The influence of ancestral spirits on sexual identity amongst Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) in South Africa: A discourse analysis

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in Research Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

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October 2018

DECLARATION

This is to declare that the work is the author's original work and that all the sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to explore whether sexual identity is influenced by ancestral guides among Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) in South Africa. The focus of this study was on *iZangoma*; diviners who are possessed by *idlozi* (spirit of the departed who had the gift of healing spiritually) and reach trance states through *ingoma* (drumming). The research design used in this study was qualitative and exploratory. The sample consisted of five participants who were recruited using the Snowball sampling technique. Participants included three lesbian females, one bisexual female and one transgender man. Four of the participants were Traditional Healers and one was still an i*Thwasa* (undergoing initiation). The Social Constructionist paradigm (discourse analysis) was used to analyze interviews with Traditional Healers. The main findings of the study were that participants defined their sexual identity as a biological or genetic construct, as their culture, their pride, a result of witchcraft or poisoning, as influenced by their environment and ancestors, and also as a misunderstood concept. This study also revealed that dominant ancestral guides can have an impact on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers depending on whether the ancestral guide was sexually attracted to males or females when they were still alive. Lastly, for Traditional Healers, engaging in same-sex relationships seemed more forced or 'imposed' by ancestral guides rather than it being a choice.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the study will be presented. This will include relevant information and previous studies surrounding the issue of homosexuality in African communities, the focus being on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) as influenced by ancestral guides. This will be followed by the objectives and the research questions for the study which will focus on three key areas, mainly, homosexuality in the African culture, the influence of ancestral guides on sexual identity, and whether it is a chosen or forced identity. The definition of key terms will also be included. Concluding this chapter will be the delimitation and scope of the study.

1.2. Background of the study

Jordaan (2011) postulated that there is an increasing avoidance to conduct research on homosexuality in African studies which is caused by heterosexual panic concerning the issue of homosexuality in Africa. According to Jordaan (2011), the insistence and recurring refrain that there is no homosexuality in Africa best captures this tendency. This refrain is often accompanied by assumptions and accusations that African populations adopt homosexuality from Western perversion (Jordaan, 2011). Given these kinds of positions spelt out by the likes of Jordaan (2011) the current study sought to explore sexuality and sexual identity in contemporary Africa. In particular, this study sought to explore the influence of ancestral guides on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) in South Africa, an area that has received even less attention in Africa.

Stobie (2011), who examined the autobiography "Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My life as a lesbian *Sangoma*" by Nkunzi Zandile Nkabinde, stated that possession by her late male ancestor

named *Nkunzi* (meaning Black Bull), her dominant possessing spirit in her healing work, serves a validating transgender function in the case of this Traditional Healer who identifies as a lesbian. However, Stobie (2011) argued that this is problematic as it creates conflict between Nkabinde's modernist, feminist beliefs and her reverence for tradition. As a result, Nkabinde's composite identity is believed to highlight problematic aspects on how gender, spirituality and sexuality are represented (Stobie, 2011).

This study also hopes to further problematise homosexuality by groups that are regarded as playing significant roles of healing and leadership in African communities. Similarly, this research study may potentially inform contemporary African debates around homosexuality, in light of recent legislation in 34 out of 55 African countries which criminalises homosexuality (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 2016).

1.3. Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To explore how a select group of homosexual and bisexual Traditional Healers define their sexual identity.

2. To investigate whether Traditional Healers' sexual identity can be influenced by their ancestral guides.

3. To explore whether sexual identity is actually a choice, or whether it is imposed on a select group of Traditional Healers.

1.4. Research questions

The following were the research questions for the study:

1. How do homosexual and bisexual Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) define their sexual identity?

2. Do ancestral guides have an impact on Traditional Healers' (*iZangoma's*) sexual identity?

3. Is sexual identity amongst Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) a chosen identity or is it imposed by their ancestral guides?

1.5. Definition of terms

Sexual Identity – This refers to "a person's gendered preference in the choice of sexual partners" (Jackson, 2010, p. 723). However, most individuals do not purposefully choose a particular sexual partner, but they find themselves attracted to that sex. It is their identity. It is who they are.

Homosexuality – An erotic preference for the same sex as well as its endurance over time (Mabvurira, Motsi, Masuka & Chigondo, 2012). In other words, a homosexual male is sexually attracted to other males and a homosexual female is sexually attracted to other females.

Lesbian – This refers to "preference by a female for female sexual partners" (Jackson, 2010, p. 723). This means that a lesbian individual is a homosexual female.

Gay – This refers to "preference by a male for male sexual partners" (Jackson, 2010, p. 723). This means that a gay individual is a homosexual male.

Bisexual – This refers to "sexual interest in both men and women" (Jackson, 2010, p. 723). A bisexual individual is sexually attracted to both sexes. However, this does not necessarily mean that he or she will be romantically involved with both a male and a female at the same time.

Transgender – A term used to describe "people who identify as gender discordant from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender individuals may undergo processes to affirm a gender identity different from that assigned at birth, known as 'transition'" (Tollinche *et al*., 2018, p. 2). For example, a transgender man is a female who identifies as a man and may change her physical characteristics to those of a male.

African Traditional Healer – "African Traditional Healers are individuals that use health practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines and spiritual therapies, to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being" (Fokunang *et al*., 2011, p. 284). An African Traditional Healer is gifted by both the Creator and his or her ancestors with the power to heal. In some cases, foreign spirits that are not related to the individual also play a role in the healing work of a Traditional Healer.

Ancestor – The spirit of a deceased relative who is believed to relay people's petitions to God (Mabvurira, 2016). This is a blood relative who once lived in this physical world and passed on. Ancestors consist of maternal and paternal family members.

Ancestral Guide – An ancestor's spirit who teaches, helps, watches and heals an individual on their physical journey (Crystal, 2012). In other words, an ancestral guide is always present (spiritually) to assist an individual with various aspects of his or her life.

1.6. Delimitation and scope of the study

The study is delimited to African Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) and *amaThwasa* (those undergoing initiation) who are homosexual, bisexual or transgender, and over the age of 18 years, living in South Africa, namely KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Eastern Cape. The study is limited to these regions in its scope. The outcomes for the study cannot be extended beyond participants in these regions.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the rationale for the study, provided the objectives of the study and the research questions. The key terms of the study were also defined followed by the delimitation and scope of the study. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the literature that was identified and reviewed in this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, the study background, objectives, research questions, key terms, delimitation and scope were covered. This chapter provides a review of literature beginning with the attitudes of homosexuality in South Africa, and a brief background into Traditional Healing and homosexuality in South Africa. This is followed by literature on the Afrocentric worldview, ancestral guides and their roles in the lives of African people, defining African Traditional Healers, and the process of becoming a Traditional Healer. This chapter then focuses on defining homosexuality and bisexuality, understanding homosexuality in the African culture, and African theories on homosexuality amongst Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*). In conclusion, the researcher looks at the concept of communitarianism and choice which is the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2. Attitudes of homosexuality in South Africa

Mthembu (2014) and de Vos (2015) observed that gay women are not really living in their imagined future, even with the Constitution in place. The discrimination and abuse suffered by gay women, particularly Black gay women, is constantly indicated in newspapers as well as academic articles (Reid, 2018). Li (2009) and de Vos (2015) pointed out that attacks on lesbians do not receive the same attention reserved for heterosexual women that are abused. This is mainly because even though we have a Constitution that protects all women, lesbians included, the ignorance and prejudice that exists in South Africa makes it a dangerous place for lesbians who are attacked intentionally (Mthembu, 2014). Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) and Mthembu (2014) reported that police apathy, lack of concern from family members, teachers and churches, as well as the possibility of secondary victimisation that homosexual individuals may suffer play a huge role in the many hate crimes that are left unreported. Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) also confirmed that gay women who lack courage to report their experiences commonly encounter secondary

victimisation from the police, the media and courts, who treat victims of hate crimes indifferently or in a hostile manner.

According to Ward (2013) and de Vos (2015), in South Africa, homosexual individuals live in a hostile world in which their lives are made invisible or sensationalised. Given how women in high profile positions have a patriarchal institutional culture to endure, such as the notion that same-sex relationships are *unAfrican*, rampant workplace heterosexuality, as well as intolerance and other forms of stigmatisation, it is not surprising that high profile women in South Africa have not come out publicly (Mthembu, 2014), even though they may be out to family members, friends and certain colleagues. Black South African communities are more accepting of gays than lesbians, claimed Mthembu (2014), possibly because women are supposed to bring in *iLobolo* (dowry), add stock to the family and have grandchildren. The fear of being further victimised and not taken seriously has resulted in anti-gay hate crimes not being reported to the police (Mabvurira *et al*., 2012; Mthembu, 2014). Of further interest are reports that sexual abuse or rape is equally prevalent for both lesbians and gays. However, the rape of lesbians, particularly black lesbians, is more public (mostly occurs in the presence of groups of people). Li (2009) referred to the practice of 'corrective rape' where the rapist believes that if a lesbian has sex with a real man, she will be 'cured' of lesbianism and her heterosexuality will be forced to emerge. Li (2009), Ward (2013) and Reid (2018) suggested that the latter results from both gays and lesbians posing a threat to heterosexuality and masculinity. The discriminations suffered by gays and lesbians irrespective of whether there are laws to protect them or not are pointed out by Steyn and van Zyl (2009), Ward (2013), Mthembu (2014) and de Vos (2015).

According to Drucker (2015), a black drag queen at the Johannesburg Gay Pride March in 1994 expressed that the South African Constitution, on its own, is really not enough to protect homosexual individuals from any form of abuse with his statement, "Darling, it makes sweet mother fuck all. You can rape me, rob me – what am I going to do when you attack me? Wave the Constitution in your face? I'm just a nobody black queen…" (p. 89–90). This statement is nothing short of a plea for homosexual individuals to be accepted by their communities, for their

rights to be respected and for more punitive measures to be taken against those who still seek to harm homosexual individuals.

2.3. Brief background into Traditional Healing and homosexuality in South Africa

According to Jacob (2008), although Traditional Healers are human beings just like everyone else, their lives are believed to be very different compared to the lives of other people. The reason for this is that other people cannot communicate with ancestors, heal, or look into their own lives and the lives of others through dreams and visions. Traditional Healers are believed to have within their hearts a desire to belong and merge with those around them as they are said to be social beings (Jacob, 2008). However, there is an assumption that they choose to live in solitary fashion as they are in the world but not of the world, belonging rather to the spiritual world. This perceived sense of separateness is believed to cause the Healer to feel alienated, until he or she fully discovers and admits what he or she really is or what his or her purpose is on earth. As a result of being considered normal but not normal at the same time, it is believed that many Traditional Healers have purposefully forgotten who and what they are (Jacob, 2008).

On the other hand, with regards to Traditional Healing, consulting a Traditional Healer or being one is something that is frowned upon and not respected by Western culture and some Christians (White, 2015). In the African culture, however, this is normal and a part of life. According to Zuma, Wight, Rochat and Moshabela (2016), a Traditional Healer is respected and is positioned as unique and important. He or she is positioned as someone who can journey into other realms, look into the lives of others, and provide healing and guidance (Kgope, 2012). As a result, Traditional Healers are trusted in African culture because of the crucial role they play in their communities (Chung & Bemak, 2012). However, this phenomenon is thought to be unreal, evil and bizarre by other cultures and religions. Individuals who are gifted with the ability to communicate with ancestors (their own and those of others) are believed to be insane or crazy by other cultures, postulated Jacob (2008) and Cromby, Harper and Reavey (2013). However, Jacob (2008) refuted the stigma associated with Traditional Healing, emphasising that when the medical profession or society says a Traditional Healer is mad or crazy, all they really mean is

that they do not understand what is happening to the individual. African[1] culture views hearing voices and having visions as normal, although this is usually constructed as abnormal by other cultures.

In South Africa, there have been many hate crimes against homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual people. However, it was found that Traditional Healers have also been mistreated (Farham, 2011), and discriminated against in the past (Turner & Schlee, 2017). This informs us that LGBTI Traditional Healers experience double-stigmatisation as a result of their calling as well as their sexual identity, over which they do not have a choice and which they cannot change.

Homosexual relations, in some instances, carry some spiritual or religious significance, as with *iziNyanga* (herbalists), *iZangoma* (diviners who are trained and possessed through dancing and music-drumming) and other Traditional Healers, asserted Tamale (2014). In a South African study done by Morgan and Reid on ancestors, sexuality and identity among same-sex identified female Traditional Healers, the study found that the way in which *iZangoma* construct their identity and desire, shifted between that of a dominant male ancestor and that of personal agency (as cited in Banks, 2013). Morgan and Reid (as cited in Phiri, 2016) revealed that these Traditional Healers have a different belief system – with regards to their sexual identity as African women – that revolves around gender, kinship, power, community and agency, which provides a window through which the interaction as well as intersection of their personal same-sex desire, and that of their male ancestors, can be viewed. With reference to these Traditional Healers, a same-sex relationship assumes a social status and, as a result, becomes a source of power (Phiri, 2016).

It is impossible to study African people as a whole, and most importantly homosexuality and bisexuality amongst African Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*), without a proper understanding of how Africans perceive or experience the world.

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[1] The use of the term(s) 'Africans', African people' and 'African culture' are not intended to suggest a completely homogenous group/ individuals/ culture

2.4. Afrocentric worldview: Hierarchy of being, structure and characteristics of African Traditional Religions

African Traditional Religion refers to "the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the people of Africa that include worship, consultation of priests, rituals, symbols, cosmology, arts, practices and society" (Olupona, as cited in Ndemanu, 2018, p. 72).

African people recognise the existence of God or a Supreme Being. In the isiZulu language He is known as *uNkulunkulu* (the Great One), *uMvelinqangi* (the One who appeared first), *uMdali* (the Creator) and *oPhezukonke* (One who is above all things). In the isiXhosa language He is referred to as *Thixo* and *Qamata* (Supreme Being). In the Sesotho-Tswana language He is called *Modimo* (One who dwells on high). Other African languages also use various names to refer to God. African people also strongly believe in ancestral spirits (*abaphansi*; *abant' abadala*; or *amathongo*). In African culture, ancestors are believed to be mediators between the people on earth and the Supreme Being (Ndemanu, 2018). In other words, the belief is that spirits of the departed are messengers that deliver or send to God the requests of man and in turn relay to man the responses and messages received from God. Therefore, Traditional African people believe that ancestral spirits are their intercessors, although they pray to, and worship, the Supreme Being (Masaka & Makahamadze, 2013; Ndemanu, 2018). African people believe that ancestral spirits operate in the physical world through certain animals such as lions, crocodiles, buffalos, fish, pythons and some birds (LenkaBula, 2008). Pfukwa (as cited in Marumo, 2016) maintained that these animals are considered totems for particular clans or tribes and are used to communicate with ancestors. Daneel (as cited in Marumo, 2016) asserted that there are also ancestral spirits that rest on mountains, in forests and trees, while others rest on water bodies or wetlands (Taringa, as cited in Marumo, 2016). However, according to Iteyo (2009), spirits that are associated with natural phenomena, such as rocks, rivers and forests, are non-ancestral (foreign) spirits. Even so, African people still consider these sacred.

Kanu (2013) postulated that the hierarchy of beings begins with God; followed by spirits of ancestors; human beings; animals; plants; and ends with inanimate objects. Ukwamedua and Edogiaweri (2017) contended that the line of religious evolution comprises monotheism (One

Supreme God), polytheism (major spirits, gods) and animism (countless spirits). Marumo (2016) and Ukwamedua and Edogiaweri (2017) were also of the opinion similar to Kanu (2013) that there are five categories in the hierarchy of beings in African Religions. These begin with *God* as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and sustenance of both man and all things; *Spirits* being made up of superhuman beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago; *Man* including human beings who are alive and those about to be born; *Animals and Plants*, or the remainder of biological life; and *Phenomena and objects without biological life* (Marumo, 2016; Ukwamedua & Edogiaweri, 2017). Basically, this hierarchy expresses that the originator and sustainer of man is God. The destiny of man is explained by spirits and man is the centre of this ontology. The environment in which man lives is constituted by animals, plants and natural phenomena, and objects, which provide a means of existence and a mystical relationship with them is established by man, if need be (Marumo, 2016). Thus, God is the greater force within this hierarchy, followed by spirits of the ancestors, then human beings (Kanu, 2013). As a complete solidarity or unity, nothing can break or destroy this anthropocentric ontology. To remove or destroy one of these categories would be the destruction of the whole existence, and of the Creator, which is impossible.

The universe consists of two spheres: the visible and the invisible (Beyers, 2010). According to Reyes (2012), creation, which we perceive around us, including human beings, is the visible world, with the invisible world being the place where God, spirits – including ancestors – and all powers reside. Iroegbu (2010) postulated that the invisible world determines each individual's destiny in the visible world. The invisible world influences mundane happenings such as life, birth, love, luck, health, success, quarrels, accidents, illness, achievements and misfortunes (Iroegbu, 2010). As a result, the invisible world prevails over the visible world, claimed Reyes (2012). The invisible world's inhabitants are called the vital forces or forces of life (Tempels, as cited in Beyers, 2010). God, the Creator, the Prime Energy is responsible for all things that exist in the universe (Thomas, 2015). This Prime Energy or Vital Force provides every living thing with its own force of life as well as its own power to sustain it. As a result, because all living things receive from the same Source the energy for life, all living beings are interconnected through this life force. However, because everything in the universe is understood only in relation to man, the created universe of the Bantu people is centered on the human force (Kanu,

2013). God is the Source from which this force comes and is the ultimate controller of it, although the spirits also have access to some of this force. Some human beings, such as witches, rainmakers, medicine-men, possess the ability as well as the knowledge to tap into, use, and manipulate this force. However, some do it for the good of their community while others use it to do bad, emphasised Marumo (2016).

The structure of African Traditional Religions, contended Aden and Olira (2017), is based on morality. It is believed that morality originates with God and flows into the ancestors. God is the power behind everything and the Giver of Life. Magesa (as cited in Beyers, 2010) argued that tradition, which is the way of human life, originates from God and that the prescriptions and moral codes for an ethical life are contained by tradition. According to Edwards, Makunga, Thwala and Mbele (2009), Beyers (2010), White (2015) and Ukwamedua and Edogiaweri (2017), African Traditional Religions are based on maintaining the balance between the two spheres (visible and invisible world) of the universe. The maintenance of this balance and harmony determines the quality of life, and is humanity's greatest ethical obligation. The aim of African Traditional Religions, asserted Thomas (2015), is for an individual to establish a good relationship with the other (invisible) world so as to secure and maintain good relations in the visible world. Humans live through the connectedness with the life force that is provided by God, the Supreme Being (Beyers, 2010). The belief is that preserving and enhancing this life force that all have received is the whole purpose of life in African Traditional Religions. This life force is maintained and enhanced by moral behaviour, but is also weakened by disobedience and disloyal behaviour toward the tradition that the ancestors passed on (Gyekye, 2010; Udokang, 2014; Watadza, 2016; Aden & Olira, 2017). Ensuring the capacity of this life force is the whole purpose of African life. A close relationship with God, the ancestors and other human beings is what ensures this life force. Growing old and living a long life that continues even after death is, amongst the African community, considered a special privilege from the Creator and ancestors. Reaching an advanced age is a blessing bestowed on those who live moral or righteous lives (Eboiyehi, 2015). As a result, elderly people are always respected as they are believed to be sacred.

Beyers (2010) asserted that African religions display similarities although varied in outward appearance. The main characteristics of African Traditional Religions include belief in a Supreme Being, belief in spirits and divinities, the cult of ancestors, as well as the use of spiritual forces, magic and charms. Kruger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009) stated that African religions have three common traits, which include belief in a Supreme Being, the realm of spirits, and a unified community.

2.5. Ancestral guides and their roles in the lives of African people

Iteyo (2009) defined ancestors as "spirits of former living members of a community – both former members of various cults, as well as individual families" (p. 155). Mabvurira (2016) added that ancestors are spirits of deceased relatives who are believed to relay people's petitions to God.

An ancestral guide is an ancestor that is assigned to a human being before birth whether or not the individual is destined to be a Traditional Healer. Ancestral guides are intimately involved in the lives of their descendants as they help guide and protect these individuals on their life's journey, to the extent of influencing their behaviour (Gibson, 2013). African people have constructed the idea that while some guides (minor guides or average spirits) are assumed to assist an individual with certain aspects of their life by only 'popping in' every now and again, other guides (major guides or highly ascended masters) are believed to stay with the individual throughout his or her life. Mc Kay (2012) added that amongst all the ancestors, there exists one or two guides who have the responsibility of guarding every move of the individual and reporting back to the elders. A dominant ancestral guide, then, is one that is ever present and has a greater influence in an individual's life, unlike other ancestral guides that only contact the individual if and when the need arises.

Crystal (2012) postulated that an ancestor or spirit guide teaches, helps, watches and heals an individual on his or her physical journey into spiritual awareness. The closest guides give the individual warnings which include a desire for particular foods, resisting certain invitations,

bodily sensations and intuition. These, according to Mc Kay (2012), are some of the many ways in which guides communicate with an individual. Ancestral or spirit guides are believed to communicate by sending messages through sounds, visual images, archetypes or intuition during meditation or in a dream. However, 'channeling', which is looking at, listening to, as well as focusing on the messages that are received, is something that can be taught (Crystal, 2012).

Mc Kay (2012) argued that in African culture, there are two main reasons why ancestral spirits gift an individual with the ability to heal. Firstly, if a dominant ancestral guide before passing on was a Traditional Healer, he or she can pass this gift on to an individual so as to continue the healing work on earth. Therefore, Traditional Healing is seen as a gift that is passed down from generation to generation (Mc Kay, 2012). Secondly, in African culture, it is believed that an individual's spirit or soul will remain in darkness and be punished by God if, whilst still in the physical world, the individual engaged in witchcraft and other unkind acts with the intention of harming others. As a result, Mc Kay (2012) postulates that to compensate on their behalf for these unkind acts, these spirits return to their descendants granting them gifts of healing to help people who are in need on earth, thereby freeing themselves from any bondage experienced in the spirit world. In the Other world, the purpose of the life of ancestors is believed to be the completion of tasks or responsibilities that were not fulfilled whilst still living in the physical world, as well as making amends for any bad deeds that they may have been involved in. According to Mc Kay (2012), these ancestral spirits may include grandparents, ancient ancestors or other deceased relatives.

Ancestors, insisted Mokgobi (2014), play an indispensable role in African Traditional Religion ontology and phenomenology, especially those who remain in the conscious memory of their survivors, such as the living-dead or recently departed. The argument is that a personal ancestral spirit serves to preserve one's life. In return for periodic rites of sacred remembrance in the form of offerings, appellation (giving its name to a child or initiate), and prayers, the ancestral spirit protects its ward from the attacks of sorcerers and witches (Pew Research Center, 2010; Ukwemedua & Edogiaweri, 2017). This also occurs on a communal level with regards to clan, prominent family and tribal spirits. The belief is that negligent persons may be chastised by the

offended ancestor, allowing an accident or some sickness to befall them. If one violates traditional customs, especially the important taboos which govern interpersonal relations such as incest, similar punitive measures will also be effected. Matolino (2011) postulated that ancestors are believed to continue to exert their conservative influence as personal spirits on the present generation in various ways, such as inflicting fitting punishments upon those who violate the established values, norms, mores and customs of society.

According to Nurnberger (2016), by punishing transgressors, African ancestors who punish their negligent descendants have actions similar to those of Christ. Ancestors punish people by blocking life chances, bringing ill health, bad luck (Matolino, 2011), as well as sterility, drought and other mishaps (Nurnberger, 2016). However, the Saviour (Christ) rewards His faithful members plentifully. Again, His attitude here corresponds to that of African ancestors who are supposed to reward their faithful descendants. Marumo (2016) postulated that good or bad is brought by ancestors as a result of their favour or displeasure. Being in the spiritual world gives ancestors supernatural powers over those living in the physical world, such as the ability to give or take life and to bless or curse (Adamo, 2011; Ekore & Lanre-Abass, 2016; Okeke, Ibenwa & Okeke, 2017).

Therefore, O'Brien and Palmer (2009) and Essien (2013) argued that when calamity strikes, people will seek to make amends through expiation and sacrifices of appeasement which are stipulated by a diviner or an obvious act of revelation from the spirits, for example, through omens, dreams or possession. Similarly, appropriate offerings of thanksgiving have to be made when one receives earthly blessings, such as good harvest or a new child, asserted Ukwamedua and Edogiaweri (2017)

The capacity for life force is also threatened through the evil working of spirits, and not only by an immoral life (Nyabwari & Kagema, 2014; Ndemanu, 2018). Spirits can be employed both to tap the life force of some and to bring harm to others. The same spirits can also be implored to protect one from others' evil intentions.

In the next section, the researcher takes a closer look at what it means to be an African Traditional Healer and also discusses the different types of Traditional Healers in South Africa.

2.6. Defining Traditional Healers: An African perspective

The international perspective with regards to Traditional Healers, postulated Cramer (2011), is that for healers to give psychic readings, the belief is that God, as well as ancestral guides and angels, communicate with them through meditation. Cramer (2011) argued that being a healer comes naturally and during a state of deep meditation. It is believed that God communicates with a healer through angels and ancestral spirits. According to Cramer (2011), even though some ancestral guides may come and go in one's life, there are always one or two guides who stay with the healer. Spirits or souls in the spirit world communicate with family members and friends in the physical world through Traditional Healers because healers are individuals that have a relationship with the spirit world (Cramer, 2011). As a result, healers believe that it is impossible to choose when, where or how spirits contact them (Cramer, 2011). The same applies to African Traditional Healers.

The term 'witchdoctor', which is translated to '*Umthakathi*' in isiZulu, is often incorrectly used to refer to African Traditional Healers or diviners. This suggests that the Traditional Healer or diviner himself or herself is guilty of the evil of witchcraft, argued Wallace (2015). However, a Traditional Healer is an individual that most people turn to when they believe that they have been, or are being, attacked by sorcerers or witches. In an effort to make people understand the difference between witchcraft and Traditional Healing, Turner and Schlee (2017) stated that witches engage in perpetrating harm, illness and death, whereas Traditional Healers act as medical or religious practitioners. According to Turner and Schlee (2017), it is a matter of boundaries as the differences are not an absolute opposition between good and evil. "African Traditional Healers are individuals that use health practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines and spiritual therapies, to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being" (Fokunang *et al*., 2011, p. 284). According to Obinna (2012) and Prahlad (2016), some Traditional Healers utilise traditionally-

sanctioned concoctions of bark, roots, leaves, herbs and other natural substances. The belief is that medical doctors are similar to herbalists or *iziNyanga* as they also make use of natural substances and herbs in the medical profession. Werbner (2011) asserted that certain Traditional Healers, especially seers, witch-finders and exorcists, possess prophetic powers**.** It is obvious that in African society, the role of a Traditional Healer is an extremely vital one, especially since it relates to the all-embracing indigenous religious system which addresses issues of the body, soul, spirit, family and community (White, 2015). African Traditional Healers in South Africa view disease as a supernatural phenomenon that is governed by a hierarchy of vital powers which begins with the most powerful deity (Supreme Being), followed by lesser spiritual entities, ancestral spirits, living persons, animals, plants, and other objects (Zimba, 2014). African Traditional Healers believe in interactions between the spiritual and physical well-being. Therefore, to deal with health and illness, African Traditional Healers take on a holistic approach by on the one hand advising individuals on moral and legal matters, and on the other providing treatment for physical, social, psychological and spiritual symptoms (White, 2015). There are, however, many different ways of practising African Traditional Healing, depending on the type of spirit that has possessed an individual.

2.6.1. Types of Traditional Healers in South Africa

The following are the different types of Traditional Healers found in South Africa:

- *iNyanga* (*pl. izinyanga*) (herbalist) – The word *iNyanga*, according to Mkhize (2011), is used incorrectly as all African Traditional Healers are now referred to as *iziNyanga*. Mkhize (2011) argued that *iNyanga* is an owner of herbs or *impande*. An individual who practised healing and died returns and possesses this person (*iNyanga*), giving them all their secrets and knowledge about herbs or *impande* (Mkhize, 2011).

- *iSangoma* (*pl. izangoma*) – This individual defines an illness (diagnostician) and also divines the circumstances of the illness in the cultural context (diviner). This individual is trained and possessed through dancing and music, e.g. drumming (*ingoma*) (Mkhize, 2011).

- *Umthandazi* (*pl*. *abathandazi*) (faith healer) – These individuals perform their healing work using water and prayer while others use candles during consultations. It is believed that *abathandazi* are possessed by a messenger of God or *isithunywa* (Mkhize, 2011).

- *Umhlahli* – According to Mkhize (2011), if a patient has been bewitched, this healer has the ability to tell them the name of the person who is responsible.

- *Abalozi* – This individual is possessed and trained by spirits who communicate using a sound like that of a whistle. In order for the healer to understand the messages conveyed by the spirits, he or she is required to interpret this sound, usually whilst in a dream state. The individual is trained by his or her ancestors to make sense of the sounds (Mkhize, 2011).

- *iSanusi* – Mkhize (2011) stated that this healer is at the highest in the African Traditional Healing hierarchy. *iSanusi* is a foreteller, a prophet and a seer who has the ability to tell a patient what will occur and when it will occur. This, according to Mkhize (2011), is believed to be the development of *Abalozi*.

2.7. The Process of Becoming a Traditional Healer (*iSangoma*)

Mc Kay (2011) postulated that a Traditional Healer is an African spiritual medium who becomes one with his or her ancestral guides for healing purposes. It is seen as a spiritual calling rather than a profession that one chooses. Mkhize (2011) argued that there are various signs that have been constructed by African people as indicating that a child has *abantu abadala* or ancestors of healing. In the African culture, if a child is covered in a veil, caul or amniotic sac at birth, also known as *umhlwehlwe* or *ingubo yabadala*, it is believed that ancestral spirits live within him or her (Mkhize, 2011). This membrane either covers the whole baby at birth or only its head. However, not every child is born with a veil. Those born with it are believed to possess special gifts. In the African culture, stated Mkhize (2011), this indicates that one has the gift of the ancestors which could mean that the child should be named after one of the ancestors and not necessarily that he or she has the calling to become a Traditional Healer. Children born with *ingubo yabadala* are considered gifted (Mkhize, 2011).

Mkhize (2011) postulated that it is the ancestors themselves who determine at which stage of an individual's life they would make themselves known. This individual will begin to dream about big rivers, oceans, Traditional Healers and their attire, and snakes. It is also believed that an individual who is called to become a Traditional Healer suffers from an incurable illness that is caused by the ancestors, or they get sick and become either too fat or too thin. Out of anger, ancestors are said to bring many misfortunes to the home to the extent of bringing bad luck to the whole family if the individual does not respond to the calling, or refuses to become a healer (Mkhize, 2011). The assumption here is that when this happens, nothing can be done by the individual or the family except to wait until the ancestral spirit (*idlozi*) shows them where they should be initiated (Mkhize, 2011).

The most common illness or disorder that an individual who is called develops is *amafufunyana*, which presents symptoms similar to schizophrenia. Bomar (2014) articulated that there is a special receptivity that cannot be controlled in the flow of information and images amongst individuals who are said to have schizophrenia. The individual goes into a frenzy unexpectedly; this kind of rush is characterized by contradictory or scary images (Bomar, 2014). In this situation, as Bomar (2014) postulated, it is essential for the separation of the individual's energy from the extraneous foreign energies to occur. Shamanic practice (what is known as a *sweep*) is the method used in order for this separation to be effected successfully and to remove these foreign energies from the aura of the individual (Bomar, 2014). As a result, once this energy field has been cleared, the individual no longer picks up a flood of information, and has no reason to be disturbed or scared (Bomar, 2014). Bomar (2014) stated that it then becomes possible to assist the individual in aligning with the ancestral spirit's energy which attempts to come through from the other world and thus a healer is born. What creates problems, argues Bomar (2014), is the blockage of this emergence. According to Bomar (2014), the healer experiences a high voltage energy. This energy, like a short circuit with fuses blowing, burns up the individual when plugged. This is the reason why this can be really scary, and it is understandable why Western culture prefers to confine these individuals. They yell and scream and are put into strait-jackets, which is a really sad image, asserted Bomar (2014). To ensure that

there is no blockage, fuses are not blowing, and the individual can become the healer that they are meant to be, the shamanic or healing approach is used to align energies.

According to Bomar (2014), the mental illness, suicidal behaviour or depression experienced by a gifted individual is generally an emergency call or the individual's way of reaching out. Normally, ancient energy of a particular ancestor that has been placed in stasis finally manifests itself in the individual. The individual is then required to trace it back, and make discoveries as to what or who the spirit is. Bomar (2014) stated that the spirit in most cases is found to be connected to nature, especially with big rivers or mountains. Using these as examples to explain the phenomenon, it is believed to be a water or mountain spirit that walks with the individual and creates a time-space direction, affecting the individual caught in it. The need here, according to Bomar (2014), is the merging of two energies so that the water or mountain spirit and the individual become one. Again, for this alignment to be brought about, a specific ritual is conducted. Bomar (2014) clarified that as much as one can run from the past, it is impossible to hide from it. Most importantly, it is not about what the spirit wants but what the individual wants. The belief is that the spirit sees in the individual a call for something grand, something that will make life meaningful, and so this spirit responds to that call. This call of the individual, which is unintentional, is a reflection of a strong longing for a profound connection, one that transcends possession of things and materialism but moves into a tangible dimension (Bomar, 2014).

According to Mkhize (2011), for several months or years an apprentice Traditional Healer, known as *iThwasa* (pl. *amathwasa*), is mentored by his or her own ancestors or another Traditional Healer through divination with bones or prayer on diagnosing illnesses, healing physical as well as spiritual illnesses, interpreting dreams and incorporating spirits. Through steaming, dreaming, dancing in a trance-like state to the sound of drums (*ukugida*) and the ritual use of medicinal herbs to purify oneself, the initiate creates a very close bond with the ancestors who gave him or her the gift of healing, argued Mc Kay (2011). A close link with the realm of the spirits is forged when the apprentice Traditional Healer works in partnership with his or her ancestral guides. This partnership is also seen as a gift (Mc Kay, 2011).

2.8. Homosexuality and bisexuality defined

According to Bailey *et al*. (2016), sexual orientation is the attraction to members of the other sex, the same sex, or both sexes. Bailey *et al*. (2016) proposed that sexual orientation includes four components, mainly sexual behavior, sexual identity, sexual attraction and physiological sexual arousal. Researchers have found that there is a difference between sexual orientation and sexual identity. Sexual orientation, as postulated by Beard *et al*. (2015) is determined early in life while sexual identity may change over time (Maynard & Snodgrass, 2015). The belief is that sexual identity is open to choice while sexual orientation is not, for the reason that identity changes whereas orientation endures. In contrast, however, Auer, Fuss, Höhne, Stalla and Sievers (2014) argued that sexual orientation amongst some transsexual individuals does change, although the reasons for this remain unknown. It is important to consider how clinicians construe identity and orientation, particularly whether one sees these as fixed or as fluid. Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) defined homosexuality as an erotic preference for the same sex, as well as its endurance over time. The argument is that there are individuals who are not truly homosexual but heterosexual, that engage in homosexual behavior for a variety of reasons, such as opportunistic or rebellious reasons, developmental reasons, or as a defence against anxiety. On the other hand, some individuals who are, in fact, homosexual will not recognise this in themselves if homosexual fantasies are repressed or suppressed. Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) placed emphasis on the argument that since behaviour often comes under the sway of society's prohibitions, there is greater significance in erotic preference as it is expressed in fantasy life than actual behavior in defining who is and who is not homosexual. According to Mabvurira *et al*. (2012), a homosexual is an individual who has definite same-sex erotic preference which is usually, but not always, expressed behaviourally.

Gooß (2008) contended that even though bisexuality is a distinct and visible sexual category and is classified as sexual orientation like heterosexuality and homosexuality, it is continually interpreted as a defence mechanism or transitory phenomenon. Gooß (2008) advocated that bisexuality be conceptualised as a specific form of differentiation of erotic fantasies rather than as a form of sexuality derived from heterosexuality and homosexuality. In conclusion, Gooß (2008) postulated that bisexual individuals do not necessarily eroticise men and women, but feel

sexually drawn to men and women who eroticise other people in a bisexual way, like themselves. Basically, the belief here is that bisexual individuals are mutually drawn to each other (Gooß, 2008). Klein (2014) speculated that because a bisexual individual moves psychosexually freely among men and women, they are like spies, or similarly traitors as they are privy to the secrets of both camps enabling them to play the one against the other. Klein (2014) argued that bisexuality is not disguised heterosexuality or disguised homosexuality, but another way of sexual expression. Klein (2014) further stated that bisexuality is a way of being, in and of itself, even though it consists of both heterosexual and homosexual behaviour.

Therefore, with regards to the aims of this study, an area of interest here would be if individuals believe that ancestral guides influence their sexuality, is this changing over time (sexual identity) or is it enduring (sexual orientation)? And, if it is influenced by their ancestors, do they still have a choice (identity), or do they feel that they have no control but are forced to engage in homosexual or bisexual behaviour (orientation)? Lastly, it is important to understand whether these individuals actually engage in homosexual or bisexual behavior without any desire or erotic feelings towards the same sex, or if this constructed influence by ancestral guides actually makes them desire same-sex relationships.

While there is a clear understanding of what homosexuality and bisexuality is, there is still a negative outlook on homosexual relationships in African societies as they hold strong beliefs that same-sex relationships have never existed in the past, are an import from the West, and are a disgrace to the African culture (Zabus, 2009; Rudwick, 2011). As a result, digging deeper into the African history with regards to homosexual behaviour may help to either confirm or reject the now popular '*homosexuality is unAfrican*' belief.

2.9. Understanding Homosexuality: An African Perspective

Contrary to the common belief that homosexuality is an import from the west, Ilesanmi (2013) stated that since Africa is said to be the cradle of the human race, it can, therefore, be logically inferred that homosexuality started in Africa prior to the human race migrating to other places to

spread its branches in different colours, shapes and sizes. Ilesanmi's (2013) views were later shared by Zabus (2014), who asserted that the African continent has always been more queer than generally acknowledged.

Ilesanmi (2013) substantiated these claims by stating that homosexuals and transsexuals in many African cultures were revered and worshipped as spirits of the gods, drawing attention to the Yoruba god of thunder, *Sango*, who was described as a beautiful man who had his hair braided and accessorised like a woman, and also dressed like a woman. According to Ilesanmi (2013), in northern Congo it was also routine for male Azande warriors to marry male youths who functioned as temporary wives. In Nigeria, it is culturally allowed for the eldest daughter in the family to marry another woman in the absence of a male child in the family. The eldest daughter is considered the husband and gets to choose a man to impregnate her wife in order for the child to bear the family name. Ilesanmi (2013) further claimed that the various historical paintings on ancient African walls are proof that our ancestors enjoyed homo-affection, love and sex.

Epprecht (2010), Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) and Ward (2013) argued that homosexuality has always been present in black society and asserted that homosexuality also occurred in traditional Africa. According to Jaji (2017), concurring with Epprecht (2010), Mabvurira *et al*. (2012) and Ward (2013), what's actually *unAfrican* is the condemnation of homosexuality. Epprecht (2010), Mabvurira *et al*. (2012), Ward (2013) as well as Bertolt (2018) maintained that homosexuality has always existed in Africa, in one form or another, with South Africa being no exception despite the difficulty in finding accurate data among blacks about homosexuality. Van Klinken and Chitando (2016) argued that there now exists a belief amongst Africans that homosexuality is caused by evil forces and witchcraft, all because black societies refuse to accept homosexuality as normal.

Sigamoney and Epprecht (2013) asserted that the belief that homosexuality is *unAfrican* is widely viewed as an expression of homophobia. They further argued that people's understanding remains limited with regards to ways of shifting the prejudices associated with this belief

because they do not have the knowledge of what homosexuality and Africanness mean in a given context (Sigamoney & Epprecht, 2013). Mthembu (2014) and de Vos (2015) argued that homophobia is the result of people's fear of homosexuality brought about by lack of understanding.

2.10. African theories on homosexuality and bisexuality amongst Traditional Healers

This section begins firstly by discussing the different theories or explanations for homosexual tendencies that exist amongst Traditional Healers before discussing the constructed influence of ancestral guides on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers.

2.10.1. The androgynous energy of Traditional Healers

Conner and Sparks (2014) argued that in African cultures such as the Dagara spiritual tradition, androgynous initiates (females who can vibrate male energy and males who can vibrate female energy) are known as "Gatekeepers". "Gatekeepers" are believed to be individuals who live life between the physical and spiritual worlds, and are also mediators who bring balance between the two genders (Conner & Sparks, 2014). Cumes (2013) postulated that a spiritual medium or Traditional Healer can look into many physical contexts and access the realm of spirits (the Other World). It is a gift and an ability in which these individuals have the capacity to feel into both sides of the human polarity spectrum (Hsu & Harris, 2010; Phiri, 2016). As a result, a male Traditional Healer would have his gender assignment accompanied by all the mental or physical faculties and predispositions usual to that gender, but is also able to access all the female thought patterns, emotions and subconscious imagery. This, according to Hsu and Harris (2010), is assumed to apply to female healers as well (in reverse). According to Phiri (2016), Traditional Healers are individuals who have the power to enter the Other World mainly because of the belief that they have an essential androgynous energy. Even though some healers are gay and lesbian, same-sex attraction is not believed to be a mandate for the use of healing powers. The African culture positions healers as special as they are assumed to carry this androgynous energy, which is the energy of the spirits (Phiri, 2016). It is believed that this androgynous

energy gives Traditional Healers the ability to exist in the physical form as well as journey into other realms (Hsu & Harris, 2010). Lambrecht (2017) concurred with Hsu and Harris (2010), Cumes (2013), Conner and Sparks (2014), and Phiri (2016) arguing that central to being an African Traditional Healer or *iSangoma* is the androgyny of behaviour and colourful dress code. This androgyny expresses *iSangoma's* position between the material and spiritual world where he or she becomes a wanderer of boundaries (Lambrecht, 2017). The cross-gender identification expressed by the dress code of an *iSangoma* suggests an overcoming of sexual differences and simultaneously highlights his or her androgynous state (Lambrecht, 2017). During a trance-state, *iSangoma* resonates and expresses the aesthetics or beauty of the ancestors that he or she embodies. The souls that possess this androgynous energy are seen as blessed in the African culture and are positioned in the community as the holy ones (Conner & Sparks, 2014). Hsu and Harris (2010) postulated that the balance of male and female energy (androgyny) in a Traditional Healer is significant as it facilitates the connection between the patient and the ancestors, both male and female, to encourage healing.

2.10.2. The African Traditional Healing practice as female-centered leading to gay male iZangoma

According to Ogana and Ojong (2015), the sexual orientation of *iZangoma*, as controversial as it may be, cannot be overlooked. Zulu anthropologist Harriet Ngubane stated that the capacity to bear children, or the matrilineal lineage, is the basis of an *iSangoma's* calling, arguing that a bridging role is played by wives or mothers as channels through which children enter the world of the living through their reproductive biological roles, with female diviners benefiting as a result through lineage (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015). Also, *iZangoma* are often females due to women's greater tendency to be intuitive, child bearers, creators and carers, as well as possessing endurance, tenacity and compassion which are important roles and characteristics in any healing profession (Ogana & Ojong, 2015).

Ngubane clarified that "it is through a woman that the transition of spiritual beings is made", highlighting women's gender supremacy in their role as mediators between ancestors and the living (Lombo, 2017, p. 36). This, according to Phiri (2016) and Lombo (2017), is crucial in

explaining why it is mainly women who are diviners and in turn why male diviners must become transvestite since a transvestite is an individual who dresses and acts in a manner that is traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Ngubane (as cited in Conner & Sparks, 2014, p. 36), in an attempt to further amplify this concept, asserted, "divination is a woman's thing and if a man gets possessed, he becomes a transvestite as he is playing the role of a daughter rather than that of a son; for the special and very close contact with the spirits is reserved for women only who can form a bridge between the two worlds".

Lee (as cited in Conner & Sparks, 2014) observed that male *amaThwasa* tend to veer to homosexuality when they are called to initiation and are usually young and unmarried. "While the whole profession is female-centered, the minority male neophytes are transvestite and tend to copy the way of women" (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015, p. 73). Derwent (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015) concurred with this statement and asserted that male *iZangoma*, in the context of ancestral possession, have acted in ways that are typically associated with the female sex. Normally, it is women who train these males who undergo *ukuthwasa* and these apprentices take on female identities by donning female dress during the process. Placing emphasis on the extent to which these male *amaThwasa* adopt roles of the opposite sex, it has also been observed that in a traditional Zulu compound, they sit on the left hand side of the house, which is specifically reserved for women and even learn the female craft of beadwork. Further emphasising this form of emasculation, Derwent (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015) argued that these males mimic women in many ways because they are trained by female practitioners. They occupy the same space in domestic settings that females normally occupy, speak in high-pitched tones, and use female attire such as *imiyeko* (wigs imitating long hair, believed to hold spiritual power) and *izidwaba* (skirts). On the other hand, lesbian and transgender male (female-to-male) *iZangoma* are allowed to do things only done by traditional Zulu men, such as carrying a shield and spear, as well as enjoying beer and meat (Conner & Sparks, 2014). Lambrecht (2017) argued that the cross-gender identification of *iZangoma* is symbolic of overcoming sexual differences and in addition it highlights *iSangoma's* marginality as well as the liminality of his or her androgynous state. It is no wonder, then, that male initiates are referred to as homosexual.

Lindsay and Miescher (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015) remarked that from a value-neutral identity, the transvestite male *iSangoma* experiences a gender transformation shift to a disparaging label for men of lower masculinity, as they are called derogatory terms like *isitabane* or *ungqingili* (men who have sex with men). As a result of homophobic information among male *iZangoma*, further research is needed from both a historical and socio-cultural perspective in order to derive a clearer understanding of the situation.

2.10.3. The constructed influence of ancestral guides on homosexuality amongst Traditional Healers (iZangoma)

Buijs (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015) refuted Ngubane's argument and stated that the gender identity of *iSangoma* depends on the ancestor who inhabits the body of the diviner. A male *iSangoma* will take on female characteristics of walk, dress and voice, if he is possessed by a female ancestor and vice versa for a female *iSangoma*. According to Zabus (2014), an ancestor spirit-possessed man in Senegal, the *gor-djigeen* ('male-female' in the Wolof language) is said to be haunted by the primordial severance between male and female in the creation of the universe, whereas claims of being inhabited by a female spirit might be made by a gay Shona man in Zimbabwe (Zabus, 2014).

Such men in *ubungoma* are not hard to identify. Mkasi (2016) concurred with statements regarding the feminine traits that male *iZangoma* possess and declared that the few Zulu male *iZangoma* that exist tend to adopt a female persona. These males are often homosexual, affirmed Ogana and Ojong (2015), a gender orientation that is viewed as *unAfrican*, and the masculine roles of husband and father are not expected from these male *iZangoma* by their communities. These male *iZangoma* also cross-dress, speak in a high-pitched female voice and tend to walk with female gait.

According to Morgan and Weiringa (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), female *iZangoma* are not excluded from this matter as some older female *iZangoma*, despite gayness being taboo, are assisted by their ancestors to select a partner, a female ancestral wife or female *iThwasa*, with whom she will

have sexual relations. Reiterating the gay tendencies observed amongst female *iZangoma*, Morgan and Weiringa (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015) stated that ancestral wives serve their female husbands and undertake chores to facilitate their healing work. The healers use these liaisons to have sex even though it is prohibited for female *iZangoma* to have sexual relations with their ancestral wives and/or *amaThwasa* in the African culture.

Mkasi (2016) echoed these statements by enunciating that in Traditional Healing there is an understanding that one's behaviour can be influenced or changed by his or her ancestral spirits. The author proceeds to point out that witnessing a female *iSangoma* behaving like a male or a male *iSangoma* behaving like a female is not something strange because at times, depending on the ancestral spirit that possesses an individual, the spirit can take complete control of one's body. Furthermore, as postulated by Mkasi (2016), it is expected that ancestral spirits cross gender boundaries. In an attempt to substantiate these claims, the author gave a background of how the Traditional Healing context interprets spirit possession:

"A female spirit in a female *iSangoma*

A male spirit and a female spirit in a female *iSangoma*

A male spirit in a female *iSangoma*

An authoritative male spirit in a female *iSangoma*

A female spirit in a male *iSangoma*" (Mkasi, 2013, p. 44).

When analysing these categories using Western concepts of homosexuality, they mean the following:

"Lesbian – A female *iSangoma* who is possessed by a male spirit

Bisexual – A female *iSangoma* who is possessed by a female spirit and a male spirit

Transgender – A female *iSangoma* who is possessed by a male (authoritative) spirit

Gay – A male *iSangoma* who is possessed by a female spirit" (Mkasi, 2013, p. 44).

Nkabinde (2008) claimed that when a female *iSangoma* assumes a male position as a result of being possessed by an authoritative male ancestral spirit, she is called *Baba* (father) by other *iZangoma* and members of the community. *iSangoma* in this position impersonates a male figure to an extent that the ancestor possessing her is easily identified by members of the family. According to Morgan and Reid (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), this type of *iSangoma* may prefer to live a celibate life, choose not to marry, choose same-sex partners, or choose an ancestral wife.

According to Nkabinde and Morgan (2011), in another South African study of lesbian *iZangoma*, it appeared that these *iZangoma* seem to have dominant male ancestors whom they believe command them to take wives. As a result, it is believed that these women use the institution of ancestral wives as a safe space in which they can have loving, intimate and sexual same-sex relationships with the assumed consent of their dominant male ancestors. Nkabinde and Morgan (2011) argued that they give credence to their same-sex relationships in the indigenous African framework by using the voices of their ancestors. This is also believed to be true with some male *iZangoma* and their dominant female ancestors who are assumed to command them to have husbands.

The obvious question, then, which this study aims to answer, is, can ancestral guides influence an individual's sexual identity? According to Mkasi (2016), this is not an easy question to answer mainly because being possessed by ancestral spirits of the opposite sex does not necessarily mean that one will be in same-sex relationships. Also, to successfully answer this question, one needs to listen to individuals who are in same-sex relationships and who are open about their sexuality (Mkasi, 2016), which is another important aspect of this study.

It all comes down to agency and how *iZangoma* position themselves in their narratives. If they position themselves without any agency, then they cannot be blamed or ostracised for engaging in same-sex relationships. The issue whether their homosexuality and bisexuality is influenced by their ancestral guides or if it is of their own choice to be in same-sex relationships, is in question.

2.11. Theoretical Framework: Communitarianism and Choice

In order to understand who (self or others) has a greater influence in the sexual identity of African Traditional Healers, it is important to study their culture and context (characteristics of the African culture) to gain insight on how African people as a whole are expected to make decisions about their lives (independently or collectively with the help of ancestors, family and community members).

Africans, unlike Westerners, have a synthesising mind-set as opposed to the accidental analytic one, contended Desmond Tutu (as cited in Kaye, 2011; Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014). According to Tutu, Westerners have a strong sense of individualism while Africans have a strong sense of community. Westerners are able to take personal initiatives because they have a strong sense of value of the individual. However, when one is a community-minded person, it is not easy to go against accepted communal mores (as cited in Kaye, 2011; Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014).

According to Greenfield (as cited in Chirkov, 2015), there are sharp distinctions between the knowing subject and the object of his or her knowledge in traditional Western ways of knowing. The knower is stripped of all particularities, such as his or her existence in space and time, culture, gender, position and the like (Rawls, as cited in Majola, 2009; Lesolang, 2010). In traditional psychology, the self is seen as an autonomous, bounded entity that is not influenced by contextual and social factors but is defined by its internal attributes, such as emotions and thoughts (Mackintosh & Long, 2017). Discretionary choice establishes this entity where the social order and relationships with others exist. Mkhize (as cited in Rogers, 2011) argued that this view of selfhood is also known as the *independent view of self* or *self-contained individualism*. This view of the self is very different compared to non-Western cultures' and indigenous societies' conceptions of the self. In these societies, affirmed Dzherelievskaya and Vizgina (2017), the self tends to be context-based in that one's relationships with others such as family, community and status within the group is what defines the self. Harmonising one's interests with those of the collective, rather than being autonomous, is the goal of socialisation (Dzherelievskaya & Vizgina, 2017). This view of selfhood is known as the *collectivist self* or *interdependent self-construal* (Kitayama *et al*., 2017).

According to Taylor-Smith (2009), in Africa, communitarianism can also be translated as belongingness. These are ties with, or a strong sense of belonging to, the family, community, ethnic group or tribe, a clan, and a state or nation in the modern sense of the word. Taylor-Smith (2009) asserted that the African society is organised around the family, community, clan and tribal ties. As a result, in Africa, human community is vital for the acquisition of an individual's identity, personhood and sustenance of their existence (Kuye & Tshiyoyo, 2015; Watadza, 2016). John Mbiti (as cited in Watadza, 2016, p. 5) captured this philosophy very well when he stated, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." As a result, Mabvurira (2016) stated that an African individual's identity "is hinged on a collective identity" (p. 35).

According to Sanni (2016), rejecting one's traditional family religious practices can only lead to an identity crisis, a weak identity, or a complete loss of identity mainly because an integral part of the African's culture is religion. The reason for this is that it is only through relationships in the community of the living and the living-dead, and through a relationship with the Supreme Being or God, that one's identity can be expressed, claimed Watadza (2016). Therefore, an African community is actually deprived of life in the present and the future, and of a life with God, if it is without the living-dead and ancestor shades.

Nkabahona (as cited in Taylor-Smith, 2009) maintained that the harmonious co-existence between the physical and spiritual, which in essence is a harmonious co-existence between man and spiritual beings, man and neighbour, man and nature or the environment, was an overarching and guiding principle for the traditional African. This guiding principle was so strong to the extent that the entire community would be negatively affected if there was interference in the harmonious co-existence, for example, through immoral behaviour (Udokang, 2014), any offences against God or man, pollution, ritual mistakes, or disregard for God, divinities and ancestral spirits (Deezia, 2018). This, according to Deezia (2018), would result in hunger, disease, thunder, epidemics killing livestock and people, flood disasters, fire outbreaks and so on. In general, chaos, suffering and disharmony in the community would be brought about by bad deeds of an individual or group of people (Deezia, 2018). However, the contrary was also believed to be true. According to Mkenda (2010), good acts by members of the community also

brought about peace, harmony and livestock. These include acts such as good leadership, reaching out to the needy, and caring for others. Since there would be no hunger and no disease, death would only be by natural occurrences, such as old age.

The African philosophy of Communitarianism has, to a large extent, a lot in common with Christianity and other World Religions. In accordance with their perception of the universe as one, undivided, hierarchy of beings, physical and spiritual, Africans had a sense of sin, although this differs radically from the traditional Christian religion. While both attribute human suffering to the sins of man, resulting in some form of punishment from God, to a great extent, African spirituality, according to Latif (2010) and Landman (2018), exonerates God from being responsible for human suffering. Instead, angry ancestors or individuals within the community are blamed for misfortunes and acts contrary to the sustenance and promotion of harmonious co-existence, peace and social order (Latif, 2010; Deezia, 2018). With morality being the foundation of African Traditional Religions, Aden and Olira (2017) emphasised that individual actions are judged as good or bad depending on the impact it has on, and the consequences it brings to, the entire community. Udokang (2014) asserted that Africans strictly observe rules, regulations, traditional and cultural taboos, as well as customs in accordance with family, clan or tribal practices and beliefs in order to maintain this harmony. However, Nyabwari and Kagema (2014) and Deezia (2018) postulated that unfortunate events can also be brought about by sinister forces, an example of this being witchcraft.

According to Manstead (2018), an individual's identity is shaped by pre-existing social structure and conditions. Identity is both individual and collective, being continually formed and reformed, created and shaped by the discourse of the individual and society or community (Persson, 2010).

From the above, one learns that the choices an African individual makes are not entirely influenced by the self but by the family community (relatives, both living and deceased) and general community. The implication of this understanding on sexual identity, it would seem, for

an African and an African Traditional Healer and their sexual identity, is a complex and very nuanced one. However, Rudwick (2011) emphasised that South Africans' anti-gay sentiments result from the reasoning that homosexuality is against their culture, implying that gay-ness is simply a behavioural codex which one could choose to adhere to or not. What many South Africans do not acknowledge, claimed Rudwick (2011), is that homosexuality is not a matter of choice for most black gay people, but a matter of identity.

The above theoretical framework will assist in understanding how the select group of Traditional Healers define their own sexual identity, that being, if they view their sexual identity as shaped by the traditional African community (which includes ancestors), or if they believe it is influenced by the self.

2.12. Conclusion

This chapter provided a literature review on the attitudes of homosexuality in South Africa; a background into Traditional Healing and homosexuality in South Africa; how African people perceive the world; the role of ancestors in the lives of African people; and African Traditional Healers and the healing practice. As with the focus of this study, the discussion also included an overview of research on homosexuality and bisexuality in Africa; African theories that have been proposed as leading to same-sex attraction amongst Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*); and how the choices that African people make are largely influenced by the community in which they live. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology that was used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 consisted of a review of literature that is relevant to the study topic which focused on homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender identities, Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) and ancestral guides. The research design of the study, which is qualitative and exploratory, will be covered in this chapter, followed by a discussion on the snowball sampling method used in this study, a discussion of the research sample, the data collection method of semi-structured interviews and the instruments used. This chapter will also discuss the discursive approach which was used for data analysis, research trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. Qualitative and exploratory

This study was a qualitative research study. This means that it allowed the researcher to identify and understand the information categories emerging from the data (Anderson, 2010), so as to explore phenomena and understand social situations (Jamieson, 2016). Investigating a relatively unknown area of research and looking for new insights into phenomena requires the researcher to use an exploratory approach (Davidsson, 2016). Therefore, this research study was exploratory as it was aimed at addressing a gap that exists in the literature by exploring the influence of ancestral guides on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers in South Africa, which is an area that has not received much attention.

3.3. Sampling Method and Sample

3.3.1. Purposeful and snowball sampling method

The researcher used the purposeful sampling method for this study rather than random sampling. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015), purposeful sampling, also known as judgement sampling, is deliberately choosing a participant due to the qualities that he or she possesses. It is a non-random technique that is used to identify and select information-rich cases in qualitative research (Etikan *et al*., 2015). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting participants that are proficient and well-informed about the phenomenon of interest. Unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling focuses on people with particular characteristics as they are better able to assist with the relevant research (Etikan *et al*., 2015). The use of the purposeful sampling technique was to assist the researcher in recruiting suitable candidates that would share their own experiences, thereby gathering rich information on the area covered in this study.

Etikan, Alkassim and Abubakar (2016) argued that chain referral sampling is another term used to refer to snowball sampling. It is one of the sampling methods used where selected elements are not determined by the statistical principle of randomness (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). These are known as non-probability sampling methods. In snowball sampling, the researcher begins by selecting initial subjects non-randomly and it is these subjects that determine how the ultimate sample is composed (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). As a result, the research is not affected in any way as any bias characteristic of other forms of sampling is reduced by this technique (Etikan *et al*., 2016). According to Etikan *et al*. (2016), interpersonal relations and connections between individuals are used in snowball sampling to access specific populations. The chain referral recruitment technique is more suited for research that is interested in or focused on rare properties (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018).

Kirchherr and Charles (2018) argued that snowball sampling enables the researcher to reach hidden and socially stigmatised populations so as to study existing problems among these populations. The chain referral sampling technique aids in breaking boundaries that make it impossible to conduct research. These boundaries include social stigma, threats to safety

resulting in fear of exposure, intolerance of diversity in society and issues of privacy (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Snowball sampling assists in minimising bias (Etikan *et al*., 2016) while also maintaining privacy and confidentiality (Vogt, Gardner & Haeffele, 2012). According to Etikan *et al*. (2016), this technique is best for studying sensitive issues and reaching hidden populations.

The snowballing technique was found to be useful in this study because of the difficulty in finding homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) who were willing to participate.

The sampling techniques used in this study were purposeful and snowball sampling. Therefore, one lesbian Traditional Healer (*iSangoma*) and one bisexual *iThwasa* known by the researcher personally were selected initially and in turn they were asked to recruit other suitable candidates (African Traditional Healers who are homosexual, bisexual or transgender). Each of these selected participants recruited one lesbian Traditional Healer that they knew, one of which recruited a transgender Traditional Healer. In total, five participants were recruited through the use of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques.

3.3.2. Sample

The focus of this study is on *iZangoma*, Traditional Healers who are possessed by *idlozi* (spirit of the departed who had the gift of healing spiritually) and reach trance states through *ingoma* (drumming). Five participants were recruited for this study. Four of the participants were Traditional Healers and one was still an *iThwasa* (undergoing initiation). Three of the participants were lesbians, one participant was bisexual, and one participant was transgender. All of the participants were older than 18 years old. All participants read and signed informed consent forms before participating in this study (see Appendix B).

3.3. Research Instruments and Data Collection

3.3.1. Research instruments

The researcher compiled two interview schedules, one in English and one in isiZulu (Appendix C). The questions were phrased in simple terms that participants could understand. The interview schedule comprised 11 questions and these, in the light of research objectives, covered three general topics (how participants define their sexual identity; participants' ancestral guides and the influence that ancestral guides have on their sexual identity; and whether their sexual identity is a chosen or forced identity).

3.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in this study. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews are loosely structured interviews that consist of open-ended questions which allow viewpoints to emerge freely. A schedule of questions or topics guide semi-structured interviews, although during the interview their order may vary and the interviewer may depart from the schedule and use a variety of follow-up questions for probing (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as they allowed for in-depth questioning of participants' thought processes and motivations, and also allowed the researcher to follow up on particularly interesting issues that were brought up during the interview process (Silverman, 2013). Participants were asked the same core questions and the interviewer built on the responses received by asking follow-up questions. The questions requested that participants provide information about their ancestral guides, their sexual identity as Traditional Healers, and share their own experiences, thoughts or beliefs with regards to the influence of ancestral guides on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers. The questions that were asked as part of this study focused on understanding the ways in which participants feel and understand their situation. Thus, it was crucial to allow participants to convey their own perspective of reality (Silverman, 2013). With this aim in mind, objective qualitative research methods were utilised using semi-structured interviews as these were considered the best suited tool in answering the research questions (Silverman, 2013).

3.3.3. Data collection

After a participant had been recruited, an individual appointment was scheduled with them to meet at their place of practice. The interviewer then explained the research process to the participant. This covered information on what the research study was about, how long the interview would take, and the option to not respond to a particular question or to stop the interview at any given time if they felt uncomfortable. The individual was then given the opportunity to ask questions and only once the participant was clear about the study, understood what would be required of him or her and was willing to participate, he or she was then taken through the consent form (see Appendix B) and asked to sign it, after which the participant was interviewed. Participants who did not live in KwaZulu-Natal were contacted via email and telephone. Similarly, the research process was also explained and they were given the opportunity to ask questions. Individuals who were willing to participate were emailed the consent form and were requested to email it back to the researcher once it was signed. A day and time that was suitable for the participant was then scheduled for an interview. Data collection included one face-to-face interview and four telephonic interviews which were all recorded. During the telephonic interviews, the telephone used was put on speaker mode and an audio recorder was placed next to the telephone to record the questions asked by the researcher and the responses given by the participant.

The interviews were approximately 50 minutes to an hour and a half long. The same questions were put to all participants who were interviewed.

3.4. Data Analysis Method and Procedure

3.4.1. Social constructionist approach: Discourse analysis

The results of this research study were analysed using discourse analysis. Badir (2017) argued that discourse analysis evolved from the study of language, literary criticism and the study of semiotics. The focus of discourse analysis is language-in-use, which is language in either written or spoken form (Alsaawi, 2016). Discourse analysis is concerned with how individuals accomplish social, political and personal projects through the medium of language (Shanthi, Lee

& Lajium, 2015). Discourse analysts argued that words and language alone cannot be used as a system of signs but that only through the shared and mutually agreed-upon use of language can meaning be created (Shanthi *et al*., 2015). Through language, our understanding of reality is both mediated and constructed, with social roles being redefined and individuals re-enacting their identities through the same use of language (Yazdannik, Yousefy & Mohammadi, 2017).

This research study examined how dynamic social, political and cultural practices are both shaped and reflected by language, making discourse analysis the best fit for this study. According to Xu (2014), through persuasion, a discourse also known as a rhetorical strategy is applied in a strategic or unique way by the writer or speaker in order for the reader or listener to embrace a particular belief. Therefore, discourse is known as 'verbal art' in which meaning is shared (Johnstone, 2018). The narrator uses a certain way to express themselves and strategically constructs their story. Ideas, symbols, discourses and meanings are then shared if the narrator successfully convinces or persuades the listener (Xu, 2014). Paltridge (2012) argued that the meaning of a text is embedded in the intentions of the speaker, in the interpretation of the audience, in the literal text, and in all the above mentioned.

In this research study, the feelings, opinions, experiences and meanings of homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) were investigated and explored using a discursive approach.

3.4.2. Discourse analysis procedure

The recordings from the interviews were transcribed and translated, and rhetorical analysis and discourse methods were used to analyse these. The discourses that participants drew on during the interviews were then looked at and compared. The use of the discursive approach enabled the researcher to compare how each participant, through the use of language, constructed or mediated an understanding of their own identity and reality. The discursive approach also allowed the researcher to look at how each participant strategically persuaded the listener to embrace a particular belief or story.

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (as cited in Anyona, 2011; Mtose, 2011) proposed three steps to qualitative discourse analysis. The first step is when the analyst looks for binary oppositions in the text, for example, love-hate, clever-stupid and good-bad. In texts, binary oppositions, according to Terre Blanche *et al*. (as cited in Anyona, 2011), are implicit as the writer or narrator only explicitly mentions one side of the opposition. The analyst is alerted to a particular discourse when the other side of the opposition is not mentioned. In the second step the analyst looks at the responses to identify recurrent metaphors, terms and phrases (Terre Blanche *et al*., as cited in Anyona, 2011; Mtose, 2011). The context of what the speaker says and how they say it is included in discourse as each discourse has a unique form of expression. An example of this is the analyst recognising terms such as *iSangoma*, visions, ancestors and healer to be spiritual, and the speaker recurrently using these terms suggests to the analyst that they are framing things within a spiritual or traditional framework. The third step is to identify discourses in the author's responses by considering the human subjects that they talk about (Terre Blanche *et al*., as cited in Anyona, 2011). However, looking closely at the human subjects in the speaker's responses often reveals the presence of more subjects. For example, if the texts of the narrator talk about the self, their family, their ancestral guides and possibly other Traditional Healers, this could alert the analyst that there are other discourses (family discourses or ancestral discourses) at play.

According to Petersen (2011), constructionist analysis focuses on linking accounts to actions. The question is '*what do texts do*?' rather than '*what do texts say*?' because a discourse analyst examines texts for their effects not veracity (Testa & Armstrong, 2012). Oppositions found in a text, frame issues in a certain way, creating a particular problem. With regards to Traditional Healers, one is alerted to a 'problem' by oppositions of normal-mentally ill found in psychiatric texts, resulting in Traditional Healers being diagnosed with schizophrenia as this 'problem' is framed as a psycho-medical one. However, the data obtained could reveal a different set of oppositions to the analyst. For example, healers using language in a strategic way to emphasise that they are not mentally ill but are victims of powerful ancestors and should not be perceived as having a choice *vis-à-vis* their sexual persuasion or as choosing to have intimate relationships

with same-sex individuals, thereby defending themselves as well as their sexual identity. The 'problem' would then be constructed in a completely different way, framing it as a spiritual problem that does not seek to be addressed psycho-medically but rather requiring traditional, cultural and spiritual intervention.

With regards to the effects, the recurrent metaphors, terms and phrases give meaning to the events or objects that are spoken about by the narrator in the text. Therefore, during the process of data analysis, the analyst was aware that the actual function of the terms and phrases used was to position Traditional Healers in a certain way in relation to society and their ancestral guides. The belief concerning effects is that subjects are also contained in discourse. As a result, the analyst looked, for example, for discourses that produced the effect of validating or justifying the work that Traditional Healers do and their homosexual or bisexual relationships, or the effect of empowering other homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers. Lastly, since texts operate within a context, the analyst looked at the context so as to determine what actions were being performed. During the interview, for example, participants stated that whether or not they will be attracted to same-sex individuals depends entirely on who their leading or dominant ancestor is at that point in time, portraying themselves as not having a choice on which sex they become intimately involved with. The narrator may do this to affirm that they have no agency with regards to who they become attracted to as it is their ancestral guides who have control. However, the context of this text was then interpreted by the analyst in order to understand if the Traditional Healer, in any other context (around friends, colleagues, family members or other healers), would have given the very same response or if they responded in this way because they were in an interview.

Researchers need to work through the hermeneutic circle when interpreting qualitative research data, argued Vieira and de Queiroz (2017). In working through the hermeneutic circle, it is important to consider the text's meaning of parts in relation to its constituent parts which are the meaning of the whole. Both subjective and objective sides should be involved in interpreting the data (Vieira & de Queiroz, 2017). Interpreters view this as a circular movement between part and whole, and between subjective and objective sides. These elements open new perspectives for

research (Vieira & de Queiroz, 2017). According to McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2018), when interpreting data, the interpreter should first look for commonalities and differences across material. Therefore, the interpreter looked for themes that were common across all transcripts which were also related to the research question. Afterwards, the interpreter highlighted common themes which were not in the transcripts, focusing on how the participants constructed these and then fed these back to the theory.

For qualitative researchers using the discourse analysis method, emphasis is placed on three key elements. The first key element, also known as "immersion", is to familiarise oneself with the text (Shanthi *et al.*, 2015) to the extent that the analyst knows exactly where a particular quotation or theme occurs in the text (Jamieson, 2016). The analyst should understand the overall meaning as well as the different types of meaning found within the text. Jamieson (2016) argued that the second key element in discourse analysis is coding and regeneration of themes. This is also known as "unpacking". This requires the analyst to lay out meanings of words relating to a particular theme. The analyst should have an overall idea of the data and also look for patterns and relationships between themes (Jamieson, 2016). The third and final key element, also known as "associating", is for the analyst to refer to the context that the meaning of text was created in, as well as the history it was employed in (Song, 2010). This is to understand the text's fullness of meaning. As a result, the analyst proceeded to immerse herself in a world of meaning of metaphors such as 'healer' or 'gifted', unpacking its many meanings and freely associating what these metaphors stand for.

3.5. Research Trustworthiness

3.5.1 Credibility rather than validity

Merrill, Frankenfeld, Freeborne and Mink (2015) stated that validity is the degree to which research conclusions are correct. This means that research findings can produce accurate reflections of reality (Grove & Gray, 2018). Credibility, on the other hand, according to Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams and Blackman (2016), is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility confirms whether research findings drawn from

the participants' original data, represent plausible information and are correct interpretations of the original views of the participants (Whitley & Kite, 2013).

Therefore, since the aim of this research was not to explain the complex phenomenon of ancestral possession as playing a role in Traditional Healers' homosexual, bisexual and transgender identities so as to make accurate conclusions, but rather to understand homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers by taking a closer look at their narratives and the discourses that they drew on, credibility rather than validity was the best fit for this research study.

The data collection or interview technique adopted by a researcher is one credibility strategy that establishes rigor in a qualitative research study (Anney, 2014). To achieve credibility, by use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher did not ask participants for truths or facts that *describe* or *explain* ancestral possession, sexual identity and their intimate relationships, but asked participants about their own personal experiences regarding this phenomenon in order to *understand* it better, because the primary interest of discourse analysis is to understand how the discourses are constructed, how these are played out in social interaction, as well as how these vary for different circumstances and purposes.

3.5.2. Transferability rather than generalisability

According to Leung (2015), generalisability is the extent to which it is possible to generalise from the data and context of the research study to broader populations and settings. Generalisability becomes essential when researchers aim to describe populations or to make universal theoretical claims. Transferability, being the interpretive equivalent of generalisability, refers to the degree to which qualitative research results can be transferred to other contexts with other subjects or participants (Moon *et al*., 2016). Achieving transferability ensures that the structures of meaning which develop in a specific context are accounted for.

As a result, transferability seemed a better fit for this research study compared to generalisability. This was mainly because the findings were specific to African Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) in the South African context and could not be generalised to broader settings and populations. The findings were not used to generalise to the wider population of South African Traditional Healers either, because the meanings that they attach to the influence on sexual identity could still vary.

The researcher achieves transferability through purposeful sampling and 'thick description' (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As a result, transferability in this study was ensured by selecting subjects who are African, who possess the gift of healing through ancestral spirits, and who are homosexual, bisexual or transgender, using purposeful and snowball sampling techniques. This allowed the researcher to ask participants, with context in mind, the factors that they believe influence their sexual identity as well as the role that ancestral guides play on sexual identity, and the results could be transferred to other homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers in South Arica if the study were to be repeated.

3.5.3 Dependability rather than reliability

According to Leung (2015), reliability is the degree to which the same sets of results are produced if the study is repeated. This means that if individuals score similarly on measures on numerous occasions, the study is then considered reliable. Dependability, on the other hand, is the stability of findings over time (Moon *et al*., 2016), meaning that organisations, individuals and groups will behave differently and express different views in changing contexts, making the findings dependable (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen-Irvine & Walker, 2018). The dependability of findings is rooted in showing how certain actions and opinions are developed out of, and are derived from, contextual interaction (Ary *et al*., 2018). In order to achieve dependability, the reader should also be provided with statements of the research design, data collection and data analysis methods used by the researcher (Moon *et al*., 2016). Dependability can also be achieved in data analysis (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve this, the researcher presents a quote in its context and gives enough information about the context in which this quote took place,

convincing the reader that an accurate reflection of the contextual interaction is made by the analysis of this quote (Song, 2010).

Therefore, with regards to changing experiences, different things such as intimate partners of another sex could be expected by the Traditional Healer's ancestral guides from time to time, resulting in different findings if the study is repeated, making dependability rather than reliability the best fit for this study. Dependability is also established through stepwise replication, which is a data evaluation procedure used in qualitative research where the same data is analysed separately by two or more researchers and the results are compared (Ary *et al*., 2018). Dependability of the research study is only achieved if the analyses of the data are similar (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the findings as well as the interpretations and recommendations of the study should also be made available to the reader to ensure that they are all supported by data received from the participants.

To ensure dependability in this study, both the researcher and research supervisor thoroughly analysed the participants' exact responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews separately, and reached the same analyses which produced the findings of the study. The reader was also informed about the method of data collection (semi-structured interviews) as well as the method of data analysis (discourse analysis) used and the researcher also included the results and recommendations of the study. This was done to ensure the reader understands that participants' discourses, which are found in their experiences and opinions, are not set discourses that will always be present as they are dependent on the various changes that they continue to experience in their lives. This was also done to convince the reader that the analyses, findings and interpretations of the study are an accurate reflection of the data received from study participants.

3.5.4. Confirmability rather than objectivity

The objectivity principle specifies that researchers should remain distanced from the study so that the findings do not depend on their beliefs, values and personalities, but rather on the nature

of the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This means that the study results should be unbiased. Confirmability, according to Anney (2014), refers to the degree to which other researchers could confirm and corroborate the results of the study. Moon *et al*. (2016) stated that confirmability is concerned with establishing that the interpretations of the findings clearly emerge from the data and are not based on the researcher's preferences or characteristics.

Therefore, confirmability rather than objectivity was the best fit for this study. To achieve confirmability in a qualitative study (Bowen, 2009), one makes use of an audit trail which "offers visible evidence – from process to product – that the researcher did not simply find what he or she set out to find" (p. 307), as well as assessing the integrity of research findings (Anney, 2014). Therefore, to enhance confirmability, the researcher kept raw data that was collected, i.e. recordings, interview notes and transcripts, for cross-checking the data and study results. Also, to ensure that the data received was not fabricated by study participants due to them being uncomfortable in providing the information required, the researcher built up a rapport and trust with participants, and safeguarded the participants' identity thereby ensuring that they could be open and honest in their responses.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

3.6.1. Informed consent

The aims and purposes of the study were explained in detail, both verbally and in writing, upon meeting with or communicating with the participants for the first time. The researcher gave participants the opportunity to ask questions about the research study and their participation. Each participant was then asked to sign a consent form if they were willing to participate in the study (Pollock, 2012). (See Appendix B).

3.6.2. Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

According to Pollock (2012), autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons refers to protecting the identity of participants and maintaining confidentiality. This principle was achieved by giving each participant a pseudonym so that their personal identities could not be identified.

3.6.3. Nonmaleficence

Participation was voluntary and not forced (Pollock, 2012) in order to ensure that no harm was done to participants as sexual identity and ancestral possession are very sensitive issues. Participants were also free to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process. After the participants were informed about the research study and had signed the consent forms, they were given or sent a take-away consent form with the researcher's and research supervisor's contact details in case they had any further concerns about the study. Also included in the form was information about trauma counseling in case participants felt they needed to talk to someone about sensitive issues (see Appendix A).

3.6.4. Beneficence

The principle of beneficence aims to minimise harm to research participants and maximise benefits for the research study (Beckmann, 2017). In terms of beneficence, quality research on ancestral possession, homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender identity could possibly transform the way in which society perceives this phenomenon and participants themselves could become more cognisant of issues that they were never conscious of.

3.6.5. Justice

In research, justice is a principle in which the researcher is required to treat participants with equity as well as fairness during all stages of research (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013). This is achieved through the fair selection of research participants and the researcher is required to provide care and support for participants who may become harmed or distressed by the research

study (Pollock, 2012). This was ensured by selecting participants based on their calling to be a Traditional Healer (*iSangoma*), knowledge about their sexual identity and ancestral guides, rather than selecting participants based on convenience.

3.6.6. Risks to participants

The risk of sensitization – The posing of a particular question or the discussion of a certain issue could have evoked emotional responses from the participants, resulting in them reacting in a highly sensitive manner. To assist participants with any traumatic experiences or emotions that may have arisen, the researcher provided them with information about crisis centres (see Appendix A).

The risk of offending the participants' ancestors – To avoid the occurrence of upset or angry ancestral guides, which could have resulted from participants not informing their ancestors about their participation in the research study, or participants releasing information about their ancestral guides that they were not permitted to, the researcher requested that participants take part in the study once they had informed their ancestral guides about their willingness to participate in the study and had been permitted by the ancestors to participate.

3.6.7. Dissemination of research

The results of the research study will be made available to all participants. There is also a possibility that the results will be published.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design and methods used in the study were discussed. The discussion included descriptions of the qualitative and exploratory research design, snowball sampling technique and procedure, participants, semi-structured interviews and instruments that were used for data collection, the social constructionist or discursive approach used for data analysis, a

discussion on the strategies employed by the researcher to enhance the trustworthiness of the research, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will provide the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

A discussion about the study qualitative and exploratory research design, snowball sampling method, the sample, semi-structured interviews used to collect data, discourse analysis method, research trustworthiness and ethical considerations was covered in Chapter 3. In this chapter, a short description of the sample (participants) will be included as well as a discourse analysis of the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews. The researcher made use of the three steps of discourse analysis (looked for binary oppositions, identified recurrent phrases, and identified discourses by considering the human subjects that participants spoke about). The researcher also focused on how participants construct their reality, how they strategically used language to persuade the listener or reader to believe their narratives, and how they positioned themselves and other subjects.

4.2. Description of Participants

Participant D (PD) is a 27-year-old lesbian Traditional Healer. She is single with one child. She has been a Traditional Healer for 8 years now and is also a waitress at a restaurant. PD preferred a telephonic interview. Her most dominant ancestral guide is her maternal grandmother and she also has male ancestral guides. She works both as *iSangoma* and a prayer healer.

Participant K (PK) is a lesbian. She is 33 years old. She is divorced with one child. She has been a Traditional Healer for 4 years and also worked as an Accounts Manager. PK does her healing work using *idlozi* as well as *isithunywa*. Her dominant guides are her maternal grandmother and a male *isithunywa*. A telephonic interview was conducted with PK.

Participant N (PN) is a transgender man who lived 37 years of his life as a lesbian. He is 39 years of age. He is recently divorced with one adopted child. He has been a Traditional Healer for 17 years and is a Tour Guide Co-ordinator. PN also preferred a telephonic interview. His dominant ancestral guide is his biological mother's uncle. He does his healing work through *abalozi* and *isithunywa*.

Participant O (PO) is a lesbian. She is 27 years of age. She is single and has no children. She has been a part-time Traditional Healer for 7 years and also works as an electrician. PO is *iSangoma* as well as a prayer healer. Her ancestral guides consist of three males and one female.

Participant T (PT) is bisexual. She was *iThwasa* at the time of the interview but has recently completed her training. She is 24 years old and is single. She studied Psychology. A face-to-face interview was conducted with her. PT's dominant ancestral guide is currently her maternal grandmother although it used to be her sister who was stillborn and her maternal grandfather.

4.3. Results: Discourse Analysis

4.3.1. Homosexuality in the African culture

Participants were asked about their thoughts or theories around homosexuality and bisexuality in the African culture.

PN and PD emphasised that homosexuality or bisexuality in the African culture is a concept that has not been properly understood:

> PN – "*Homosexuality in the African culture is basically something that needs to be taught. The thing is our forefathers… our forefathers died a long time ago with this big secret, do you know that?*"

PD – "*You see, amongst Black people… The problem is that we lack understanding… The problem with people is nothing but understanding. Some people, they lack that. You see, people fail to understand that you can't be with him because of… you love somebody else, you know? To understand the concept that… we are all people, but we can never be the same and we can never love the same way… that's the problem!*"

By PD continually positioning the understanding of homosexuality/bisexuality as a problem amongst Black people, conveys the idea that gender issues still need to be addressed or discussed in order for them to be understood as well as accepted in the African culture. This idea is also conveyed by PN when he stated that it needs to be taught but also further claimed that our forefathers died having not spoken about or shared the truth of homosexuality with other generations, positioning homosexuality as something that has always existed even during the times of our forefathers, but was kept a secret all these years. PN then asked, "Do you know that?" as an attempt to encourage the interviewer into believing this and possibly embrace it as a fact, indicating that:

"*… In the olden days, men were alone in the Mines, women stayed at home. Honestly, honestly, each individual has feelings, you get me? Has feelings… as they were alone, what were they doing? Do you get me? Most of the time woman like to… you know, woman-to-woman it's easy than man to man. Like, when women sleep alone in these houses… if the walls that they slept in could talk, they could tell more stories!... But unfortunately the walls can't talk.*"

By describing how things were in the olden days as well as placing emphasis on the undeniable fact that all individuals have feelings, PN persuades the interviewer into becoming aware that homosexuality is not something new in the African culture and that it has a long history. The idea that surely men became intimate with other men in the mines and that back at home women became intimate with other women, is sparked when PN asked the interviewer what it is that these two sexes were doing when alone, as well as when PN stated that if those walls could talk, they would reveal the truth that was hidden by past generations.

On the other hand, PT agreed that homosexuality exists in the African culture, however not as a result of the sexes being alone and in need of intimacy as stated by PN but as a result of an individual having ancestors of the opposite sex:

> "*Okay, In the African culture… well the African culture says it doesn't believe in it, you know. But for me, because… you know, I've been exposed to you know, to… to the idea of homosexuality, because I did, you know, psych, you know…. Sometimes you find out that it is genetic, you know. And it's nothing that one can control. There's a preference that they do have, you know. But traditionally, you know especially with ancestors, I believe that, you know, it is something that's gonna be there!…*"

PT argued that in theory, the African culture itself is against homosexuality, however in practice and as a result of the involvement of ancestral spirits in the lives of Black individuals, the opposite is portrayed. PT positions homosexuality as something that is bound to happen or occur amongst African people and justifies this by stating:

> "*Because my dominant ancestors are male, you know, I'm attracted to females. But if they are female… you know, grandmothers… grandmothers are attracted to males. It's only standard that it is gonna happen that way because for them, back in the day, they didn't know all of this, you know? And it was errm… a matter of you're not even allowed to look at the same sex. So they still uphold those standards, you know, that 'I'm female, I'm getting married to a man'. So, dominant, dominantly, you know, I'm female, I'm dominating a male, but who I'm attracted to is that male, you know. So… oGogo are inclined to go for, you know, males. So, whether you're a male or a female Sangoma, that's what they gonna be going for, you know.*"

By PT drawing attention to the role that ancestors play in one's sexual identity, she aims to demonstrate that if one's dominant ancestral guides change over time, the sex or gender that one

is attracted to may also change, attempting to introduce the possible element of versatility or flexibility with regards to sexual identity in the African culture. PT further indicated this by mentioning that even though the grandparents of Traditional Healers are now ancestral guides or spirits, they are still attracted to the individuals they were attracted to whilst still alive and this may influence the sexual identity of the host. By positioning ancestral spirits as inclined to be attracted to the opposite sex serves to legitimise homosexuality in the African culture amongst healers, making it seem acceptable as PT presents it as something that is beyond anyone's control. The purpose of the repeated use of "*you know*" by PT, also known as a filled pause, discourse marker or linguistic hedging device, is to inform the interviewer that she needs time to process complex thoughts, implying her desire to share or rephrase her opinions. "*You know*" is also used by PT to confirm the understanding of the listener, positioning the interviewer as unresponsive to, or uncooperative with, the content of her utterance. It is also a result of an assumed unawareness or lack of knowledge of what she is talking about. This serves to function as a polite way of striving towards attaining a mutual trust and understanding between the participant and interviewer. PT presents homosexuality as a forced identity amongst Traditional Healers as the individual is not given the freedom or opportunity to make his or her own choices or to live his or her life in a manner that he or she is comfortable with when she continues to argue:

> "*And people don't understand that, you know… they think that, 'Oh no, you're just making a choice', however, as the host… you are actually what the dead people are. You live their lives. Like for you, it's like, 'Okay, I know I'm not, you know, I'm not supposed to be'… as a male, you're like, 'I know I'm not supposed to be dating males, you know? But I'm so attracted to them and I don't know why'. And then when you dig further, you find out, 'Okay, it's because he is female dominated', you know.*"

What this line of argument does is convince the interviewer that homosexual Traditional Healers themselves are not to blame for their sexual identity. The fault lies with the ancestral guides and their sexual preferences, which they impose on the Traditional Healer. It is a pre-emptive defence against the interviewer assuming Traditional Healers have a say or can make their own

choices with regards to who they become intimately involved with. If the Traditional Healer's ancestral guides were attracted to men, then it is very likely that he or she will be attracted to males as well, standing firm on the fact that the reason for this is that the Traditional Healer has to live the way his or her deceased guides lived, and that includes sexual relationships. PT ended her argument with:

> "*But honestly, if I wasn't living it and I didn't understand it, I would think, 'this is nonsense! Utter nonsense! What are these people talking about?' You know? So… living it, you know, and experiencing it opens your eyes to so many other possibilities, you know.*"

This constructs PT as someone who understands why people generally find this bizarre and difficult to grasp, especially if they haven't experienced it. PT impresses upon the interviewer that she is able to put herself in someone else's shoes and understand the confusion from their perspective. However, this also encourages the interviewer to, in turn, be just as understanding, as well as to be willing to see this sexual identity issue from her view, thereby embracing it the same way that she has. PT emphasises that she has a better understanding of this because she has experienced it personally. By mentioning how her eyes have been open to various other possibilities, PT aims to indicate that in the African culture, and especially amongst Traditional Healers, the possibilities on the gender spectrum are endless, and that it is not only genetics or biology and background etc. that play a role on sexual identity, but ancestral spirits as well. PT enjoins the interviewer to agree that a factual and correct statement is being passed when she emphasises how the roles of ancestral spirits on sexual identity still need to be incorporated in our culture and tradition. Interestingly, she chooses to make this point by using a male example, suggesting that gay men are less likely to find acceptance in the African culture:

> "*I think that it is something that still needs to be incorporated in our culture and tradition that… you know what… as much as I am a boy, and a Sangoma… it doesn't necessarily have to mean that I have to get married to a woman.*"

PO also concurs with this when she compares homosexuality to culture, implying that it is one and the same thing:

> "*You doing it because this is who you are and… like in our days, people think, there are people who just take it as a lifestyle of which it's not just a lifestyle, it's, it's… it's culture!*"

Culture is a custom or tradition that an individual is born into and cannot choose. By positioning her sexual identity as a 'culture', PO conveys the idea that she sees homosexuality as part of her being, a way of life, or something that she has to abide by, not just a lifestyle. PO stated that some people do choose to be homosexual but emphasises that her case is totally different.

PK, on the other hand, constructs homosexuality as something that is viewed and spoken about differently in the African culture:

> "*Errm… in the African culture, you know obviously that homosexuality, like, is something else that is looked at differently…*"

in an attempt to convince the interviewer that homosexuality is not a common thing in the African culture. It is a concept that is not generally discussed. PK further maintains that:

> "*In the African culture, we are not allowed to talk about such things and we are not allowed to open such topics for discussion, but these should be kept secret 'cause they used to say… they say… what can I say? They say it's, you are… disgracing or like embarrassing… like it's an abomination for a woman to sleep with another woman because people say that you have to, like, have a penis, things like that, in order to sleep with a woman… or as men, how do you sleep with one another? Things like that.*"

PK, in presenting homosexuality as a disgrace in the African culture, conveys the idea that gays and lesbians are considered shameful to Africans, and are thus discriminated against. PK also attempts to emphasise just how much African people lack understanding by drawing the interviewer's attention to the various questions that people ask concerning gays and lesbians, such as, 'how can you sleep with another woman if you don't have a penis?' Or, where exactly is the penis inserted when a man sleeps with another man?' These questions aim to convince the interviewer that African people lack understanding because it is possible to sexually engage with an individual of the same sex. PK presents herself as an individual who is willing to educate people about gays and lesbians so that they can gain a better understanding of their lives. PK further emphasised her concern when she stated:

> "*... But there is something you need to know, like, I, I wanna know exactly why is it we like…. Like, why do we hide ourselves? That's one thing I can ask… I wanna know why most Sangomas that are lesbian or gay, tend to hide themselves… Why do you hide yourselves?... You know? I don't understand.*"

By repeating this question, PK underlines the importance of the issue at hand, and tries to raise an awareness of the fact that there is no freedom for gay and lesbian *iZangoma*. PK continually points out that they hide themselves, indicating that they live secret lives. This is also a way of encouraging gay and lesbian *iZangoma* to be proud of who they are and to live their lives freely, rather than to hide their true identity.

It is noted, in the above discussion, that various strategies are used by participants to present the different thoughts or opinions that they possess with regards to homosexuality and bisexuality in the African culture. PN expressed that there exists a history of homosexuality amongst African people as a result of men spending more time with each other at the mines and women being left alone at home; PN and PD argued that African people lack understanding; PT asserted that the role that ancestral guides of the opposite sex play on the sexual identity of a Traditional Healer should not be ignored; PO stated that being a lesbian is not just a lifestyle for her, but a 'culture';

and PK placed emphasis on how homosexuality is something that is considered shameful in the African culture and is not spoken of.

4.3.2. Ancestral guides' influence on sexual identity

When research participants are asked if it's in any way possible for ancestral guides to influence a Traditional Healer's sexual identity, a common statement that arose from almost all of them was that ancestral guides do play a role in one's sexual identity leading to homosexuality or bisexuality, but not in all cases.

PD first mentioned that:

> "*... Most times you find that maybe the person was straight but once they start initiation, because of the fact that that ancestor doesn't want to appreciate a male because the ancestor is also a male, you find that many people are then attracted to women and then you ask yourself how this happened. They also play a role.*"

PD's emphasis on the words "once they start initiation" is an attempt to clarify that if an ancestor has influenced the Traditional Healer's attraction to the same sex, then this would only begin after the *ukuthwasa* process, as this is the time when the healer establishes a stronger bond with his or her ancestors, and that is when the ancestor plays a major role in the life of the healer. PD points out that the problem begins when a male ancestor does not want to be intimately involved with another male, attempting to validate the ancestors' reasons for causing the healer to be drawn to the same sex, thereby indicating that if the ancestor would appreciate and accept another male, the Traditional Healer could freely live a heterosexual life. PD makes another statement that stands to inform the interviewer that if an individual is homosexual or bisexual before training to be a healer commences, then the ancestors are not responsible for his or her sexual identity:

> *"If this thing is caused by the ancestors, I would say that that person would only see it after ukuthwasa."*

Furthermore, PD mentions that it's not always the case that having ancestral guides of the opposite sex leads to homosexuality or bisexuality. Some healers are aware that their ancestors have not caused this and would still feel happier in a same-sex relationship even without the involvement of the ancestors. They use their ancestors as an excuse or to justify their homosexuality or bisexuality in order to be understood and accepted in society, as well as to avoid being judged. By blaming their ancestors, they are not considered responsible for their sexual identity and are, therefore, not criticised:

> *"In most cases, you will find that others use their ancestors and say that errm… 'my ancestor is the one that wants me to be with a same-sex individual' while the person knows where they stand. But they will make an excuse 'the ancestors want me being a man to be involved with another man.' Do you understand?... the fact is, this person is a born homosexual, you can't change that. No matter what he says, he is still gay! But he will make an excuse using his ancestors by saying, 'no, my ancestor is happier when I am with a man'..."*

PD portrays these healers as dishonest people who lie about their ancestors so they can live comfortable lives. The use of the word 'other' to refer to these individuals, sets PD apart from bad Traditional Healers, and in so doing she attempts to convince the interviewer that she is not one of those who use their ancestors as an excuse, creating discursive distance, and at the same time protecting her ancestors from possible criticism.

PN explained that some Traditional Healers are not aware of the fact that their ancestors have played a role in their sexual identity. However, this influence by ancestors of the opposite sex only applies to some cases, not all. Some are born homosexual, some are influenced by ancestors:

"You know, my sister, what I can tell you is that, I can say I've seen and I've looked. I've noticed… in some people, some of the Sangomas, yes they have been influenced by that, neh… they are being influenced by their ancestors and they don't even notice that… but some of them, it's not!... neh… it's a two-way street thing… Why am I saying that? Errm… in… I've been, I was dating, recently I was dating a Sangoma… Sangoma… woman… and she has a male dominant… ancestor in her. And this… our relationship couldn't last because… she always wanted to be a man to me, you understand?... She was also in control and our relationship couldn't last. We had a fight all the time and I ended up telling her that 'you know what? We won't last because izinkunzi zimbili (there are two bulls)' you see?"

PN later demonstrates an example about his previous relationship and placing emphasis on how much they fought in the relationship as well as the use of the phrase "*izinkunzi zimbili*" was a strategy used by PN to make the interviewer realise that the tension was, in fact, between both men (PN and this ex-girlfriend's male ancestor), thereby implying that it would only have been possible for their relationship to last if she was female dominated or if PN himself was a female. PN is male dominated and his ex-girlfriend is also male dominated. As a result, it became almost impossible for the relationship to work, mainly because both PN and the male ancestor that possesses his ex-girlfriend both wanted control over the relationship, a situation compared to having two bulls in one kraal. PN uses another example to portray the role played by ancestors in one's sexual identity:

"There's this lady who went and started ukuthwasa… she was attracted to men, she loved men. But ever since she… she came back… she loves women. She was crying to me last time saying, 'I don't know whether they fed me muthi or what'. I said to her, 'they didn't give you bad muthi (medicine), it's your ancestors doing this to you'. You understand? The ancestors can influence that."

This demonstration serves to validate PN's reasons for stating that having ancestors of the opposite sex can lead to homosexuality or bisexuality. By mentioning that this woman used to love men but after becoming *iSangoma*, she started desiring women, PN in this example positions ancestors as completely responsible, in turn presenting the woman as having no control over her sexual identity, leaving her blameless. Suspicions of witchcraft (bad *muthi*) by the woman further reinforce PN's previous argument that many healers are unaware that their ancestors are responsible for them being drawn towards same-sex individuals. The thought that one's homosexuality or bisexuality could result from witchcraft is powerful. It suggests how 'wrong' it is and how 'out of control' one feels when experiencing this. PN uses this term deliberately too, to communicate the turmoil that some individuals feel or experience. PN then presents himself as someone who is aware of, or knowledgeable about, the impact one's ancestors can have on their sexual identity, when he points out that he is the one who made this woman aware that her male ancestors are responsible for her sudden attraction to other women, not because she is a victim of witchcraft. Similarly, in response to the above-mentioned question, PK, like PD and PN, established that having ancestors of the opposite sex can affect one's intimate relationships:

> "*Yes, it is possible. Yes, it is possible. They can, you find that… like, have you noticed that there are some people who start ukuthwasa whilst still very young? You know, whereby their ancestor doesn't take too much time, it just makes itself known during the early stage of the person. On the other hand there are other people whereby even if the ancestor had shown itself, you find that the parents are church-goers… and nobody knows anything about traditional healing stuff…*"

PK expressed that the fault lies with African people paying more attention to Christianity or religion and neglecting traditional and cultural practices that it's only realised at a later stage that an individual has a 'calling', implying that African people should go back to their roots and build stronger relationships with their ancestors from an early age. By paying attention to traditional and cultural practices, the individual would be able to better understand the role played by

ancestors in their lives and would therefore be aware of the influence of ancestors on their sexual identity, if any.

Contrary to PD's, PN's, and PK's belief, PO argued that it is all dependent on God:

> "*Errm… you know when it comes to that, neh, I personally think that it doesn't have to do with ancestors. It has to do with God.*"

This is an attempt by PO to make it clear to the interviewer that it is only God who can decide who an individual is attracted to, avoiding giving too much control to the ancestors instead of God, He being the one who has ultimate power and influence over all things and, according to PO, including one's sexual identity. Later in the interview PO stated:

> "*But there are instances whereby they (ancestors) end up respecting you especially if you ask or tell them, 'You know what guys, this is who I am and there's nothing you can change about it' ….*"

Positioning ancestors as accepting once you make your request known to them and as spirits who would not force you to be something that you are not is a way of suggesting that if Traditional Healers inform their ancestors of their sexual identity and let them know who they want to be in a relationship with, their ancestors might also honour their request and allow them to continue with intimate relationships the way they wish to.

According to PT, it's not a clear-cut thing that if your ancestors are of the opposite sex then that means you are gay, lesbian or bisexual:

> "*… And there are, you know, there are Sangomas who are, like, if you are a male and you are male dominated but you still love women, you know. And errm… even if you are*

female dominated but you still love women, you know. It, it, it's just… not, it doesn't strictly say that if you are a male and you have oGogo (grandmothers as ancestral guides) then you are gay, automatically… no! It happens, you know. It depends on your ancestors and their preferences. You know. And it also depends on you as well as a person, you know. Because your ancestors could be strictly heterosexual but you're homosexual… you see. So, and, and now, in that case, it's not because you're ancestrally driven, it's because it's a choice you have made, you know. So this debate could go either way, you know. It could be you as the host, or it could be the ancestors… or it could be both…"

The effect of emphasising that it all depends on the Traditional Healer's ancestors, their preferences and on the individuals themselves is to encourage the interviewer to understand that many factors could play a role, and also positions both the healer and his or her ancestors as responsible for his or her sexual identity.

All participants maintained that having ancestors of the opposite sex can lead to homosexuality or bisexuality excluding PO who argued differently by insisting that this phenomenon has nothing to do with ancestors but God. PT, however, emphasised that just because a healer is male and has female ancestors does not automatically make him gay. It depends on his ancestors, their preferences and on the healer himself. According to PK, many African people miss the opportunity to get to know their ancestors well at an earlier stage in their lives and whether or not their ancestors have played a role in their homosexuality or bisexuality, mainly because they neglect cultural practices and building relationships with their ancestors, focusing more on religion and Christianity. From the above analysis, we also learn that in some cases Traditional Healers use their ancestral guides as an excuse for being gay or lesbian so as to gain acceptance in society. This stands to reaffirm the statements made by some participants that some Traditional Healers are born homosexual or bisexual and some are influenced by their ancestors. Another important view expressed by most participants concerning this debate is that if the healer's homosexuality or bisexuality is a result of their ancestors' influence, then this will only be seen after training or *ukuthwasa* as that is when the ancestors make themselves known.

However, we learn that a gifted child is possessed by ancestors from birth and these ancestors only exhibit themselves at a later stage.

4.3.3. Chosen or forced identity?

Participants were asked what they believe influenced their own homosexuality or bisexuality, whether this was a chosen identity, or whether it was imposed by their ancestors.
PO responded briefly to the above-mentioned question whether she believes she was born homosexual or if her ancestors influenced her sexual identity, by stating:

> "*50/50.*"

The implication PO makes here is that she believes that an equal role can be attributed to her genes and her ancestral guides. PO continues to explain that:

> "*The moment I show up, you can just see that this is a lesbian; this is a lesbian! I'm, I'm more like errm… my style is more like a manly style, you understand? My clothes, you know, the way I am, the way I walk, it's not something that I fake etc, etc. it's who I am, you understand?*"

By informing the interviewer that her character and everything about her is like that of a man, PO intends to affirm that this is not just a façade she puts on or an act, but it's who she is. The effect of stating that she is not faking her identity is also to validate her following argument:

> "*This thing, it's inside your veins, first of all. You cannot change what's inside your veins, you see? So if this thing is in you, it's in you. If it's not in you then it's not!… And just think about it, being called a Satanist and all that stuff… if you were doing it out of pretence, would you choose that kind of a life? You understand?… Nobody can choose to live a lie for such a long time, you understand?*"

Attention should be given to PO drawing on the criticism of being labelled a Satanist as well as the question she posed to the interviewer, as this motivates the interviewer to feel compassion and to truly understand that it's highly impossible for her to choose or to make a conscious decision to live a life that she will be judged for. PO positions herself as a victim in order to make it abundantly clear that if she had a choice, she would not have chosen to be a lesbian. The *it's inside your veins* utterance also plays a powerful role – it runs through your person. PO gives the impression that her sexual identity is something that is placed inside you; something that is separate from you but also tied to you. PO further argued:

> "*It takes time to understand who you are… but the more you understand yourself as to what it is you want and what it is you don't want, that's where you can get the answers.*"

This is aimed at giving the interviewer the impression that PO has taken the time to understand the person she is and being a lesbian is just part of who she is and that is something she cannot change.

PN on the other hand expressed that his ancestors only 'followed' his sexual identity and added their influence to it after finding him this way:

> "*I was born lesbian. My ancestors follow at the moment. Their influence is there because for me, the strength of (name of ancestor) like… physically… I'd say he found me being like this then on top he added that, 'okay, I'm giving you this masculinity in full because you've already been blessed with my masculinity', you understand?*"

One should not overlook the word "follow" used by PN as this creates a sense of encouragement or motivation from his ancestors *vis-à-vis* his sexual identity. This encouragement is emphasised when he mentions how the strength or power of his dominant male ancestral guide made him fully a man, thereby creating the impression, similar to PO's, that both biology or genes and

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ancestral guides have influenced their sexual identity. Furthermore, this is also an attempt by PO to convince the interviewer that being homosexual was not a chosen identity and he used the following argument to reaffirm this:

> "*How can you choose something…? Honestly, you choose to wear a jacket, you choose a shoe and a top. Can you choose something that you can be murdered upon? No, you can't! If it was a choice, honestly I would say the person who chooses something that can get them killed is stupid… and there is this corrective rape thing, men will rape you… it is really, really not a choice! It's something that you are born with. You, you, you…it's in you!*"

PN insists that it is absurd for one to think that being homosexual is a choice he made. To highlight just how insane this idea is, PN gives examples of some painful experiences that lesbians are subjected to, such as corrective rape and murder, to make the interviewer aware that only a foolish individual would choose to be in a same-sex relationship, knowing that there is a possibility of getting raped or even killed, aiming to clarify that he has no option but to be with the person that he feels attracted to. PN also emphasised this belief by stating that one can choose what to wear but one can't choose to be homosexual. PN continued to inform the interviewer that:

> "*If I heard about transition, I would have done it at the age of 13 but I never had information. With me, I had to grow up living a life of a lesbian not even… wanting, not being a lesbian, you understand? I, I… there was a man feeling in me… I'd always tell them I'm a man!*"

PN stated that if he had information, he would have transitioned to a man when he was a teenager, however because he didn't know anything at that time, he was forced to live his life as a lesbian, indicating that he has always believed he is male, even as a child. Another childhood example used by PN to confirm this as a fact is:

"You know what? This is something I will never forget because when my mother was still alive, she… she liked reminding me about it by saying, 'You know, whenever you played house you'd always want to dress up as the father'. I'd always want to be a man… and always felt like a man."

Attention should be given to the repeated lines, "*there was this man feeling in me*", "*I'd always tell them I'm a man!*", "*I'd always want to be a man*" and "*I always felt like a man*", as these are uttered to make the interviewer understand that this was something he had no control over and could not change.

Similarities as well as differences to PO and PN are noted in PK when she sets herself aside from the individuals who are influenced by their ancestors, in order to emphasise that being a lesbian is part of her biology or genes, rather than something that is influenced by her ancestors, positioning her ancestors as not having contributed to her attraction to the same sex, unlike PO and PN:

PK – "*You know, with me, I can't say, from my side, I don't know about other people, I can't say it's 'something'… it's me! It's me!*"

However, later during the discussion, PK, like PN argued that:

"I, I won't say that it is my ancestors that have made me lesbian. My ancestor found me already lesbian and made it worse in such a way that… you know what? I understand why my ancestor chose me, and when you take a look at all the ancestors that chose me, 'cause I'm not the only Traditional Healer in the family, there's so many, and some of them can't even control certain things…"

This is an attempt by PK to get her point across that she is the one who is attracted to other women and not her ancestors. Her ancestors have only added to the person she already is. PN also further emphasised that her ancestors chose to possess her instead of her other family members because she is lesbian and, as a result, can better handle their demands or needs. Placing emphasis on the fact that her ancestors didn't make her lesbian but only saw it as a benefit for themselves, serves to position her ancestors as blameless with regards to her sexual identity. PK further stated:

> *"They can't control that, they just have to accept. When they told me that I'm their chosen one, obviously they knew that I want, or I have this kind of a partner, you see?"*

By positioning her ancestors as comfortable with her sexual identity since they found her lesbian anyway, and presenting herself as having more control of her personal life rather than her ancestors dictating who she should or should not be in a sexual relationship with, PK aims to give the interviewer the impression that there is no way she would date a man instead of a woman just because her ancestors expect that of her. PK further reaffirms this with:

> *"... So they can't decide that they want this or that, or that they want James whereas I want Rose, I mean really?... I want my Rose and that's it!"*

PK portrays herself as someone who knows who she is and what she wants, and wouldn't let outside forces, or her ancestors for that matter, tell her who she can and cannot date, a dilemma between wanting control and being controlled.

Contrary to PO, PN and PK, PT believes that her ancestral guides are wholly responsible for her bisexuality:

"… Now that I found out that when I was growing up, the more dominant ancestors for me were males, it clicks, you know, as to why I would see other females, you know, sexually appealing or sexually attractive, and as I grew up and after my grandmother passed away… Oh, and another thing that confused me was like okay you know what? I grew up with boys, so I'm inclined, you know, to think that way… I grew up with boys so I had a tomboyish errm… character to myself, ya. So… I always used to, you know, play with cars, play in the dirt with boys and I never used to be able to interact with girls that much… So anyway, after my grandmother passed away, it was just strictly guys, you know, guys were just appealing for me and I understood because she is the dominating force for me now, you know? She is the dominant ancestor. As much as the males and the females have a say in it, but she's the dominating one. But there are still those instances, you know, where I just wanna dress like a boy… and on that day, you know, girls are just appealing for me, you know? But it's not much of a strong sexual attraction now, it's just like you know, a thought… but I wouldn't now because I'm still sexually inclined to be with guys, you know? My dominant ancestors are now females…"

PT uses the word "clicks" in an epiphany of sorts in order to spark the idea that she was never aware that her ancestral guides had an influence on her bisexuality. She only realised later in her life. PT believes that her male ancestors who were once dominant were the reason she was so attracted to females in the past. However, PT also points out that as a child, she was always around boys and this may have an impact on her sexual identity as well. The use of the word "inclined" in PT's statement is significant in that it encourages the belief that because the environment she grew up in was dominated by males, it is very likely that she became prone to thinking and acting the way males do, thereby possibly resulting in her attraction towards females. Aimed at giving the interviewer the impression that she may have considered herself as one of the boys and understandably so became attracted to the 'other', that being females, PT demonstrated an example of the activities she engaged in with boys and mentioned that she had very little interaction with girls. Placing emphasis on how she was 'strictly' attracted to guys only after her grandmother passed away, is again an attempt to make the interviewer aware of the role played by her ancestors on sexual identity, mainly because her late grandmother was now her dominant ancestor, instead of her grandfather, and she thus has the final say in who she

should be in a relationship with. Even so, the male ancestors, although not dominant anymore, still have a little influence and this is evident in her desire to dress like a boy from time to time. According to PT, on those particular days she is more drawn to females. In PT's statement:

"... I'm still sexually inclined to be with guys",

the use of the word 'still' should not be overlooked as this serves to indicate that her attraction to either male or female can change at any stage in her life depending on who her dominant ancestor is, implying that should she again have a male as a dominant ancestor, history might repeat itself resulting in a same-sex relationship. To reaffirm this, PT argued that:

"*I would strongly consider myself bisexual… what if it happens that the males dominate at a later part of my life, you know? And… I'm already saying, 'No, I'm strictly heterosexual', you know?*"

PT further stated:

"*... For me, I think it's, it's also a matter of, it doesn't really matter whether it's the same-sex or not. It's more about where I'm getting the love, you know. If you love me the way that you're loving me and the way that I want to be loved, then… I would date whoever (male or female). But because I'm not 'alone', I've got these ancestors. They specifically love who they love… the host has nooo say… whatsoever!*"

Attention should be given to PT's mention of the fact that she is not 'alone'. In so doing she informs the interviewer that she cannot just date whoever she wants to but that her ancestors are the ones who get to choose who she can and cannot be in a relationship with and she just has to follow that, a dilemma between being with the person you love and pleasing your ancestors. This is also aimed at motivating the interviewer to embrace the belief that her personal life isn't really personal as a result of her ancestors controlling it and having the final say, positioning her

ancestors as having a major influence on her bisexuality and in turn constructing herself as powerless. The repeated use of the word "host" by PT serves to make the interviewer aware that she is just a vessel that her ancestors use to live their own lives, rendering her innocent for her bisexual identity.

PD, on the other hand, when asked what she believes influenced her homosexual identity, argued the following:

"… *But I, I think… eish, maybe I was born with it, I don't know. I still have to find out if it's not people who gave me poison that resulted in me being like this* (*laughs*)."

PD seemed unsure whether she was born homosexual or not. She also suspects that maybe she was poisoned. PD's response expresses that she has never really given it much thought and doesn't really know what may have influenced her sexual identity. This also gives the interviewer the idea that she doesn't dwell much on it because being a lesbian is who she is and there's nothing she can do about it. Stating that she may have been poisoned is a way of shifting the blame, rendering her innocent and others fully responsible for her intimate same-sex relationships. Again, like the use of the term 'witchcraft', 'poisoned' also seems to communicate 'wrongfulness' or 'fault' in a very serious way. When asked if it was possible that her ancestors played a role in her homosexual identity, PD argued:

"*No, I was like this even before thwasaring. I have always loved only women… I'd be lying if I said ancestors had an influence because I've always been a lesbian, from way back…*"

PD maintained that if her ancestors were involved, she would have only desired women after the process of *ukuthwasa*. However, because she was attracted to women even before initiation, she strongly believes that her ancestors have absolutely nothing to do with her being lesbian. PD then added:

"*… But I think they don't have a problem with me being with another woman because majority of my ancestors are male anyway*, *you see*?",

implying that maybe if her ancestors were female, they may have a problem with her being with another female. The question that arises is whether PD would then be forced into a heterosexual relationship if her ancestral guides were in fact females that are attracted to males?

A common theme of an external locus of control is found amongst most participants as they argued that being homosexual or bisexual is not a choice they made, but is one beyond their control. This is aimed at motivating the interviewer to believe that they cannot be criticised or held responsible for being in same-sex relationships, as this could very well be due to biology or genetics, ancestors' demands, the environment the participants grew up in or even poisoning, which are things that they have no control over, protecting themselves from possible judgement. Those who felt it was a choice were very assertive and confident about this and did not want to minimise their autonomy in this regard.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter first provided a short description of each study participant. Secondly, discourse analysis was used to analyse the data collected with regards to the participants' thoughts and opinions about homosexuality and bisexuality in the African culture, ancestral guides' influence on sexual identity, and whether theirs is a chosen or imposed identity. In Chapter 5, a discussion about the results will be provided.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a short description of each participant and presented the results of the study which were a discourse analysis of the data collected during the interviews. This chapter will look at the three research questions and discuss the results of the study in relation to literature and the study theoretical framework of communitarianism and choice.

5.2. Discussion of the results in relation to literature

5.2.1. Q1: How do homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers (iZangoma) define their sexual identity?

From the results of the study, it was noted that participants used various strategic discourses to define their homosexual, bisexual and transgender identities. All participants constructed their sexual identities as something that was due to biology or genetics. Other participants, in an attempt to shift the blame from themselves, drew on a collectivist view of their sexual identity by adding that the environment they grew up in, their ancestors, and witchcraft or poisoning may also be responsible for their attraction to the same sex, presenting sexual identity as something that can be influenced by the family, ancestors and the community. This corresponds with the study's theoretical framework of Communitarianism and Choice which is supported by Taylor-Smith (2009), Persson (2010), Tutu (as cited in Kaye, 2011; Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014), Kuye and Tshiyoyo (2015), Mabvurira (2016), Mbiti (as cited in Watadza, 2016), Aden and Olira (2017), Dzherelievskaya and Vizgina (2017), and Manstead (2018). The belief that witchcraft or black-magic causes homosexuality amongst African people, is a concept mentioned by van Klinken and Chitando (2016). The influence of ancestral guides on sexual identity is supported by Nkabinde and Morgan (2011), Crystal (2012), Mc Kay (2012), Mkasi (2013), Zabus (2014), Buijs (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015), Morgan and Reid (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), Morgan and Weiringa (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), and Mkasi (2016). Another way in which participants

defined their sexual identity was by constructing it as a culture rather than a lifestyle and as their pride, positioning it as something that is not just a façade or disguise but part of their being (Rudwick, 2011; Klein, 2014). This was done to encourage other *iZangoma* to not live in secrecy about their sexual identity which is often discouraged and misunderstood in many African cultures (Zabus, 2009; Jordaan, 2011; Rudwick, 2011). By defining their sexual identity as the result of biology and genetics, informs the researcher that they believe that their sexual identity is something they are born with. It is in their blood. It is part of their being. This also informs the researcher that the idea of having a sexual partner of the opposite sex would seem a little far-fetched for homosexual Traditional Healers because attraction to the same sex is all that they know. It is who they are. The environmental and cultural factors indicate that their sexual identity is something they cannot move away from or neglect as it is who they are. The concept of ancestors as well as witchcraft having an impact on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers suggests that they have no control over it; instead, it is the ancestors or the ones who practice witchcraft who are in control of the sex they become attracted to, whether the Traditional Healer is aware of this control or not. Defining their sexual identity as their pride gives the impression that it is something that they are proud of. Normally, when one takes pride in something they do, it means they also treasure it and would not cease doing it. This indicates to the researcher that the participants would not be willing to change their sexual identities even if they had the opportunity to. This is mainly because being in a heterosexual relationship would not give them the kind of pleasure that they get in same-sex relationships.

5.2.2. Q2: Do ancestral guides have an impact on a Traditional Healer's (iSangoma's) sexual identity?

Coinciding with Nkabinde and Morgan (2011), Crystal (2012), Mc Kay (2012), Mkasi (2013), Zabus (2014), Buijs (as cited in Ogana & Ojong, 2015), Morgan and Reid (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), Morgan and Weiringa (as cited in Mkasi, 2016), and Mkasi (2016), most participants were of the view that dominant ancestral guides do have an impact on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers but not in all cases. Discourse analysis, which was used in this study, revealed that participants applied language in unique ways to persuade the interviewer to embrace the belief that ancestors can have an influence on sexual identity. Participants

positioned ancestors as having valid reasons for causing a Traditional Healer to be attracted to the same sex, and also used various personal life experiences to convince the interviewer of this belief. This means that homosexual, bisexual and transgender identities can be influenced by ancestors. However, it is dependent on the ancestors' sexual identities as well as how strong their possession of the individual is. It is believed ancestors continue to live their past lives through the individuals they possess. The question that arises here is why would a heterosexual male ancestor possess a female descendant of the family instead of a male descendant? This would avoid his attraction to females being imposed on a female descendant. Binary oppositions were also noted. One participant portrayed African people as being at fault for neglecting traditional and cultural practices, resulting in them being unaware of the role played by ancestors on their sexual identity because they have no close relationship with their ancestors. This participant presented herself as someone who has always been aware of her ancestors' influence on her sexual identity. From the study results, it seemed that the impact was forceful in most cases as it could lead or shape one to becoming homosexual, bisexual or transgender. This impact was also found to cause one to behave in a manner that is believed to be associated with the other sex (e.g. a female who behaves like a male with regards to the way they talk, walk, dress and the activities that they engage in). On the other hand, the study results revealed an intentional or deliberate impact by ancestral guides on the sexual identity of *iZangoma*, as some participants were of the opinion that the sexual needs or interests that they possess as individuals were possibly identified by their ancestral guides as similar to their own, which may have been a factor that resulted in them being 'chosen' by their ancestors. These participants created a discursive distance and set themselves apart from Traditional Healers whose ancestors have 'made' them homosexual, bisexual or transgender, with the aim of positioning their ancestors as blameless with regards to their sexual identity, claiming that their ancestors only 'add to' who they already are. It is surprising that some Traditional Healers mentioned that ancestors choose to possess a particular individual only because they have observed that they are attracted to the same sexual partner that they were attracted to. The view here is that a male ancestor who was sexually attracted to other males whilst still alive will possess a descendant who is a gay male or heterosexual female. Likewise, a male ancestor who was heterosexual will possess a descendant who is a lesbian female or a heterosexual male. They also emphasised that just because a healer is male and has female ancestors, that does not automatically make him gay; it depends on the ancestors'

preferences and the way in which they lived their lives. Another important view expressed by some participants concerning this debate, is that if the healer's sexual identity is a result of their ancestors' influence then this will only be seen after training or *ukuthwasa* as that is when the ancestors make themselves known, positioning ancestors as not being responsible if one is attracted to the same-sex before initiation. This belief is problematic in that it could create doubt and confusion amongst younger homosexual or bisexual individuals who have the calling to become Traditional Healers, have not yet undergone initiation, but are aware that their sexual identity is entirely influenced by their ancestors. According to Mc Kay (2011) and Mkhize (2011), a gifted child is possessed by ancestors from birth and these ancestors only show themselves at a later stage. This view informs the researcher that it is possible, then, for an individual's sexual identity to be influenced by his or her ancestors even before undergoing initiation as ancestors possess an individual from birth. In contrast to the above, one *iSangoma* argued differently by insisting that this phenomenon has nothing to do with ancestors but God because only God has ultimate power and control over all things, including one's sexual identity. This participant further maintained that ancestral guides can only obey or follow the individual that God has created one to be, and that ancestors cannot make you something that you are not, portraying homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers, and their ancestors as blameless, with God having ultimate control. This view is in line with Kruger *et al*. (2009), Kanu (2013), Thomas (2015), Marumo (2016), and Ukwamedua and Edogiaweri (2017), who postulated that African people believe in the existence of one Supreme Being and that He has power over ancestors, human beings, animals, plants and all creation. However, the argument that arises from this statement is that if it is only God who has control of one's sexual identity, then the possible influences mentioned by the Traditional Healers in the first theme (environment, culture, ancestors and witchcraft) would be completely ruled out, except for biology. On the other hand, if this control by God, and God alone, means that He does not 'make' one homosexual, bisexual or transgender but rather 'allows' the many different factors mentioned to influence an individual's sexual identity, then these factors can be accepted. However, these factors do not have full control, but play a minor role since, ultimately, the decision would be for God to make.

5.2.3. Q3: Is homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender identity amongst Traditional Healers (iZangoma) a chosen identity or is it 'imposed' by ancestral guides?

The discursive approach used in this study showed a common theme amongst most participants, which was that of an external locus of control, as these participants argued that being homosexual, bisexual or transgender is not a choice they made of their own volition but is beyond their control. This indicates that attraction to the same sex is real, genuine and is not something that can be denied or rejected. From the results chapter, it seemed that sexual identity was generally imposed, although there were strong voices suggesting that choice still exists. Where it was imposed, participants communicated this by constructing an inflexible reality where the power and influence of dominant ancestral guides is unrelenting and incontestable, positioning themselves as having no agency; presenting themselves as individuals who are in a dilemma between being with the person they love and pleasing their ancestors; and portraying themselves as mere vessels that ancestors use to live their own lives. Where there was choice, participants communicated this by positioning their ancestors as spirits who can be understanding and accepting at times, constructing a reality where negotiation was a precondition. Participants expressed that theirs was more of a forced identity since it is their ancestral guides that get to decide who they should or should not be in a relationship with. Rudwick (2011) emphasised that homosexuality and bisexuality is not a matter of choice for most Black gay people but a matter of identity. Some participants believe that the sexual preferences of their ancestral guides are imposed on them and that they have to live the same way that their deceased ancestral guides lived. Such findings do not exist in literature on sexual identity and Traditional Healers, although Gibson (2013) did argue that ancestors can influence one's general behaviour. It is believed that ancestors bring harsh consequences to bear on their descendants if things are not done their way (Latif, 2010; Adamo, 2011; Matolino, 2011; Ekore & Lanre-Abass, 2016; Marumo, 2016; Nurnberger, 2016; Okeke *et al.*, 2017; Landman, 2018). Therefore, a question that arises here, is whether it would still be considered a 'choice' if one only engages in a same-sex relationship out of fear that they could be punished by their ancestors if they refuse? Lastly, binary oppositions were noted when participants indicated that some Traditional Healers use their ancestral guides as an excuse for being gay or lesbian in order to gain acceptance in society. This was an attempt by participants to set themselves apart from dishonest healers, presenting themselves as honest healers who would never use their ancestors

as an excuse if they knew that their ancestors have nothing to do with their same-sex attraction. Participants also drew on 'victim' discourses by mentioning the criticism and judgement that they experience because of their sexual identity, as well as the fear of 'corrective' rape and possible murder, to convince the interviewer that no sane person would choose to live such a life, positioning themselves as having no control and positioning their sexual identity as something that they cannot change.

5.3. Conclusion

In this chapter the results of the study were discussed in relation to the literature. Some of the findings were supported by earlier literature while some were relatively novel. Chapter 6 will cover the major conclusions from the study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 discussed the results of the study in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter will state the main findings of the study in relation to the three research questions. The limitations of the study as well as the recommendations for further research will also be included in this chapter.

6.2. Conclusions about the Research Questions

The ways in which lesbian, bisexual and transgender participants defined their sexual identity differed in several ways. Overall, in relation to the research question of how homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) define their sexual identity, the findings reveal that Traditional Healers defined their sexual identity as a biological construct. In addition to that, they also defined their sexual identity as influenced by their environment, culture, ancestral possession and possibly witchcraft, emphasising that their social structure and community is responsible. Although Traditional Healers defined their sexual identity as their pride, they believed it to be a misunderstood concept for many. What the researcher identified is that there can be more than one factor that influences the sexual identity of one individual. As a result, this encourages homosexual, bisexual and transgender individuals to dig deeper and find answers for themselves in order to understand the influence on their own sexual identity. No previous study has been conducted that interviews homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers on how they define their own sexuality. Therefore, this study was significant in that it elicited personal views about what Traditional Healers believe to have impacted their sexual identities.

To answer the research question of whether ancestral guides have an impact on a Traditional Healer's (*iSangoma's*) sexual identity, the findings state that ancestors do have an influence on the sexual identity of Traditional Healers. However, this only happens in some cases and possession by ancestral guides of the opposite sex does not automatically mean that the Traditional Healer will be homosexual or bisexual. The impact of ancestral guides seemed strong or heavy for most participants, whereas it presented as intentional or deliberate for some. On the other hand, most Traditional Healers are said to be unaware of the impact that their ancestors have on their sexual identity. This finding encourages not only Traditional Healers but African people as a whole to have a closer relationship with their ancestors so as to better understand their sexuality, as well as the challenges they face in other aspects of their lives. This study is significant because it educates African communities that since ancestors have an impact on certain aspects of one's life, this impact can also extend to one's sexual identity.

Is homosexual, bisexual and transgender identity amongst Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*) a chosen identity or is it 'imposed' by ancestral guides? From the above findings, the answer to this research question is that attraction to the same sex is never a choice as it is imposed or forced by ancestors. The view was that the dominant ancestral guides' attraction towards a particular sex is expressed through the Traditional Healer, thereby possibly resulting in homosexual or bisexual relationships. Some Traditional Healers expressed that although it is a forced identity, choice still exists in that their ancestral guides are a little more understanding and less demanding. These findings are a call for African communities to educate themselves about sexuality, to be open-minded, and to accept the different types of sexual identities. This course of action, if adopted, could address multiple problems with regards to sexual identity in African communities and lead to the development of new knowledge. Violence against homosexual, bisexual and transgender individuals would be significantly reduced, resulting in less confusion concerning sexual identities that differ from heterosexual identity. In addition, this would encourage homosexual, bisexual and transgender Traditional Healers, and Africans as a whole, to be transparent, open and fearless because communities would be more knowledgeable about different sexual identities and more accepting of LGBTI individuals. Although studies on sexual identity as influenced by ancestors amongst Traditional Healers do exist, these studies do not look at the challenges that Traditional Healers are faced with. These challenges include

complying with ancestors' demands to the point of having a sexual partner of the same sex. As a result, this research study advances past research about Traditional Healers, sexual identity and ancestral guides. It addresses a gap in literature and provides new insights, therefore, a unique contribution to overall research about the topic.

6.3. Limitations of the Study

A major obstacle that was faced in conducting this research was that there is no sufficient literature that exists on the area of sexual identity as influenced by ancestral guides amongst African Traditional Healers (*iZangoma*). With very little prior research done on this topic, the number of citations on the literature review is minimal making it difficult to lay a foundation for understanding the research problem being investigated.

Secondly, some Traditional Healers were not very comfortable speaking about their ancestral guides and the ways in which ancestral guides influence their lives, thereby yielding limited information. This was a significant obstacle in finding a trend or a meaningful relationship between the research topic at hand and the data obtained.

Conducting telephonic interviews can affect the quality of the interviews by making it difficult for participants to make sense of, or understand, the questions being asked as well as reducing the quality of audio responses from participants because of background noise and disturbances depending on the environment the participant is in during the time of the interview. This, in turn, creates problems for the researcher as analysing the data becomes difficult.

The failure to secure male participants was another limitation to this study. Despite efforts to identify male participants, many of them refused to take part in the study after being informed that no incentives will be given for participation. Furthermore, they also cited fears of being judged. Absence of male participants limited the study as the results and conclusions made represent one demographic (female) sector of the interest population for this study.

6.4. Recommendations for Future Studies

If the study were to be repeated, face-to-face interviews would be encouraged for all participants rather than having some participants interviewed telephonically, so as to obtain better quality audio responses from all participants.

Providing incentives for participants could also be a benefit for further studies as it could assist in obtaining both male and female (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) perspectives on this area of research.

In light of the findings of this study, there is a need for awareness and more information concerning homosexual, bisexual and transgender identities, and traditional healing, especially in black communities. This may help people gain deeper knowledge and understanding and also reduce the double-stigma experienced by LGBTI Traditional Healers in South Africa, thereby ensuring communities of trust and unity.

Studies that investigate the possibility of witchcraft or black-magic as a cause for homosexuality in Africa are also needed.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the major findings of the study. This was followed by the limitations identified in this study. Recommendations for future research were also discussed drawing from the experiences from this study.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET

Hi, I am Khanyisile Mnyadi. I am a Psychology student doing my Research Masters at UKZN in Pietermaritzburg. I am requesting people who are Traditional Healers or African spiritual mediums to answer a few questions for my research which I hope will benefit everyone's understanding in future.

A research project is a Master's academic year requirement and I chose to conduct research regarding African spiritual mediums. I am interested in finding out more about homosexuality and bisexuality amongst Traditional Healers. I am carrying out this research to help society understand African Traditional Healers and their sexual identity better. The purpose of this research is to investigate homosexuality and bisexuality as influenced by ancestral guides of the opposite sex. I would also like to explore how this phenomenon is understood within a cultural context by the mediums themselves by exploring the meanings that they attach to this, their experiences and opinions. Lastly, to investigate if this identity is actually a choice or if Traditional Healers have no control but are compelled by ancestral spirits. The results of the study may be published. However, no personally identifiable information will be released.

I have chosen you because you are a suitable candidate for this study. After combining all the answers of all the Traditional Healers that we have been referred to, I hope to learn more about homosexuality in the African culture.

Please understand that your participation is completely voluntary and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not is entirely yours alone. However, sharing your experiences and thoughts will be really appreciated. You will not be affected in any way if you choose not to take part in answering these questions. Should you agree to participate, you may stop at any time and discontinue your participation. There will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way should you refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage. If you agree to participate, I ask that you also inform your ancestral guides of your

participation or ask them for permission, if necessary. Pseudonyms will be used in the study and your name or the names of your ancestral guides (if you do share these) will not be recorded anywhere in the research. No one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researcher will have access to such information as it will be stored separately to the data. All individual information will remain confidential.

You will be interviewed and request that you are as open and honest as possible in your verbal responses to these questions. Some questions may be of a personal or sensitive nature. You may choose not to respond to these questions. Questions that you may not have thought about before may be asked, which involve thinking deeply about. If you are not absolutely certain about the responses to these questions, I ask that you think about them. There are no right or wrong answers as these will be your own personal experiences or opinions. If a question that makes you or your ancestral guides feel sad or upset is asked, you may choose not to respond to it. There are also professional people (counsellors) who are willing and available to assist you with the things that upset you, if you need any assistance later. They are available at the Child and Family Centre in Pietermaritzburg at the University of KwaZulu Natal. Should you need to speak to these counselors, you may contact me (Khanyisile Mnyadi at 0825346695/ kay.m0507@gmail.com) and I will make arrangements for you.

If you have any questions about this study, you may also contact me on the contact details above, my supervisor (Mr. Thabo Sekhesa at sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za) or the Humanities & Social Research Ethics Committee (Dr. Shenuka Singh on 031 260 3587/8350/4557 or at ximbap@ukzn.ac.za/ snymanm@ukzn.ac.za/ mohunp@ukzn.ac.za).

UKWAZISWA

Sawubona, mina ngingu Khanyisile Mnyadi. Ngingumfundi wePsychology owenza ucwaningo lweMasters eUKZN eMgungundlovu.
Ngicela abantu abangabelaphi bendabuko noma abanemimoya ukuphendula imibuzo emibalwa ekucwaningeni, engethemba ukuthi kuyozuzisa ukuqonda kwawo wonke umuntu esikhathini esizayo.

Ucwaningo kuyinto [ebalulekile futhi ephoqayo ukuthi siyenze ngalonyaka we](#)-Masters ngakho ke ngikhethe ukuqhuba ucwaningo mayelana nobungoma. Ngifisa ukuthola kabanzi mayelana nobungqingili kanye nobulili obungakhethi kubantu angabelaphi bendabuko. Ngicwaninga loludaba ukuze ngisize umphakathi uqonde abelaphi bendabuko kangcono kanye nobulili babo. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo ukuphenya ubungqingili kanye nobulili obungakhethi okukholakala ukuthi kuwumuphumela wokuba nokhokho/ amadlozi wobulili obuhlukile kunomelaphi. Ngifisa futhi ukuqonda kangcono ukuthi loludaba luqondwa kanjani ngabelaphi bendabuko ngokuthi ngithole izincazelo kanye nemibono yabo. Okokugcina, ngingathanda ukuphenya ukuthi lobulili empeleni okokuzikhethela, noma abelaphi bendabuko abanakukulawula kodwa bashukunyiswa imimoya yokhokho. Imiphumela yocwaningo ingase ishicilelwe. Nokho, imininingwane yomelaphi ayikukhululwa.

Ngikhethe wena ngoba ngibone ulufanele lolu cwaningo. Emva kokuhlanganisa zonke izimpendulo zabo bonke abelaphi bendabuko, ngiyathemba ukufunda okwengeziwe ngobungqingili ebantwini abamnyama.

Ngicela uqonde ukuthi ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo iqhaza lakho lokuzithandela ngokuphelele futhi hhayi ngokuphoqeleka. Isinqumo sokuba ingxwnye yalolu cwaningo sizothathwa nguwe kuphela. Nokho, ukwabelana ngolwazi nangemibono yakho ngingakujabulela ngempela. Ngeke uthinteke nganoma iyiphi indlela uma ukhetha ukungathathi iqhaza ekuphenduleni le mibuzo. Umangabe uvuma ukuba ingxenye, ungayeke noma inini futhi uma uthanda. Ngeke kube khona izinhlawulo futhi ngeke kube nobandlululo nganoma iyiphi indlela uma wenqaba ukuba ingxenye noma uhoxisa ukubamba kwakho iqhaza. Uma uvuma, ngicela ukuba wazise abaphansi/ okhokho bakho ngesinqumo ozosithatha sokubamba iqhaza

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kulolo cwaningo noma ucele imvume kubo, uma kudingekile. Ocwaningweni kuzosetshenziswa amagama ekungasiwona awabelaphi kanti futhi amagama okhokho/ amadlozi akho (uma usitshela wona) ngeke abhalwe ocwaningweni. Akekho ozokwazi ukuthi lezizimpendulo ziphuma kuwena. Umcwaningi kuphela oyokwazi ukufinyelela emininingwaneni efana nalena ngoba izogcinwa ngokwehlukana kunemiphumela yocwaningo. Yonke imininingwane yomelaphi iyohlala iyimfihlo.

Ngizokubuza imibuzo futhi ngiyacela ukuthi ukhululeke futhi ube neqiniso ezimpendulweni zakho zamazwi zalemibuzo. Eminye imibuzo ingase ibe bucayi. Ungakhetha ukungayiphenduli lemibuzo. Ungase futhi ubuzwe imibuzo ongakaze wayicabanga naphambilini ezodinga ukuthi uyicabangisise. Uma kuwukuthi awunaso isiqiniseko esigcwele ngezimpendulo zakho kulemibuzo, ngiyacela ukuthi uzicabangasise. Ayikho impendulo elungile noma engalunganga ngoba kuyobe kuyizinto wena odlule kuzona nemibono yakho. Uma umbuzo ucasula wena noma okhokho/ amadlozi akho, ungakhetha ukungawuphenduli. Kunabantu futhi (abeluleki) abazimisele, futhi abatholakalayo ukukusiza uma udinga noma yiluphi usizo esikhathini esizayo. Batholakala eChild & Family Centre eMngungundlovu eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natal. Uma kudingeka ukhulume nabo abaluleki, ungaxhumana nami (Khanyisile Mnyadi ku 0825346695/ kay.m0507@gmail.com) mina bese ngikuthintela bona ukuze bakwazi ukukunika usizo oludingayo.

Uma futhi unemibuzo mayelana nalolucwaningo, ungaxhumana nami kulemininingwane engaphezulu, umphathi wami (uMnu Thabo Sekhesa ku sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za), noma uthinte iHumanities & Social Research Ethics Committee (uDkt Shenuka Singh ku 031 260 3587/8350/4557 noma ku ximbap@ukzn.ac.za/ snymanm@ukzn.ac.za/ mohunp@ukzn.ac.za).

APPENDIX B

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding Traditional Healers, their ancestral guides and sexual identity. I understand that I am participating freely, without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point, should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand what is expected of my participation. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the details of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues that may arise during the study.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the interview schedule and that my answers will remain confidential.

_____

I understand that, if at all possible, feedback will be given to me on the results of the completed research.

_____

Signature of Participant: Date:

Additional Consent to Audio Recording:

In addition to the above, I hereby agree to the audio recording of the interview for the purpose of data capture. I understand that no personally identifying information or recording concerning me will be released in any form. I understand that these recordings will be kept securely in a locked environment and will be destroyed or erased once data capture and analysis are complete.

Signature of Participant: Date:

IMVUME

Lapha ngiyavuma ukuba ingxenye yocwaningoi mayelana nabelaphi bendabuko, okhokho/ amadlozi abo, nobulili babelaphi. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngithatha iqhaza ngokukhululeka, ngaphandle kokuphoqeleka nanoma ingayiphi indlela. Ngiphinde ngiqonde ukuthi ngiyakwazi ukuyeka ukuba ingxenye nganoma yingasiphi isikhathi uma ngingasathandi ukuqhubeka, nokuthi ngeke lesi sinqumo sithinte mina kabi nangayiphi indlela.

Inhloso yalolucwaningo ngiyichazeliwe, futhi ngiyaqonda yini elindelekile kumina ekubeni inxenye yalo. Ngiyaqonda noukuthi lokhu kuwumsebenzi wocwaningo injongo yawo ekungasikona ukuzuza mina uqobo.

Ngiyitholile nemininingwane yomuntu engingase ngixhumane naye uma ngidinga ukukhuluma ngezinye izingxoxo ezingase ziphakame phakathi nocwaningo.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi lefomu yokuvuma ngeke ihlanganiswe nemiphumela yocwaningo, nokuthi izimpendulo zami zizohlala ziyimfihlo.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi, uma kwenzeka, ngiyokwaziswa ngemiphumela yalolu cwaningo uma seluqediwe.

Isignesha yomelaphi: Usuku:

Imvume esengeziwe yokuqoshwa okulalelwayo:

Ngaphezu kwalokhu okungenhla, mina ngalokhu ngiyavumelana nokuqopha okulalelwayo ngenhloso yokubamba izimpendulo zami. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ayikho imininingwane yami ezokhishwa noma ingayiphi indlela. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukuqoshwa kuzohlala ngokuphepha endaweni evaliwe, futhi iyobhujiswa noma isulwe uma izimpendulo zonke sezibanjiwe, nokuhlaziywa kwazo sekuphelile.

Isignesha yomelaphi: Usuku:

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please tell us a little about yourself (age, marital status, children, how long have you been a Traditional Healer)?

2. Tell us a little about your childhood (who you grew up with, the environment you grew up in, and any significant childhood experiences)

3. Take us back to how you actually became a Traditional Healer. (If still undergoing the initiation phase, take us through how you realized you had the calling and your experiences as *ithwasa*

4. What made you accept the 'calling' to heal?

5. Tell us a little about your ancestral guides (who are they? Your relationship with them etc.)

6. Tell us a little about your culture and/ or religious beliefs

7. What are your thoughts/ theories around homosexuality/ bisexuality in the African culture?

8. I believe you are gay/ lesbian/ bisexual. Take us back to when you first realized that you were attracted to the same sex

9. It has been believed, in some cases that if a Traditional Healer's dominant ancestral guides are of the opposite sex then this could possibly have an impact on the healer's intimate relationships, leading to homosexuality/ bisexuality. How does this happen and is it completely spiritual, or is it actually a chosen identity?

10. Since people attribute homosexuality and bisexuality to something that is "ungodly" and "unAfrican", how would you as a gay/ lesbian/ bisexual African healer respond to this?

11. What are some of the challenges you face being a gay/ lesbian/ bisexual Traditional Healer?

UHLELO LWENGXOXO

1. Ngicela usitshele kancane ngawe (iminyaka yobudala, isimo somshado, izingane, usunesikhathi esingakanani ungumelaphi wendabuko)?

2. Sitshele kancane ngempilo yakho usemncane (wakhula nobani, indawo owakhulela kuyona yayinjani, nanoma yini ebalulekile oyikhumbulayo usemncane)

3. Ake usithathe usiyise emuva, waba kanjani empeleni umelaphi wendabuko? (Uma usasesigabeni sokuthwasa ake usitshele ukuthi waqaphela kanjani ukuthi unobizo, usitshele futhi ngezinto obhekene nazo njengomuntu oyithwasa

4. Yini eyayenza wamukela 'ubizo' lokuba umelaphi?

5. Ake usitshele nje kancane mayelana namadlozi/ okhokho bakho (Bangobani? Ubuhlobo bakho nabo njalo, njalo…)

.6. Ake usitshela okuncane mayelana nezinkolelo zakho- zosiko kanye / noma ezokholo…

7. Ngabe ucabangani / imibono yakho ithini mayelana nobungqingili / ububili obungakhethi ebantwini abamnyama eAfrika?

8. Ngikholwa ukuthi ugay / lesbian / bisexual…. Ake usithathe emuva lapho waqala khona ukuqaphela ukuthi uthanda abantu bobulili obufanayo…

9. Ngezinye izikhathi kuye kukholakale ukuthi abaphansi/ amadlozi omelaphi uma bengabantu besilisa yena engowesifazane/ uma bengabantu besifazane yena engowesilisa, kuye kube nemiphumela lokhu ebudlelwaneni obuseduze bomelaphi. Ingabe kwenzeka kanjani lokhu? Kanti futhi, ubulili bomoya/ okuqhamuka kwabaphansi noma ubulili umelaphi asuke ezikhethele kona?

10. Njengoba abantu abaningi bethi ubungqingili kanye nobulili obungakhethi kuyinto "engahambisani noNkulunkulu" kanti futhi "Akusiyona into yabantu abamnyama", wena njengomelaphi wendabuko othanda ubulili obufanayo/ obungakhethi ungaphendula kanjani kulezisho?

11. Yiziphi ezinye izinselele obhekene nazo ngokuba umelaphi othanda ubulili obufanayo/ obungakhethi?

26 July 2018

Ms Khanyisile Mnyadi 210506604
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Mnyadi

Protocol reference number: HSS/0366/014M
Project title: The influence of ancestral spirits on sexual identity amongst Traditional Healers in South Africa.
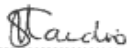

Full approval – Recertification

Your request for Recertification dated 12 July 2018 was received.

This letter confirms that you have been granted Recertification Approval for a period of one year from the date of this letter. This approval is based strictly on the research protocol submitted in 2014.

Any alteration s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Yours faithfully

....

Dr S Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Thabo Sekhesa
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Maud Mthembu
cc School administrator: Mrs Priya Konan