma & Jackson, 1990:19; Hall & du Gay, 1996:4; Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003:8).

A big part of our identity is influenced by how society sees us, it fulfils the innate need for recognition by our community and society (Taylor et al, 1994:25)⁴. This is more so during the adolescent years during which there is a high susceptibility to influence that can lead to life choices that can have an impact on the course of one’s life (Head, 1997:68; Moshman, 2005:148). In addition to this innate need for recognition, our identity at a certain point in time is made up of our cumulative life experiences to that point and the vision that we have of ourselves in the future (Marcia et al, 1993:3; Garrett, 1998:41; Erikson, 1965; Taylor et al, 1994:25). Marcia (1993) and Erikson (1965) state that;

⁴ “The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves (Taylor et al, 1994:25).”

Identity formation involves a synthesis of childhood skills, beliefs and identifications into a more or less coherent, unique whole that provides the young adult with both a sense of continuity with the past and a direction for the future.

From this one can infer that identity has a social and psychosocial element and we are able to switch between these two automatically (Côté & Levin, 2002). Society and the world around us play a crucial role in how we formulate our identity. In the past social identity was a lot more role based. One grew up in a community that had specific roles and during their life they are prepared into occupying specific roles at different stages of life and this is the case in orthodox African religion (Côté & Levin, 2002:1), (Gyekye & Wiredu, 1992:114).

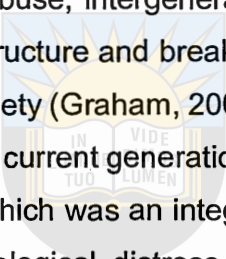
Social self is about the ties that we have with social groups such as cultural groups and the recognitions that we receive from them. Côté & Levin (2002) and Taylor (1994) agree about our inborn need⁵ to be recognised in a favourable light by our kind and that we have as many social selves as the number of people in society that recognize us, plus we present to society the number of selves that are determined by the groups of people that we desire recognition from and whose opinion of ourselves we care about. How others see and perceive us informs our identity regardless of how true or false those perceptions are (Taylor et al, 1994:25). Taylor (1994) argues that this misrecognition can be "a form of oppression that imprisons an individual in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being and can lead to their adoption of this misrepresentation and self-depreciation". This is reflected in adolescence through their consumption patterns that seeks to mark and mask differences in the process of identity construction (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010:229; Hill, 2011:341). Urban youth with the calling are particularly vulnerable to this misrepresentation because the symptoms and behaviour they exhibit due to troubles can lead to them being labelled as suffering from mental disorders or physical ailments that cannot be seen by western medicine (Booi, 2004:4).

⁵ "The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves (Taylor et al, 1994:25)."

In modern society there is unlimited freedom in terms of identity formation and individuals have a variety of choices that have replaced (Moshman, 2005:19; Côté & Levin, 2002:2). This has led to self-definition being complex, individualistic and highly stressful due to lack tools that can assist individuals make identity formation choices (Côté & Levin, 2002:2; Erikson, 1959:111). Côté & Levin (2002) state;

.....the process of forming an adult identity has become dramatically different for most people in Western societies, and many people have not developed the means for coping with a process that allows them to make choices, the consequences of which they may have to live with for the remainder of their lives.

The change in family structure due to factors such as the legacy of apartheid, urbanization, poverty, substance abuse, intergeneration sex and HIV/AIDS has had the effect of changing the family structure and breaking ties of kinship which are part of the cultural values of African society (Graham, 2006:81; Oyedele & Minor, 2012:93; Clark, 2012:83). This has led to the current generation's lack of support, guidance and mentorship from parental figures which was an integral part of village and communal living which contributes to psychological distress and disempowerment of young people (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012:1018).


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Even though our identity formation is more individualistic, group dynamics still come into play when it comes to how we categorise ourselves into different social categories whenever we encounter contrast and this is reflected in our consumption patterns (Côté & Levin, 2002:8; Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010:229; Hill, 2011:341). These self-defined or created groups are ones that lead to the phenomenon of in-group and out-group. We have a desire to be recognised in the in-group of our choosing especially when we feel like the values and characteristics they display resonate with our own (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010:229; Hill, 2011:341). This stems from group categorisation, which we do when we encounter contrast, and group identification, which we do when we want to highlight similarities, against those we deem dissimilar (Côté & Levin, 2002:8; Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010:229; Hill, 2011:341). The implications of this to someone who has the calling is that suddenly they will find themselves being outcasts, separated from their friends and being part of the out-group. When their trainer is revealed to them, they are then able to move in with the trainer and become a member of the trainer's household along with any other initiates that the trainer is training. This gives them an environment that is accepting of what they are currently going through and people who have also gone through the same

experience. This now becomes the new in-group and the novice suddenly notices all the things that he or she has in common with fellow initiates.

Erikson (1956) identified three dimensions to psychosocial identity formation, i.e. the social, psychosocial and subjective/psychological dimension. The first two have already been discussed, the latter one deals with ego identity. Erikson (1956) theorised that the ego identity is a constant reference point that was used in the identity formation process and lack of clarity would result in a crisis (Côté & Levin, 2002:16; Erikson, 1956; Marcia et al, 1993; Moshman, 2005).

Identity reaches a form of resolution once all three dimension of identity are in alignment. This is when a firm ego identity is developed which is able to shield the individual from any outside forces that might influence them, and when behaviour and character is stable enough for them to be able to acquire acceptable roles in the community (Côté & Levin, 2002:16; Erikson, 1965:14). Identity formation is an ongoing process that involves negotiation and renegotiation within the individual but when the three dimensions align the person is always able to regulate themselves in terms of their psychosocial identity, so even if the society at large reflects negative images, one has the mental capabilities to deal with them. This is why understanding the initiate training and rituals is important, it builds and aligns all three dimensions of the initiate's identity so that they can be self-assured healers. There is a lot of negativity that surround traditional healing which the initiates encounter during their training and throughout their practice, having a solid view of themselves and what they do means that they are able to deal with this negativity.

2.4 Cultural Change and Persistence

The anthropological view of culture which was adopted from the German word 'cultur' and had the effect of viewing cultures as a complete whole with specific identities attached to it (Papastergiadis, 2000:104, Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Smith, 2001). It confines culture to a specific territory and space with carefully constructed borders that distinctly separate one from the other (Papastergiadis, 2004:104). It presupposes independence and leads to essentialists views of culture that invariably lead to calls for its defence and preservation (Papastergiadis, 2004:104). Culture is one of the core drivers behind the formation of our social identity. It is culture that sets out the

expectations and stages of life for an individual through practices such as rites of passage. Historically when identity was role and obligation based culture and custom were the compasses that showed the way and provided the tools one needed to go from one life stage to another.

Culture change occurs whenever there is any modification in the way of life of a people which can result in internal developments or in the contact between two people with different ways of life (Spindler & Spindler, 1959:37). Bronislaw Malinowski (1945) defines culture change as;

...a process whereby the existing order of a society which includes its social, spiritual and material civilization is transformed from one type into another.

This includes any changes in the politics of a society, in the domestic institutions of the society and the modes of territorial settlement; beliefs and system of knowledge, education and law, as well as in its material tools and their uses, and the consumption of goods on which its social economy is based (Malinowski, 1945:1). Malinowski saw culture change as a 'permanent factor of human civilization'. He believed that it can occur within a community without any outside influence and referred to this as the independent evolution of culture. He also recognised that it can happen through the contact of different cultures whereby cultures influence each other and he called this diffusion.

Early theorists of modernization argued that modernization in the form of economic development would bring about cultural changes that would lead to the homogenization of culture (Inglehart & Baker, 2000:19; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993:xi; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:21). Inglehart and Baker (2000) used data from the World Values Surveys to test this and found that even though economic development resulted in massive cultural changes there were distinctive cultural traditions that persisted. The results also showed that cultures were not changing and moving towards a homogenised culture but were carving their own path that was parallel to other cultures and the path was dependent on their own cultural heritage and values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). What this means is that modernization impacts different societies in different ways and cultural change and persistence is culture dependent (Inglehart & Baker, 2000:49). Comaroff and Comaroff

(1993) in their book *Modernity and its Malcontents* emphasise this by looking at different persistent practices in different societies in Africa and state;

despite the predictions of modernization theory and historical materialism, the world has not been reduced to sameness and that 'there are, in short, many modernities'" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993: 18).

They agree with Inglehart & Baker (2000) that it should not be assumed that this is only applicable to developing societies but is applicable to all societies:

We privilege Africa, then, not only to understand better its contemporary predicament. We do so also to make the point that its modern history illuminates the very general, dialectical workings of global processes and transnational forces as they encounter human beings where they live: in local communities, that is, be they in Chicago, Shoshong, or shanty-town South Africa, in Onitsha, Oyo, or oases in the Sahel, in London, Lagos, and countless little villages all over the planet." (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000:xxxi)

2.5 Rites of Passage

In African society religion is an inseparable part of the fabric of everyday life and rituals are there to punctuate all aspects of African life (Lugira, 2009:64). Rites of passage such as "*ukuthwasa*" consist of a collection of rituals that are performed to punctuate the transformation and transition of an individual through the different stages of life in their pursuit of personhood (Wiredu, 2004:326; Asante & Mazama, 2009:570). The African concept of personhood is that of acquiring the status of being human which is achieved through interactions with the community (Wiredu, 2004:326; Asante & Mazama, 2009:521). The community plays an important role as both the catalyst and prescriber of norms and meanings that stress that one cannot exist or attain the status of being human without social relations and involvement in a community (Wiredu, 2004:326). Through rituals one's transition is publicly affirmed and acknowledged. Personhood in African society is not a birth right but is a value laden concept that is pursued and sometimes achieved or not achieved (Wiredu, 2004:326; Asante & Mazama, 2009:523). The prominence of community in such societies means that parents are not the only source of guidance and mentorship, the entire community is involved in affirming appropriate behaviour and redirecting or remedying behaviour that is viewed as improper.

2.5.1 The Calling (*Ukuthwasa*)

The call to become a traditional healer is called "*ukuthwasa*", a Xhosa word meaning to emerge, to come out, and it manifests itself through "*inkathazo*" or troubles (Hirst,

1990:23, 1997 & 2005; Mlisa, 2009; Boo, 2004:9). *"Intwaso"* is a well-researched and documented mystical phenomenon by scholars of various fields, but anthropologists were some of the first to try to understand it from a cultural perspective (Hirst, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2005; Turner, 1975; de Jager & Gitywa, 1963; Mlisa, 2009; Bührmann, 1981; Bührmann & Gqomfa, 1982). There has been further research from other disciplines including medical and mental health science, despite the problem of the essentially Eurocentric assumptions that commonly misdiagnosis of the condition. Parents usually turn to traditional healers as a last resort, after they have exhausted their options in western medicine (Ashforth, 2005:6). Families often consult with more than one traditional healer to confirm the diagnosis of *"intwaso"* (Boo, 2004:3). Even in the case of parents who are traditional healers, they find it difficult to accept the diagnosis for their children even if they were aware of it. They do not want their children to go through the process because of the hardship and challenges that initiates and traditional healers go through in their journey and continue on for the rest of their lives (Mlisa, 2009:6, 221; Boo, 2004:10). Medical and mental health practitioners easily misdiagnosed *"intwaso"* because the signs and symptoms of *"intwaso"* are similar to those of people with anxiety issues, mental issues and personality disorders (Boo, 2004:10; Bührmann, 1986). The research done by mental health professionals has helped to strengthen the validity of the calling which can manifest itself as early as pre-adolescence even though it frequently manifests in adolescence (Boo, 2004:26 & 44; Mlisa, 2009).

"Ukuthwasa" is a word that refers to the calling that an individual has to become an initiate or novice *"umkhwetha"* and train to become a traditional healer called *"igqirha"* in Xhosa. The calling is referred to as an illness as it manifests itself in the form of severe sickness that is referred to as troubles *"inkathazo"* in Xhosa. This sickness seems to be a common thread in the lives of diviners, healers, mediums and shamans around the world (Boo, 2004:2; Hoppál, 2007; Harvey & Wallis, 2007). They sometimes referred to as "wounded healers" which is a term from Carl Jung regarding the fact that what draws a psychoanalysts to their work is their own wounds. What draws them to traditional healing is their own sickness stemming from *"inkathazo"* and through their healing and training they then acquire the skills to be the vessel that helps heal others.

Once the initiate decides to heed the calling of “*ukuthwasa*” he or she is then lead by his or her ancestors to an elder practitioner who then becomes his or her trainer. The initiate is adopted into the family of his/her trainer and becomes part of the trainer's household (Mlisa, 2009; Wreford, 2007). Discipline, respect, humility and patience are some of the central themes of teachings (Mlisa, 2009; Wreford, 2007). The initiates are made to experience some of the humiliation and challenges that their patients would have had to deal with in the journey that landed them in-front of a traditional healer (Wreford, 2007:834). The training is harsh as it is believed that it is more effective and produces initiates that are disciplined and professionals that are strong willed (Mlisa, 2009:257). The severity of this training though varies from trainer to trainer and depends on their individual beliefs and preferences (Mlisa, 2009:257). The training of initiates is within certain parameters that are set by the trainer but the true driving force behind the training are the ancestors. It is the ancestor, who through dreams and revelation, communicate to the novice and his or her trainer regarding each step that the novice goes through in their training.



2.6 Conclusion

The literature shows that adolescence is a crucial stage to identity formation and is also a tumultuous stage. The freedom of choice that comes with the western perspective of identity formation has meant that adolescents have unlimited choices but no tools to help make the appropriate choices for themselves. This is where culture and specifically rites of passage play a crucial role in assisting the individual transition from one stage of life to another. They are an important part of identity formation as they provide the adolescent with the tools they need to be able to navigate this period and make informed life choices and “*ukuthwasa*” is one example. Its onset in adolescence coincides with the identity formation stage. Its training helps these adolescent transitions from one life stage to another and achieve self-actualization. It is also an example of a pre-colonial cultural practice that has survived despite socio-economic changes that have occurred which is contrary to what early modernization theorists predicted. Even though economic development does bring about significant cultural changes, these are path dependent and will have the imprint of the cultural heritage of the society.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and approach used in the study while explicitly stating the reasons behind the choices made and their relevance to the study. A summary of the modes of data collection, selection of participants, research area, and ethical issues are discussed. Detailed information regarding the research methodology is included in Appendix A.

3.2 Research Design

The research design outlines how the study will be conducted (Berg, 2001:28). It refers to the way in which a research idea is transformed into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in practice by a researcher or research team and make it possible for them to answer research question (Given, 2008:761; Flick, 2007:36). Bechhofer & Paterson (2000) state that research design at its core is about comparison and control and that focusing on them allows the researcher room to make judgements about the strength and weakness of various approaches to research. A vital part of research design is to consider the best way of collecting data to ensure meaningful and insightful comparisons and control which assist in the acquisition of reasonable objective knowledge about the social world (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000:2). In the case of this research comparison is done when the process of the calling is compared to rites of passage and control is applied in the choice of group that is chosen for the research.

A case study design of enquiry was adopted for the study because the study develops an in-depth analysis of the process of "*ukuthwasa*" through the experiences of the initiate (Creswell, 2014:82). Case studies can involve one or more participants and are time and activity bound (Creswell, 2014:82). Detailed information was collected through various data collection methods and over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2014:82). The experience of "*ukuthwasa*" was looked at, focusing on describing experienced commonality as the initiates go through it and thereby being able to identify the universal essence or true nature of it that is universally identifiable and consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Creswell, 2007:58).

This involved studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning using multiple data collection strategies to help validate the results (Creswell, 2014:67). As a philosophy phenomenology emphasizes direct observation of phenomena, seeking to sense reality and describe it in words that reflect consciousness and perception with an emphasis on the common experience of all human beings and our ability to relate to the feelings of others (Russell, 2006:23).

During the research, the focus was on the description of the experiences of the participants with a deliberate exclusion of the experiences of the researcher while taking a fresh perspective towards "*ukuthwasa*". The process of looking at a phenomenon from a fresh perspective with everything being perceived freshly, as if for the first time is referred to as transcendental phenomenology even though the fresh perspective may not be perfectly achieved but can be improved through reduction (Creswell, 2007:60). To achieve this the data collected from the participants is distilled into significant statements or quotes which are then combined into themes then a description of the experiences that highlight what they have experienced and how they have experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations or context and a combination of the two is used to convey an overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007:60).

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach is the plan or proposal to conduct research that involves the intersection between philosophy, research design and specific methods (Creswell, 2014:58). Creswell (2014) states that when planning a study, the researcher needs to think through the philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study, the research design that is related to the worldview and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice. Of the three approaches to research namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods; a qualitative approach with a social constructivist paradigm was chosen. Qualitative research is used when the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem are explored (Creswell, 2014:55).

Social constructivism is a worldview whereby individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work through development of meaning. This can be towards

objects or things with their relationship to reality being examined through constructive approaches (Flick et al, 2004:88). These meanings are numerous leading the researcher to rely on the participants' view of the situation which are negotiated within a society, history, culture and formed through this interaction with others hence social constructivism. (Creswell, 2007:21; Given, 2008:819; Flick et al, 2004:88; Willig, 2013:49). Research is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and to trace their implications for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2013:49). This study adopted a qualitative approach that entailed understanding the lived experiences of the "*ukuthwasa*" initiates when heeding their calling and how it impacts identity formation.

3.4 Research Method

Research methods are the tools that a researcher uses when conducting their study while research methodology is the systematic way that the researcher solves the research problem (Kothari, 1985:7). The research methods are informed by the methodology adopted for the research. Research on "*ukuthwasa*" has been done before but it is Mlisa who has dealt with the different stages a novice goes through in their training and links it with identity formation and self-actualization (Mlisa, 2009). This research goes a step further by correlating the different stage of the novice's training to the life stages that are recognized and celebrated in African culture through rituals and traditional ceremonies. It attempts to show that these can be models that can be applied to modern youth in their journey to self-actualization.

Due to the exploratory nature of the research and its attempt at generating new information a qualitative inductive approach was taken. Babbie (2007) identifies three purposes of research, namely exploratory, description and explanation. An exploratory study does exactly what the name suggests, it is an attempt at exploring a new concept or looking at it from a different perspective. One of the main driving forces behind exploratory studies is the attempt the researcher makes at satisfying their curiosity and their need for achieving a better understanding of the subject (Babbie, 2007:89). They also test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study and help develop methods to be employed in any subsequent study (Babbie, 2007:89). With any choice

one needs to be aware of and keep in mind the pitfalls that come with it and for exploratory study it is the representativeness of the sample group (Babbie, 2007:89).

3.4.1 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions and in qualitative research visual and verbal evidence is used as data to obtain findings that are grounded in the data (Creswell, 1998:110; Givens, 2008:190). This is what distinguishes qualitative research from speculative, philosophical or archival research and puts it in the category of empirical research (Given, 2008:190). Qualitative data can be collected in various ways that help set boundaries for the study and range from interviews, observations, documents and visual material (Givens, 2008:190; Creswell, 2014:534).

3.4.1.1 Semi-structured Interview

There are different types of interviews defined by different scholars (Russell, 1998:333; Givens, 2008:471&810; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:695; Berg, 2001:68; May, 2001:120; Flick, 2009:149; Brewer & Miller, 2003:166; Kothari, 2004:97; Russell, 2006:210; Marvasti, 2004:14; Crano & Brewer, 2002:223; Babbie, 2007:305; Brewer, 2000:63; Flick, Kardorff, 2000:203) but the definitions fit into three categories of interviews namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The types of interviews lie on a continuum ranging from unstructured to structured with others including semi-structured, lying somewhere in between depending on who you are reading (Berg, 2001:68).

The semi-structured interview was chosen for its suitability to exploratory research and design that enables for the subject's lived experience to come through. A topic centred interview guide was used which meant that the interview questions were used to steer the interview towards ensuring that specific topics were cover (Givens, 2008:496). As well suited as semi-structured interviews are to the research, they also come with their own disadvantages that need to be guarded against. Some of the major disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are bias, reliability, lack of comparability, interruptions and anonymity (Miller & Brewer, 2003:169).

The interview data was collected from three research sites. The first is from one of the biggest “*igqirha*” and trainers in Mdantsane Township called “Mawawa” staying in Native Unit (NU) 17 (see **Picture 8**). He has a lot of initiates living with him and eight were interviewed. The next trainer also resides in Mdantsane in NU 12 (see **Picture 9**), who also “*igqirha*” but has a more modern lifestyle than “Mawawa”, one of her initiates was interviewed. The third one is from village called “Ncerha”, he is a faith healer and three of his initiates were interviewed.

3.4.1.2 Observations

Observation was used to augment the verbal data collected during interviews so as to triangulate them with other data sources and increase the expressiveness of the gathered data (Flick, 2009:225). Observations in social research can be categorised into two parameters based on the degree of participation by the researcher, unobtrusive and participant observation, and the awareness of the subject of being observed, covert and overt observation (Miller & Brewer, 2003:213). Observations were conducted in an unobtrusive and overt manner that was clearly communicated to ensure transparency and gain the trust of the participants. Doing this overtly had the potential of the data being distorted through the reactive effect, whereby participants change their behaviour because of the presence of the researcher, this was managed through triangulation (Miller & Brewer, 2003:215; Givens, 2008:729). The faith healer gave the researcher an opportunity to take some photographs of his divining space which are inserted below.

Picture 3 - Divining space of faith healer⁶



Source: Author (28/05/2014)

⁶ Picture taken 28 May 2014 at Ncerha

Picture 4 – A Variety of Traditional Medicines ⁷



Source: Author (28/05/2014)

3.4.1.3 Online material and literature

Online publications, media articles, and online videos were used to understand the subculture and its etiquette. The information was used in preparation for the interviews to ensure that the interviewer was able to follow and understand what the interviewee was saying. The volume and variety information uncovered illustrates the significance, prominence and changing attitudes towards “*ukuthwasa*”. Internet blogs are one of the outlets that some of these initiates use to chronicle their journey.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

The nature of the study meant that non-probability sampling was used to choose participants and specifically purposive sampling as it is used to specify the type of informant needed for the study (Russell, 1988:97; Givens, 2008:679). This is further

⁷ Picture taken on 28 May 2014 at Ncerha

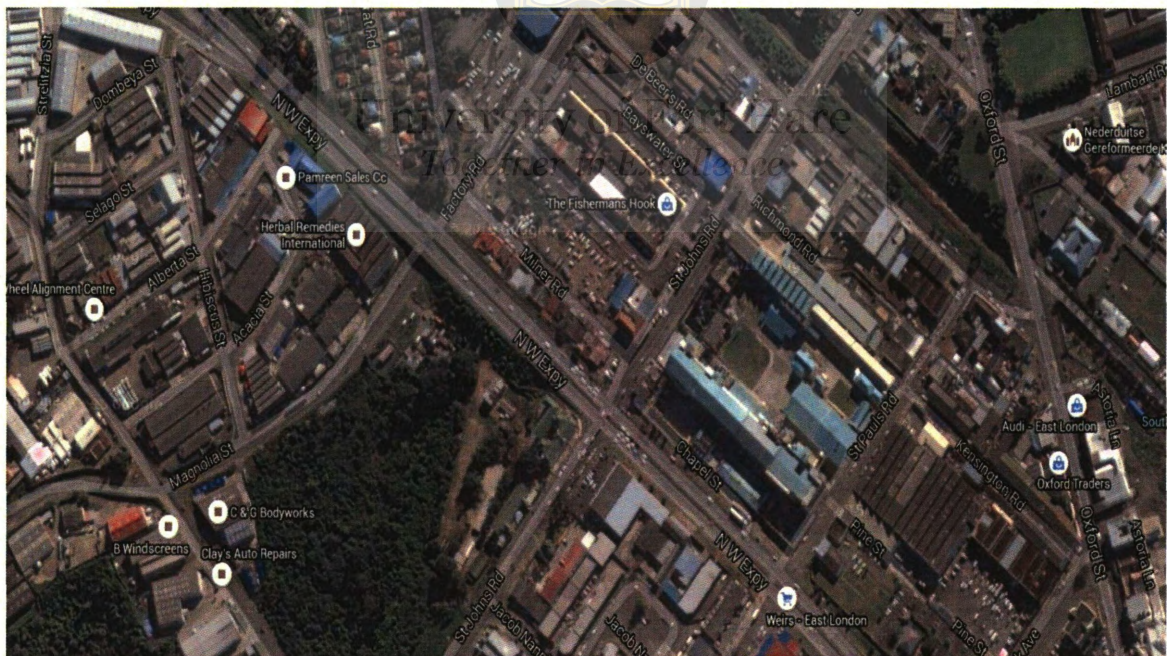
supported by the fact that “*ukuthwasa*” is part of a sub-culture that researcher needed to gain entry into. The secrecy and mystery surrounding it meant that gatekeepers were needed for entry even though the researcher is from the same culture as the initiates and speaks their language. The criteria used in selecting participants was based on the research problem ensuring that the sample will be able to address the research questions. A bit of snowball sampling was also used but it was used as a form of validation for some of the decisions made regarding the selection of participants. In a phenomenological study, the participants may be located at multiple sites but they must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2007:119).

A relationship between the researcher and a traditional medicine pharmacy in downtown on Milner Street in East London (see **Picture 5**) was established through frequent visits and ongoing conversations with the owner and customers. The pharmacy was frequented by both healers and the general public (see **Picture 6**). The owner of the pharmacy admitted that he used to have his own practice and trained initiates earlier in his career but no longer did. His first referral was to the faith healer in Ncerha village (see **Picture 7**) who was a regular customer of his. He provided the researcher with contact details of the faith healer. Even though the faith healer had his practice in a rural village, his initiates were from Mdantsane Township and Buffalo Flats, which are urban areas around East London. He also referred the researcher to the well-known traditional healer in Mdantsane Township called Mawawa. It had been the researcher's intention to visit Mawawa as he was well known but the referral also reconfirmed the researcher's decision. This is an illustration of one of the pitfalls of the snowball effect, the names that normally come up from this sampling technique can sometimes be the big and famous names in that particular field, combining the two helped control that (Russell, 1988:98). The importance of purposive sampling is that it allows you to select participants based on some feature or process in which you are interested in as per your research, helps you think critically about the parameters of the population you are studying and choose your sample carefully on this basis (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008:166; Russell, 1998:151; Flick, 2009:122; Miller & Brewer, 2003:273; Kothari, 2004:59). The largest number of initiates were obtained from Mawawa as he had a large group under his mentorship. His initiates were from various

urban areas around East London which included the township of Mdantsane and some suburbs of East London.

Based on this three groups of healers and their initiates were interviewed. The faith healer was a fresh lead obtained from the pharmacist through purposive and snowball sampling. After having discussed the type of initiate I was looking for the pharmacist was able to refer me to him. The faith healer himself was approached as the gatekeeper and provided permission for his initiates to be interviewed after the purpose of the interview was explained. As one of the largest known healers and trainers in the East London area, Mawawa was on the list of gatekeepers to be approached, a third gatekeeper was also obtained through this process.

Picture 5 - Milner Street, East London



Source 3- Google Maps (2015)

Picture 6 - Traditional Medicine Pharmacy on Milner Street, East London



Source 4- Google Maps (2015)

3.7 Data Reliability and Validity

It is important for research to be replicable even though it might not be practical in the case of qualitative research (Miles et al, 2014:257). One needs to be aware of the different sources of bias when it comes to the analysis of qualitative research (Miles et al, 2014:257). The inductive approach used in the analysis of the data minimised the impact of bias. The complete elimination of bias might not be possible and the researcher will need to explicitly state their bias so it can be taken into consideration during the analysis process (Given, 2008:459; Aurdach & Silverman, 2001:83).

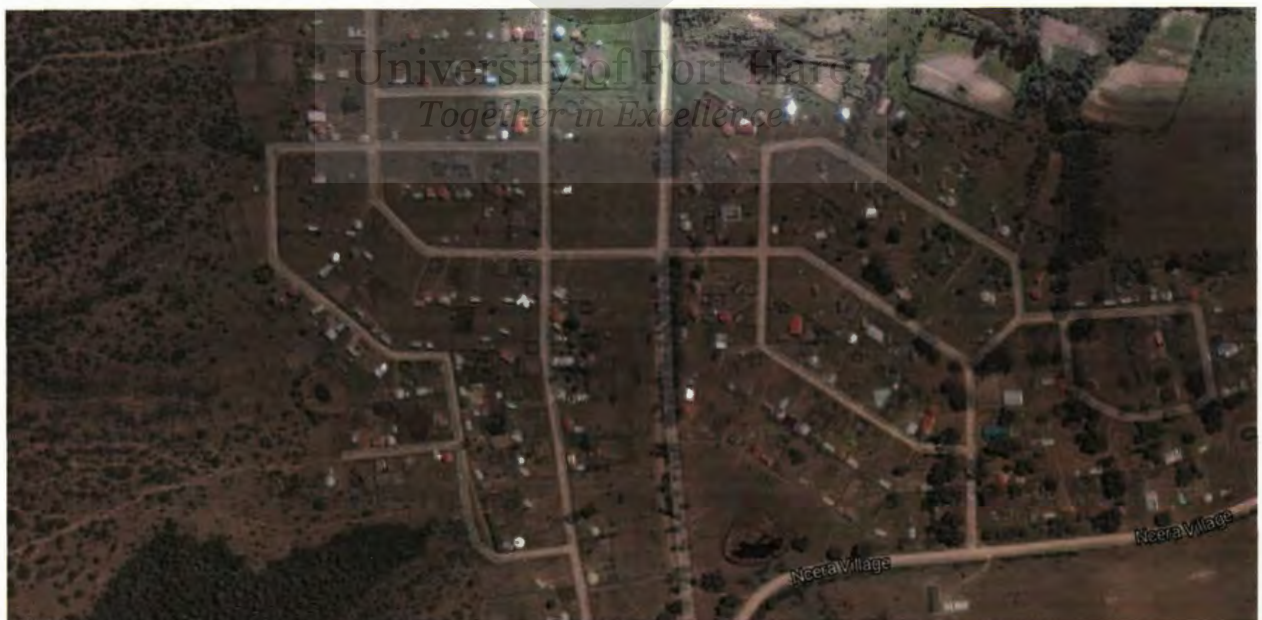
Triangulation was also used to validate data by testing one source of information against another to remove alternative explanations and try to prove a hypothesis (Fetterman, 2010:94). Literature and observations were used to help validate and test the data from collection to analysis. Through observations and frequent visits to the research area I was able to confirm the integration of the initiates into their trainer's household. They also referred to their trainer as "tata" meaning father illustrating the surrogate parental role that the trainer plays. To try and obtain a representative sample

initiates from a faith healer were interviewed and they confirmed a lot of what Mawawa's initiates said giving more weight to their statements.

3.8 Location of the Study

The choice of research area was based on what could be obtained pertaining to the research. Judgement was used to find a research area that reflected the subject of interest (Russell, 2006:190). East London (see **Figure 1**) was chosen due to the prevalence of traditional healer trainers and ease of access. It is an area that is well-known by the researcher as the majority of its population are Xhosa speakers and the researcher is a Xhosa speaker born and raised in the area. The study was located in three areas, namely; Native Unit (NU) 17 (see **Picture 8**) in Mdantsane Township (see **Figure 2**), NU 12 (see **Picture 9**), and "Ncerha" (see **Picture 7**).

Picture 7- Aerial View of Ncerha Village, East London



Source 5- Google Maps (2015)

Picture 8- Aerial View of Native Unit 17, Mdantsane



Source 6- Google Maps (2015)

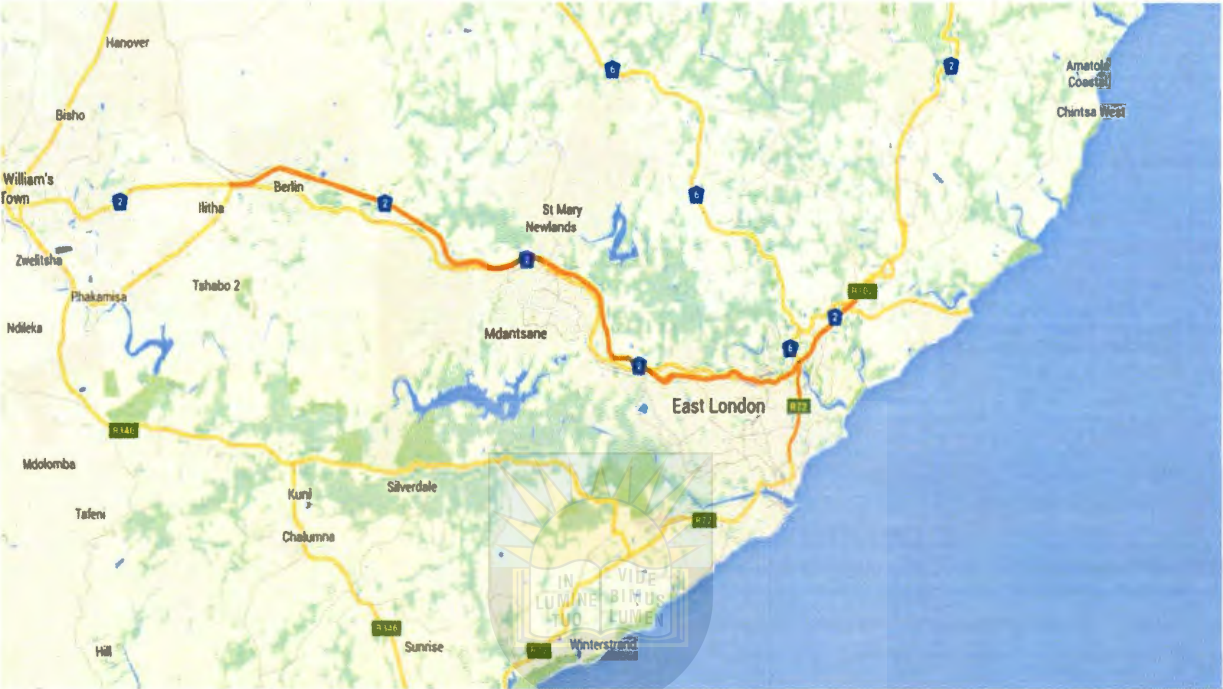
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Picture 9- Aerial View of Native Unit 12, Mdantsane



Source 7- Google Maps (2015)

Figure 1 - Map of East London



Source 8- Google Maps (2015)

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Figure 2 - Map of Mdantsane Township



Source 9- Google Maps (2015)

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Berg (2001) states

"Social scientists, have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population, and the larger society because they delve deep into the social lives of other human beings"

This statement strikes to the core of why ethics are particularly important in social science. The researcher enters the inner workings of the private lives of participants, it is therefore important to ensure that the access is obtained in an ethical manner and the information be treated with respect (Berg, 2001:39). The researcher was upfront and honest about why she was there and obtained permission to interview the initiates from their trainers. Before each interview she outlined what the interview was about and gave the participant an option to have the interview recorded or not, all consented to the recording. They were also made aware that anonymity will be maintained if that was their preference, they all preferred anonymity. They were also informed that at any stage where they feel uncomfortable or not willing to answer a question, they had the right to refuse to answer. For each interview a shielded area was chosen to maintain privacy for each interview although it posed a challenge at Mawawa's place because of the ongoing activity that occurs there and the traffic of people coming and going at each given time. All participants gave a verbal consent to the interviews to be used, they did not want to sign any documents.

3.10 Data Analysis

The analysis of data commences even before data collection phase. From the moment that one starts going through literature in preparing and presenting the proposal, thinking of and formulating data collection to the point just before field work commences; it constitutes the theoretical portion of the research (Flick et al, 2004:253; Dey, 1993:66). Once the field research begins it forms part of the practical portion of the research which will have an impact on the theoretical portion and might results in questioning, reviewing and revising the initial theoretical assumptions (Flick et al, 2004:253; Dey, 1993:66). It can be defined as consisting of three concurrent flows of action; data reduction, data display and conclusion & verification (Berg, 2001:35; Miles & Huberman, 1994:8).

The collected audio interview data was prepared by transcribing it in Xhosa as this was the language used in the interviews. The Xhosa transcripts were verbatim and

contained repeated word and other nuances. The Xhosa transcripts were then translated into English and into a more manageable form through the elimination of repetition and irrelevant information (Flick, 2014:304). Data was reduced by managing and focusing it on the objectives of the research (Berg, 2001:35; Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003:43). This meant going through the transcripts and eliminating any irrelevant text. The test for whether the text was valid was done by questioning its relevance to the research objectives.



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Chapter Four: Engaging “Ukuthwasa” amongst the Urban Youth

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at the analysis of the collected data by attempting to put into perspective results obtained during the data collection process. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a phenomenological approach was used in the analysis due to the exploratory nature of the research.

4.2 Data Display and Categorisation

Exploratory research is an attempt at trying to solve an unstated or ambiguous problem that has to be framed and reframed on an ongoing basis (Miles & Huberman, 1994:91; Dey, 1993:104). This means going through a process of categorising your text into themes and trends, testing your findings so that you can clearly define and integrate your data into explanatory framework (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003:68; Miles & Huberman, 1994:91; Dey, 1993:102; Flick, 2014:305). To ensure that they are meaningful to the data and to each other interaction between them and the data is essential (Dey, 1993:105). Visually displaying allows for the data to be viewed as a whole, in one location arranged in a systematic way that helps answer the research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994:91; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014:106; Dey, 1993:201). Mapping was chosen for the study because it is a great visual tool when dealing with human data that focuses on theorising about what goes on in people's minds⁸ (Miles & Huberman, 1994:134). It's the better option when it comes to reflecting relationships between categories (Dey, 1993:212 & 214).

4.3 Data Interpretation

Data cannot speak for itself therefore it is up to the researcher to find meaning (Given, 2008:458; Miles et al, 2014:243). In interpreting the data the researcher makes assumptions regarding worldview and this influences making sense of the data (Given, 2008:458; Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003:83). It is not possible for the researcher to be completely free of their own subjectivity when interpreting but it's important to avoid imposing subjectivity and to explicitly state the perspective used in the interpretation (Given, 2008:459; Auerbach & Silverman, 2001:83). When the participants were

⁸ See Appendix A

relating their journey they identified the liminal stage as having a life changing impact on their psychosocial development resulting into the early development of self-actualization and identity achievement. This occurs in three distinct stages that I've identified as the trouble-denial stage, the acceptance-separation stage and the training-liminal stage.

4.3.1 Trouble – Denial Stage

The initiates first experienced their symptoms in adolescence through dreams and visions. These were communicated to their parents but were either ignored, not taken seriously, or discouraged. This is where the initial breakdown of the parent child relationship occurs (Hirst, 1997:221). Ms N and Ms D stated;

Ms N: Around ten years and when you're a child and you're telling old people something, they will tell you to shut up. We black people do that, we do not say to the child, no this is what it means, they are also afraid and decide to shut you up instead and then when you're having all these dreams you then are scared to tell them about them and this can go on until you're old and are able to make the decision to let them know (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

Ms N: I was still in school when I first told them that I have these dreams and this is what I see in these dreams. They still did not take it seriously and ignored it until they had to take notice because I was getting ready to leave and I would tell them that this and this was going to happen, and then would happen, that gave them pause to take it seriously (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

Ms D: there were signs from early childhood, like thirteen years old when I used to see things and be very confused, not knowing what was going on. I would see things before they happened then when it happened I would be confused and ask my parents whether they've experienced this but they would just laugh it off. I would see things before they happen or have vivid dreams showing me exactly how something would happen and it would (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

The initiates spoke of the different forms of "*inkathazo*" troubles that they experienced. Their troubles can be classified into physical manifestation of disease or ailment, emotional disturbance or turmoil, breakdown of personal and social relationships, bad luck or misfortune and psychological disturbances. Their troubles became more severe the longer it took for them to accept and acknowledge that they have the calling to the point of threatening their life or their mental sanity. This is a well-documented part of the troubles stage (Mlisa, 2009:141), (Hirst, 1990:91), (Schweitzer, 1977:49), (Wreford, 2007:832), (Booi, 2004:4).

AN: I became sick, I was sick for a long time and I was going to the hospital again and again. I would be in a car accident and I would be the only injured person, this continued until I came to the realisation that, like it or not, I have to accept this calling (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

- NM: I came to know that I have the calling last of last year (two years ago) and I ignored it, I was told [again] but still I ignored it and did nothing about it. When I went for the second time I got the same story that I have the calling so I decided then to take it seriously and follow up on it and by that time I also was sick so I started this year in January (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- MM: I had a battle with sickness a lot when I was young but my family assumed that it was a normal part of growing up because kids get sick as they grow up. The sickness really became serious in 2002 (05/06/2014, Mdantsane)
- JK: Mine manifested itself through sickness, I was sick, smoking, drinking alcohol, doing all sorts of things that were wrong. What happened is that when I was in church this year, I went to go and get prayed for because I was so sick and tired of being sick (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

A prolonged stay in the trouble-denial stage caused further breakdown in their relationships and personal conduct, which spread to siblings, immediate and extended families, friends, employers and co-workers (Hirst, 1990:122),

- JK: I would lose my mind and I would be jumping up and down not knowing why..... I've changed a lot because I've stopped fighting with everyone at home, I used to fight everyone and always wanted to have the last word. All that has changed (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).
- Ms N: Inkathazo are not the same, they are different in each person for example I left home for a year that is how they occurred in my case. Others have other symptoms such as excessive drinking, promiscuity, violence and so on and causes people to dislike you..... I wasn't happy, I no longer had friends, I wasn't happy, during the day I would hide under the blanket and didn't want to see anyone (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).
- NM: I was unruly and acting out. I drank and smoked and didn't want to listen to anyone. I was always out and about in the street (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- CK: I was very combative and did not listen to them [parents] at all (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).
- Ms D: The other thing is that if you have this calling things in your life do not go well, they just do not work out until you deal with it. Be it stuff from work, they just never go well (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

This stage is called the trouble-denial stage because of the resistance and reluctance to accept the truth despite numerous diagnosis from healers. The denial begins with the parents who ignore, discourage or sweep under the rug the symptoms exhibited by the child when the calling manifests in adolescence this then trickles down to the "thwasa" (Mlisa, 2009:140), (Hirst, 1997:219). One could argue that the lack of acceptance or acknowledgement from the parents at such a critical stage of development could be one of the contributing factors to the breakdown of relationships and emotional issues experienced by the "thwasa". Adolescence on its own is a

challenging time filled with emotional turmoil because of the physical and psychological changes that occur at this stage (Moshman, 2005:xix).

The initiates identified the influence of Christianity to be one of the reasons behind the denial of parents. Some of the parents find it hard to accept that their children have the calling because they are devoted Christians and view the calling as evil and pagan (Mlisa, 2009:221, 222, 227; Wreford, 2007:833). This belief stems from the missionaries who came to South Africa and attempted to stem out African religion because they did not recognise it as such (Mtuze, 1999:1). Even the initiates of the faith healer were experiencing this from their parents even though faith healing is based on prophecy which is a Christian phenomenon (Mtuze, 1999:63; Mlisa, 2009:9; Hirst, 1990:25). This leads to initiates accepting the calling without parental knowledge or consent. This poses a challenge because parents are an important part of the process of "*ukuthwasa*" as it is an expensive undertaking (Hirst, 1990:62). The involvement of the parents ensures that they will support the initiate financially when certain ceremonies need to be performed (Mlisa, 2009:226). Lack of support could mean that a training period that should take 2 to 3 years may stretch up to 15 years because the initiate will need to put together the money before performing a ceremony for the different stages of the training (Hirst, 1990:93). In instances of where parents refuse to give blessings or participate then someone from the extended family or from the same clan would then step into the role of parent (Mlisa, 2009:227; Hirst, 1990:137). Another influencing factor is the fact that some parents had repudiated their own calling (Hirst, 1997:219)

- Ms D: My family's clan name is "*Gaba*" we are river people and "*intwaso*" is part of who we are by birth so there were a lot of people with the calling but the majority of them did not accept it, like my dad. He [father] never accepted it, he just told himself that he is a teacher, a principal and he didn't want even his child to be a healer then he died and my half-sister accepted but I continued denying it (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- Ms N: They were people who believed [in healers] at first but what changed them is the church and they stopped doing them even though they believed in them but because of the church they changed (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).
- CK: The problem is the non-belief that was in my family and since I was raised in that environment I also did not believe in them [healers and ancestors] as my family were born again Christians, so I adopted the same attitude (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).
- JK: They don't know [paternal] only the family from my mother's side knows and they support me (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

TM: yet we were raised by the church [Christianity] so now to parents it's hard to accept. I guess it felt like, well I'm the one who one who had to accept my new life and then my parents if they don't accept it, they'll have to tolerate it (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

The trouble-denial stage is one that everyone goes through regardless of their background. One of the interviewees has parents that are traditional healers. She grew up around the practice and because it is hereditary the probabilities were high that she would have the calling but when she had the symptoms, she reacted in the same fashion as other "thwasa";

AN: I come from a family that has the calling but because I was young I did not like healers, I did not want to have anything to do with healers until I was older. Every time I came across a healer I just didn't want to have anything to do with them but I became sick, I was sick for a long time and I was going to the hospital again and again. I would be in a car accident and I would be the only injured person, this continued until I came to the realisation that, like it or not, I have to accept this calling (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

The interviewees expressed that an intense hatred of healers as another manifestation of the troubles;

Ms D: I wanted absolutely nothing to do with healer, I just could not stand them at all but now that I've started training here I can stand them but I've been told that when you have the calling that's how you react to healers, you hate them and are not able to stand them. That it is one of the ways you resist the calling but at the time I didn't know that but if I saw someone dressed like a healer, I would have to walk far, far away from them and when I could come across them suddenly, I would be filled with anger and would even cross the road to walk on the other side to avoid them. Even someone wearing animal print of any kind would drive me mad (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

Mlisa states in her research that the acceptance of the calling is a challenge because of the hardship involved, even parents who are healers do not want their children to have the calling,

"All the informants in this study confirmed that no-one really appreciates "*ubizo*" [the calling] because of the hardships involved." (Mlisa, 2009:8)

"The point is that no-one wants to thwasa. For example, irrespective of this truth, regression and vacillation take place between different stages. The vacillation may continue throughout the training process until a person is fixed in the middle of the training or just before graduation. This means that the full process of this stage or phases [resistance, denial stage] is commonly repeated throughout the entire training period. That is why some do not complete the training." (Mlisa, 2009:140)

I agree with her argument regarding the denial and resistance to accept the calling but the data collected does not reflect the continuation of this throughout the training to the point that the initiate decides to leave before completing their training. What the data shows is that there is an initial fear of the unknown but once the training commences they felt a spiritual connection;

- AN: I feel like this is where I'm supposed to be. And what I love about what I do is to help people. There is no better feeling than being able to help someone who came to you for help and then they come back telling you that you've helped them (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- NM: I was afraid because I didn't know what [it is that I was] about to enter into but I tried and started in January to train and everything just fell into place and was just right. Even I can see visible difference in me (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- TM: To me he's the one [trainer] who really made me to discover myself, to accept myself, to know about "*intwaso*". And I can't complain when it comes to my process of "*ukuthwasa*" because utata didn't to hide the information from me instead made me an active participant because we come from different backgrounds, we're different people, we're many, and we have to try to be able to live together and understand each other and to me it was just another experience, to me it was something nice (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- KK: I can say that firstly you are given rules here, you are told that having the calling means that you must not be a harsh person. You must be someone who has respect, respect for your calling and not just for it but have respect in other areas of your life because if you just respect the calling and nothing else then you will not be able to respect it. So you cannot just change on the surface, the change goes deep and respect is the most important (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

I also had the opportunity to observe these initiates over a period of time and found no evidence of uncertainty or unhappiness with the initiates. The training of initiates though differs from trainer to trainer and depends on both the ancestors and the trainer (Wreford, 2007:835; de Jager & Gitywa, 1963:109). Through dreams the ancestors communicate the whether the initiate can move to the next stage and how this should be done (Wreford, 2007:835).

4.3.2 Acceptance – Separation Stage

Once the initiates come to terms with and accepted their calling, they leave their homes and move in with their trainer to become part of his entourage and are now even given the opportunity to go home and visit (Wreford, 2007:834; de Jager & Gitywa, 1963:109 & 111). This is the stage where any outstanding traditional coming of age ceremonies are completed before the commencement of the training (Mlisa, 2009:136; Hirst, 1990:138). The influence of Christianity and widespread poverty increases the likelihood that these life stage rituals were not performed and results in a prolonged training period (Hirst, 1990:138; Mtuze, 1999:5).

- Ms N: They were behind me all the way, supporting me. Even as I was training in Swaziland they supported me financially... I stayed there for two years (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

The initiates touched on the initial anxiety they felt when they moved into their trainer's home. The communal living is initially seen as something that is unfamiliar but ends up being a source of support for them. The trainer becomes a surrogate parent with many children who come from diverse backgrounds and upbringing (Hirst, 1990:176);

AN: But the family could see that I was suffering and they realised that they needed to give me their blessing and let me go, they did and it was not easy for them as parents to let me go (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

I observed this fear of the unknown in two initiates. The one refused to be interviewed but from my observations she had just been dropped off by her parents. Everything she was wearing was new, it did not have worn in look of the others. She had a weave in her hair, was wearing make-up, was wearing shoes and had isolated herself from them others. I asked her if she could allow me to interview her about her experiences here. She declined stating that she did not know what to say. I told her that I just wanted to find out how she got there and why she was there. She said that she also did not know why because they just left her here, I assumed that she was referring to her parents as Mawawa does not train anyone without the consent of the parents. She looked young around fifteen and when I spoke to her initially, I spoke in Xhosa and she replied in English, I figured that she was more comfortable speaking English but understood Xhosa so I switched languages. In the end I was not able to get an interview with her. The other initiates is Ms D who only came to accept her calling much later in her life and was dealing with a lot of anxiety and uncertainty, she stated,

Ms D: I'm still new here so I cannot say that I have learned much so maybe those who have been here for a while they have but I'm still going through it (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

Once they are over they are over the acceptance-separation stage, they get into the training-liminal stage.

4.3.3 Training – Liminal Stage

This stage is the one identified by the participants as having the most impact in their psychosocial identity development. They spoke about experiencing a lot of change during this period which helped attain identity achievement.

Ms N: There is no way that you can't be changed by a process like that... I just changed (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

NM: Yes I had to change a lot.... Firstly you have to change according to where you are (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

TM: I've changed and I believe that this is the right way that my ancestors want me to go and no one can break the bond between me and them...., it changed the way that I was thinking because with my friends we even had a slogan that we're classy [materialistic] (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

JK: I've changed a lot because I've stopped fighting with everyone at home, I used to fight everyone and always wanted to have the last word. All that has changed....when I come back home they are puzzled by this new me, they don't know what's going on. My conduct has completely changed. I was known as being very stubborn, did not listen to anyone, who wants to always have the last word and now I'm different.... There are things that I used to do in the past that I changed and now am focusing on what I do here (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

CK: So you cannot just change on the surface, the change goes deep and respect is the most important (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

MM: I was someone who loved having fun and having a good time. I used to stay with friends but now I have to stay at home and be respectful towards my family especially elders (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

Erikson (1970) speaks of identity achievement as being the unification of an individual's gifts and talents with the possible choices that are offered by the world. He puts an emphasis on the importance of communality, which is a feeling or spirit of cooperation and belonging in a group, in identity achievement. By moving in with the trainer and being part of that household the initiate looks to this group for a sense of belonging and the trainer takes on a surrogate parent role. All the initiates viewed their trainers as parents and the trainers spoke of the initiates as being their children. Looking at the data what is evident is the difference in training styles that each trainer has. Through my observation I saw the training style of the prophet as more open and relaxed while speaking to him he said;

"I don't believe in being harsh. For example my initiated drink Coca Cola even though there are restrictions from others. We stay together in one room and watch television and they eat meat too. Food is needed by the body so that when you are doing the work of "idlozi" you can do it strong, nourished by eating healthily. So to say you are going to be strict and harsh it's not right. My initiates use the phone, they use whatsapp [messaging application] and all these things because times have changed" (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

Even though the trainer had these views his initiates seemed to have a clear understanding of the boundaries and appropriate behaviour which is reflected in their statement below;

I can say that firstly you are given rules here, you are told that having the calling means that you must not be a harsh person. You must be someone who has respect, respect for your calling and not just for it but have respect in other areas of your life because if you just respect the calling and nothing else then you will not be able to respect it. So you cannot just change

on the surface, the change goes deep and respect is the most important (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

The rules imposed by the trainers differ but there has been an influence of modernity in the training whereby there are radical changes in how the trainees are trained (Mlisa, 2009:260). Rules and respect for yourself, your trainer, the gift and others were identified by participants as the main lessons learnt. Others were humility, love for your fellow man, patience, discipline, understanding and selflessness. Mawawa has a more hands on approach to the training and uses patience, self-reflection and the influence of the group in his training. His initiates have a clear understanding of the rules and boundaries of being an initiate;

- TM: [when it comes to the food eaten] I would decide that I cannot eat this and would go to Sasol garage to get something else' that is when utata said to me why we do this, not that, we eat normal things like all other families and there are times you need to learn, cause I can go to your house and go there and find that nothing to eat except for bread, sugar and water and immediately you offer that to me I have to accept it with all my heart, I don't have to ask any questions or say 'oh my God why am I eating this now' because you gave me the water, bread and sugar because that is all you have. So to me, now I can adapt to each and every situation, I understand each and every person that I come across and can say 'ok cool now I have to go like that' (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- NM: do everything you are told to do so that your training can continue in a good way. When you are told that you must not drink, you must not sleep with a man, do as you are told so that you can be on good terms with your ancestors and so that they can also accept you..... You must follow the rules given to you by your trainer and have respect. The respect must not only be for your trainer but it must be for everyone and you must have empathy (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- TM: Different houses have different rules. So what I have been taught will not be the same as what you've been taught I respect everything that utata Mawawa taught me, I respect the boundaries that he has set for us (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- MM: So you must always be ready even when you are told to go somewhere, you must be a disciplined person..... Have respect for all parents-regardless of whether they are yours or not. You also learn to live with many different types of people as you can see here we are many from different families so we live together as one family as children of one person utata. So sometimes one person might have a different personality and you will have to learn to adjust. So those are the lessons respect and being able to live with many people harmoniously (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- TM: But coming here, seeing utata, it was my very first time seeing a parent like him. Someone who is not harsh but can correct you and say 'my child, wait, wait, this thing doesn't work that way, this is how you do it' then I started to pay attention and seeing those who were older than me really helped me because sometimes I would argue with a person that is older than me and they would all look at me as if I'm a fool and at that time you have to ask yourself 'why are these people looking at me like that' like what did I make wrong, like whatever situation you're in just try and calm down and utata always teaches us that whatever is going on try and talk it out, immediately (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- Ms D: When it comes to the food, there are rules here regarding what you cannot eat and because I'm a diabetic there are things that I don't eat generally. Another thing is that I'm a single parent and live with my child, it's hard for me to go and leave a fifteen year

old alone because there are things that we have to go and attend like "intlombe" which is a gathering of healers. You sacrifice a lot, and basically the whole thing is a huge adjustment for anyone (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

A common thread amongst them is the belief in the higher power of ancestors as being the final judge of their conduct. They were aware of the importance of ensuring that they appease them as different ancestors place additional requirements on initiates;

TM: Everything that we do is a representation of our trainer and our ancestors and we are always responsible for three reputations, our own, that of our trainer and that of the ancestors so although I do use social media but it is within certain boundaries (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

MM: First is respect, to have respect for yourself, respect for your elders and ancestors and respect for people in general..... Respect your calling and know who you are (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

AM: From installing weaves, I would get a really bad headache to the point that I would end up in the hospital and I would have to take the weave off. Every time I would wear trousers or pants it was a huge problem because when I tried getting up my legs would just lock and I couldn't walk until I took them off. Even leggings, I can't wear them on their own I have wear them with something on top that will hide them..... So I had to make all those adjustments of no more weaves, no more pants and so on. So I understood that I have the calling and I had to abandon these things, so I accepted that and I stopped wearing weaves and pants and became simple like you see me. So I decided to have dreadlocks in my hair so that no one could touch it (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).

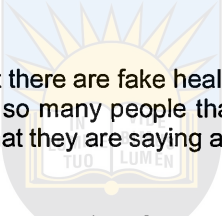
While interviewing Ms N who had been trained in Swazi and Xhosa style of healing, she highlighted some differences in their training. Although the aim of the training is similar, the rules are more explicit and tough;

"In Swaziland you don't just talk to a healer, there are rules and way of talking to a healer one of them is that you don't speak to a healer standing up, you must go on your knees. You don't look a healer straight in the eye..... Respect is very important in Swazi thwasa, you don't talk standing up to the healer, you go down on your knees, you don't sit down on a chair, you sit down on the floor or use a traditional mat, and you don't sleep with a man at all even if you are a married woman or are a man" (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

"In Xhosa I found that people were sleeping with their men while going through thwasa, people stay in their homes although they in training, people use spoons when eating although they are in training. In Swazi you don't use spoons when eating, you eat with your hands until you finish the thwasa process. In Xhosa people speak to healers standing up, those are just some of the differences" (30/05/2014, Mdantsane).

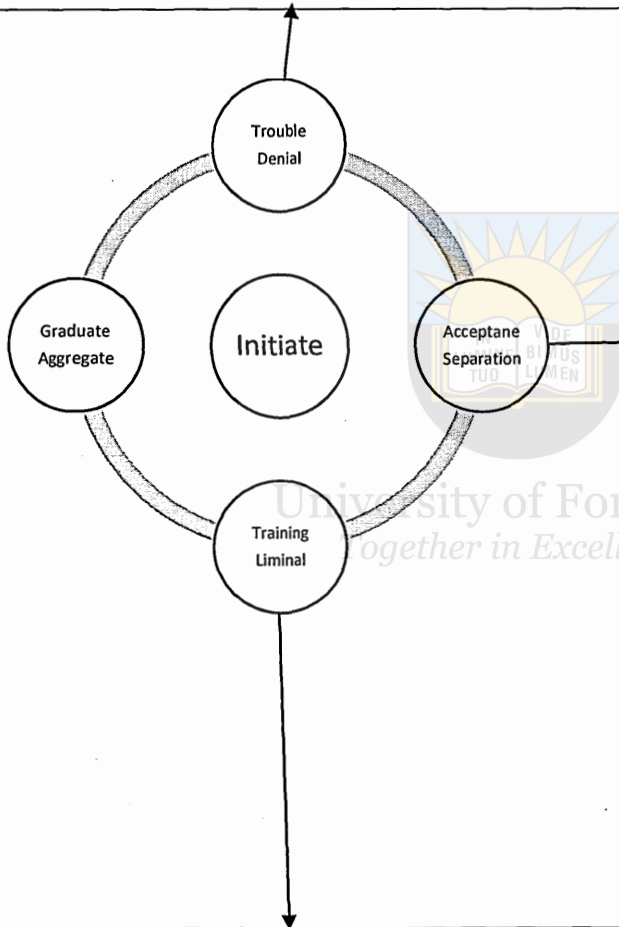
The issues raised by Ms N confirms what Mlisa (2004) states about the influence of democracy on training, this is collaborated by De Jager and Gitywa (1963) in their article that describes an initiation process similar to what Ms N describes in Swazi initiation. Some of the rules about sexual relations and living with your trainer are still applied by some trainers as shown in the case of Mawawa.

They also communicated the fact that the training was able to help them in dealing with negativity and adversity they faced during this time. There is an increasing dislike and mistrust of healers in communities where they practice. They are sometimes blamed for any sickness, misfortune or death that might be occurring in that community. One of the faith healer initiates raised the issue of people who use evil spirits to gain healing powers referred to as “ukuthwala”. This is something that is feared by communities and when a new and unknown healer settles in a community, the people are not sure how they acquired their power as they hadn’t grown up in the same community and had not been seen evolving into a healer.

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- TM: in our days, you will find that there are fake healers that could kill [you]. For example to me, [Mawawa] you will find so many people that talk bad thing about him but when I came here I realised that what they are saying about him is really not true (05/06/2014, Mdantsane).
- KM: Firstly in this road that we are in, a lot of people are jealous. It happens that after we have helped a person, when it is discussed in the streets... the person we helped will say things about us in the streets dirtying our name to those we help and those we could potentially help. So I decided, since I’m someone from church, who grew up in the church, there is a verse that says “this too shall pass” so when those thing arrive in my ears I just tell myself that this too shall pass (28/05/2014, Mdantsane).
- KK: I completely agree, it’s like that with us as well, because people do talk. When we first arrived here the people of this area did not want us here, there were a lot of things said about us. We don’t even where what they were saying was coming from but we did nothing about it. We realized that they did not like us and they did not like the house we were living in. There were cases whereby when someone died or got sick we would be blamed for it and people accused us of practising witchcraft and said we have a snake that causes these things (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).
- JK: In my opinion I would say that some people who are healers are sometimes people who don’t have the gift but use dark magic to heal and that is the truth of the matter, most of these people “*bathwele*”. Sometimes people who are new in the area and have never been seen before, suddenly come and heal people when in fact they have acquired the power to heal through dark magic. The other thing is that utata (King) did not grow up in this area, he settled here when he became a healer and started healing people and we understood the situation from that perspective (28/05/2014, Ncerha Village).

4.3.4 Visual Display of Data

'I ignored it', 'the I was told but still I ignored it and did nothing about it., 'I was unruly and acting out. I drank and smoked and didn't want to listen to anyone.', . I was always out and about in the street.', 'we were raised by the church thingy so now to parents it's hard to accept', 'battle with sickness a lot when I was young but my family assumed that it was a normal part of growing up because kids get sick as they grow up', '. It's not easy to accept that you have the calling', 'strange things started happening to me especially in church', 'Mine manifested itself through sickness, I was sick, smoking, drinking alcohol, doing all sorts of things that were wrong', 'My biggest challenge was that I smoked marijuana but I'm no longer doing that'



"When I went for the second time I got the same story that I have the calling so I decided then to take it seriously", 'I came here a lot brought by my parents', I was afraid because I didn't know what was it that I was about to enter into', I've accepted it now but when I first arrived it was hard', 'utata doesn't do anything without the parents', ', well I'm the one who one who had to accept my new life and then my parents if they do not accept it, they'll have to tolerate it', 'but at the end you grow up and you have to talk to the elders at your home, your parents and try and make them understand because we all grow up and have to make our own decisions, not that you want your parents to give up on you but you have to make them understand the kind of life that you are living and they will have to accept you', 'So I then came here and accepted my calling as I had nowhere else to go and did not know how I would be able to focus at school', '

'and started in January to train and everything just fell into place and was just right', 'Even I can see visible difference in me', 'I stayed and persevered until I could see and understand it', 'I had to change a lot', 'that is against the rules here', you have to change according to where you are', 'do everything you are told to do so that your training can continue in a good way', When you are told that you must not drink, you must not sleep with a man, do as you are told so that you can be on good terms with your ancestors', 'you can go there to speak to your ancestors. You can feel the difference when you have spoken to them', 'My inner spirit is at peace because now I know how to keep in contact and interact with my ancestors and my family at home', 'You must follow the rules given to you by your trainer and have respect', 'whatever he is going to do, whatever steps he's going to take, he involves the parents cause I was young at that time', 'ubugqirha is something that you are supposed to respect, it is something confidential', 'To me he's the one who really made me to discover myself, to accept myself, to know about "intwaso"', 'I love helping people the most', 'I've stopped fighting with everyone at home'

4.4 Conclusion

The process of “*ukuthwasa*” and the training that follows is a sequential process that has distinct stages that contribute to the persistence of the practice. The results show that the persistence continues despite the integration and influence of social, economic and political changes. They show that even though the experience of these initiates vary, either due to the different training methods of healers or the requirements of ancestors, the results are similar in terms of the impact on psychosocial identity formation. Faith healing is one example of the constant reinvention and persistence that has occurred and continues with changing times.

The analysis and interpretation of the data has shown that there is a co-relation between liminality, identity achievement and the continued persistence of “*ukuthwasa*”. To better understand liminality and its impact, it must be looked at holistically with the preceding stages. Too much focus on the liminal stage alone can have the effect of distorting findings. The reason for not covering the graduation-aggregation stage is because initiates have not experienced the stage and is therefore not relevant to this research. What the results show is how the practice of “*ukuthwasa*” is able to continue and thrive as a practice and cultural process amongst the modern urban youth while impacting their psychosocial identity formation at adolescence. They provide evidence to the transformative nature of these practices which have the impact of re-ordering of social systems.

Chapter Five: The calling in context

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at *“ukuthwasa”* in context by looking at the societal challenges that exist and stem from the social, political and economic changes of the country. It illustrates that the practice has not been unscathed but has adapted while maintaining some of its core values.

5.2 Stigma

The traditional healing fraternity is one that is shrouded in mystery and secrecy within as well as without. This mysticism fuels the underlying fear that people have of healers. The darker side of the profession came into sharper focus post-apartheid through the harvesting of human body parts for traditional medicine called *“muti”* and claims of cures for HIV/AIDS (Scholtz et al, 1997; Steyn, 2005). The African divination system has always recognized the existence of various supernatural forces including *“ukuthwasa”* that can be viewed in either a negative or positive light (Mlisa, 2009:266). The close association of these forces with *“ukuthwasa”* is one of the reasons for the stigma that surrounds initiates and practitioners. This is because the calling, which is *“ukuthwasa”* is associated with the acquisition of power or wealth called *“ukuthwala”* (Mlisa, 2009:268). As previously stated *“ukuthwasa”* is innate but *“ukuthwala”* is something that is acquired through evil means that require human blood sacrifices of family members (Mlisa, 2009:268; Wood, 2008:347). This is where the problem of *“muti”* killings emanates, an individual without the calling can decide to acquire it through *“ukuthwala”* (Mlisa, 2009:268; Wood, 2008:347). A known famous healer that acquired his abilities through *“ukuthwala”* is Khotso Sethunsa from the Eastern Cape (Wood, 2008, 2010). Healers with the calling can also add their power or increase their potency through *“ukuthwala”*. This is something that the prophet spoke about in conversations that with the researcher alluding to *“ukuthwala”* being a temptation for both initiates and healers; and that as a young healer looking for success in a modern world he had faced this temptation.

What is interesting to note is the close association between two supernatural forces, from the terms that are used in the Xhosa language for them to the similarity between the familiars that are connected to individuals on either side. The Xhosa terms used

to describe the two are “*ukuthwasa*” vs “*ukuthwala*” which is the calling vs the acquisition of power or money; “*ubugqi*” vs “*ubugqirha*” which is magic vs divine and “*igqwirha*” vs “*igqirha*” which is witchdoctor vs diviner and the familiars associated with both being wild animals such as snakes and monkeys and the mythical creature called “*mamlambo*” or mermaids (Mlisa, 2009:268; Wood, 2000; Hirst, 1990, Bernard, 2010). “*Mamlambo*” are the powerful river people that are part of the “*ukuthwasa*” and “*ukuthwala*” narratives (Bernard, 2010). This was also highlighted in a conversation held with Mawawa (24 May 2014) who stated that divination and witchcraft are two sides of the same coin and that it is up to the individual to decide whether to use their gift for good or evil. This puts into perspective why powerful and known healers such as Mawawa are both famous and infamous. He stated that evilness of a deed is a matter of perception, to illustrate he relayed a story about a client who wanted to find out who was stealing among his employees. He went to the employees and told them that the culprit should either confess or choose to not wake up the next morning [to die]. The culprit chose to confess because they knew that what was said was no an idle threat. He stated that from the perspective of the owner what he did was a good service but from the perspective of the thief who would have been dead the next morning had he not confessed, would view it as evil. In his community Mawawa is both respected and feared and this something that was alluded to by one of the initiates who stated that he had heard a lot of stories about Mawawa but when he got there he found that these were not true. The reputation of the trainer has a direct impact on the initiates that he trains because if he is seen as having his powers from an evil source the initiates will also be painted with the same brush.

Picture 10 – A traditional healer using snake skin as a magic charm⁹



Source: Africanpictures.net (2009)

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Picture 11 – Traditional diviner using charms to forecast¹⁰



⁹ Picture by Roger de la Harpe/Africa Imagery/africanpictures.net in Lugira, 2009

¹⁰ Picture by Roger de la Harpe/Africa Imagery/africanpictures.net in Lugira, 2009

Source: Africanpictures.net (2009)

These initiates have to deal with these perceptions while living in urban areas and modern society that views what they are doing in a negative light. There is also added pressure from parents and friends who look down on the calling and view it as something that is associated with the uneducated and lower class. This leads to these initiates effectively being “in the closet” regarding their gift which can lead to their isolation from friends, family and the community they live in. This leads to them being outcasts in the community and being blamed for any misfortune that occurs in it. The mistrust stems from the fear of the involvement of “ukuthwala” and this is why the graduation step is important. It provides an opportunity for the community to welcome and accept the graduate as part of their community.

The brilliant thing about the separation stage is the fact that it allows these initiates to enter an environment that is somewhat shielded from these perceptions and join a community of people who are going through the same experience. Their training is both their coping mechanism as well as their preparation for what they will be facing in the real world once they complete their training. This is why some trainers believe in administering harsh treatment in the training because they believe that this will result in the initiate being a strong and self-assured healer as they need to once they graduate (Mlisa, 2009:257). This separation period takes them when they are most vulnerable and easily influenced and introduces them to a different type of living which becomes part of their identity leading and resulting in self-assured and self-actualized individuals.

5.3 Sexual Relations

Sex is one of the things that initiates have to abstain from during their training. Any sexual activity during this time requires that a cleansing ceremony be performed to purify themselves of the sexual act. Despite this sexual relations do occur between initiates and between initiates and their trainers. There are different views regarding the appropriateness of this, Mlisa (2004) is of the opinion that this is taboo and tantamount to sexual abuse. The role of the trainer is that of a parent and initiates of the same trainer are viewed as siblings. The position of power that is held by the trainer makes it hard for the initiate to refuse sexual advances from the trainer as they can ill-

treat and sabotage the advancement of the initiate in their training. The inverse of this is situations is also true whereby initiates can use their sexuality to advance themselves in the training. A different view from Hirst (1999) is that of seeing these sexual favours being part the perks of the job. Nkabinde and Morgan (2006) view as being mainly driven by the ancestor spirit to the point of affecting the sexual orientation of the individual.

Nkabinde and Morgan (2006) have researched the sexual relations of initiates and trainers with a specific focus on sexual orientation. The results of their research is that depending on the strength of the ancestors that inhabit an initiate or trainer, their sexual orientation can change to accommodate the needs of that ancestors. This can lead to a situation whereby a heterosexual male who has a strong female ancestor living in them can lose their desire for female sexual partners and be attracted to male ones. The opposite is also applicable and there are also healers and initiates whose sexual orientation remains unchanged. What their research failed to illustrate was whether the reverse was also true, that of a homosexual initiate or trainer who ancestors is attracted to the opposite sex which leads to heterosexual activities. It is my opinion that their research was biased towards trying to prove that homosexuality is something that has always existed in African culture but their failure to explore the converse of their theory calls into question the validity of their conclusion. Despite the above, navigation around sexual issues is another challenge that initiates are faced with especially homosexual initiates because some healers view homosexuality as un-African and a curse. This adds an additional layer of difficulty in circumstances that are already complex and challenging.

5.4 Modernization

The 1994 elections ushered in a new era in South Africa. The South African constitution is one of the most progressive especially with respect to human rights and equality. This has produced a generation of youth that is more aware of their rights and is not afraid to question authority. Media and technology have allowed people separated by great distances to connect and share experiences. This has created a global village that is becoming a melting pot of different cultures. There are scholars who argue that this impacts identity formation negatively by promoting cultural imperialism that is leading to the elimination of ancient cultures and a movement

towards a more homogenised culture of individualism and consumption which are at the centre of Western culture (Gidley, 2001:1; Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010:233; Hill, 2011:348).

This impacts initiates because it has introduced a period that has seen the image of the diviner changing and a direct impact of democracy on the African religion. Post 1994 celebrities, prominent public figures, highly educated South Africans and white people have been coming out and openly admitting to having the calling. There have been a lot of national and international coverage that has referred to them as the “modern sangoma”, which is the Zulu word for healers. They have been portrayed as young, hip, confident, technological savvy, are not afraid or ashamed of their gift or being open about their sexual orientation. These new age initiates and healers can be found on the internet chronicling their journey, on social media consulting and connecting with their clients and in media publications. They believe in lifting the veil of secrecy that surround traditional healing leading to a more transparent practice that will help in the elimination of the stigma surrounding it.

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This has been met with resistance from older healers who believe in the necessity of the secrecy in order to preserve the culture and their power. Older healers see their wisdom and knowledge as a commodity that separates them from the others and are sometimes very reluctant to pass on this knowledge even to their own initiates (Mlisa, 2009:249). The majority of these new age healers have a higher qualification having been raised in suburbs and attended multi-racial schools and mainly use English as their language of communication. They are aware of the human rights laws of South Africa which may classify some of the training techniques as a violation these rights. This creates tension between trainer and trainee as the trainee becomes unwilling to do anything that violates their rights. The older generation refer to these initiates as the Mandela initiates (Mlisa, 2009:261). This creates a chasm between the old and young with the old defining what they believe it means to be a healer and what one should or should not do creating an essentialist view of the culture that sees one group as insiders and the other outsiders.

The argument I am putting forward is that a pure pre-influenced culture does not exist because the minute two cultures come into contact change occurs on both sides. This

is evident in the incorporation of Christian healers called prophets as part of the Africa religion. This hybridity is evidence of the ability of the culture to change and evolve with the changing times. Another part of this argument is the fact that when arguments are made regarding the influence of one culture on another it is always told from the perspective of the influence of westernization but the reverse is not explored. The reality is that cultural exchange occurs both ways and this is evident in the growing number of whites both domestic and foreign that train as African traditional healers. In her 2007 paper Wreford mentions that some of her fellow initiates were whites from Germany and other European countries who admitted that being trained in Africa and certified as African traditional healers allowed them to charge higher prices.

Picture 12 - Thabiso Siswana dressed as a traditional healer



Source 10- British Broadcast News - BBC (2013)

Picture 13 - Thabiso Siswana at work as a corporate administrator



Source 11- British Broadcast News - BBC (2013)

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5.5 Conclusion

Throughout their training these initiates are faced with the challenges of the modern world that is driven by consumption and an individualistic way of life. They then enter an environment that calls into question some of their beliefs and values. For individuals who have grown up in an urban lifestyle that is materialistic adjusting to the way of life of the initiate can be challenging. It is clear that there are a lot of challenges and temptations that initiates face in their journey towards being full diviners but they are able to thrive despite these.

What is even more interesting is the ability of ritual such as "*ukuthwasa*" to evolve and thrive in a modern environment. A similar situation is observed by Comaroff & Comaroff (1993) in Malawi with respect to the Nyau ritual. It is a ritual that existed in precolonial times, has been impacted by the political and social changes that have occurred in the country but has thrived and is being practiced in the Eurocentric and Westernized Malawi (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993:34). Furthermore this research shows that such rituals are not isolated or confined to a specific space or territories with boundaries that separate different groups as implied by the traditional view of

culture (Papastergiadis, 2000:104). It illustrates that these rituals and cultures occupy a space that Papastergiadis (2000) refers to as deterritorialized with porous boundaries between groups that allow for the hybrid process of cultural transformation as evidenced by faith healers who emanate from the Christian influence.



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Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will summarise and put into perspective the findings of the research and give some recommendations.

6.2 Summary

The aim of the research was to explore the journey that urban youth go through when heeding the call to become traditional healers in light of the changes that have occurred in post-apartheid South Africa which have had a direct impact on their identity. South Africa had moved from a country demarcated in terms of race and had led to the creation of collective identity in order to fight for the rights of these groups. In post-apartheid South Africa identity is no longer defined in terms of identity politics which has meant that the youth of the new South Africa have numerous options to choose from when forming their identity. Although this might seem to be the more appealing alternative, it has had consequences that have led to the transition to adulthood being more stressful and filled with risky behaviour.

The noticeable difference with the youth that were heeding their calling and undergoing training was the self-assurance and identity achievement they displayed. They had attained from their experience what the average South African youth wanted to attain but were struggling to. Through interviews the research then investigated what it was about the "*ukuthwasa*" journey that led to this self-actualization so as to evaluate whether its model can be used to help other young people to achieve the similar results. The investigation was of an exploratory nature and focused on the lived experiences of young initiates with respect to their identity formation in post-apartheid South Africa because a research of this nature has not been done.

To achieve this, the research looked at the identity formation process of the initiates and juxtaposed that with that of ordinary adolescents. This period was chosen because it is the identity formation period and in the case of initiates, is the period when the calling initially manifests itself through troubles. Considering the above it was fascinating to discover that a process like "*ukuthwasa*" that has such a profound impact on one's identity commences at the point of identity formation which illustrated the

parallel nature of *“ukuthwasa”* with what occurs during puberty. Literature showed that adolescence is a certainty, is a period of vulnerability and susceptibility to influence and that it is important to provide the youth with tools that will help them navigate this period. *“Ukuthwasa”* therefore offered a potential blueprint for doing this.

In Chapter 4 an in-depth analysis of the interview responses was done to understand the influence of *“ukuthwasa”* on identity formation which resulted in concluding that it is a rite of passage. Literature supported the fact that rites of passage have always existed in indigenous cultures as a tool to help individuals transition from one stage of life to another and that these rites were successful in doing so thereby reducing the stress associated with transitioning. It also highlighted the fact that as human beings we crave rites of passage especially in adolescence to the extent that in their absence we end up creating our own that might not necessarily have the attributes of rites of passage and might end up causing more harm than good.

In Chapter 5 looked at the societal influences and challenges faced by the initiates during their training. This was done to contextualise the experiences of the initiates so as to understand the continued existence of these rituals despite westernization. This is important because of the traditional view of culture that leads to essentialism and is evidenced by label of Mandela initiates that older trainers give to the post-apartheid generation of initiates.

6.3 Conclusion

The traditional view of culture is no longer adequate when it comes to describing the modern view of culture. By being space based and exclusionary it does not take into account the fluidity of cultural diffusion that occurs on an ongoing basis in modern society. Globalization has led to the deterritorialization and hybridity of culture. This is evident not only in *“ukuthwasa”* in the form of faith healers but is also evident in western society whereby they apply modified rituals from indigenous communities to deal with modern problems. Rites of passage and restorative justice are some of the practices that are being modified in modern societies and implemented to help deal with issues such as domestic violence, school discipline, etc. The World Health Organization has also incorporated alternative and complementary forms of medicine into their strategy as they recognise their persistence and continued use. This has led

to there being a drive towards some form of integration between these traditional forms of medicine with allopathic medicine.

6.4 Recommendations

This research set out to illustrate the persistence that exist in cultural practices despite the socio-economic development. It highlighted the fact that these continue to exist despite the weakening of the rural-urban connection. These practices are impacted by development and change but still have an imprint of their values. They remain relevant and applicable in modern societies. It has been able to illustrate that despite political, social and economic changes there are rituals from precolonial times that still thrive and are able to exist in modern day through cultural evolution and diffusion. Globalization has meant that the essentialist view of culture is inadequate with the implications that culture is no longer space bound within borders that separate distinct groups of people. This is important because of the applicability of some cultural based interventions in the modern world. One example is that of rites of passage, which are used to deal with a variety of societal and individual issues. These are especially effective in dealing with youth challenges such as violence and identity. Programs exist internationally of modified versions of these programs and this is something that should be adopted for South African communities.

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