

**THE ROLE OF THE DEAD-LIVING
IN THE AFRICAN FAMILY SYSTEM**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that with the exception of the sources acknowledged in the text this dissertation is my original work. It has not been submitted to any other University for assessment. I thus submit it for the first time in the School of Psychology of the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Research

African traditional healing has been a rather neglected area of study in psychology. Attempts made to investigate African healing methods fell short of capturing the essence of African traditional healing because conceptualisations, theories and methodologies employed did not take African cultural contexts and settings into consideration (Lartey, Nwachuku, & Wa Kasonga, 1994; Nsamenang, 1995). The aims of such investigations were often not for the benefit of the African people themselves, for their effective mental health service delivery, but to prove the evolution of mental health care systems (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964). Since African healing methods were perceived to be primitive, it was thought that once Africa became “civilised” and modern, such primitive healing methods would gradually give way to civilised healing ones (Lartey, 1994).

For those researchers whose quest was for the most appropriate methods for effective mental health service delivery for African people, lack of an interdisciplinary framework for comparing the effectiveness of African approaches to healing with Western psychotherapies hampered their investigations (Nsamenang, 1995).

In modern Africa, African traditional healing exists side by side with Western-oriented psychotherapies. Even though Western civilisations and Western methods of mental health treatments have now become rooted in Africa, the continued consultation of African traditional healers by many Africans, seems to suggest that Western-oriented therapeutic approaches are not meeting the needs of the majority of African people (Madu, Bahuma, & Pritz, 1998). Daisy Nwachuku (1994) provides one reason when she says: “To a very large extent, we all are

prisoners of our own cultures, structures and practices which provide us with skeletons or organizational framework of our lives” (p.3).

The place occupied by ancestors or the dead-living within the African cultural contexts has to be taken seriously as it is the essence of African traditional healing (Mpolo, 1994). Gyekye (1997) complains that African people pay unnecessarily excessive and incessant attention to their ancestors. But as Hollenweger (1993) puts it: “Take ancestors away from the Africans and you destroy their roots in the past, their culture, their dignity and their understanding of *communio sanctorum*” (p. X). The continued existence of African traditional healing practices along side Western-oriented psychotherapies poses a challenge in psychology to investigate this essence of African traditional healing within its own cultural contexts and settings. The purpose of this research is to begin to meet this challenge.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The awareness of the existence of spirits is a strong reality in Africa. The dead-living are believed to have a place of residence, but continue to live after death and to interact with the living (Byaruhanga-Akiiki, 1993; Opoku, 1993). Since death does not terminate life, this raises the question: What is the role of ancestors or the dead-living in the African family system?

1.2.1 Sub-problems

- ✓ 1. How is the role of ancestors or the dead-living manifested and negotiated within African cultural contexts?
- ✓ 2. How do ancestors or the dead-living act as a diagnostic medium and how can they be involved as context for treatment?
- ✓ 3. What is the psychological understanding of the role of ancestors or the dead-living?

1.3 Justification for the Research

In modern Africa culturally-responsive forms of psychological treatments for people of African origin are lacking in Western-oriented mental health delivery systems. According to Lartey (1994), any attempt to examine the practice of healing in Africa has to come to terms with the fact of the inability of Western modern scientific practices to deal therapeutically and completely with the physical and psychological, socio-economic, political and spiritual needs of the African continent.

African cosmology is believed to contain a constellation of powers which interact with human beings and influence their lives (Mpolo, 1994). Ancestors or the dead-living are one such power that is believed to play a role in the lives of the living. Research into how this phenomenon of the dead-living or ancestors impact on the psychological well-being of the living is lacking yet necessary. The motivation for this study on the role of the dead-living in the African family system first emerged out of personal experience with African traditional healing. Secondly, in my work as an intern psychologist I was confronted by cases in which the ancestors or the dead-living were implicated in the mental health problems of their kin. The confrontation by such cases gave rise to a sense of moral obligation to make sense of this potentially important therapeutic mechanism.

1.4 Methodology

This research study was essentially based on observations. Two qualitative methods were used to gather data and to analyse them. The two methods, namely, participant observation and case study, are context-sensitive (Edwards, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Yin, 1998). Given the sensitivity of the contexts and settings in which the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system is believed to be manifested, the participant observation method was employed to gather first-hand information from naturally occurring contexts and settings (*ibid.*). On the other hand, due to the limited number of settings in which observations were carried out, the case study method was used for data analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Silverman, 2000). The selection of

cases was purposive, that is, based on the accessibility of cases with different site and background characteristics that illustrated some features or processes of the role of the dead-living in the African family system (ibid.).

1.5 Definitions

Definitions adopted by researchers are often not uniform, so key and controversial terms used in this study need to be defined. Definition of concepts used in this research are found in the Appendix.

1.6 Delimitations of Scope

Although this study's focus is the role of the dead-living within the African cultural contexts, an attempt will be made to understand this phenomenon within Western-oriented psychological context in order to enhance the need for closer co-operation and integration of culturally-responsive therapeutic interventions in Western-oriented mental health care systems. The focus will however, be on the presence and participation of the dead-living or ancestors in ritual ceremonies and symbols, and how such perceived presence and participation give legitimacy and authority to healing and restoration of harmonious relationships among family members. The discussion will also try to show the therapeutic value of ritual ceremonies in providing context for emotional release or catharsis, a sense of belonging and acceptance, as well as corporate harmony, all of which are culturally congruent and internally consistent within the African world views and frame of reference (Lartey, 1994).

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The following are some of the limitations or weaknesses of this study: This research study is a preliminary study which is based on three case studies. The limitation with the case study method is the problem of generalization. The study is oriented towards the role of the dead-living or

ancestors in the African family system, but overlooks different degrees of the belief in ancestors' role in the lives of their kin. Due to considerable overlap in the beliefs of different African cultures this study generalises to all Africans south of the Sahara. The heterogeneity of the African cultures is not accounted for. There is lack of comparison with Western cultures due to unavailability of data on the role of the dead-living or ancestors, and lack of a comprehensive theory to evaluate both the universality and the variability of this phenomenon in these cultures. The researcher is a participant in the study. Her participation is an asset as well as a limitation in this research. A Participant Observation method is employed to collect data for this study. This method's disadvantage is that it cannot be replicated due to ethical problems. The method is also prone to bias because it is not rigorous enough.

Despite these limitations, the need for the exploration of the issue of ancestors and their role in psychopathology is a pressing one that cannot be postponed for ever.

1.8 Conclusion and Implications

Any meaningful human development takes place in a cultural milieu, even though such milieu receives or adopts many elements from other cultures (Gyekye, 1997). African cultural factors cannot be ignored in aspirations and goals to provide effective psycho-socio-spiritual support for modern Africa in the third Millennium. The family is a vital element in all societies. African conception of family is a positive feature of African cultures. It includes the living and the dead-living. Fragmentation and disintegration of families spell disaster for any society (ibid.). The role of ancestors or the dead-living in ritual ceremonies and symbols embody reconciliatory and healing powers to create, renew and consolidate relationship bonds within African families in a way that empowers and emancipates individual members. Their role is worthwhile researching for the sake of the psychological well-being of modern Africa. The long-term goal of this dissertation therefore, is to contribute to the quest for culturally-responsive therapeutic interventions within the present Western-oriented mental health care systems. Similar studies of the concept of the role

of ancestors within Western cultural context might shed clearer light to whether the concept is culture-bound. This might lead to restructuring of psychological mental health care systems to incorporate African conceptualisations and forms of healing practices.

1.9 Outline of the Dissertation


This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The second chapter reviews literature on African approaches to healing and the basic assumptions underlying such approaches. It also examines Western-oriented psychotherapies and the assumptions on which they are based. Chapter three is on research methodology and design. It describes two qualitative methodological strategies, namely, participant observation and case study, and explains why these methods were deemed appropriate for an observational study of this kind. The personal characteristics of the researcher are also taken into consideration since the researcher was an important variable in the contexts and settings where observations took place. The fourth chapter deals with the analysis of data. In this chapter case studies are described and emerging themes interpreted within the African cultural context and Western-oriented psychological context. The final chapter is on discussion of findings in the light of research questions posed in chapters one, two and three. Included in this final chapter is the critical evaluation of the study and its implications for effective mental health care provision for modern Africa.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first part of this chapter reviews African approaches to healing and their basic assumptions. The second section is on Western psychotherapies and the underlying assumptions on which they are based.

2.1 Introduction



The research into the role of the dead-living in the African family system cannot be divorced from African traditional world views, concept of self, African concepts of health and sickness, and African approaches to healing.

According to Sue and Zane (1987), the most difficult issue confronting the mental health field is the role of culture and cultural issues in psychotherapy. Extensive reviews of literature into African world views, concepts of self, of mental health and sickness, and approaches to healing yielded contradictory statements about what is salient or peculiar to African cultures and what is universal. For example, data from cross-cultural findings demonstrate that even the modern study of mental illness is not culture free; that the scientific study of mental illness is a product of a particular culture-based intellectual tradition (Azibo, 1996; Castillo, 1997; Greenfield, 1997; Roland, 1996). On the other hand, other researchers like Hermans and Kempen (1998) and Spiro (1993) seem not to be in favour of cultural categorizations between Western versus non-Western typology arguing that such categorisations ignore the importance of individual differences within cultures and the cultural complexity.

This chapter reviews how African approaches to healing contrast with that of Western psychotherapies in how they respectively view mental health problems and the techniques they use

for diagnosis and treatment. The chapter, as was mentioned in the outline of the study, is divided into two sections. The first section looks at the cultural framework of the African approach to healing and the second section deals with the cultural framework of Western psychotherapies and how it relates to the problem under investigation. Each section in turn is sub-divided. The first two sub-sections of each section look at the basic assumptions that are the foundation on which the understanding of mental health concepts, such as health and sickness, the role of the dead-living or ancestors, and the approach to healing are based. These basic assumptions are the world views and the concepts of self.

It is acknowledged that the comparison between African approaches to healing and Western psychotherapies might be misleading because of the lack of interdisciplinary framework. Cultural context will be used as a framework to examine factors that influence the perception and the expression of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in African and Western contexts because the conceptualisations of such factors have implications for the problem under investigation, namely, the role of the dead-living in the African family system. //112

2.2 The African Approaches to Healing

Gyekye (1997) points out that human activity springs from a cultural base and takes on its significance from the context of that culture. The belief that the dead-living play a role in the lives of their living members seems to be culturally based or influenced by the cultural context. Research into how this phenomenon impacts on the field of psychology is lacking. Even in anthropology and the study of religions, where it has received some attention, methods and techniques employed somehow seem to fail to capture its features and essence because different researchers, mostly from Western cultures, approached the phenomenon from Western cultural perspectives.

African cultural contexts do not receive the attention they deserve in issues of mental health. For example, generally, a Western-style mental health system is followed in diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in mental institutions in Africa, while African approaches to healing and African

traditional healers have only a marginal role if any (Nsamenang, 1995). According to Nsamenang (1995), scientific psychology lacks African concepts and tools to capture the local knowledge and point of view adequately because it was imported into Africa as a ready-made intellectual package. African approaches to healing cannot be understood by employing Western categories and perspectives (Ho, 1998). Mbiti (1989), although criticised by Gyekye (1997) as radical in his views, warned that ignoring African traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices could lead to misunderstanding of African behaviour and problems since these beliefs exert great influence on the thinking and living of most African societies. The problem as Spiro (1993) points out, and this researcher agrees, lies in different conceptualizations, methodologies, theories, and empirical evidence used. So, while researchers argue about what is salient or peculiar within African cultures and what is universal, African traditional approaches to healing, in whole or in their modified versions, continue to exist side by side with Western-based psychotherapies.

This researcher has been witnessing that amidst cultural complexities of modern Africa, the dead-living still play a role in the mental health of African people. This phenomenon must still be serving psychological and sociological functions to have endured to this present day (Milingo, 1985; Sogolo, 1993). Azibo (1996) would argue that it is because people consciously or unconsciously frequently and systematically manifest "holdovers" that derive from their characteristic cultural deep structure even when they follow other cultural statements. Although Gyekye (1997) argues that even a large proportion of beliefs and practices inherited from the past do undergo varieties of changes over time, to some extent he agrees with Azibo that some enduring elements in the cultural life of a people may have been accepted and preserved in part or in whole by successive generations. Health-related beliefs and behaviours are not uniform in one cultural group, even family, but it is a known fact that cultural factors may constrain the cultural patterning of health care systems (Kleinman, 1980). The cultural significance demonstrates the need to view the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system within its cultural contexts, to assess and examine how the phenomenon has been sustained and the processes that are responsible for its continued existence (Sogolo, 1993).

2.2.1 African World Views

According to Gyekye (1997) and Hermans and Kempen (1998), no cultural tradition can claim to be pure in a sense of having developed on its own terms in isolation from other cultural views. African world views have also undergone transformation at various levels within the cultures and at contact zones. Despite transformation, these views still emphasise interpersonal relationships and interdependence.

It was mentioned in the introduction that the role of the dead-living in the African family system is intertwined with African world views. African world views are also the basis for understanding African health concepts and approaches to healing. They are the logic of the situation of African people, their presupposition about values, their language of discourse, knowledge and communication (Brown, 1997; Miller, 1997; Sogolo, 1993). The views that perceive a relationship between the dead-living and their living kin are those that emphasise the importance of social relationships and interdependence. These relationships are expressed in comprehensive interactions that are very complex, and would therefore not be explained in detail in this study except where they shed light on the problem under investigation.

In most African societies community life is not optional because the community constitutes the context, the social or the cultural space in which the actualization of the individual's potentials takes place (Gyekye, 1997). The community is viewed as a reality in itself, and the individual is seen as an inherently communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, and never as an isolated individual who is self-contained (Gyekye, 1997; Kambon, 1992; Phillips, 1996; Tholpe, 1993). Social aspects of the self are not just self-definitions or mental representations, but the social reality that the individual person lives out within the social setting and network. For example, in African social context of family, each individual member, even from an early age, has several roles and obligations to fulfil for the common good of all members of that family.

The impression that is often upheld by some proponents of individualistic views is that communally-oriented societies override individual freedom, autonomy, and independence (Miller, 1997; Sampson, 1988). The emphasis of communal values however, does not necessarily involve the rejection of individualistic values in any way as will be explained under African concept of self. It is just a matter of emphasis. It is what Gyekye (1997) means when he says: "In a social situation that, as a matter of ethical testament, stresses the importance of social relationships and such communal values as concern and compassion for others, insistence on rights (some rights) may not always be necessary or appropriate" (p. 66).

To understand the role of the dead-living in the African family system, African views have to be taken into consideration as they remain part of the cultural complexity in the mental health system of modern Africa. This is why Kitayama and Markus (1994) say: "Knowing and understanding people in other cultures from their own perspectives is increasingly important if we are to be effective participants in this world" (p. 22).

Generally African traditional world-views make no distinction between the natural and the supernatural because, according to Sogolo (1993):

The acts of the African deities are not seen as anything extraordinary. They are normal to the African. The ancestral spirits are not different in kind from us. They just happen to have a higher status than the mortals. Their actions are, therefore, within the regular patterns of events (pp.59-60).

African world views say a person is a person through other people. This conception can best be illustrated in how the African understands the concept of self which for him/her is personal, relational and collective simultaneously.

2.2.2 African Concept of Self

The use of the phrase, "concept of self" in this study is not really appropriate when one takes into

consideration the distinction Spiro (1993) pointed out between “person” and “self” - person as referring holistically to the psycho-socio-biological individual, and self as referring to the individual’s own person.

Uses of the concept of self are contradictory. Spiro (1993) says: “Given these different meanings of the term self, I could never be sure ... which of these meanings the author has in mind” (p.114). This researcher agrees with him. Comparisons across cultures are indeed confusing because different researchers use different techniques and methods of research, and are often outsiders and not insiders in the phenomenon they are studying. For example, Sampson (1988) distinguishes between self-contained individualism and ensembled individualism; Triandis (1989) theorizes about three aspects of self, namely, private, public and collective; while Hermans and Kempen (1998) perceive the notion of self as a dynamic multiplicity of different and even contrasting voices that allow mutual dialogical relationships. For Wilber (1979) self-identity depends entirely on where you draw the boundary line, so that “who are you?” means “Where do you draw the boundary?”

Gyekye (1997) expressed: “The type of social structure or arrangement evolved by a particular society reflects - and is influenced by - the public conceptions of personhood held in the society” (p. 35). Social structures in African societies reflect interpersonal relationships as playing a crucial role in the conceptualisations of self (Kambon, 1992). Although according to various researchers (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Gyekye, 1997; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Sampson, 1985; Sampson, 1988; Spiro, 1993; Triandis, 1989) no modern human society can be said to be absolutely communal or absolutely individualistic, the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system is better illustrated in the context where the emphasis is more on holistic interconnectedness and interdependence of all entities within the universe, including the universe of spirits (Azibo, 1996; Rack, 1982). In such a context the boundary between the natural and the supernatural is blurred, the self is complex because it is also defined in terms of vertical and horizontal relationships. These relationships in turn influence how health problems, whether physical, mental or spiritual, are viewed interpersonally on both visible and invisible levels.

Despite criticisms by Gyekye (1997), Mbiti's (1989) summary of the African concept of self in the following words expresses the complexity of relationships in the African context:

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his [sic] own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself [sic] and towards other people. When he [sic] suffers he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he [sic] rejoices, he [sic] rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or living. When he [sic] gets married, he is not alone, neither does the wife "belong" to him [sic] alone, so also the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen, even if they bear only their father's name. What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual (pp.108-109).

Gyekye (1997) admits that this kind of description makes clear the communal nature of African culture. He also admits the fundamentally relational character of a person and the interdependence of individuals as arising from their natural sociality in these words:

It is evidently true that in the social context, in terms of functioning or flourishing in a human society, the individual is not self-sufficient, her [sic] capacities, talents, and dispositions not being adequate for the realization of her [sic] potentials and basic needs. Human beings have needs and goals that cannot be fulfilled except through cooperation with other human beings (p.38).

The criticisms or arguments levelled at the proponents of African concept of self as rigid and failing to recognise the individualistic aspect of self are failing to understand that this aspect is implied and intrinsically linked to the communal aspect. The African concept of self is more complex than is given credit for. It can be said to be multifaceted because it can be viewed horizontally as well as vertically (Kambon, 1992; Rack, 1982). Horizontally it includes all the living members in a given group and vertically it includes the dead-living and those not-yet-born as well as the community of spirits and

the Creator (Azibo, 1996; Mbiti, 1989; Pasteur & Toldson, 1982). It is the vertical level that has not yet been researched as to how it impacts on psychological approach to healing.

Although the emphasis most of the time is on the relational aspect, it is acknowledged that just as the individual cannot develop outside the framework of community, the welfare of the community as a whole, cannot dispense of the talents and initiatives of its individual members (Gyekye, 1997). Sampson (1988) also noted that core cultural values of freedom, responsibility, and achievement can be realised by both kinds of individualisms - namely, self-contained individualism that is often equated with the Western cultures and ensembled individualism which is termed communal and is equated with other cultures.

Proverbs exist in African cultural contexts that express the idea that individuals are responsible for their own situations in life (Gyekye, 1997). For example, in the Tswana language a proverb that says: “Moremogolo go betlwa wa taola, wa motho o a ipetla”, which can be translated to mean that a person moulds his/her character or identity, whereas the character or identity of the divining bone is shaped by the maker, is understood by the Tswana people to put the responsibility of character formation squarely on the shoulders of an individual. The one that says: “Tshwenyana e boya bontlha e ya ikilela” is understood to mean that an individual knows his/her capabilities and will therefore, make choices accordingly. Even respect is not confined to respect of elders only, but to children too as the following proverb suggests: Susi ilela Suswana gore Suswana a tle a go ilele” (Susi is advised to respect Suswana so that Suswana can respect Susi in return). Individual variations are acknowledged because prefixes exist which when attached to verb-stems express individual expertise. For example, the prefix “Se-“, distinguishes an expert from the ordinary - Se- + apaya > Seapei (an expert cook) as opposed to Mo- +apaya > Moapei (anyone who cooks).

Sampson’s (1988) description of the ensembled individualism as fluid in its Self-Other boundary due to the fact that it includes others within its region, and externally controlled because it is not only governed by internal factors, but by forces that go beyond the person, helps to express the complexity of African concept of self. This description also helps in situating or contextualising the role of the

dead-living because the dead-living are recognised as part of the forces in the universe. In this sense, they have a reality of their own within the universe. The fluidity reflects the interdependence and the interconnectedness that a person has, not only with family members, but with the whole universe.

Understanding the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system which this research study is about, requires reference to a person in relationships with the visible and invisible others, rather than the conception of the person's self or self-representation. African world-views of interdependence of all entities are apparent in ancestral beliefs.

2.2.3 Ancestors

Just as life begins before the actual birth of an individual, so it fades gradually into obscurity. Older people are already on their way to ancestorhood and are accorded due respect; they may be called "amadlozi" even before their death. Physical separation from the visible community is simply one more stage on the journey of life - a journey which starts with gradual admission to the community, leads through various stages of community participation, and ends with gradual departure to the spirit world. Death of an elder is referred in words which imply continuing existence, albeit in an invisible form (Thorpe, 1991, p.38).

Figure 1 below gives the idea of where the dead-living are located in the hierarchy of forces in African ontological assumption. The figure is Azibo's (1996) illustration of the African's extended-self.



Figure 1

The Not-yet-born, the dead-living, the ancestors, the community of spirits and the Creator all form the vertical level whereas all living members form the horizontal level, but the levels are intertwined so that one cannot exist without the other. In this research study no distinction will be made between the dead-living, ancestors and the community of spirits because details about the differences between these different entities are beyond the scope of this research. It suffices to say that all of them are separated from the living by death, but remain in close contact with the living through various manifestations (Berglund, 1976).

All human beings are potential ancestors. The question, as Berglund (1976) puts it, is not whether one becomes an ancestor or not, but what influence s/he has. The importance attached to the influence varies according to social status, age, and the number of children one had prior to death (ibid.). For example, children and infants become ancestors, but have no power, they cannot give advice nor exercise influence of any kind, but can appear in dreams. Those who commit a serious misconduct are believed to roam about aimlessly until rituals to reconcile them with their kin are

performed (Ela, 1995; Ngubane, 1977).

In Africa the dead are almost always honoured in some way according to the funeral ceremonies used by a particular ethnic group (Ela, 1995). Patrilineal groups instal the head of the family, the father, and women who have reached a ripe age as ancestors through ritual actions (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977; Ray, 1976). After the ritual the recently deceased's name is included in the praise list of ancestors and is called upon to take his/her place among the protectors and defenders of his/her line. S/he can be expected to make her-/himself known (Thorpe, 1991). As a member of the collective ancestral group, the father becomes influential to his children, to his junior brother's children, as well as his grandchildren through his sons (Berglund, 1976). All the dead people go to the spirit world. Rituals help to re-establish and maintain communication between the physical world and the spirit world where the ancestors reside (Thorpe, 1991). As spirit beings the dead-living are not restricted to certain places, but can be in many places at the same time (Berglund, 1976). It is understood that they continue to exist under the earth, but that they are also invisibly present in the homestead, and even return in the visible guise of their progeny. Their presence may also be assumed in a person's head, back, sexual organs and especially the shoulder blades (Berglund, 1976; Thorpe, 1991). The dead-living are not regarded as invisible and far away because, they manifest themselves through dreams, visions, omens or medium of diviners (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977). The ancestors are mediators. Their relationship with their living members is fundamentally reciprocal and interdependent (Ela, 1995). They often serve as diagnostic mediums, pointing up problems in domestic and family relations (Ray, 1976), hence their link with concepts of health and sickness, and approaches to healing.

The activities of the dead-living are defined by strict kinship rules of behaviour (Berglund, 1976). It is in the context of family, consisting of parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and grandparents, that ritual behaviour characterises the relationship with the ancestors (Mbiti, 1989). As part of the family, the presence of the dead-living is authentically experienced as the participation of the invisible world in the world of the living (Ela, 1995). The ancestors remain members of the family because the bonds are not severed by death (Klass, 1996). Rituals and libations as tokens or

symbols of communication with the deceased are integrated into the system of relationships that the living maintain with nature, family and society (Ela, 1995; Kambon, 1992). Food and drink are offered to relive a kinship relationship with the deceased, actualising such a relationship once again in the living present (ibid.):

The acts of pouring out libation (of beer, milk or water), or giving portions of food to the living-dead, are symbols of communion, fellowship and remembrance. They are mystical ties that bind the living-dead to their surviving relatives. Therefore these acts are performed within the family (Mbiti, 1989, p.25).

Even in modern Africa great emphasis and respect is placed on burials and graves as can be observed from the kind of funerals usually held and the types of tombstones at graveyards. Ritual practices are performed in the privacy of the family circle, with neighbours joining in the feasting afterwards. According to Ela (1995), lack of ritual practice is believed to condemn the dead-living to wonder aimlessly. As a result, instead of exercising their immediate and direct influence for the good, they create disharmony (ibid.). Beliefs concerning the ancestral spirits are closely interwoven with those concerning African traditional healers, hence collaboration with the latter is a necessity (Thorpe, 1991). Traditional healers are believed to be in direct communication with the ancestors, and hence with the entire spirit realm.

In the African context, the ancestors are familiar with family events. They make themselves known through various overt signs or symbols to draw the attention of a person and the whole family to their needs (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Ngubane, 1977). If the deceased are neglected, they are believed to become angry and to allow sickness or misfortune to happen to their living members (Ela, 1995). Their acts, even though they may appear negative, unlike those of witches and sorcerers, are believed to turn out for the good of their living members (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Ngubane, 1977).

Understanding the role the dead-living play in the African family system is crucial for placing

African approaches to healing within a larger context, for understanding the sources of distress as well as identifying possible avenues of emotional healing.

2.2.4 African Concepts of Health and Sickness

The African world-view of health and illness is holistic. Health in African conception is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of the fabric of existence. It implies well-being of mind, body and spirit; living in harmony with one's neighbours, the environment and oneself, and in all levels of reality - physical, social, spiritual, natural and supernatural (Appiah-Kubi, 1981). When welfare prevails in the family, when there is absence of sickness, when there is escape from danger such as road accidents, release from prison or safe return of a family member, the ancestors are applauded (Berglund, 1976). As MB Appiah-Kubi (1981) explains it:

To be healthy is to be in total harmony with all the forces that assail man's [sic] well-being and in so far as these forces impair his [sic] productive abilities and therefore, his overall capacity to fulfil his aspirations in life, he [sic] is ill (p.8). MB

The universe of sickness is inseparable from the universe of spirits too (Berglund, 1976; Ela, 1995; Sogolo, 1993). There are certain sicknesses that are attributed to ancestors. For example, misfortunes in schools, unexpected unfavourable events, accidents, and lost court-cases when everything seemed to speak of a favourable outcomes, are regarded as symbols of the ancestors' anger towards their living kin (Berglund, 1976; Hammond-Tooke, 1986; Ngubane, 1977; Thorpe, 1991). Anger, hatred, and strife are associated with witchcraft and perceived as carrying in them the mystical threat of disaster to oneself and to others (Appiah-Kubi, 1981). When a person dies prematurely witchcraft or sorcery is suspected. Such a death is described in terms indicative of a breaking off, and it is believed that the person could be enlisted as a spirit helper for evil purposes, rather than as an ancestor for purposes of protecting and benefiting the community (Thorpe, 1991). The difference between the sickness attributed to ancestors and the sickness attributed to witches

and sorcerers is therefore, that the former put pressure on their living kin to frighten them , but the latter want to kill and annihilate (Berglund, 1976).

It is the prolonged illnesses that do not respond to ordinary measures and those things that seem to have no human explanation that are understood as having an invisible cause which are blamed on three kinds of agents (Thorpe, 1991). These agents are the ancestral spirits when they fail to prevent sickness or misfortune from befalling the family because they have been neglected or are angry at an offence committed; the witches and sorcerers for malevolent purposes; and spirit possession when someone is being called by a spirit to become its medium (Hammond-Tooke, 1986; Thorpe, 1991). When adverse events occur, it is necessary to consult a diviner to determine the cause. If an ancestral spirit is responsible, the person concerned may be troubled by dreams or a diviner may diagnose and determine rituals expected (Thorpe, 1991). This does not mean that illnesses with ordinary causes are not recognised. They are also recognised and treated by home remedies. Use is also made of Western-based clinics, private medical doctors or hospitals (ibid.).

Generally illness or misfortune seems to be viewed as symbolic expressions of disturbed relationships between the living and the dead-living. Thorpe (1991) expresses it better when he says: "Pain in the African context is psychical with strong social dimensions; not predominately physical and individualistic. Pain is felt when relationships are disturbed" (p.111). HB

The role of the dead-living in African concept of health and illness is confirmed by Ela (1995) when he says: "The belief in the ancestors as representatives of fatherhood [sic] plays a primordial role in the African medicine, given the African understanding of sickness" (p.22).

Linking health problems with the dead-living is bound to have implications for diagnosis and treatment of mental illness or problems for people of African origin who seek psychotherapeutic help.

2.2.5 African Approach to Healing

Since sickness is inextricably involved in the relationship of human beings with each other and with the universe, it is also felt as a disturbance of social and cosmic relationships as well (Ela, 1995; Sogolo, 1993; Thorpe, 1991). The techniques of healing cannot therefore, be separated from the symbolic universe from which they emerge (Ela, 1995).

According to Makunga, Edwards and Nzima (1998), the contribution that African traditional healing could make to the mental health system can be missed entirely if Western-oriented therapeutic approaches are the only ones used to confront mental health problems. As Godwin Sogolo (1993) puts it: "Whether in witchcraft, in sorcery or in spiritual possession, these beliefs are too submerged in traditional African culture to be ignored in the matters of health and disease" (p.114).

African holistic emphasis on healing cannot be underestimated. Healing requires a meaningful cultural context of interpersonal relationships (Berglund, 1976; Sogolo, 1993). When a person is experiencing problems, Africans believe that the cause should be ascertained and dealt with, so that holistic unity can be restored (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977). When diagnosing, the healer extends the borders of the disrupted area to include the invisible, spiritual world because of the belief that communication which restores unity on an invisible, mystical level, leads to a restoration of wholeness on a visible, physical level as well (Ela, 1995; Thorpe, 1993). Social relationships become the point of departure for individual diagnosis and therefore, the focus on the individual as an isolated "patient" is often rejected (Appiah-Kubi, 1981; Ela, 1995). The kin group identifies closely with the sick person from the onset of illness. They support him both psychologically and materially, their sense of obligation and readiness to help depending on their perception of danger to the whole group (ibid.).

Rituals play an important part in restoring normal relationships between the dead-living and their living members (Berglund, 1976). Rituals are believed to contain a meaningful and appreciable symbolic interpretation (ibid.). These rituals and symbols are accessible only to "insiders" and full of

meaning for them, but may be indecipherable for “outsiders” (Ela, 1995; Ray, 1976). Traditionally rituals that would be performed for restoration of normal relationship would be ritual slaughtering and beer-drinking for communion with the ancestors (Berglund, 1976). The ritual of “ukubuyisa idlozi” (bringing back home of an ancestor) would automatically be done a year after death of an adult person, so the ancestors would already be around the homestead in specific places such as “umsamo”, the hearth, the doorway arch, the cattle enclosure, and in their living kin (ibid.; Ngubane, 1977). The existence and presence of the ancestors was never doubted.

With colonisation and the arrival of the missionaries in Africa, while the belief in the existence of the ancestors did not change, communication with the ancestors through ritual celebrations became in some places a private family practice or was associated with expressing primitive or pagan thinking of people where rational and scientific values had not yet made their mark (Berglund, 1976; Jung, 1964; Milingo, 1985). Most modern African families do not even know about the ritual of “ukubuyisa” and what that ritual entails. In the modern cultural context, at least with the traditional healers with whom the researcher collaborated, the “ukubuyisa” ritual is a process that involves three rituals, namely, the cleansing or purification of the ancestors from great-grandfather to the father if he too has passed away; the thanksgiving ritual, and the “ukubuyisa” ritual per se. Ritual killing and beer-drinking are part of these rituals. The ritual killing during the “ukubuyisa” ritual as the main ritual involves the slaughtering of four to more goats depending on the demand of the ancestors of that family. This researcher knows families where six, nine and eleven goats had to be slaughtered. It is hoped that this brief introduction helps to make sense of the events described below

Achieving wholeness or health in African contexts involves confession, sacrifice, forgiveness and atonement, hence the living partake of sacrificial meals for cleansing and atonement for reparation of broken relationships between the living and their dead-living members and among the living members (Appiah-Kubi, 1981). Restoration of community bonds with the invisible world of the dead who are mediators of life, is one of the fundamental tasks that African traditional healers versed in African cosmology with its techniques, theory of knowledge, its way of interpreting reality, its system of rationalisation and explanation, are called upon to perform (Ela, 1995).

Traditional healers specialise in the healing of both individuals and the community by restoring wholeness. They are believed to be in direct communication with the ancestors, and hence with the entire spirit realm (Berglund, 1976). They are consulted whenever illness or impending disaster troubles an individual or his/her family because they are expected to use their knowledge and power legitimately and constructively. People who come for consultation wait for the healer to tell them why they have come. The diviners name the illness and prescribe certain measures (Tholpe, 1991). This researcher witnessed a diviner naming problems by just handling items of clothing brought to her for diagnosis. Traditional healers may prescribe ritualistic observance or medicines. In modern times some of them are accused of misuse of their power and knowledge.

Africans believe that people are closely bound to one another and to their environment and that harmony and well-being of one affect the other (Appiah-Kubi, 1981). Trees, streams and rivers, are more than merely things to be utilised, they have a spiritual quality which unites them to human beings in a greater cosmic whole. Some rituals involve using trees for “umuti” (medicine) and or bathing in streams and rivers.

Treatment of a sickness is a long process that is often given in three phases. First the cause is ascertained through divination. Secondly it is treated according to who caused it. If ancestors are the cause, they are reconciled with through appropriate rituals; if witchcraft is suspected as the cause, medicines for counteracting its effect are prescribed; if the cause is the calling to traditional healing, the person is advised to respond to the calling. Curative medicines are also administered as part of the healing process (Thorpe, 1993). NB

From the discussion in the first section of this chapter, the African cultural contexts of interdependence even with the dead-living is what is missing in Western-based mental health system to respond to the deep-seated needs of people of African descent. The perception that diagnosis and treatment of mental illness depend on the same set of assumptions in both African and Western approaches to healing becomes somehow questionable when one scrutinises the socio-cultural contexts of Western psychotherapies because, according to Klass (1996), differing cultural values

create differences in interpersonal bonds, thus different dynamics in breaking and continuing bonds even after death. For example, dependency is undesirable in Western culture and independence from parents is seen as normative, hence dependent personality disorder in the DSM IV (Klass, 1996; Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb, 1994). On the other hand, interdependency is the essence in interpersonal relationships among African people.

2.3 Western Psychotherapies

There are many schools of psychology with varying views pertaining to the influence of various cultural factors in conceptualisations, methodologies and theories of mental health problems. The complexity of Western views makes it difficult to find a homogenous cultural context in which to assess how the problem of the role of the dead-living in the mental health of their living kin is perceived and treated by various psychotherapies.

In contrast to African approaches to healing, Western psychotherapies are varied and extensively researched. Contradictions exist here too about what is peculiar or salient to Western cultures. According to Gyekye (1997) however, it would be safe to assume that cultural values and practices that evolve within a society, were at the time of their creation, grounded in some historical circumstances, certain conceptions of human society, social relations, certain metaphysical ideas, and other kinds of ideas, beliefs or presuppositions. Western cultures are no exception.

Besides the advanced forms of science and technology, Western cultures developed other characteristics such as urbanism, individualism, the ascendancy of reason, nation-state secularism, and relegation of religion to the private sphere of life (Gyekye, 1997). These characteristics have been influencing Western world views, conceptions of self, concepts of health and sickness, the role of the dead-living in the lives of their kin, and techniques of healing.

2.3.1 Western World Views

According to Hickson & Christie (1989), a world view constitutes our psychological orientation in life and determines how we think, behave, make decisions and define events. Almost every counselling and psychotherapy paradigm has a world-view or cosmological foundation in terms of which causes and effects, human behaviour and psychopathology is defined, explained and predicted (ibid.). This recognition is shared by Draguns (1981) who wrote: "Psychotherapy defies isolation from its cultural context" (p.6). Geertz (1974) too is quoted as saying: "There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture" (cited in DiNicola, 1985, p.85). Kambon (1992) also claims that one of the significant functions of world view systems is that they determine the meanings we attach to events that we experience in our day-to-day existence, our definitions, our concepts, and our values.

Western world views about the universe vary according to the boundary line drawn. One of the views that has persisted over many generations and constituted the basis for conceptualizations, methodologies, theories and empirical research into the nature of the universe has been the dualistic or dichotomous orientation (Gyekye, 1997; Wilber, 1979).

The dualistic view also affected the field of psychology so that mind-body split became a fundamental perspective of Western theories of various psychotherapies for decades. Most world views underlying various schools of psychology and psychotherapies reflect this mind-body split. Wilber (1979) for example, identified several levels of the spectrum of consciousness and the therapies associated with each of the levels. Although he admits that all the levels shade into one another and no absolute distinct or separate classification of these levels or the therapies addressing them is possible, he gives a very brief example of groups of therapies classified according to the deepest level they recognise. For example: Psychoanalysis and most forms of conventional psychotherapy are associated with the ego vs body level; humanistic therapies are associated with the level of the total organism vs environment; and transpersonal bands of therapies are classified according to their concern with processes that transcend the boundaries of the individual organism.

Unlike African world views, Western world views change more often because Western intellectuals and researchers are constantly critical about their traditional views and revitalize some of the aspects of these views by making amendments or refinements to them in order to bring them more into harmony with the contemporary cultural trends - something that Gyekye (1997) laments as lacking in terms of African world views.

Western world views have implications for understanding the role of the dead-living in the African family system because how this phenomenon would be conceptualised would depend on whether, for example, the views are intrapsychic in orientation, interpersonal or systemic.

2.3.2 Western Concept of Self

According to some researchers, among them Wilber (1979), Gyekye (1997), Segall, Lonner and Berry (1997), and Spronck and Compernelle (1997), society or community constitutes the context for the creation and development of a person's identity. A person's identity therefore, derives, at least in part, from the cultural or social context.

Generally, the definition of the term "self" is difficult because different studies lack definitions and conceptual clarity in their use of the term (Spiro, 1993). The concept is used in diverse ways including the person, the cultural conception of a person or individual, a psychic entity, a person's construal of such an entity, personality, self-other differentiation, self-representation or mental-representation (ibid.). Historical and cultural evidence shows that certain characteristics are recognised and associated with Western conceptualisation of self (Azibo, 1996; Gyekye, 1997; Kitayama & Markus, 1994; Klass, 1996; Sampson, 1988). For example, individualism as one of the central characteristics of Western cultures has influenced Western conceptualisation of self. This does not mean that the notion and the exploitation of its practical implications and consequences is confined to the West only, as it is the manner in which it is handled that varies historically, culturally and subculturally (Gyekye, 1997; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Sampson, 1988; Spiro, 1993;

Triandis, 1989).

Geertz's (1984) summary of Western concept of self is quoted by Spiro (1993) as follows: "a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against its social and natural background" (p.108).

Although Geertz's (1984) conceptualisation can be said to be individualism in its extreme or negative form, nevertheless the individualistic aspect of the term is what has been stressed by most Western cultural conceptions since the 16th century (Gyekye, 1997; Sampson, 1988), while the communalistic aspect was often thought to be "immature, pathological or even anti-democratic pre-individualistic state" (Sampson, 1988, p.17). For example, Triandis (1989) defines the self as consisting of all statements made by a person, overtly or covertly, including the words "I", "me", "mine", and "myself". He conceptualises the self as an active agent that promotes differential sampling, processing, and evaluation of information from the environment. Spiro (1993) too, although critical of Geertz's conceptualisation, explains that according to psychoanalytical theory the blurring of boundaries between self- and object-differentiations is associated with mental illness.

Sampson (1985) more or less echoes Geertz's conceptualisation when he describes Western cultural ideals or dominant views of personhood (ego, selfhood, identity) as "an autonomous, fully integrated entity in itself, defined by its separateness and distinctiveness from other people and the rest of nature" (p.1204). This conceptualisation, according to Sampson (1985), assumes a person to possess power and control, thus to be the author of his/her life story. The phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system requires a person to view him-/herself as a character in the story and the ancestors as authors. This means that a person has no authority over his/her own life, but has the task to discern the path determined for him/her, and then to act to follow it (ibid.). For example, the call to become an African traditional healer, whether an isangoma (diviner) or any type, is not a matter of personal choice since the refusal of the call may result in punishment by ancestors and eventually lead to a miserable and painful death (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977).

Spiro (1993) criticizes Geertz's (1984) conceptualisation as too restrictive in that it fails to acknowledge individual differences within any cultural context. Hermans and Kempen (1998) argue that such a conceptualisation presupposes cultural homogeneity. Diverse conceptualisations of self in Western cultures have implications for the conception of the role and the manifestations of the dead-living in the lives of their living kin. For example, any conceptualisation that perceives the self or the individual as having power and control or as author of own life story would be inclined to view the role of ancestors or the dead-living as a potential infringement on personal autonomy (Sampson, 1988).

2.3.3 Ancestors

Western psychotherapies understand the role of ancestors or of the dead-living in the family system differently from how the African traditional healing approaches understand the phenomenon because they are a product of their cultural context. They recognise the influence of family of origin on psychological states, but their understanding is more in abstract than relational terms. For example, Berglund (1976) avoided using the term ancestor in his study of the phenomenon of the dead-living among the Zulus because, according to him, the word "suggests ascendants who are dead (according to Western concepts) and, as a result, there is a distance between them and the living. There is, in other words, a separateness between the living and the dead" (p.29). According to Klass (1996), Western cultural values of autonomy and independence influence interpersonal relationship with the living as well as with the dead-living because an attempt to maintain contact with the dead-living may be defined as pathology. The social structures provide little, if any, rules of interdependence, and social obligations are not of paramount importance (Castillo, 1997). Most individuals in these cultures maintain contact with their ancestors or the dead-living as part of the inner mental representations because rituals which symbolically reinforce kinship interaction in the form of ancestor veneration, are not part of their cultural values (Klass, 1996). Independence from living parents is seen as normative while dependency is discouraged and negatively valued, therefore death is a loss and grief work is the acceptance of the essential separateness (Berglund, 1976; Klass, 1996).

Instances where the understanding of the role of the dead-living or ancestors would somehow be similar to how it is understood in the African healing systems, might be in those psychotherapies that are aimed at the spiritual aspect of the individual person, and in some religious practices. The bond that individuals feel with their ancestors or the dead-living is within the sense of interdependence, and ancestors remain members of the family because the bonds are not severed by death (Klass, 1996). It is the expression of that bond that varies in different cultural contexts and within each context or setting.

Conceptualisation of ancestors in Western psychotherapies therefore, has implications for understanding the role of the dead-living in the African family system, depending on the level that each therapy focuses on. For example, if the level of focus is intrapsychic, then this phenomenon would be treated as part of intrapsychic factors within a person. Hermans and Kempen (1998) would view the phenomenon as “part of the repertoire of collective voices playing their part in a multivoiced self” (p.118). Systems theory will make reference to this phenomenon on personal level, family level or cultural level, depending on the speciality and choice of the therapist or researcher (Spronck & Compernelle, 1997).

2.3.4 Western Concepts of Health and Sickness

“Acceptable explanations are tied to people’s general conception of health and illness; which is dependent on the overall world view” (Sogolo, 1995, p.9).

Western concepts of health and sickness cannot be divorced from their cultural context, because cultural factors may not only alter the presentations of symptoms, but cultural variables may also influence the process of assessment (Brown, 1997; Miller, 1997; Tseng & Streltzer, 1997). For example, according to Frank (1973), cultural factors determine to a large extent which conditions are singled out as targets for therapy and how they manifest themselves. Behaviour of the afflicted person is greatly influenced by culturally determined expectations of how persons so defined should behave (ibid.).

The body-mind dualism has affected concepts of health and sickness in Western cultures for decades. Currently, however, there are as different conceptualisations of health and sickness as there are a complex of psychotherapies. Science and technology as well as cultural complexity continue to influence various conceptualisations. Factors perceived to generally cause mental illness for example, are divided into physical, spiritual, mental, and socio-cultural factors, but the division is not a strict one as there is much overlap among these factors. Conceptualisation of what constitutes mental health and what constitutes mental sickness or illness is dependent on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV).

Some psychotherapies recognise that some physical reactions may be one form in which problems that trouble people unconsciously express themselves (Jung, 1964). Other approaches also recognise that certain symptoms, for example, certain types of pain and abnormal behaviour are symbolically meaningful (*ibid.*). This is why Gardiner, Mutter, & Kosmitzki (1998) warns: "Attempts to employ theoretical concepts or interpretations developed in one cultural setting to situations found in another may not always be appropriate and can lead to much misunderstanding of cultural behaviour" (p.263).

The understanding of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system within Western cultural contexts will be dependent on Western conceptualisations of what constitutes mental health or sickness.

2.3.5 Western Psychotherapeutic Approaches to Healing

Science and technology in Western cultures have led to a sophistication of psychotherapeutic techniques. There are as many varieties of these techniques as there are schools of psychotherapy. Some methods are intrapsychic in their approach, others deal primarily with the individual person as having choices and thus author of his/her life, still other psychotherapies deal with the individual as a member of a family or group, or with an individual's total milieu (Frank & Frank, 1991). The cultural assumptions influence the approaches to healing just as they influence the concepts of health

and sickness or illness (Castillo, 1997). The aims to promote health or growth are dependent on the conceptualisation underlying the therapy in question (Torrey, 1986; Tseng & McDermott, 1975). The treatment techniques used are also perfectly logical within the theoretical framework of that therapy and its goals (ibid.). Those whose conceptualisation is intrapsychic employ techniques that are intrapsychically-oriented. For example, Psychoanalysis and most forms of conventional psychodynamic psychotherapies would aim at healing the radical split between the conscious and the unconscious aspects of the psyche in order to create a strong and healthy ego (Wilber, 1979); humanistic approaches are mostly person-centred, whereas family therapies focus on family structures and interactions (O'Callaghan, 1976). Systemic approaches focus on many different levels, but choose the level of intervention according to the interest, goal, knowledge, tools, and capacities of the therapist (Spronck & Compennolle, 1997). The techniques are constantly evaluated to take into account cultural complexities of humanity, and thus to bring them into harmony with the present scheme of things (Gyekye, 1997).

How various therapeutic techniques deal with the problem of the role of the dead-living in the African family system will be dependent on how seriously such techniques take into consideration the African cultures as part of the complexity of cultural contexts (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Spronk & Compennolle, 1997). As Wilber (1979) puts it:

As a person (layman or therapist) gains familiarity with the spectrum - its various levels with their different problems - He [sic] may be able to recognise more readily from which levels the present problems or conflicts stem, and thus apply to any given conflict the appropriate "therapeutic" process for that level (p.13).

2.4 Ancestors in other Cultures

We are all influenced by our cultural and historical circumstances. Studies of cultures in the Near East and archaic Greece show that in Pre-Christian era, suffering in these places was traced among other things to spirits of ancestors (Burkert, 1987). For cure or healing purification rituals that were

considered good for both the living and those who had died were performed. Rituals were done because it was believed that the living and the dead belong together, and therefore disturbance in the beyond are felt in this life. For this reason those rituals that had the effect of eliminating grief and sorrow among the living, would have repercussions on the other side with psychotherapeutic effect (ibid.). Revival of some of these ancient beliefs are found in recent religious approaches (Thorpe, 1993).

Beliefs that some spirits of those who died prematurely, for example, murdered or committed suicide, haunted the living, are documented (Von Franz, 1995). Spirits of the dead in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor were called evil demons if they brought sickness or harm to human beings. Otherwise they were good demons if associated with good, and were benevolently disposed to human beings (ibid.). In Ancient Rome the deceased members of the family were believed to live on in the house with the living as anonymous beings together with the house gods (ibid.).

Alan Roland who worked therapeutically for some years with Indian and Japanese patients found that their cultures have a self that is not enmeshed and embedded in extended family context, but also in a world of invisible influences and spirits (Roland, 1996). The spiritual aspect form a major portion of their psyche (ibid). Thorpe (1993) also found that the belief in the spirit world is part and parcel ^{HB} of the Asian thought patterns. Asians are said to fear the recently dead, but revere their ancestors or the long dead as protectors of the family. The essence of the belief of the Native Americans in maintaining contact with the spirit world has also altered in that only certain aspects and particular components of their most celebrated rituals have been altered in accordance with their modern lifestyle (ibid).

According to Thorpe (1993), basic human needs do not change in spite of altered circumstances and environments. Shaped by factors that are peculiar to the circumstances of their birth and life, Asian societies like Africans believe that the spirit world and their ancestors influence their actions and experienced in the present and the future (Roland, 1996). The Asian and Japanese world views, their concept of self which is extended, their concepts of sickness and health encourage such belief.

Their conception of illness and healing go together. Their social-cultural structure provides rituals that symbolically strengthen kinship interactions and communication with the spirit world (Klass, 1996). Healing ceremonies reaffirm solidarity with the visible community and the invisible world of spirit beings as well as ancestors (Thorpe, 1993). As a result of their assumption of the synchronicity between spiritual experiences and the human psyche, involvement with traditional healing practices continue to flourish alongside Western healing practices even among the educated urban elite (Roland, 1996). Traditional healing elements are also found in the second and third generation of the Indian- and Japanese-Americans (ibid.).

2.5 Conclusion

Various studies have been done examining common denominators of healing systems across cultures (Frank, 1973; Tseng & McDermott, 1975), even though these common denominators are framed in culture-specific language and framework.

Psychological elements have been identified in other cultures outside Western ones (Roland, 1996; Thorpe, 1993). There are widespread distribution of psychological features throughout the world. Therapeutic explorations of any school of psychology are never far from family sphere. Emotional conflicts can include cultural and psychosocial factors. There is therefore no reason to exclude African traditional healing from being regarded as a form of psychotherapy.

African traditional healing and Western psychotherapies are different forms based on common principles of healing. The difference between the interpretations of African traditional healing and Western psychotherapies lies in the world views from which these approaches emerge and the ways in which they are controlled and utilized (Thorpe, 1993).

At the centre of African approaches to health, sickness and healing is the role played by ancestors or the dead-living. The belief that the dead-living play a role in the psychological health of their living

kin is intertwined with African world views which do not distinguish between the natural and supernatural causes. On the other hand, Western world views have been influenced by science and technology as well as factors such as urbanism, individualism and secularism. These approaches distinguish between physical, spiritual, mental, and socio-cultural factors in their diagnosis and treatment of psychological problems. Within Western-oriented psychological context criteria for judging the relevance of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the present day African is lacking because often this phenomenon is relegated to religion, and therefore seen as inappropriate to psychological research and practice.

African traditional healing can be termed a psychological approach that connects current difficulties of a person with the spiritual. Studies of Roland (1996) and Thorpe (1993) show that Asians, Japanese and Indians also believe ancestors and the world of spirits play a role in healing processes. But studies of Burkert (1987) and Von Franz (1995) show the belief to have existed during Pre-Christian era in the Near East, archaic Greece and ancient Rome. Whether the spirits of the dead-living or ancestors are part of the personal realm of the psyche projected outside or have an identity of their own, if they cause emotional stress they warrant to be dealt with in ways that are meaningful or congruent to the value system of the individual concerned. Addressing a problem of suffering from its own particular system is perceived by Thorpe (1993) as effective healing.

Literature further revealed that in African approaches to healing, symbolism in the form of rituals and symbols play a very important role. Psychological health problems are viewed as symbolic expressions of disturbed relationships between the living and the dead-living or ancestors. Rituals for cleansing, atonement and forgiveness are performed to re-establish broken relationships. Such rituals are seldom known or appreciated in Western psychotherapies. The assumption in the African cultural context that ancestors or the dead-living reside also in a person's neck, back, sexual organs and shoulder blades presents a conflicting view from what Western psychotherapies often diagnose as somatization. This conflict calls for research into manifestations of the presence and role of the dead-living in the lives of their living kin.

The role of the dead-living is a subtle but important psychosocial aspect of the African culture. Therapeutic exploration of this aspect can only enrich Western-oriented psychological context because traditions persist “even in vastly different pathologies and lengths of exposure to the West” (Roland, 1996, p. 183). Even in highly sophisticated, modern settings of today there is a need for a spiritually-oriented psychotherapy (Thorpe, 1993).

Given the significant function of the role of the dead-living in the African family system, can this phenomenon be incorporated in Western-based psychotherapies as a potential cause of psychological health problems and a strategy for treatment, or has this phenomenon no relevance whatsoever in the psychotherapeutic visions and goals of present schools of psychology?

According to Kleinman (1980), all available treatments that might be helpful should be tried. The purpose of this research study is to examine how the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system still serves the purposes of life as a diagnostic medium and context of treatment in modern settings.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

An introduction to methodology was provided in section 1.4 of chapter 1. This chapter aims to build on that introduction and to describe the procedures followed in selecting a research methodology and techniques for data collection and analysis. The chapter is organised around research methodology and design.

3.2 Research Methodology

According to Shipman (1997), theoretical models guide the selection of problems, procedures for collecting data, criteria for checking that the evidence is valid, and ways of analysing and presenting the results. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) support this statement when they say that different kinds of problems require different research methods. The aim of this research is to explore the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system. The concept of role of the dead-living in the African family system is a rare and unexplored area for psychological inquiry. Quantitative methodology would be unlikely to shed light on a problem of this nature since experiments would be unethical. The nature of the problem under investigation calls for qualitative methodological strategies or techniques, because some variables involved in African concept of the dead-living cannot be manipulated (Kvale, 1998). Such variables can, however, be observed contextually in certain real-life settings such as family ritual ceremonies and be brought to the level of reflective awareness and critical evaluation. Qualitative methodology is deemed appropriate for this research study because it is context-sensitive (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Research Questions

The following statements and questions form the backbone of this research design and constitute the conceptual framework for the conception and the manifestations of the role of the dead-living in modern African context.

Gyekye (1997) describes African traditional family as a model of communal life and thought, the immediate context for concrete and spontaneous expression of communal values such as love, caring, cohesion, solidarity, interdependence, mutual sympathy, responsibility and helpfulness. He also describes it as the crucible for character formation, an effective instrument for moral education and the development and inculcation of societal values.

The role of the dead-living in the African family system may have been rejected or ignored in psychological research on grounds that it is in the realm of the supernatural and not factual. However, spirituality is a core dimension of the human psyche and has to be acknowledged in psychology (Roland, 1996). The spiritual and psychopathology can have complex interactions.

Individual psychology is from the onset a sociocultural psychology. The family, especially the parents, are the primary transmitters of cultural and social values and norms (Roland, 1996). Conflicts about personal identity may be aggravated by the spiritual value system embedded in the sociocultural context. Although adherence to traditional spiritual practices may have died down or denied, inherent patterns remain and need to be reconciled with or integrated into personal identity.

Spiritual issues are central psychological issues among Africans because of their subtle but important psychosocial aspect. An in-depth study of the role the ancestors or the dead-living play within the African family system is important to understanding difficulties Africans experience in family interactions, psychosomatic illnesses, and self-identity conflicts, as well as patterns of

psychopathology. Due to multi-cultural experiences of modern times and the socio-political effects of colonialism, an African psyche can be said to be multiple split and fragmented, thus in need of holistic healing and integration. The role of the dead-living or ancestors impacts psychologically in the experience of being uprooted, in multi-cultural dilemmas and misunderstandings, as well as in the fragmented identity of modern African.

(Gyekye, 1997) states that African communal social fabric has been torn apart by transition to modernity with the result that kinship ties have been disrupted and social and moral values fragmented. According to Gyekye, any task of strengthening community values will be meaningless if it does not emphasise the need to strengthen family ties, because the fragmentation of community has its origin in the fragmentation of the family, and the character of individuals degenerates as a result of the fragmentation of family and subsequently family bonds. The questions that are being investigated in the light of these statements are:

- (a) How is the presence and role of the dead-living or ancestors manifested and how are those manifestations negotiated within the African cultural context?
- (b) Can ancestors or the dead-living complicate diagnosis and treatment of psychological health problems if their role is not taken into consideration, or can they facilitate diagnosis and treatment if they are considered? If so, how do ancestors act as diagnostic medium and how can they be involved as context for treatment?
- (c) What is the psychological understanding of the role of ancestors or the dead-living in the African family system?

The literature review supports the importance of the study's focus and will be used to validate the eventual findings of the study.

3.3.2 Research Methods

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), methods cannot be chosen in a vacuum, and in qualitative research data collection and analysis go hand in hand. The answers to the foregoing questions require that people be studied in the contexts and situations in which they find themselves because their behaviour cannot be manipulated and measured, but can be observed. The researcher in qualitative studies is described by Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) as a variable in the research design - not just in the statement of the problem, but also in the collection and analysis of the data. This researcher is therefore aware and recognises that the research results may well be shaped by her position in the power structure and by the context within which this study was carried out.

Two qualitative methods, namely, participant observation and case study were deemed suitable to investigate the problem under study and to answer the research questions posed. Qualitative method of participant observation was selected as the primary method for data collection because interactions are central to this study and the method has the potential to generate data based on observations of events as they occur in a natural setting (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2000). Similarly, case study method is selected because the researcher does not control data collection environment, but intrudes into the world of participants, and through participation and direct observation of their activities and interactions collects the case study database (Edwards, 1998; Yin, 1998).

3.3.2.1 Participant Observation

Although in any research study a researcher cannot be a completely neutral collector of information, in qualitative studies a researcher is an instrument for data collection and his/her presence in the lives of the participants is fundamental (Buhrmann, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1996). Participant observation as a research technique is particularly suitable in this research because data sources were potentially available and the personal characteristics of the researcher facilitated access to these sources. These characteristics and their ethical implications are discussed in section 3.3.4.

The method involves spending a considerable amount of time in nondisruptive and unobtrusive activities while these activities are actually happening; the encounter is face-to-face; large amount of contextual data can be obtained quickly; data on nonverbal behaviour and communication can be obtained; access for immediate follow-up data collection for clarification is facilitated; and the subjective side and participant perspectives of the organizational processes are easily uncovered (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The major weaknesses of this method are biases, namely, its openness to misinterpretation; ethical dilemma; it is difficult to replicate because procedures are dependent on researcher's opportunity for gaining access or his/her personal characteristics; it can cause danger or discomfort for the researcher when interactional tensions run high (ibid.; Shipman, 1997). These strengths and weaknesses have ethical implication for research.

3.3.2.2 Case Studies

Yin (1998) defines case studies as studies of events within their real-life contexts as opposed to experiments which are artificial constructions of life. The case study method is one of the several strategies for doing research (Edwards, 1998). In this research case studies are conducted by way of participant observation, and are used as a framework for analysis and interpretation. They represent three different sites for the study of the same phenomenon, namely, the role of the dead-living in the African family system, so as to assemble complementary, contrasting, and overlapping results of the same phenomenon if possible. In this way they follow a replication logic as analogous to multiple experiments (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). They address the question of what kind of cases are being studied and not how many cases are being studied. They are also used as criteria to judge the validity of the study and to demonstrate the applicability of one set of findings from one site to another, which critically challenge the very patterns that seem apparent in the analysis and interpretation of the evidence (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

3.3.3 Procedures

3.3.3.1 Negotiating for Entry and Access

The research into the role of the dead-living in the African family system is sensitive. The contexts and settings are also sensitive and rare. The personal characteristics of the researcher created an unusual and distinct opportunity to access this emotionally embedded phenomenon, but also raised serious ethical issues for validity, reliability and generalisability of the data. This threat to validity is however anticipated and taken care of methodologically. For this reason these personal characteristics are discussed on their own in section 3.3.4.

3.3.3.2 Researcher as Participant Observer

The researcher obtained easy access to relevant data sources where the hidden aspects of the role of the dead-living or ancestors in the African family system were best illuminated in ritual settings. She could establish immediate rapport with participants, especially “gatekeepers”, that is, those that invited her to facilitate the ritual processes that were to take place. She was aware of the ethical issues involved in the role of facilitator, but the potential social benefits for the participants and the enhancement of accountability to people of African descent in mental health services as well as the personal sense of what is right prompted her to immerse herself in these private settings for several hours on an intermittent basis. Full participation enabled her to hear, see, and experience the reality of participants in a nondisruptive and unobtrusive manner. The ethical issues involving personal characteristics are discussed below in section 3.3.4. As participant observer she also engaged in informal conversations and interviews with participants to cross-check certain experiences and insights deduced from symbols and rituals. She also engaged in follow-up checks with gatekeepers and cross-checks with a traditional healer of good reputation.

3.3.3.3 Selection of Cases

Cases for analysis were selected because of their potential to yield good data, to promote validity, increase reliability and generalisability of the study to various contexts and settings. Three cases were selected in terms of the following criteria:

- A) The researcher had more information on these cases from direct observation, cross-checking with a traditional healer of good reputation, and follow-up conversations. Their uniqueness and revelatory nature made them worth documenting and analysing.
- B) Each case is composed of more than one individual.
- C) The cases represent urban, township, and rural areas of the country.
- D) They represent ten national languages.
- E) Although women outnumbered men in all three cases, the marriage status of participants ranges from single, divorced, married and widowed.
- F) Ages of participants ranged from 5 to 75 across the three cases.
- G) The participants are in a variety of occupations such as nursing, teaching, clerical, shop steward, and retired.
- H) Level of education is pre-school to post-graduate.
- I) From the point of view of the researcher the three cases present an enlightening information of specific manifestations of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the lives of their kin.
- J) The cases represented a nuclear family, an extended family and a heterogenous group respectively.
- K) They help answer the question of what happens under variation of conditions relating to the assessment of the role of the dead-living in the African family system.

3.3.3.4 Brief Description of Each Case

The following is a description of each case. Salient points and themes of these cases will be described under analysis to avoid repetition.

3.3.3.4.1 Case 1

The first case study involves a nuclear family consisting of five members, namely, parents and their three adult children. Other participants are two traditional healers and the researcher. One traditional healer is the chief isangoma and is of good reputation in divination. The researcher introduced follow-up check in the form of evaluation of the events through casual conversations and interviews with the family members immediately after the events took place and intermittently during the course of three years. The other form of follow-up check was presenting an item of clothing of one member of the family to the traditional healer of good reputation for assessment. The main events of this case took place in 1997. The first cross-check with a traditional healer was done in 1999 and the second in 2000.

3.3.3.4.2 Case 2

This case is typical of African concept of family because the family is extended. Participants were a mother, her eight adult children, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. The researcher was personally known to some members of the family, but not in the capacity in which she was introduced by the eldest daughter to facilitate a family reconciliation ritual. The father died when most of the children were still young. One married daughter also died. Of the three sons who died, one was only 9 years old. Of the other two, one died in police custody and the other was stabbed to death. The ritual took place at a family home in the township. The whole process including symbols were agreed upon by the researcher and the gatekeeper, namely, the eldest daughter, prior to the event. No prior consultation with traditional healers was done, but after the ritual, an item of clothing belonging to the gatekeeper or index person was presented to a traditional healer of good reputation for cross-checking.

3.3.3.4.3 Case 3

The setting for this case is spiritual renewal of a group of African traditional healers. The process

started Friday evening and ended Sunday afternoon. The group was composed of diverse men and women with multiple experiences and background. Most of the participants were formally trained traditional healers who had formed themselves into an association. Some participants were new in the field of healing and others were still discerning their call to healing. The number of participants changed from time to time, and from day to day because some arrived late, others came in and out, some were absent during the day and new ones joined on Saturday evening. The newcomers were mainly spectators as the gathering of traditional healers was an annual event with dancing and feasting. This was the first time that the traditional healers met from Friday and spent the whole Saturday in prayer. The researcher was invited by one of the two co-ordinators in consultation with the committee to facilitate this renewal process as a follow-up on the one she facilitated six months previously. From the information received from this co-ordinator, and from personal observation at the similar gathering the previous year, this renewal process always involved ritual killing. The researcher met with the committee to plan the timetable for the process on the Friday afternoon. The follow-up of the outcome of the process is mainly from the two co-ordinators and some participants whom the researcher met a month later.

3.3.4 Question of Researcher Bias

Actions and beliefs are not very meaningful unless observed in immediate context (Feagin, Orum, & Sjöberg, 1991). The implicit aspects of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system could only be accessed by active participation of the researcher in real-life contexts and settings where they were believed to manifest themselves. The undertaking of the role of facilitator in these settings provided unusual opportunities for collecting case study database, but also presented major problems of validity and reliability. The major problem relates to personal bias, namely, the personal characteristics which are most difficult to control.

Despite claims of scepticism towards African traditional healing, and the role of ancestors or the dead-living in particular until 1996, the researcher's personal bias cannot be ignored. The following personal characteristics pose a threat to validity and reliability in this research study:

- 1) The researcher is an African.
- 2) She comes from a family of traditional healers.
- 3) She has been identified by some African traditional healers and Western psychics as possessing a gift of African traditional healing.
- 4) She has personal experience of African traditional healing.
- 5) She has been employing African traditional healing methods in diagnosis and treatment of those who sought her services over the past four years.
- 6) She was easily accepted by participants in their private settings as an insider rather than an outsider during private family ritual activities because she is a healer.
- 7) She was facilitator of family and group rituals which placed her in a position of power where she could easily manipulate procedures.

These characteristics and those intrinsic to the research method of participant observation are bound to compromise validity and reliability of the data, hence mechanisms such as cross-checking and multiple cases, were put in place to counteract the biases.

On the other hand, these same characteristics enabled the researcher to gain easy access to family events that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigations, namely, intimate family rituals of confession, sacrifice, forgiveness, and atonement. Another opportunity that the researcher's status provided was that it made it possible for her to interact naturally with participants, to establish easy rapport with them, and to develop insights and understanding from patterns in the symbols and rituals that were employed. The circumstances of gaining access to private family settings situated her "in high action spot" to gain evidence for this research study, but also obligated her to engage in a system of reciprocity that made the study possible (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

3.3.5 Validity and Reliability

The notion of validity is central to research design (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The reliance on direct observation and informal conversations in the researcher's role as participant observer,

makes it difficult to control validity and promote reliability of the data. To establish validity and promote reliability of the method for data collection, cases in which the researcher collaborated with other African traditional healers were chosen. In the first case study the researcher was co-participant observer with a tradition healer who was the main facilitator. She also consulted with a traditional healer of good reputation for cross-checking by submitting items of clothing of some members of the first two cases for diagnosis. Follow-up studies of cases were also done through casual conversations after each event. The third case study was included as a strategy to further strengthen the validity and the reliability of the evidence collected.

3.3.6 Generalizability and Transferability

The third case study was chosen as part of the unit of analysis to check the generalizability to other settings involving a cross-sectional group with variety in background, for example, marriage status, ethnicity, gender, education standard, occupation, and to assess whether this case study encapsulates the same experiences or processes through which the role of the dead-living is observed to manifest itself.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), understanding context is critical because context drives the way we understand the meaning of events, meaning is always within context and context incorporates meaning. This chapter on the analysis of data consists of the introduction followed by a description of events in section 4.2. Section 4.3 will be the summary of identified themes. In section 4.4 each of the three case studies described in section 4.2 will be interpreted within the African cultural context using the identified themes mentioned in section 4.3. The same themes will be used to interpret the three case studies within Western-oriented psychological context in section 4.5. Section 4.6 will be on cross-case comparison within the African cultural context and within Western-oriented psychological context.

4.2 Description of Events

Observations of the events described below are filtered through the “researcher’s selective lens” because findings do not exist independently of the consciousness of the observer (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.160).

4.2.1 Case 1

The index or contact person is a woman in her thirties. The researcher came into contact with her through casual conversation about African traditional healing. At the time of contact, she was complaining of being ill, but could not understand why she was constantly sick and yet not be cured. When she heard about the researcher’s contact with traditional healers, she was interested to consult

them and hear what they had to say about her constant aches and pains. It was through her that the researcher gained access to the family and became participant observer at all their rituals.

Visit to Traditional Healers

The researcher accompanied the index person to a traditional healer. Through use of divining bones the traditional healer who later officiated the family rituals, told her that she had a gift of healing from her ancestors. The traditional healer also told her that her constant pains and aches and the problems of living that she was experiencing were caused by the ancestors. For example, that the index person is unable to keep money, she experiences unusual mishaps and accidents, and that her family members too are all struggling with problems of money and lack of success in their undertakings. All these misfortunes that the index person and her family were experiencing the traditional healer attributed to the dead-living members who according to her diagnosis were feeling neglected and needed to be cleansed and brought back home. The index person was told that unless family rituals were performed, nothing would come right. Family rituals involved cleansing and bringing back (ukubuyisa) of paternal ancestors. To have family rituals the index person needed the agreement and co-operation of the other family members. Her parents and sister accompanied her on the second visit in order for them to get first hand information about what the index person was told concerning the family. On this occasion the four family members were assessed by the chief isangoma through “abalazi” (whistling spirit divination). The researcher took the role of translator during these visits because the traditional healer spoke only in Zulu and nobody in this family knew the language.

The content of the diagnosis on both occasions included the issue of the gift of healing for both mother and daughter, how some members of the ancestors died through accidents on both sides of the family, the physical pains and aches that each family member was experiencing, and that the family members were experiencing problems of living because the ancestors have turned away from them. Both traditional healers prescribed a family ritual to cleanse and bring home (ukubuyisa) the dead members of the family for reconciliation with their living members. The family decided during their visit as a family to the traditional healers to start the process of re-establishing relationships with their

ancestors.

Ukubuyisa Ritual Process for the Paternal Ancestors

The whole ritual process of “ukubuyisa” was undertaken by the family. The ancestors were first cleansed or purified by the living kin and this was followed by the ritual cleansing of the home which was marked by a ritual celebration during which a goat was slaughtered. This ritual celebration was facilitated by the first traditional healer who saw the index person alone. After the cleansing ritual, the family had to celebrate a thanksgiving ritual ceremony. Again ritual killing took place. This ceremony was facilitated by the researcher with instructions from the chief isangoma (the traditional healer of good reputation) because this family did not feel confident to do it on their own as usually happens. The ukubuyisa ritual was for re-instating the paternal ancestors in the home. This ritual was facilitated by the same traditional healer who facilitated the first ritual. The family requested to have only one goat for slaughtering, but to use chickens as substitutes for the three more goats that were required. The traditional healers, namely, the officiating one and the chief isangoma agreed, but told the family to get an extra chicken to request the ancestors with it to accept the substitutes.

First Ritual: The Cleansing of the Home

The mother is a third generation to live in a home that once belonged to her grandfather. The house is situated in a suburb. The family members participated in the cleansing of ancestors by going through the process of cleansing themselves through ritual medication for three weeks. The mother was reported as having the greatest difficulty to carry out the procedures involved.

The isangoma who was coming to facilitate the ritual to cleanse the home, arrived without the “umuti” for the ritual. She had to go back to fetch it before she could proceed with the ritual. The rest of the ritual procedure went on without any further problems.

Second Ritual: The Thanksgiving Ceremony

For this ritual which took place two weeks after the first one, the researcher was given instructions of what to do by the chief isangoma. She used three candles to represent the presence of the ancestors or the dead-living, one to represent the father's ancestors, the other to represent the mother's ancestors and a third to represent all those who formed part of the family support system, but were not related to the family. For the rest the researcher followed the instructions as was dictated to her by the chief isangoma. Nothing remarkable happened at this ritual procedure.

Final Ritual: The Ukubuyisa

This stage was facilitated by the same isangoma that facilitated the first one. All the five family members were present. At the start of the ritual, the father was instructed to go and fetch the ancestors starting with his great-grandfather and his wife, then his grandfather and his wife, and finally his father and his wife. In turn these were asked to bring anybody that was supposed to accompany them. He was driven by his son while the rest waited at home. To go and fetch ancestors they were given "ihlahla" (a special branch for ukubuyisa). When they came back, they were met at the gate with the ritual goat. The father was the one who did the talking to the ancestors telling them what to do just like one would do to a visitor who arrives at one's home. After he welcomed them, he dragged the "ihlahla" carrying the ancestors behind the goat to the house, with the rest of the participants following from behind. It was as he was entering the house that a branch fell in the middle of the doorway. The researcher pointed the branch to the traditional healer. The latter decided that others wait until the father came out of the house. When the father was asked by the traditional healer what the branch was, he told her that it was a rose branch from the roses that he had put on his mother's grave the day before. Hearing this, the traditional healer instructed him to throw it away and he did. The procession proceeded inside.

The "ukuhlambuluka" (confession) stage was introduced by the traditional healer once everybody was seated. This involved speaking out any hurts, anger, tension or whatever was bothering each of the

family members. Each member could respond to anything anybody said. When the family members had expressed what they wanted to express, the traditional healer asked who the house belonged to. The mother responded that the house belonged to her side of family. The father agreed but mentioned that he also contributed to its payment. This created some tension when the two daughters supported their mother's claim and the son supported the father's claim. Nothing was said further and the chicken designated for reconciliation between the living and the dead-living and among the living themselves was introduced to the ancestors (ukubika) and the procedure of slaughtering the ritual animals began with the slaughtering of the goat. It was while the father and son and a helper were busy outside that the researcher and the two daughters held the ritual chickens inside. The one the researcher held started becoming restless and making noise and the others joined in the restlessness. It was then that the researcher suggested they let them free since the chickens were inside and could not go out. When the men had finished with the goat, the mother took each chicken one by one for slaughter. Nobody was aware that there was one hiding until everybody was preparing to come back into the room to await the next instructions by the traditional healer. When the noise from the chicken under the sofa was heard, the chicken was brought out and as it appeared, one of the daughters exclaimed that it was the one that was held by the researcher. The researcher asked the traditional healer what this incident could mean. She told the researcher that it was already introduced so there was no need to do anything with it except to have it slaughtered too. It was taken out to be slaughtered and the researcher did not know what happened outside until the next morning. Once the traditional healer was gone, the researcher evaluated the ritual process with the family. She shared her observations with the family. Neither the researcher or the family members took the incidents of the rose branch and the chicken hiding under the sofa seriously at this time. Only two years later with the new information did the significance of the incidents become apparent.

The index person's item of clothing

Two years later the researcher met with the index person and her mother. The researcher learned from the mother that things were not going as expected since relationships were still problematic. The index person who had been the initiator of the family process expressed disappointment, but also

shared some personal positive experiences. The researcher felt obligated to check out what could be the reason for problems reported. As she was accompanying another family to consult with the same traditional healers, she took the index person's item of clothing to find out what was wrong.

Before the traditional healer of good reputation could throw the divining bones, she remarked that the owner of the item had a gift of healing, "she is an isangoma", she said. This remark confirmed what was said by the first traditional healer, the same healer who officiated at the family rituals two years previously, and the chief isangoma herself during the family visit. She did not know that she had seen the owner before and that she sent another traditional healer from there to perform the family rituals because at this consultation, the researcher did not tell her to whom the item belonged. Through the interpretation of the divining bones, the traditional healer prescribed what the woman needed to personally do to ensure that her gift of healing was activated. Concerning family relationships, she identified that there was a problem between parents and their ancestors, stating that one set of ancestors seem not to have been consulted about a ritual that took place. According to what she was reading from the bones, the ancestors were complaining about lack of consultation. She asked the researcher to explain the history of this person. It was only at this request that the researcher reminded her that a family ritual officiated by a traditional healer sent from that place happened. The researcher suggested that the traditional healer concerned be called in to explain herself what happened during the "ukubuyisa" ritual. To the researcher's disappointment, the traditional healer could not remember of her own accord what took place two years previously. She reported that she had officiated at various other rituals of different families since. It was left to the researcher to recall the incidents of the rose branch and the chicken hiding under the sofa. According to the explanation of the divining healer, the traditional healer of good reputation, the incidents were the manifestations of the maternal ancestors drawing attention to the fact that there was no consultation with them during the ritual that involved bringing the paternal ancestors to the home. She attributed the continuation of misfortunes and poor relationships even after the appropriate rituals were performed, to this fact.

When the researcher reported back to the family what the chief isangoma said, the events surrounding

the whole “ukubuyisa” ritual process of the paternal ancestors were recalled. Other issues that the researcher had forgotten about were brought to the fore. The following is the summary of the unusual events as recalled by four family members and the researcher:

How the mother experienced difficulties to join in the cleansing ritual; how for the ritual cleansing of the home as the first ritual celebration, the officiating traditional healer forgot one of the important elements of the ritual, namely, the “umuti”; how on the occasion of the ukubuyisa ritual, the rose branch remained behind in the middle of the doorway and the isangoma gave the instruction that the branch be thrown away; how during the confession session the isangoma questioned the family about the ownership of the house and the tension that seemed to result from the responses given; how the chicken earmarked for reconciliation hid under the sofa; how the next day during the follow-up conversation, it was reported that the mother felt disinterested to help clean the chicken, and that the job was done by the daughter and her father; and the report that one of the dogs ate up that specific chicken.

Ukubuyisa Ritual of the Maternal Ancestors

During the first cross-check with the traditional healer of good reputation, the researcher asked what happens when an unusual situation of having to bring back paternal ancestors to a maternal home occurs. The chief isangoma explained that a house is often build for the paternal ancestors rather than have them housed in that which belongs to the maternal ancestors. Since the family was disappointed that things did not work out as expected the first time, the researcher discussed with them about rectifying the situation through a ritual to reconcile the maternal and paternal ancestors. The researcher and the family planned “ukubuyisa” ritual for the maternal ancestors so that they could be reconciled with the paternal ancestors who were already brought home.

Since the family could not afford building a different house for the ancestors and to invite the traditional healer to rectify the mistake made, the researcher offered to facilitate the reconciliation ritual to re-install the maternal ancestors into their house. Instead of putting both the maternal and

the paternal ancestors in the same room, the researcher suggested a different room. She was told that the room she suggested was actually part of the house that belonged to the maternal ancestors and that the room where the paternal ancestors are housed is the part that the father added on later. Two chickens, one male and the other female, were used for reconciliation between the paternal and maternal ancestors. Candles were used to represent the presence of both ancestors during the reconciliation ritual. The reconciliation ritual took place within the context of the Mass. During the confession part, the researcher also admitted responsibility in the conflict situation by failing to insist at the time of the “ukubuyisa” ritual that the symbolism be unravelled. A week later the researcher took an item of clothing to the traditional healer for further cross-checking. No tension was revealed. This is how the family ritual of “ukubuyisa” was finally brought to a close.

4.2.2 Case 2

The index person in this case study was a retired woman in her sixties. Her sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews wanted to give a party to celebrate her sixtieth birthday. She expressed a wish to bring back home (ukubuyisa) her late father. She told the researcher during one of their sharing on African traditional healing that her father was not there and attributed the lack of harmony in her home to the fact that her dead father was not present. She decided to discuss the matter with her family that the occasion of her birthday be combined with a ritual of “ukubuyisa”.

The index person knew that the researcher was doing research into African traditional healing, and that she had been involved with individuals and families who reported problems that they associated with their ancestors. The index person requested the researcher to facilitate family ritual of “ukubuyisa”. The researcher made her aware that the father cannot come home alone, that her three brothers, her sister, great-grandparents and grandparents from the father’s and mother’s side of the family would all have to be involved. Once the matter was discussed and the date set for the occasion, the index person kept the researcher informed about the preparations. The index person had to ensure that there was a goat for the ritual killing and different colours of candles that were

going to be used to represent each dead member of the family.

Ukubuyisa Ritual

The ritual took place on a Saturday in the family home in one of the townships. It started officially in the afternoon. It was followed by the reconciliation ritual and the process finished after midnight. Each of the dead-living members were represented with a candle, blue if they were male, and yellow if they were female. The index person added a paternal aunt who played an important role in their life. Each of the candles was labelled to make it easier to know who it represented. The participants were the index person, her mother, three brothers, four sisters, one sister-in-law, one brother-in-law, nieces and nephews of various ages. The researcher came with a companion and there was a priest present. Other people who were helping to prepare for the birthday party celebration of the next day did not join the family ritual. With the help of one of her sisters, the index person (eldest daughter), prepared the candle holders according to the number of the dead-living who were being invited home. These were placed on a low table in the sitting room where the family was going to meet for the reconciliation ritual.

The start of the ritual was marked by the family members present approaching the ritual goat with “impepho” (ancestral incense) and sea water. With the burning of impepho that is used to invoke ancestors, the index person was instructed by the researcher who acted as a facilitator in this ritual procedure, to invoke the ancestors or the dead-living and to inform them that the ritual procedure of “ukubuyisa” was starting and that they (ancestors) should get ready because she (the index person) was coming to fetch them from the graveyard to bring them home. She then gave the goat the sea water to drink as there was no “umuti” from traditional healers. From that moment until the candles were put off at home, she was to speak only when she addressed the ancestors.

Having learned what happened when some dead-living members were left behind in other rituals, the facilitator instructed the index person to coax those reluctant to come, to come and talk things out at home. The index person took the marked candles and had two other members of the family

accompany her to the graveyard to help her hold the candles. They were driven there. While they were gone, the researcher's companion pointed to the ritual goat which they found tied in the front garden eating the lawn when they arrived. Until just before it was approached for the start of the ritual, it was still grazing. According to the companion, it was as if the goat was becoming impatient because it was no longer grazing, but had pulled closer to the door and was looking inside. Her remark was that if it was not still tied up, it would come inside.

When those who had gone to the graveyard arrived, the family members went to meet them at the gate. The index person and her companions got out of the car with lit candles. The mother welcomed the ancestors inside the yard, went inside the house and at the knock on the door, opened and welcomed the dead-living inside the house. The burning candles were placed in candle holders. The researcher noticed a dice in one of the candle holders and asked who put it there. Nobody had the idea who left the dice there. The index person started scolding, saying that one of the little nephews had been naughty and was about to remove it, but the researcher told her that there must be a reason that it was left there. The researcher asked whether the person represented by the candle in that candle holder where the dice was found, was a gambler. She (the researcher) did not know who it was and how old he was when he died. The two sisters checked the label on the candle and responded that the person died at the age of nine and was still too young to be a gambler. The researcher said that maybe it was significant and that the nine year old brother was trying to communicate something about gambling in the family. The two sisters and their niece remarked that there were indeed gamblers in the family.

Reconciliation Ritual

The index person had invited a priest to say Mass for the reconciliation ritual. As soon as the priest arrived, the facilitator gave him a summary of what was going to take place and what his role would be during the ceremony. He was keen that the ceremony start soon. All the participants except the oldest brother were present from the start of the "ukubuyisa" ritual. The reconciliation ritual started with the goat being brought inside the house to the room for the meeting followed by all participants.

The goat was to be a symbol of reconciliation and restoration of unity between the living and the dead. When the ceremony was about to start and the oldest brother was still nowhere to be seen, the index person expressed agitation. The facilitator reassured her and told her not to worry because this was not her process, but the ancestors', and that anybody who was meant to be present would be. The two were talking on their way from the kitchen to where other members were gathering. When they entered the room and saw him (the oldest brother) taking off his shoes with everybody else, they exchanged glances. He appeared to have been drinking.

When everybody was seated, the index person introduced the facilitator officially. The facilitator then gave the overview of what was about to happen, but reassured them that she would still introduce each phase, therefore they were not to worry about what was coming next. One family member started a hymn which was the paternal grandmother's favourite, the priest then opened with a prayer. The facilitator told the participants that they were free to start sharing about hurts or pain inflicted by either a living or dead member of the family, to forgive or ask forgiveness of any member, whether living or dead. The index person volunteered to start off after a brief silence. She poured her heart out about all the things that had been happening in the home and among the members since her father died, how painful it was for her because of feeling helpless to do anything to alleviate or change the situation. She spoke in anger about her two brothers who died in their twenties; especially about the circumstances around their death. When she broke into tears, a member started the granny's hymn. The hymn was started whenever the atmosphere seemed to become tense. After observing that when the sharing was becoming too intense, there was singing, the facilitator remarked about the singing. Apart from this remark, the facilitator sat quietly, listening to the family share and discuss conflicts and hurts.

The oldest brother then took over after the facilitator's remark and told everybody not to worry about anything, but just to pray because that is what they were gathered for. He sat down. Those who followed after him ignored his remark and continued the index person's pattern of speaking from the heart. He (oldest brother) interrupted anybody who tried to speak out - his sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews alike - saying that they were not allowed to speak out some of the family matters in

public. The brothers and one of the older nephews physically tried several times to remove him from the room because he kept interrupting the proceedings, but no sooner was he removed did he return to interrupt again. He was instructing one of his nieces to stop talking, but she stubbornly refused saying it was a family TRC and she would not be intimidated. When he threatened her, the facilitator tried to intervene by requesting him to let the niece share the way she wanted. He became angry and told the facilitator that he would not allow “a woman” to tell him what to do. He threatened the facilitator. The facilitator remained silent while he threatened. It was at this point that one of the nephews who had hitherto been too shy to even speak except through one of his uncles, grabbed him and pushed him out of the room in silence, and led him outside through the kitchen where non-family members were. He never returned. His mother went later to call him to join others outside the gate during the cleansing or washing of hands. The next day he claimed that he did not recognise the researcher the night before, even though the researcher was not disguised.

After the family members shared their pain and hurts, responded to one another’s sharing, and sometimes argued among themselves, the researcher referred to the reactions of the candles and the goat to elicit from the family members if the reactions meant anything to anybody. She would mention what she was observing and would ask those nearest to the table to check the name of the dead member the candle represented. For example, she would mention a lump in the flame and ask if the person concerned had a reason to be angry. The candles flickered vigorously and the goat got on its feet “fighting” with the one holding it during arguments and threats, especially when the daughter-in-law shared a very sensitive issue about marital relationship problems between the oldest brother (her husband) and herself. The complaint was that her husband was having an affair. The mother was implicated as contributing to the problems by her not reprimanding the oldest son when he came to visit her. One of the other sons expressed being treated differently by the mother on similar issues. When there was quietness and those who shared could do so without interference, the goat would lie quietly and the candles burn calmly. Eventually the goat was so calm that it could be held by a young boy. That seemed to give the indication that the confessions were over.

Before the next phase was introduced, the researcher asked the index person to share with the family

members about what happened when she went to the graveyard to invite the dead members. She told them how she almost finished the matches trying to invite one of the brothers to come home. She expressed how she could at this stage understand his reluctance to come because many were referring to him for their hurts. She admitted that she never realized how much they suffered because of him. The facilitator mentioned the dice and some of the adults chuckled.

The next phase involved the slaughtering of the goat outside the gate for cleansing as is customary after confessions to symbolise removing the debt (icala). The area in front of the gate being cement made it difficult to let the blood flow to the ground from the slaughtered goat. Instead a dish was used to catch most of the blood with a little allowed to flow on the cement floor. The facilitator instructed the index person to get up early the next morning to go and throw the blood in the dish in the bush, asking the ancestors to take away anything negative or evil that might still be there. The family members washed each other's hands. The mother was the first because she could not stand on her feet for long. She went back to the house as soon as she finished. The facilitator went back to the meeting room leaving the family members to cleanse themselves. She (facilitator) heard the mother scold the oldest son in the kitchen and tell him that everybody was outside cleansing themselves and asking for blessings from the ancestors while he sat and drank. She came holding him by the hand and when she saw the facilitator repeated what she was saying to him. The facilitator's comment was: "He is your son, you do what you think is right". She dragged him to join other family members outside the gate.

The dish with the blood was brought in and placed at the foot of the table and was left there as the next phase of the ritual took place, the thanksgiving prayers. Once the ceremony was over, tea was served. People started dispersing to sleep or to join non-participants in the kitchen or outside the kitchen. Some members of the family, the researcher and her companion stayed behind and were having a casual conversation and evaluating what happened during the ritual ceremony. The family members shared their impressions and expressed surprise about the nephew who grabbed his uncle and took him out of the room. They mentioned that he stutters, but that he also surprised them by the way he stood up to talk during the sensitive issue that almost had everybody talking at the same

time. They also mentioned that he is named after their father. We were still talking when one of the sisters carrying a baby on her back, knocked over the candle representing the nine year old brother as she was passing. It fell into the dish containing the blood and as it did, the others exclaimed: "that is how he died". The researcher asked what they meant and was told that this nine year old brother drowned. One of the brothers came forward to rescue the candle. The dice had fallen into the dish with it. He asked if he should rescue the dice too, but the researcher remarked that maybe it was being symbolically thrown out to demonstrate to gamblers to quit gambling and that therefore, if rescued, even the growing nephews might get hooked to gambling. Those present agreed that the dice be thrown out with the contents in the dish.

The next morning the niece who was on night duty and therefore unable to be present, was being told by one of her sisters what happened. The researcher came in and was interested in their conversation. This niece was interested to hear how her youngest sister behaved and what she said. Her sister related how surprised she was that the youngest sister admitted her faults and asked for forgiveness. She also related how she (youngest sister) refused to let their uncle intimidate her. They shared with the researcher about how they tried in their own home to have a ritual because a traditional healer had recommended it, but how it failed because as they said, their paternal aunts spoiled the occasion. The one who was present expressed having learned something about candles. She reported how one traditional healer using candles told her about angry ancestors without explaining what she was seeing in the candles.

Item of Clothing

A month later the eldest daughter (index person) expressed interest to consult traditional healers to hear what they would say about her and her home. The researcher was accompanying another family to these traditional healers. The researcher told the index person that she could send an item of her clothing for divination, since through divination the traditional healer of good reputation would be able to tell her what she wanted to know. The index person and another woman put their items in one bag. When she brought the bag to the researcher, the researcher asked her what item she put

in, saying that she (researcher) did not want to say “ngiyavuma” (I agree) to traditional healers about something that she (researcher) did not know. The index person reported that hers was the scarf.

The researcher had several other items of clothes from other people to present for divination to the traditional healer of good reputation. The traditional healer asked that she be provided with pen and paper to take notes so that she (the researcher) be able to report back to the owners of the items of clothing without confusion. When the researcher presented the scarf that she knew belonged to the index person, she could not recognise anything about the index person in what the traditional healer was interpreting from the divining bones. She (researcher) thought that she must have misunderstood to whom the scarf belonged. The researcher could, however, recognise the other woman in the description whose item was in the same bag because she knew the other woman’s history too. The researcher kept writing what was said by the traditional healer. She became even more confused when the traditional healer said that the person needed to have a ritual at home. She wondered why there was no mention of the ritual which had already taken place. What the traditional healer was saying continued to be irrelevant to the index person’s history. The researcher then mentioned that the family had a ritual, but was told that it was not showing in the divining bones. She decided to just continue to write down what was being said, thinking she might have made a mistake.

When the other item belonging to the other woman came under divination, the traditional hearer remarked that she was seeing candles burning and that there was an indication of a ritual that went very well and is appreciated by the dead-living members. The researcher apologised for what she thought was a mixed up of items and wrote down what was being said. She could recognise the index person in everything that was said about this particular item of clothing. The traditional healer explained that when one puts items together belonging to different people, their personalities get mixed up. However, she had two other items of clothing belonging to two different persons in one bag, but the same thing did not happen with this pair. She recognised the two different persons’ histories in their individual item.

When she got back home, the researcher asked the index person once again what her item was. The

index person told her (researcher) that it was the scarf. The researcher told the index person about her confusion and read what she had written under the scarf. The index person told her that it was the other woman she was talking about and not herself. The researcher then read about the other woman's item. The index person told the researcher that what she (researcher) was reading, was her history. The researcher then met with the other woman and read what she (researcher) had written under her item. The woman told her that she was already told about the mix-up. She too did not recognise herself in her item of clothing, but in the index person's item.

4.2.3 Case 3

Background History

For ten years a group of African traditional healers had been meeting annually at a particular village for spiritual renewal. The site was developed to accommodate their ritual performance and dancing too. Every year they had a different person to facilitate the first part of their process which entailed giving a talk for reflection. The second part involved ritual slaughtering and dancing until early hours of the morning. They had two co-ordinators who had been journeying with them for all these years. The researcher was requested by one of the co-ordinators to facilitate the event of this case study. She met briefly with this co-ordinator a month before the event. The co-ordinator briefly told her what had been discussed at the traditional healers' meeting and that each one had been reminded to bring yellow, blue, red, and white candles as the researcher had instructed. He also told her that this annual spiritual renewal involved ritual slaughtering of a goat and a sheep. The invitation was issued in consultation with the committee of the group.

Friday

The researcher arrived Friday afternoon at the annual meeting place of the traditional healers to facilitate the renewal process. It was not the first time that she had come to the place. She came as a passive observer to the traditional healers' annual spiritual renewal the previous year. It was also

not the first time that she met the office-bearers of this group for planning. She had met with them for the first time five months before this event at another venue during a week-end of renewal which she was invited to facilitate. It was as a result of that week-end that the traditional healers and their co-ordinators decided to start this particular renewal week-end on Friday evening, and finish Sunday midday, instead of the usual coming together on Saturday evening and ending Sunday at midday.

During the planning with the office-bearers of the group, the facilitator outlined what she thought could be the timetable for the week-end, including where to start, whether in the church or outside in the ancestral “lapa”, and what should be slaughtered and where the slaughtering should take place. Usually the traditional healers started in the church and later went to ancestral “lapa” for the ritual slaughtering followed by ritual dancing by various “izangoma”. This happened when they had only one night. This time they had two nights for the first time. The facilitator suggested that the sheep be slaughtered the Friday evening, but not for ritual purpose, and that the goat be slaughtered for the reconciliation ritual the next evening outside the gate, thinking it was customary everywhere to slaughter the goat for the reconciliation ritual outside the gate. The committee raised objections regarding the ritual slaughtering. The committee wanted the slaughtering to be handled the way they normally did when they came together for renewal. For example, they objected to the sheep being slaughtered unceremoniously as the facilitator was suggesting. They also objected to the goat being slaughtered outside the gate, rather than at the ancestral tree in the “lama”. The facilitator learned afterwards that it was due to ethnic practices that the objections were raised. The Sotho group - Batswana, Basotho, and the Bapedi - associated themselves with the sheep for ritual slaughtering, whereas the Nguni and the Tsonga groups associated themselves with the goat. They had no objection to starting at the ancestral “lapa” and commencing to the church, and to the participants not eating the meat of the ritual goat. The facilitator respected their wishes. The sheep was slaughtered on Friday evening after it was introduced ceremoniously to the ancestors (ukubika). The slaughtering itself was not for ritual purposes such as for atonement or for restoration of unity between the living and the dead, but for the meat only.

Each participant brought four candles, one yellow, one blue, one white and one red. The benches in

the church were removed so that the participant could sit on their mats against the wall. There were various symbols placed in the centre of the church to create the atmosphere of prayer. Participants kept arriving at various times from the afternoon. Supper was served at 7p.m.

At 8 p.m. all the participants assembled at the ancestral tree with their candles. The sheep was introduced to the ancestors. After the sheep was introduced according to their way of doing it, the first stage of the renewal process started with each participant invoking her/his ancestors at the ancestral "lapa". As they invoked their ancestors, they lit the appropriate candle. A yellow candle represented the mother's side, a blue candle represented the father's side, and a white candle represented the marital side if the person was married. If single, the white candle represented friends or people who played an important part in the single person's life. The red candle represented the participant him- /herself. After some prayers, the participants then went with their burning candles to the church where each one was to spend an hour of meditation. There was a lot of disturbance during the meditation. Some participants arrived late, others were coming in and out. The facilitator joined the meditation. She tried to ignore the disturbance, but eventually asked the participants to try to be quiet. At the end of the hour period of meditation participants shared about their experience. When those who wanted to share finished, those who came late were informed about the timetable for the rest of the evening including the next day. An argument arose because two late-comer participants wanted to have a ritual dance the rest of the evening, and the others tried to explain that the dance was reserved for the Saturday evening after the ritual ceremony. One of these late-comers complained saying ancestors had to be invited by dancing. The facilitator sat quietly as other participants tried in vain to explain what the procedure was. One of the co-ordinators also tried, but the woman seemed unreasonable. The facilitator then expressed feeling sad that some traditional healers had a problem with silence when they carried such a great responsibility as healing. She then requested participants to try to spend the rest of the evening as quietly as possible. She introduced the quiet time by ten minutes of silent prayer before the session could be brought to an end.

Saturday

The next morning started with an hour of meditation before breakfast. The facilitator explained again what each candle represented for the sake of new-comers. During the course of the day two other periods of meditation were held. After the last period, two of the committee members approached the facilitator and reported that not all of the participants were trained traditional healers, that is, they had not gone through the “ukuthwasa” process. They requested that those participants who were not qualified traditional healers be excluded from the reconciliation ritual that was to take place in the evening. The reason given for wanting to exclude those who had not gone through the “ukuthwasa” process was that they were not meant to hear what those who were trained were saying in their confessions. Confession is an essential part of the reconciliation ritual. One of those they were referring to happened to be close by. When she heard what was being discussed, she came closer and tried to explain why she had come. She was one of those who were still searching. She came for the first time invited by a couple that had been attending at least two of those events that the facilitator had been present at. The two committee members reminded the facilitator that she expressed the importance of the reconciliation ritual and that therefore, they thought only those who were qualified should be present. They did not want those who had not gone through the “ukuthwasa” process to listen to their confessions. The facilitator told them that those who were not participating in the activities, those who only come to observe the dancing would be the ones excluded together with children. When they insisted, she told them that she also did not qualify because she had not been through “ukuthwasa” process, therefore she would be excluded. This statement kept them quiet and they did not insist further that others who had been participating in the process from the evening before, be excluded because they were not qualified.

The reconciliation ritual had not been part of the annual routine. What the facilitator observed on a video of previous events was that participants at such annual renewal events went to the priests present for confession while others sang or testified about African traditional healing. It was for the first time that there was going to be a reconciliation ritual.

On Saturday evening the participating traditional healers gathered under the ancestral tree to begin the ritual of reconciliation between them and their ancestors and among themselves. A goat designated to symbolise the ritual of restoration of harmony and unity in interpersonal relationships and interdependency among the participants and between them and their ancestors was brought to the tree to mark the start of this ritual. After the goat was ceremoniously introduced to the ancestors, it was led indoors where only visiting adults and the participants were allowed in for the reconciliation ritual which involved public confessions. The goat had to be pushed forward along the way as it appeared reluctant to move. Although children were not allowed to come in, non-participant adults could not be excluded without obstruction to the process. Once seated, the facilitator for the reconciliation ritual, introduced what was to take place by summarising all the preparations of prayer and meditations that took place during the course of the day, so that those who were not present could understand the context in which the ritual was taking place. The ritual was taking place within the Mass celebrated by the two co-ordinators of the group. The facilitator reminded the traditional healers what she heard them complain about at their renewal the year before, namely, the lack of unity, competition and tensions among them. She told them that the reconciliation ritual was the opportunity for them to be reconciled each with his/her ancestors and among themselves as the stewards of African traditional healing.

During confessions the facilitator observed that when some participants avoided painful issues, the goat became more restless, and the seven candles in the middle of the floor flickered vigorously. The same reaction of the goat and the candles was observed when some participants were deviating and talking about how they were called to become traditional healers and not even say anything about whether they had been using it for the benefits of others or not. When the process was back on track, she noticed less restlessness. When the facilitator noticed what appeared to be a pattern of avoiding painful issues, she made the participants aware of what was happening. Towards the end of the confession part, the facilitator noticed that the man who had been holding the goat was leaning back on his hands and that the goat lay quietly on his lap, adjusting itself to his movements.

There was some painful sharing about how some of them and their families were cut off from the

Church just because they were traditional healers. Some were still experiencing discrimination from their Church leaders. When nobody else was saying anything, the facilitator asked the two co-ordinators to ask for forgiveness on behalf of the Church for decades of pain and hurt caused to the traditional healers both living and dead. It was at this point that the goat bleated. When the goat was being led out to be slaughtered, it was moving without coaxing. At the ancestral tree the facilitator asked the man who had been holding it in the church and let it out to the tree whether he noticed that the goat seemed willing to move without coaxing, and he confirmed the observation. Amid singing of hymns and clapping the goat was slaughtered and some blood and gall were mixed with water and used for washing one another's hands for cleansing and also for splashing around the ancestral tree. The water from the cleansing was thrown outside the gate. The participants then went back to the church and the Mass continued to conclude the ceremony. It was 3 a.m. when the ceremony ended.

After the ceremony tea was served for everybody present. Those who wanted to continue the celebration with song and dance until 6 a.m., gathered in the ancestral "lapa" to dance or watch the dancers. The researcher decided to go to bed.

The next morning after breakfast, the traditional healers joined the people of the village for the Mass. They (traditional healers) dressed in their regalia and took part in the procession of gifts by singing and dancing. It was interesting to notice that one of the traditional healers who on previous occasions and at the renewal in May got into a trance during Mass, did not this time. (This observation was confirmed during the follow up of events in December by one of the co-ordinators who claimed that the traditional healer concerned, was no longer getting into trances during Mass and was even helpful with those who did). After the Mass celebrated with people from the village, the facilitator and the traditional healers evaluated the week-end renewal by identifying what was positive and what was negative as well as what needed improvement. The evaluation included the planning, the activities planned, the meals, and finally the facilitator. After the evaluation a meal was served and everybody was free to leave any time.

4.3 Identified Themes

The following themes are identified for all three cases, but their discussion and interpretation vary according to the events of each case study. These identified themes are used to create structure to the interpretation of the events within a cultural context or frame. They are pressure tactics, redressive mechanisms, use of symbols, and unheeded signs.

4.3.1 Pressure Tactics

Pressure tactics are mechanisms that the dead-living or ancestors are believed to use to communicate their presence and role in the lives of their kin. They are means by which they manifest their presence or absence in events or situations in which the living members find themselves. For example, the pains and aches of the index person in the first case study and the family tension were diagnosed by traditional healers as manifestations of the pressure the ancestors were putting on the family to re-establish kinship ties with them through rituals.

4.3.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Redressive mechanisms involve various rituals that are performed by the living members to re-establish communion with their dead-living members in order to restore broken relationships. They are negotiation techniques employed by the living to remedy fragmented and broken relationships with the ancestors or the dead-living. Ritual performance presupposes broken relationship that has to be restored. The presence of ancestors is invoked during rituals because their participation is necessary for the success of such rituals. Examples of rituals performed by the living in the three case studies were, cleansing ritual, ukubuyisa ritual, and reconciliation ritual.

4.3.3 Use of Symbols

According to Carl Jung (1964), what we call a symbol may be anything that is familiar in daily life,

but which may possess something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. In the African cultural context ancestors “speak” through symbols. Ancestors can express anger, agreement or disagreement, satisfaction, approval or disapproval through the symbols of their choice (Berglund, 1976). Symbols are integral part of ritual performance. Rituals themselves are symbols of communion between the living and their dead-living members. Symbols are tangible and visible signs of the presence and reactions of the dead-living during ritual performance. Goats, chickens and candles were symbols chosen before hand, but the communication of ancestors was not confined to these symbols only. For example, the rose branch was a symbol the maternal ancestors used to communicate in the first case study. In the second case study the ancestors used the item of clothing to communicate and in the third case study the ancestors used some participants’ restlessness and division to communicate.

4.3.4 Unheeded Signs

Traditional healers are regarded as experts in understanding the language of the ancestors. Through the medium of divination they can diagnose the manifestations of ancestors to their kin. Therefore, if they are unable to discern the language of ancestors, this is detrimental to the living kin who are depended on the traditional healers’ expertise. What is termed unheeded signs are those signs whose symbolic significance was ignored by either the participants, the traditional healer as an expert or researcher during ritual celebrations. These signs which are pointers that the ancestors use to communicate can also be neglected or remain unrecognised by participants due to lack of knowledge of the manifestations of role and presence of family guardian spirits or ancestors. The signs may demonstrate that any process flows out of the interplay of actors, events and settings. They may also demonstrate that key issues or characteristics of settings or events can be identified via reflective remarks of participants. They are also those signs of the role of the dead-living members that are not dependent on the co-operation and knowledge the living have, but lie beyond the belief, norms and practice of cultural contexts. Examples of unheeded signs were the symbols of the rose branch and the chicken hiding under the sofa in the first case study. The traditional healer ignored them, maybe due to being unfamiliar with the situation of the home belonging to the maternal side of family

or for a reason known to the ancestors alone.

4.4 Interpretation of the Events Within African Cultural Context

4.4.1 Introduction

In the African cultural context ancestors are not abstract, they are people who are not very far away and who can be seen through the medium of diviners and symbolic associations or representations (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977; Sogolo, 1993; Tholpe, 1991). When an individual or family is experiencing unusual problems of living, what could be termed psychological problems, such as a sickness for which no Western-based medicine is able to detect any cause, constant misfortunes where everything seem to be going wrong without valid reasons, the individual or family may turn to African traditional healers for help. A visit to a diviner may reveal that the misfortunes are due to the anger of the dead-living members who may be offended because the living have no communion with them, or who may feel neglected and hungry because relationship ties with them have not been maintained by the living (ibid.).

In the context of patrilineal kinship, it is the paternal ancestors that are brought back to the home of their living kin through the ritual of “ukubuyisa”. The home usually belongs to the paternal ancestors because when a man marries, it is customary that his wife leaves her family to join his family, hence when the bringing back ritual or “ukubuyisa” is suggested by the diviner it is not unusual that no questions are asked about which ancestors are involved. It is taken for granted that it is the paternal ancestors starting with the great-grandparents who would be brought home by their great-grandson, grandson, and son if the father is dead too. The male ancestors are the ones invoked and invited to bring along their wives and anybody else who they know needs to be included in their company. After the “ukubuyisa” ritual relationships are expected to be restored and welfare to prevail. It is with this background that the events of case 1 and case 2 are interpreted below.

Within African cultural context it would be logical that a family, which is the third and fourth

generation, but that had not been in communion with the ancestors, would experience problems of living. It is within this context that the family in the first case study was told by the traditional healers during a visit for divination that their pains and aches, and tensions and conflicts were the manifestations of their ancestors who wanted to re-establish relationships ties with them.

Rituals are redressive mechanisms the living employ to restore kinship bonds. The rituals that were performed in the case studies included ukubuyisa, cleansing, ritual slaughtering, confessions and forgiveness or reconciliation. The cleansing, confessions, and the slaughtering are culturally the essentials of any rituals ceremony whose aim is to re-establish kinship bonds between the ancestors and their living kin (Berglund, 1976). The ritual practices are culturally congruent and internally consistent within the cultural context (Lartey, 1994). The rituals recommended to the family in the first case study for the re-establishment of kinship bonds were also within the cultural context. Such rituals were, ukubuyisa, cleansing, thanksgiving and reconciliation. The ukubuyisa would normally have taken place a year after the death of the adult male or female. The cleansing, confessions, thanksgiving and reconciliation, would normally be part of the ritual slaughtering and beer-drinking.

In modern African contexts such rituals have not been taking place in many families. Until this time, the families in the first two case studies were examples of such families that did not know anything about the manifestations of ancestors and the appropriate rituals. Consulting the medium of divination is logical within the cultural context. The traditional healers as experts in such matters, diagnosed and recommended ukubuyisa ritual process for the family, involving all the other rituals, namely, the cleansing of ancestors, the thanksgiving ritual after the cleansing of the home in preparation for the arrival of the ancestors, and the ukubuyisa per se. The process followed was according to what these traditional healers practised, other traditional healers may have followed a different procedure for ukubuyisa process.

Culturally, ancestors are regarded as watchdogs of family values of love, caring, cohesion, interdependence, mutual help, and responsibility (Gyekye, 1997; Kalu, 1993). They are also seen as mediators between the living and the Creator. The pressure the family ancestors put on their kin,

even though in the first instance might be negative, would be expected to have a positive outcome since the aim of ancestors is not to punish, but to do good (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Therefore, after the completion of the ritual procedures, the ancestors are expected to withdraw the anger that caused the sickness of the index person, and normal relationships are also expected to be regained through confessions and expression of good-will (Berglund, 1976). Within the African cultural context nothing happens by chance (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Symbols are integral part of rituals because they are means by which ancestors communicate with the living irrespective of whether the living attach meaningful associations or not. The reason given is that nobody can tell the seniors or elders what to do and how to do it (Berglund, 1976). Symbols are the language of ancestors. Ancestors are respected as senior members of the lineage. Some symbols are culturally known to represent ancestors, for example, animals for ritual slaughtering. Other symbols depend on the choice of ancestors to communicate with their living kin, for example, when something unexpected or unusual happens during the ritual (ibid.).

4.4.2 Case 1

According to African cultural beliefs, norms, practice, and values, good interpersonal relationships with ancestors are symbolised by physical, psychological and spiritual well-being (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Kinship bonds are culturally perceived as essential in the African family system. If a breakdown in kinship bonds among the living and between the living and their dead-living or ancestors occurs, it can be rectified through rituals including slaughter and ritual beer-drinking (ibid.). The events of this case make sense within such cultural context.

4.4.2.1 Pressure Tactics

Within African cultural context, the misfortunes or psychological problems that the family in this case study were experiencing, can be interpreted as pressure tactics by the family ancestors or the dead-living members to draw attention to their plight. The misfortunes as symbolic manifestations of the

ancestors' demands or anger can be interpreted as diagnostic of family conflicts and tensions both past and present. This family did not understand the meaning of the tactics that their ancestors were using, so they needed an expert. The traditional healers as acceptable experts in these matters explained to the family that their misfortunes and problems were manifestations of the demands of their ancestors. According to the interpretation of the traditional healers, the ancestors were putting pressure on this family to re-establish communication and communion with them, that is, to restore kinship bonds through cleansing and "ukubuyisa" ritual process. The performance of "ukubuyisa" ritual would according to the traditional healer, have positive outcome of restoring normal relationship bonds.

Given the culturally unusual situation of home ownership, it seems logical that the maternal ancestors would not welcome any action that excluded them from their home, and that they would symbolically manifest their anger and disappointment at such exclusion. It is logical within the cultural context to expect that if they felt excluded, they would use their own pressure tactics to manifest their dissatisfaction, anger or demand during the ritual process or even after the process is completed. The inability of their daughter to join the ritual cleansing preparation can be interpreted as maternal ancestors' pressure tactic in such circumstances. The fact that the traditional healer forgot the "umuti" on her first visit, can also be interpreted as the other tactic to stop the process.

4.4.2.2 Redressive Mechanisms

In line with the African cultural context, the celebration of the rituals in this case study was aimed at communion with paternal ancestors, who it was taken for granted would invite the maternal ancestors (Berglund, 1976). The situation of the home belonging to the maternal side of family being unusual within the cultural context, warranted a special treatment for the maternal ancestors, different from the normal one. Without special rituals aimed at them, the maternal ancestors seemed to express their approval or disapproval. It can therefore, be said that the rituals performed for the paternal ancestors did not succeed because the maternal ancestors were not invoked or acknowledged to be present and participate in partnership with the paternal ancestors. Ignoring their special position

in the family was bound to have negative outcomes for the living kin.

African cultural concept of family includes both living and dead members. The ritual celebration required that the living and the dead-living come together to settle interpersonal family disputes before normal relationships could be restored (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Lartey, 1994). The family in the first case study performed “ukubuyisa” ritual to bring the paternal dead-living members back home. While the living participants could be seen physically, the presence of the dead-living could only be represented symbolically. Within this context of ritual performance, the animal for ritual slaughtering becomes the personified presence of ancestors, hence the importance of its reaction during the ritual would be revealing of the dynamics both past and present (Berglund, 1976). At the time of the ritual event of “ukubuyisa”, nobody was aware of the crucial position the maternal ancestors held, hence their presence was ignored and no special attention given to them. This kind of situation must have been unfamiliar to the officiating traditional healer, unless it was the way the ancestors were manifesting the fact that they were no longer restricted by laws of gravity, distance or time, and burden of carrying a body (Milingo, 1985). The presence of ancestors during the rituals in this case study was not confined only to ritual animal symbols, the mother’s reactions, the rose branch, and the behaviour of the dog though not understood at the time, were indicators or representations of the maternal ancestors’ reaction in the ritual celebration that was not involving them as the former owners of the home.

4.4.2.3 Use of Symbols

Some symbols were chosen according to the cultural norms to represent the dead-living or ancestors during the ritual ceremonies, but others were symbols chosen by the ancestors themselves. Although the language these symbols spoke was not understood at the time, after the event had taken place, and largely as a result of the cross-checking with the traditional healer of good reputation, these symbols spoke. The reactions of the symbols in this case study can therefore be interpreted as the reactions of the ancestors giving an indication of whether they were approving of the ritual performance or not. It is therefore logical within the African cultural context to interpret the

traditional healer's inability to discern the language of the maternal ancestors as the latter's way of demonstrating their importance and need for a special treatment, while at the same time communicating their disapproval of the ritual process that was excluding them.

The living in this case study could express their emotions verbally as well as non-verbally through facial expressions, tone of voice or action, but dead-living members could only do so through symbols. Within the African cultural context the rose branch falling in the middle of the doorway from the branch symbolising the arrival of the paternal ancestors could not be a mere co-incidence, but a strong message that should have received attention, since within such context nothing happens by chance (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). At the time of the ritual events, except for the traditional healer who was expected to know and understand the language of ancestors or the dead-living, the family members did not know this language. The researcher, together with the family, were dependent on what the traditional healer said. It is congruent within this context to interpret the rose branch in the middle of the doorway as maternal ancestors, questioning whether they were being thrown out of their house or not, or blocking the doorway to prevent the take-over by paternal ancestors. Why was the officiating traditional healer not alarmed by this symbolic gesture despite the challenge to review the symbolic meaning of the incident?

If the maternal ancestors were disapproving of what was to take place, namely, the taking over of their home by the paternal ancestors, it stands to reason that they would not lie low, but would continue to communicate their disapproval to draw attention. The following interpretations are therefore appropriate within the cultural context because within this context it is possible that the ancestors can cause tension among the living if they are ignored (Berglund, 1976; Lartey, 1994). Firstly, when their first attempt to communicate was ignored, the maternal ancestors caused the family members to be divided into male and female groups during the discussion of ownership of the house. The male group can be interpreted to have been symbolically representing the paternal ancestors as they are the bearers of a lineage, while the female group was symbolically representing the maternal ancestors. Secondly, when the symbolic gestures by the maternal ancestors failed to raise the awareness to their plight, they refused to be reconciled with the paternal ancestors as symbolised by

the chicken designated for reconciliation hiding under the sofa. The symbolic significance of the chicken lay in the fact that it was the one that was supposed to reconcile the ancestors on both sides of the family. Within the cultural context there can be no reconciliation without all the parties being involved and without a sign of good-will from parties involved (Berglund, 1976). These symbols can also be interpreted as indicative that there was no reconciliation because the maternal ancestors were not involved in the process.

The symbols associated with the paternal ancestors showed no unusual reaction. Since the rituals were directed at the paternal ancestors, the normal reaction of the "ukubuyisa" branch, the goats for ritual slaughter during the three phases, and the reactions of the father and his children can be interpreted as signs of their approval of the celebration in their honour.

The officiating isangoma was supposed to be an expert in such matters as interpretation of symbols because within African cultural context, the traditional healers are specialists of cultural norms, beliefs and practices and communicate with the ancestors (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Lartey, 1994). The question of ownership of the house was posed by her during confessions. What prevented her from discerning the symbolic meaning of family members' disagreement? Why did she still refuse to review the symbolic significance of the hiding chicken when challenged to? These are questions that remain unanswered? Although the next morning the mother reported loss of interest in the cleaning of the chicken and later reported that the dog ate the chicken, the significance of these incidents was not taken seriously or recognised. No wonder that two years later tension between the maternal and the paternal ancestors was diagnosed to exist. But why did it happen that with so many signs during the ritual events the language remained undeciphered until two years later? What is it that the dead-living or ancestors wanted the living to learn from these experiences?

Although only in retrospection, the significance of the symbolic manifestations of the maternal ancestors' disapproval is added by the fact that during the second phase of the ritual process, they were invited and symbolically represented with a candle in the same way that the paternal ancestors were, and no unusual incidents were observed. This can be interpreted to mean that when their role

was acknowledged, they co-operated, but when it was ignored, they refused to co-operate.

4.4.2.4 Unheeded Signs

Since within African cultural context nothing happens by chance, and the symbols are means by which ancestors communicate with the living, the reactions of the chosen cultural symbols should give the indication of whether the ancestors approve of the ritual performance or not (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). The unheeded signs on the other hand, are those symbols whose meaning the living cannot decipher or understand at the time of their occurrence. They are said to be unheeded signs because their effect in the context in which they occur was not understood, yet they were important. This means that if the living are unable to discern the language of their ancestors, that cannot be interpreted to mean that the ancestors are not present and participating. It can rather be said that if the language of the ancestors is not known or understood, it is to the detriment of the living. For example, within the African cultural context it can be interpreted that the maternal ancestors expressed their anger or disapproval at being left out of the ritual through several symbols which at the time of their occurrence were all unheeded. Firstly, they symbolically communicated through their daughter, but nobody understood their language at the time. They caused the officiating traditional healer to forget the “umuti” which would be used to mark the take over process by the paternal ancestors. Again the symbolic meaning of the forgetfulness was not understood at the time. These incidents were unheeded because they were not understood by the family, the officiating traditional healer and the researcher within the context in which they took place.

The ritual of “ukubuyisa” was the essence of restoration of normal relationship between the living and the dead-living as the latter were symbolically welcomed home to take their rightful place in the home in order to protect, restore health and success to their living kin. The essential phase, the “ukubuyisa” ritual per se, was marked by several symbols of the maternal ancestors’ indignation and cry for attention. Once again the symbolic meaning of these incidents was unheeded until later in follow-up conversations and cross-checking with the traditional healer of good reputation.

The revelation by the traditional healer of good reputation that tension existed in relationships between the maternal and paternal ancestors prompted review of all the events of the “ukubuyisa” ritual and gave meaning to the important role the maternal ancestors had in these events. This revelation also resulted in the rituals of “ukubuyisa” and reconciliation of maternal ancestors with the paternal ancestors in order to rectify the situation.

The fact that further cross-checking through items of clothing has not revealed any more tension between the maternal and paternal ancestors, can be interpreted to mean that since the ritual to reconcile the paternal and the maternal ancestors, there is peaceful co-existence between them.

The unheeded signs demonstrated that the understanding of symbols does not depend entirely on the knowledge of symbols by experts.

4.4.3 Case 2

The circumstances of the events in this case study are different from that of the first case study. There were more participants involved. The family is extended. No prior consultation of African traditional healers for expert assistance took place. There was no “umuti” for the ritual. Within the African cultural context, ancestors or the dead-living are not only everywhere, but they also reside in their living kin. For example, they are believed to be in a person’s head, neck, shoulder blades, the back, the joints and the sex organs (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). The interpretation of the events of this case study makes sense within this context.

4.4.3.1 Pressure Tactics

Within African cultural context, whether the researcher lacked information about the family relationships prior to the reconciliation ritual which she was invited to facilitate or not, is irrelevant because the dead-living or ancestors are not limited since they are spirits, but manifest their desires using any means (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Lartey, 1994; Milingo, 1985; Opoku, 1993).

Within this context therefore, the desire of the index person to have “ukubuyisa” for her father can be interpreted as pressure from her ancestors which was being facilitated by her father as “morongwa” (messenger) on behalf of all the ancestors from great-grandfather down to him (father). If the ancestors did not initiate the ritual, it would not have succeeded to happen because within this cultural context it is believed that “fa badimo ba sa rate, dinkgo di a wa” (nothing succeeds without the approval of the ancestors). The fact that the presentation, of an item of clothing belonging to the index person to the traditional healer of good reputation, revealed that her ancestors were happy about the ritual celebration that took place, can be interpreted to be a confirmation that the ancestors put the idea into the index person’s head. If the ancestors or the dead-living can cause sickness or disturbance in the heart to communicate their desires, what can stop them from communicating through a person’s desire? The approval of the ancestors can therefore be understood as indication of their involvement in the ritual ceremony suggested by the index person to her family (Berglund, 1976). Even the thought of celebrating a ritual of reconciliation cannot be without a good reason within African cultural context because nothing happens by chance (Buhrmann, 1984).

4.4.3.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Within African cultural context, the aim of rituals is to establish relationship bonds with the dead-living or ancestors or to strengthen such bonds. In this case study two rituals took place, namely, “ukubuyisa” and reconciliation because in accordance to this cultural context, reconciliation cannot succeed without the presence and participation of ancestors. Rituals presupposes broken relationships and bring disjointed parties together for healing of such broken relationships (Wa Kasonga, 1994). The wise counsel of ancestors is necessary to resolve family conflicts or disputes (Buhrmann, 1984). Since this family too had not done the “ukubuyisa” ritual of any of their dead-living before, they had to do it to ensure the presence and participation of the ancestors in the reconciliation ritual. The “ukubuyisa” in this case study involved going to the graveyard with candles to represent each of the ancestor to be brought home. It was not done in the traditional way because there was no traditional healer to provide the “umuti” for the process. The reaction of the burning candles and the goat during the reconciliation ritual can be interpreted as the reaction of the

ancestors or the dead-living participating in the discussions and dialogue or confessions.

4.4.3.3 Use of Symbols

The symbolic manifestations by ancestors or the dead-living are a normal occurrence and language within the African cultural context (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Symbols played an important part in the “ukubuyisa” and the reconciliation of this case study. Although candles and the ritual goat were deliberately chosen to represent ancestors’ presence and participation in the ritual, ancestors communicated through other signs of their choice such as, the number of matches used to light a candle at the graveyard, the dice, the falling of the candle into a dish after the ritual process, and the swapping of items of clothing presented to the traditional healer of good reputation for cross-checking. For example, the number of matches used to invite one of the brothers home can be interpreted as symbolising his reluctance to come home in view of the pain he caused while still living. Within the cultural context it can be said that he was afraid to come home and therefore needed coaxing. The fact that the dice fell into the dish whose contents were to be thrown out, can be interpreted as a reprimand by the dead-living to discourage gambling.

Within the African context the colours of candles representing male and female ancestors and the association of candles with each ancestor, were meaningful to participants once the candles were named. The participants had a visible representation of the one they were addressing. Once the candles were named, they were no longer just candles, but the dead-living or ancestors. Therefore, the lumps formed by some candle-wicks can be interpreted to have represented anger of some of the dead-living members. It can also be said that the ancestors expressed good-will and approval of the undertaking by their calmness after the confessions and the cleansing. Their calmness could be interpreted as signs of restored harmonious relationships between the living and the dead-living after the acknowledgement of offences in confessions and the readiness to forgive and be forgiven.

The falling of the candle representing the nine year old brother who died by drowning can be interpreted as him reminding his brothers and sisters about how he died. It was not just a coincidence, but a sign that he was present among them. Therefore, if any of the living members had

any doubt as to whether the ancestors did come home after the “ukubuyisa”, this was a positive sign.

Another sign of the ancestors being home and participating in the ritual was that the nephew who grabbed his uncle during the ritual is named after the father. Within the African cultural context, a name means a person (Milingo, 1985). Therefore, culturally it was not his nephew, but his own father who grabbed him and put him out. It therefore made sense why the oldest son never came back after he was taken away by his father’s namesake when he had been repeatedly returning before this incident happened.

Washing after confessions is a symbol of washing off the debt (icala) (Berglund, 1976). The cleansing symbolism after confessions sealed the participants’ desire to be reunited with their ancestors and to improving and maintaining better relationships among themselves as they washed one another’s hands. The cleansing can be interpreted to symbolise mutual acceptance and interdependence.

4.4.3.4 Unheeded Signs

Within African cultural context, ancestors or the dead-living sometimes use a language that is intelligible to their kin, sometime not (Berglund, 1976; Nwachuku, 1994). In this case study the incidents that are being referred to here as unheeded signs, were only unheeded as far as the facilitator was concerned, but the family members seemed to understand the language of their ancestors. For example, when the candle fell into the dish, they spontaneously and simultaneously exclaimed: “That is how he died”. They were the ones that understood why the oldest brother did not come back to the room after being taken out by the nephew. The index person recognised what was hers in the swapped items of clothing. The confusion about which item was hers was only experienced by the researcher during cross-checking with the traditional healer of good reputation. For the facilitator, these incidents were unheeded signs because she did not understand their meaning and significance within the context they were occurring.

Within the African cultural context the unheeded signs by the facilitator can be interpreted to

demonstrate that the existence and presence of ancestors is real, that the spirit components are not invisible and confined to the knowledge of experts, but can be experienced in a very real sense by any person, irrespective of who they are. Secondly, symbols are indicators of the presence and participation of ancestors or the dead-living irrespective of whether such symbols are understood or not (Berglund, 1976). For example, the researcher thought that by knowing which item of clothing belonged to the index person, she would be able to understand the assessment by the traditional healer of good reputation, only to discover later that the knowledge was of no use as the item of the index person revealed the other woman's history.

4.4.4 Case 3

A brief background history of the relationship between the Catholic Church and African traditional healing seems necessary to place the spiritual renewal event within context and to facilitate the interpretation of such an event, especially the reconciliation ritual performed on the second evening.

For decades the Catholic and other mainstream Churches regarded African traditional healing as a pagan practice (Lartey, Nwachuku, & Wa Kasonga, 1994; Milingo, 1985). The communication with ancestors was interpreted as worshipping other gods (Mpolo, 1994; Milingo, 1985). Any member of the Church who was known to consult traditional healers was cut off from the membership of that Church, and so was anybody who was or became a traditional healer. With the passage of time some priests became interested in the issue of African traditional healing especially when some of their devoted and trusted members became traditional healers before their very eyes. They began to realise that whether attacked, despised, condemned or threatened, African traditional healing continued unabated in Africa (Oduyoye, 1993). They started organizing those who remained members of the Church even after the "ukuthwasa" process that made them qualified traditional healers. The traditional healers' group is one such organised group.

4.4.4.1 Pressure Tactics

Within African cultural context, nothing succeeds without the participation of ancestors (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Wa Kasonga, 1994). Lack of harmonious relationships, for example, conflicts, power struggle and discrimination, found among the participants in this case study can be interpreted as symptomatic of lack of participation by the ancestors who were responsible for the calling of these traditional healers. Some of these ancestors might have been traditional healers who were denied or stripped of membership of the Church due to their status of traditional healing. The fact that participants were people who are perceived to be experts and the voice of ancestors, yet manifested negative attributes that are not associated with the ancestors or the dead-living when relationships are good, can be interpreted as ancestors' manifestations, demanding attention or acknowledgement. Within this context these negative characteristics can be interpreted as pressure tactics by the ancestors to attract attention to the fact that they are still outside the Church since their banning. The interpretations are culturally congruent within the African frame of reference because the dead-living continue to be members of their families, communities and societies and interact with their living kin (Opoku, 1993).

The dead-living also retain their human status after death (Berglund, 1976; Opoku, 1993). It can therefore be expected that those who as traditional healers were expelled from the Church, would put pressure on their kin to express the fact that no reconciliation has taken place. Although the pressure would be negative, it would aim at communion and harmonious relationships (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Within this cultural context it is not surprising therefore, to come across power struggle, unresolved conflicts and tensions among the participants who are gathered for a spiritual renewal if ancestors are not included. Such tensions and conflicts can also be interpreted as symbolic of the unresolved issues between the Catholic Church and the dead-living traditional healers who are using such tensions and conflicts as pressure tactics to demand attention.

If the ancestors or the dead-living retained their identity after death as African conceptualisation say they do (Opoku, 1993), the fact that no ritual of reconciliation had taken place between the Catholic Church and the ancestors who were traditional healers, means that the restlessness of some

participants during the meditation can be interpreted as a form of pressure by the ancestors who were still feeling unwelcomed in the Church. The traditional healers could not relax to pray in the church until the relationships between their ancestors and the Catholic Church were mended. Therefore, the presence and participation of the ancestors were vital for the success of the spiritual renewal of their living kin.

4.4.4.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Within African cultural context, rituals are important for the restoration of broken relationships. Animal slaughter is vital for rituals because there can be no communion with ancestors without the shedding of blood and the gall which become signs of the pledge between the living and their ancestors (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Although traditional healers are given a forum by the Catholic Church, no ritual has been performed to officially welcome the ancestors back into the Church. What the researcher observed in videos of similar occasions and the gathering in 1998, was a kind of two religions that were parallel (Milingo, 1985). Two rituals performed, namely, a form of “ukubuyisa” and reconciliation, were to ensure the presence and participation of the ancestors. The “ukubuyisa” involved invoking the ancestors at the ancestral “lapa” by representing them with candles and taking them to the church so that they could be present and participate in the reconciliation ritual. Without the ancestors the reconciliation could not be a success (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Wa Kasonga, 1994). Their participation in the process of healing relationships and reconciliation was necessary because at the heart of African healing is the restoration of harmonious relationships (Lartey, 1994).

4.4.4.3 Use of Symbols

Within the African cultural context symbols are important because ancestors communicate through symbols (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). Symbols used at the rituals were candles that represented the paternal, the maternal and the in-law ancestors or other significant people in one’s life that are not family. The other symbol was the goat for ritual slaughtering. The reaction of these

symbols can be interpreted as communication or reaction of the dead-living or ancestors. Therefore, when the goat was reluctant to enter the church, it symbolised the ancestors' reluctance to go into the place from which they were banned for decades. They had to be coaxed to enter and share their grievances or pain from inside the church. When the candles flickered vigorously, they represented ancestors' reactions which can be interpreted as disapproval or restlessness of not feeling at home in the Catholic Church. When the candles and the goat became calm, it can be interpreted as ancestors being calm once their living kin had named and shared about the pain and hurt that they experienced in the Church. The bleating of the goat after the two Church representatives asked for pardon on behalf of the Catholic Church was appropriate within the context because it was the symbol of the ancestors' approval of the Church's acknowledgement of the wrong. In ritual killing the noise that the animal makes is a good sign of approval of the undertaking (Berglund, 1976). In this context it was specially important since the call to healing comes from them and is not a personal choice (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Lartey, 1994). Within African cultural context the sheep is the symbol of quietness (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984). The sheep slaughtered on Friday evening can be interpreted as symbolising ancestors still being quiet because they had been silenced by the Church.

The approval by the ancestors or the dead-living and their willingness to be reconciled with the Catholic Church was symbolised by the goat's willness to be slaughtered to seal the restoration of normal relations gained in confessions and as an expression of good-will. The atmosphere of singing and clapping that took place as the goat was being slaughtered can be interpreted as symbolic of the spirit of harmony being restored between the Catholic Church and the dead-living, and of the ancestors willingness to share in the merriment and feasting that followed after the ritual. The washing of hands with gall mixed with blood and water symbolised cleansing of the debt and reunion. These interpretations are congruent with the African cultural context which regard the spirit of sharing food to be important because harmonious relationships between the living and the dead are expressed in the willingness to share food (Berglund, 1976; Lartey, 1994).

4.4.4.4 Unheeded Signs

The researcher did not always discern the language the ancestors used to communicate or express their needs within the context in which such communication or expression was made. She was inclined to take things at face value. For example, when the planning committee wanted to retain the goat versus the sheep for ritual slaughtering, she did not understand the symbolic meaning of this incident. When some members wanted to exclude others by requesting that those who had not gone through the “ukuthwasa” process stay outside, she did not take heed of the symbolic meaning of the qualified versus the unqualified, that is, the two religion story that Milingo (1985) talks about.

4.5 Interpretation of Events within Wester-oriented Psychological Context

4.5.1 Introduction

There are a variety of schools of psychology. Different schools look at the same phenomenon from different perspectives or models and from different levels. Each psychological perspective or model has its own conceptualisation, theory and methodology for diagnosis and treatment of psychological problems. Western psychological conceptualisations, theories and methodologies have been influenced by the cultural contexts in which they developed (Klass, 1996; Roland, 1996). African concept of ancestors and their role seems a very difficult concept to understand within Western psychological context (Buhrmann, 1984). Within this context, the concept ancestor is abstract and not a reality (Berglund, 1976; Lartey, 1994; Sampson, 1988). Western psychology is based on empirical causal explanations and perceives reality differently from how religion and African cultures perceives them (Gyekye, 1997). The supernatural assumptions have no place in Western-oriented psychological context (Gyekye, 1997; Lartey, 1994). For example, since Freud’s concept and theory of unconscious, psychoanalysts and depth psychologists put emphasis on the unconscious as the invisible root or source of the conscious thought (Buhrmann, 1984). Within psychoanalytic theory ancestors are thought to be images from the unconscious original patterns of psychic perception which are universal (ibid.). Symbols are perceived to be created by the psyche and to be mediums

or language of the unconscious part of the psyche (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964; Lincoln, 1935).

With multiple psychological perspectives different interpretations can be expected. The following attempt at interpretation of the three case studies within Western-oriented psychological context is based on a mixture of several perspectives, especially psychoanalysis, Jungian psychology and systems theory.

4.5.2 Case 1

4.5.2.1 Pressure Tactics

Within the psychoanalytic perspective the unconscious may be seen as the source of pressure. According to this perspective therefore, somatic complaints that have no physiological basis can be classified under psychosomatic complaints. Such psychosomatic complaints can be said to have been triggered or precipitated by an external situation, but having their source within the person or the unconscious (Buhrmann, 1984). From this perspective psychosomatic complaints of the index person can therefore be interpreted as pressure from the unconscious manifesting itself in somatic pains and aches, but representing underlying psychological problems. Psychological problems can in turn be interpreted as manifestations of repressed emotional experience (Jung, 1964).

Within Western-oriented psychological context it is also acknowledged that, “we do not become ill all by ourselves, the community has an important role to play in health and sickness” (Hollenweger, 1993, p.XI). According to general systems theory the index person can be perceived as a scapegoat of symptomatic family relationships, that is, as the site of family pathology (Keeney, 1979). Within the family context therefore, the index person’s symptoms can be viewed as relational metaphors. The tension about ownership of the house can be interpreted as the possible cause of the symptomatic expression because the index person is part of the family system. Her symptoms can be perceived as having a communicative function (*ibid.*). Ancestors’ role would only enter the picture indirectly in identifying family norms, values and practice that are significant to the symptomatic complaints

(Bloch, 1984). The family rules can therefore be interpreted as some material from one of the layers of the unconscious material that is being projected onto family dynamics.

4.5.2.2 Redressive Mechanisms

From a Western-oriented psychological perspective the rituals that were performed in this case study can be interpreted as archaic forms of therapy (Buhrmann, 1984). Confessions that are part of such therapies would be important for relieving tensions and conflicts which individual participants had been hiding or repressing (ibid.). When unexpressed anger or guilt feelings are brought to consciousness, they are seen to contribute to liberation from anxiety, thus contributing to psychological health (Lartey, 1994). Various rituals or stages of the “ukubuyisa” ritual can be viewed as therapeutic interventions. From a Western perspective the emphasis of the ritual cannot be on the presence and participation of the ancestors, but on the coming together of family members to thrash out strained relationships and to cathart. From family and systems theory point of view, the family ritual ceremonies in this case study can be viewed as therapeutic mechanisms whereby symptomatic communication both on the individual and family relational level are alleviated by restructuring patterns of relationship network (Keeney, 1979; Bloch, 1984). The rituals can be interpreted as creating conducive environment for catharsis, verbal expression of wishes and needs for support, but also revealing the communicative function of symptoms of the index person and her family. The mother’s inability to take part in the cleansing preparation ritual can be interpreted as an indication of the symptomatic relief of her daughter and transfer of symptomatic expression from the daughter to the mother (Keeney, 1979).

From depth psychology point of view rituals can be interpreted as mechanisms whereby symptoms are legitimately transferred onto objectified or personified objects called ancestors (Buhrmann, 1984).

4.5.2.3 Use of Symbols

Meaning of symbols used in Western psychological perspectives differs from the meaning of symbols

used in African cultural context. For example, within psychoanalytic perspective symbols would not be perceived as the language of the dead-living or ancestors, but could be seen as language of the unconscious (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964). In this perspective symbolism is regarded as the expression of a transformed unconscious repressed wish, which is generally felt as being painful or regarded as culturally unacceptable (Jung, 1964; Lincoln, 1935). According to this perspective symptomatic problems such as psychosomatic illness of the index person can be interpreted as symbolic of intrapsychic problems or interpersonal relationship problems (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964; Lincoln, 1935). Symbols such as the animals for ritual slaughter, the rose branch in the middle of the doorway and the chicken hiding away, can be interpreted as representing material from the unconscious. For example, the rose branch in the middle of the doorway can be interpreted as symbolising the participants being confronted with unconscious painful memories from the past, but that the underlying fear prevented them from dealing with the issues openly (Jung, 1964). The traditional healer's actions or refusal to discern symbolic meaning of the rose branch and the chicken hiding under the sofa can be interpreted as sensitivity to the fact that the family members were not ready to deal with the issues that confronted them in the ritual process (ibid.). The recalling of the symbolism two years later can be interpreted as a significant sign of the family's psychological growth in accepting the unconscious part of the psyche and reconciling it with the conscious part.

From family and systemic views, the pains and aches of the index person can be interpreted as symbolic of symptomatic family structure or functioning (Bloch, 1984; Keeney, 1979). The tense discussion about the ownership of the house during the confession part of the ritual can be interpreted as a symbol or sign of symptomatic interpersonal sequences, interactional patterns, distribution and management of power and authority (Bloch, 1984). The tension can also be interpreted as symbolic of the original family history as the reinforcer of symptomatic patterns. On the other hand, the symbols used in the rituals can be interpreted to be symbolically significant for shifting the site of family pathology onto them (symbols), so that the family members are relieved of the blame and the symptoms. The symbols can therefore be regarded as objectified projections from the unconscious (Buhrmann, 1984; Keeney, 1979).

4.5.2.4 Unheeded Signs

Every symbol or event has a potential meaning. What could be termed unheeded signs within the psychoanalytic perspective are those signs or symbols whose meaning is avoided by the participants because of the painful association they have and their threat to ego defenses. Such signs or symbols can be said to be laden with psychic energy (Jung, 1964). The meaning of such symbols can be refused entry into consciousness because of anxiety. For example, the refusal of the officiating traditional healer to interpret the symbols during the crucial “ukubuyisa” ritual can be interpreted as having painful associations for her, and that therefore she avoided their meaning, but unconsciously projected the pain onto the family members as countertransference (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964). Her inability to recall them two years later despite new evidence from the traditional healer of good reputation can be interpreted as confirmation of their painful association for her.

4.5.3 Case 2

4.5.3.1 Pressure Tactics

In the introduction to the interpretation of the events within Western-oriented psychological context it has already been stated that the source of pressure in some perspectives is theorised to be the unconscious in which painful memories and culturally unacceptable wishes have been repressed (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964; Lincoln, 1935). According to such theories, retirement of the index person in this case study can be interpreted as a trigger factor that is forcing some of the repressed unconscious material to be brought into the light of consciousness. Some of such material includes painful childhood memories, the father-complex, unresolved issues of grief and mortality. These developmental crises can be interpreted as the tactics that led to her desire to have rituals of “ukubuyisa” and reconciliation. Her desire can be interpreted as expressing her childhood fantasies and a sign that she reached late adulthood stage without achieving psychological maturity (Jung, 1964). According to systemic perspective the index person can be seen as the site of family

pathology. The index person's desire or wish to bring her dead father home can be interpreted as communication metaphor that is putting pressure on the family to make adjustments to her developmental stage (Keeney, 1979).

4.5.3.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Within Western-oriented psychological context the "ukubuyisa" and reconciliation rituals can be seen as primitive or ancient forms of therapy (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964). For example, according to theories of the unconscious, the "ukubuyisa" ritual can be perceived as symbolic of bringing into the light of consciousness, the unconscious issues. The reconciliation ritual can be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the inner world of the unconscious with the outer world of the conscious, with ritual ceremonies as mechanisms for catharsis. According to ecosystemic and systems theory, the site and nature of symptoms manifestations may shift (Keeney, 1979). The index person as part of the relationship system may have been the site of pathology. In accordance to this view the ritual ceremonies can be seen as forms of family processes that aim at reframing the symptomatic communication metaphors in order to shift the blame from the index person to another site. The ancestors would be the new site. The gathering of family members would be crucial to discuss and re-negotiate the problematic situation of the index person, namely, her developmental transition.

4.5.3.3 Use of Symbols

Differences in psychological meaning can be seen in the various symbolic elements used in the rituals performed in this case study. For example, the psychoanalytic and depth psychology perspectives would see the goat which is a noisy animal as symbolising the unconscious being activated, being given a voice or the candles as illuminating the unconscious so that its hidden treasures can be seen (Jung, 1964). The falling of the candle that represented a nine year brother can be symbolising the level of psychological development to which the index person has regressed or at which her development was arrested (Buhrmann, 1984; Jung, 1964). A dice on the candleholder of the nine year old brother's representation can be said to symbolise how she gambled with her life for sixty

years of her age. The calmness of the symbols that prevailed towards the end of the confessions, may represent a growth process or the acceptance of the unconscious.

According to systems theory perspective the index person's retirement can be seen as a disequilibrating factor for the family to re-adjust to changed relationship structure (Keeney, 1979). Tense interactions involving the oldest brother can be representing recursive interpersonal patterns that contribute to the maintenance of interactional rules, and distribution and management of power and authority in the family. The behaviour of the mother towards the oldest son can be symbolic of an enmeshed relationship or powerlessness and helplessness (Bloch, 1984). In order to break the cyclical sequence of symptomatic relationship metaphors, the symbols of goat and candles that were chosen before hand would be seen as strategically chosen in order to relieve the index person and her family of symptomatic discomfort by externalising and transferring them onto these symbols. Depth psychology would view these symbols as archetypes of the collective unconscious or animistic regression (Jung, 1964).

4.5.3.4 Unheeded Signs

Certain signs and symbols are difficult to explain. For example, how can the falling over of the candle and the swapping of items of clothing be explained psychologically? Are these events mere coincidences or exaggeration of normal occurrences because according to Jung (1964) in rational societies the boundaries between the unconscious and the conscious are sharp and "no voices speak to man [sic] from stones, plants and animals, nor does he [sic] speak to them believing they can hear" (p.95).

4.5.4 Case 3

4.5.4.1 Pressure Tactics

Certain Western perspectives regard manifest conflicts to result from the unconscious latent conflicts.

For example, the power struggles and the tensions among the participants in this case study can be interpreted to be manifest symptoms of unresolved unconscious conflicts because, according to psychoanalytical frame of reference, in each of us there is inner conflict of which we are not aware (Buhrmann, 1984). Under group stress this unconscious conflict can be triggered and manifest itself as pressure in the form of group dynamics. According to ecosystemic theory perspective tensions and conflicts can be seen as communication metaphors of symptomatic and maladaptive group interpersonal relationships (Keeney, 1979). The symptomatic communication can be interpreted as having a function within the complex group relationships (ibid.). Such communication can be identified as strategies that the group members used for cohesion or exclusion of others, for example, in cliques, coalitions and group norms.

4.5.4.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Within Western-oriented psychological context the spiritual renewal event can be interpreted as a therapeutic situation involving participants of different ages, from different background and experience (Buhrmann, 1984; Keeney, 1979) with the facilitator as a catalyst within the group. According to the systemic and family theories the event can be seen as an intentional strategy to intervene in the symptomatic interpersonal patterns of behaviour and interactions of the group, or as a strategy for catharsis (Sluzki, 1983). The purpose of “ukubuyisa amadlozi” and the reconciliation rituals can therefore be to shift the site and nature of symptoms onto the personified objects called ancestors (Buhrmann, 1984). As archaic form of group therapy, the ritual ceremonies can be representing the collective cultural unconscious which would enable participants to shift the blame from themselves to the ritual symbols of candles and goat.

4.5.4.3 Use of Symbols

Symbols of the goat for slaughter and candles can have a significant function within the systemic perspective as sites for transference of symptoms in order to bring relief to the participants. In this way a healthy homeostasis could be restored in the group (Keeney, 1979). According to

psychoanalytic perspective, it can be said that the conscious mind of the participants could not assimilate jealousies, anger and conflict without projecting them onto candles and the goat for slaughtering (Buhrmann, 1984). Within this perspective the bleating of the goat can be interpreted as the unconscious processes finding a voice or expression after a period of repression, especially since the sheep is a symbol of quietness. The use of such symbols can be seen as a natural attempt by the traditional healers to reconcile and unite the opposites within the psyche (Jung, 1964).

4.5.4.4 Unheeded Signs

Unheeded signs can be those signs or symbols that participants ignore or are not aware of. For example, using two animals for slaughter as goat versus sheep and requesting to exclude others in terms of the trained versus the untrained, can be interpreted as symbolic of internal split of which the participants lacked awareness. On the other hand, the symbolic meaning of what happened during the spiritual renewal week-end is misleading without the background knowledge of the relationship between the African traditional healing and the Catholic Church. The interpretation of causation which is based on the supernatural assumption can also be missed if we try to separate the sacred from the profane (Lartey, 1994). According to Buhrmann (1984), ancestors cannot be intellectually understood and rationally explained, they can only be experienced, hence their role can become unheeded without experience of the ancestors' manifestations.

4.6 Comparison of the Three Case Studies

4.6.1 Cross-Case Comparison within African Cultural Context

4.6.1.1 Pressure Tactics

All three case studies provided evidence of pressure tactics. These tactics can be said to come from the ancestors making their needs or demands known, because within African cultural context nothing happens by chance. Therefore, whether pains and aches, desire or conflict in the group, the ancestors

or the dead-living are seen as communicating their desire to the living through these events. Traditional healers, as the mediators between ancestors and their living kin, can be of assistance in interpreting the manifestations of the ancestors, but the ancestors can also use their own choice of mediation or language that is intelligible to their kin.

4.6.1.2 Redressive Mechanisms

In all three case studies rituals were performed to re-establish communication and communion with the ancestors or the dead-living. The ritual of “ukubuyisa” took different forms in all three case studies, but the significance of the ritual was in ensuring that the dead-living are present to participate in the reconciliation ritual. Not only are the ancestors present in rituals as elders and guardians of the moral values and customs, but as a community of spirits who need to be reconciled because of the unresolved hurts and pains they inflicted on their kin or their kin inflicted on them while still alive. The reconciliation ritual performed in all three case studies included confessions and cleansing. Both rituals demonstrate the importance of the presence and participation of both the living and the dead-living for the psychological well-being of all. Otherwise if some significant members are missing or not co-operative, the process of reconciliation becomes a futile exercise.

4.6.1.3 Use of Symbols

The presence of the dead-living or ancestors was symbolically represented in all three case studies. In accordance with African cultural context, symbols of animals for ritual slaughter and candles to visually represent the dead-living, were chosen by the living in advance. The ancestors were seen as communicating through these chosen symbols and others of their own choice to make their presence known and felt. Other symbols of the ancestors’ choice confirmed their presence and participation or non-participation in the rituals in a manner demonstrating that their role is not limited or dependent on what the living do or do not do. The latter symbols also demonstrated that the role of the dead-living is not limited to specific settings, but that the dead-living can surprise the living or do something known to the living that confirms their presence.

4.6.1.4 Unheeded Signs

The unheeded signs in the three case studies further demonstrated that even though symbols can be chosen in advance, the living cannot know in advance how the ancestors are going to react during the ritual ceremonies. Therefore, unless one is careful, the language of ancestors can be missed. Secondly, the unheeded signs seem to demonstrate that although according to the cultural context, ancestors or the dead-living retain their human attributes and remain members of their families, they have a higher status and power than the living because they are spirits. As spirits their role is complex, unpredictable and not under the control of the living. The unheeded signs also demonstrated that the role of the dead-living is not dependent on knowledge of the customs and norms of the culture and on the intellectual ability of experts. Therefore, experts can also make mistakes and misunderstand or misinterpret some signs.

4.6.2 Cross-Case Comparison within Western-oriented Psychological Context

4.6.2.1 Pressure Tactics

Within Western-oriented psychological context the source of pressure could be seen as the unconscious. The manifestations of psychological problems in the three case studies can be said to originate from the unconscious and triggered by an external situation. How the pressure from the unconscious manifests itself and how it is interpreted, depends on different psychological perspectives. In the three case studies the manifestations took different forms such as pains and aches, desire and group conflict. The external situation that precipitated the symptoms can be developmental crises or family or group dynamics. On the level of relationships, the symptom manifestations in the three case studies can be seen as communication metaphors.

4.6.2.2 Redressive Mechanisms

Ritual ceremonies performed in the three case studies can be regarded as archaic psychological processes. Family members were involved in the first and second case studies and participants of different family backgrounds were involved in the third case study. The African concept of ancestors being difficult within Western psychological context, the therapeutic value of the ritual ceremonies is in how these rituals created an atmosphere in which emotional issues of relationships could be shared and discussed in confessions, rather than aiming at communion with the ancestors. Ancestors or the dead-living can be considered important in the rituals as personified external objects on which the symptoms could be shifted or as personified projections of the unconscious. The therapeutic value of the rituals performed in the three case studies can also be perceived as catharsis for the participants because these rituals offered opportunity for confessions, since unexpressed anger and guilt feelings if brought to consciousness are believed to contribute towards freedom from anxiety, anger, jealousy and guilt feelings and to promote mental health (Mpolo, 1994).

4.6.2.3 Use of Symbols

Within Western-oriented psychological context symbols are the creation of the psyche, and as such take different meanings depending on the perspective followed. Symbols could be perceived as the language of the unconscious. Through the use of symbols, the unconscious material that threatens psychological growth and well-being of a family or group can be brought to the surface and dealt with through rituals. Therefore, the symbols of animals for slaughter and the candles used in the three case studies represent the unconscious. As the externalised projections of the unconscious, symbols help rid the participants of anger and tension which is then projected on them when the conscious mind has difficulty to assimilate anger and tension except in symbolic form. Since symbols are one way in which the unconscious manifests itself, the goat chosen for ritual slaughter can represent the unconscious finding a voice to express itself when the goat bleats during a ritual. The candles can also be symbolic of repressed wish, conflicts or tensions being illuminated and faced within the ritual context.

4.6.2.4 Unheeded Signs

All signs and symbols have a potential meaning. Signs or symbols are therefore unheeded if the symbols used invoke painful psychic associations and as a result their meaning is avoided by the participants. Secondly, since there are many possible meanings of symbols, some symbolic meanings or signs can be missed and thus remain unheeded. Thirdly, it can be said that signs are unheeded if the cultural context of the participants is not taken into consideration. For example, if ancestors are equated with the unconscious, there is likelihood that the meaning of the manifestations of the ancestors would be missed, appear foreign, meaningless or irrelevant to the psychological well-being of the participants.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the original aims of this research, the research problem and sub-problems, as well as the research design and methods. What emerged from the research study is discussed in the light of research questions posed in chapter three and the literature review in chapter two. The discussion includes a critical evaluation of the whole research process, conclusions and implications, as well as the need for further research.

5.2 Aim of the Research

Initially the questions asked were: Have ancestors or the dead-living a role in the lives of their kin? What role do they have? How does that role link with psychological processes?

The researcher's personal experience during her psychology internship and literature review on African traditional healing seemed to suggest that ancestors had a role. Since African approaches to healing exist side by side with Western-oriented psychotherapies, research was necessary to find out what the role of ancestors was and how it links with psychological processes. The lack of a multi-disciplinary framework made it difficult to compare African approaches to healing with Western psychotherapies. A contextual framework was adopted to study the essence of African traditional healing within African perspective with its cultural settings and contexts.

5.3. Research Problem and Sub-problems

The following research problem was formulated, namely: What is the role of ancestors or the dead-

living in the African family system? Three sub-problems formulated were: How the role of ancestors or the dead-living is manifested and negotiated within African cultural context; Can ancestors or the dead-living complicate diagnosis and treatment of psychological health problems if their role is not taken into consideration or can they facilitate diagnosis and treatment if they are considered? If so, how do ancestors act as diagnostic medium and how can they be involved as context for treatment? And what the psychological understanding of the role of the dead-living or ancestors in the African family system is.

5.4 Research Design

The nature of the problem was such that most traditional psychological research methods were unsuited to deal with the problem adequately. An observational research design was opted for because the questions raised could only be investigated by observation of people in their natural settings (Edwards, 1998; Shipman, 1997; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher took part in ritual ceremony events as a facilitator and observer. Her personal characteristics and their implication for access and validity were taken into consideration.

Due to the intimacy of the settings where observations could take place, only few cases were observed. For the purpose of this research study three cases were selected for analysis because they yielded more information. Secondly, the researcher was present at all events. The events of the three case studies were interpreted within an African cultural context and a Western-oriented psychological context using themes identified from the description of these events. The themes were pressure tactics, redressive mechanisms, use of symbols and unheeded signs. What emerged from the analysis of these events is discussed below in the light of research questions.

5.5 Research Questions

How is the role of the dead-living or ancestors manifested and how are those manifestations negotiated within the African cultural context?

From the analysis of the three case studies, what emerged is that within the African cultural context ancestors are both agents of causation of psychological problems and resolution of such problems. Pressure in the form of psychosomatic pains and aches, relational conflicts and tensions has ancestors or the dead-living as its source. Such pressure is not fatal. It has a positive outcome for both the living and the dead-living because it leads to ritual celebrations. Ritual ceremonies thus become mechanisms for re-establishing communication and relationships between the dead-living and their living kin through ritual symbols. The use of symbols means that sometimes the communication can be missed, misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The events were also interpreted within a Western-oriented psychological frame of reference. Lack of African concepts in psychology made it difficult to interpret the African concept of the role of the dead-living because psychology is loaded with Western cultural meaning and is not comprehensive enough to include African cultural meanings (Fischer, Jome, Atkinson, 1998; Nsamenang, 1995; Roland, 1996; Terrell, 1994). Psychology as a science is peculiarly Western in origin due to the fact that it is driven by Western-based theories, epistemologies and methods (Castillo, 1997; Gardiner, et al., 1998; Ho, 1998; Hollenweger, 1993; Kleinman, 1980; Nsamenang, 1995). The conceptualisation of the role of the dead-living within Western-oriented psychological context is governed by different world views and specific cultural presuppositions and epistemological interests which are different from those of African cultures (Nsamenang, 1995; Tseng & Streltzer, 1997). For example, in the interpretation of the three case studies within a Western-oriented psychological context, the source of pressure and meaning of rituals and symbols could take different forms depending on different psychological perspectives and their theories.

Roland (1996) laments lack of common categories or standards for comparison across cultures. Lack of a comprehensive theory of conceptualisation and methodology made it difficult to make comparisons of how this phenomenon of the role of the dead-living from African cultural contexts compares with the same phenomenon within Western cultural contexts. This means that the cleaning up of the conceptual language is necessary because what is authentically psychological has been mixed up if not confused with Western cultures (Ho, 1998; Lartey, 1994; Oduyoye, 1993; Pobee, 1993). Before this African concept of the role of ancestors can be articulated within an authentic psychological context which is comprehensive enough to include indigenous conceptualisations, the concept must be researched within both Western and African cultural contexts to ascertain whether the cultural context determines the meaning of the concept or whether similarities and differences exist irrespective of a cultural context (Levers, 1997). Such study is beyond the cope of this research.

Can ancestors or the dead-living complicate diagnosis and treatment of psychological health problems if their role is not taken into consideration or can they facilitate diagnosis and treatment if they are considered? If so, how do ancestors act as diagnostic medium and how can they be involved as context for treatment?

African traditional healing has its roots in ancestors (Hollenweger, 1993; Lartey, 1994). According to Lartey (1994) a breach in social relations threatens the very survival of a family which is based on mutual interdependence. Within African ritual contexts and settings observed in the three case studies, when the presence and participation of the dead-living were invoked and acknowledged, the dead-living co-operated and promoted conflict resolutions.

The aim of ritual ceremonies all over Africa is the restoration of harmonious relationships between the dead-living or ancestors and their kin (Berglund, 1976; Lartey, 1994). The three case studies demonstrated that without the presence and participation of both the ancestors and the living, no reconciliation can be said to have taken place. One party cannot reconcile with the other party in absentia. Therefore, the living cannot be said to be reconciling with the dead-living when the latter are absent. Resolving tensions and conflicts requires public confessions and forgiveness before

harmonious relationships can be restored. Ancestors as elders and custodians of moral values have authority to intervene in family issues (*ibid.*). Their presence makes rituals sacred (Kalu, 1993). The living must reconcile in the presence of the dead-living or ancestors because when one person is offended, the living and the dead-living are also offended through that person (Berglund, 1976; Sawyerr, 1993). The research showed that when ancestors are left out of ritual ceremonies, dissatisfied or ignored in resolutions of family matters, they complicate issues. When their presence and participation are accommodated, they facilitate family processes. The research also showed that whether approving or disapproving, the dead-living do not remain silent, but communicate their approval or disapproval through symbols.

Westerlund (1993) argues that different perspectives or concepts are governed by different world views and interests. Kalu (1993) supports this view when he says that healing techniques betray cultural understanding of nature and its conceptualisation. Western philosophical assumptions govern the field of psychology (Roland, 1996). African world views are fundamentally spiritual, thus human affairs are infused with religious meaning (Kalu, 1993). Therefore, in Western psychological perspectives such as psychoanalysis, depth psychology and general systems theory, the difficulty to answer the question of whether the dead-living can complicate diagnosis and treatment of psychological health problems if not taken into consideration or whether they can facilitate therapeutic process, lies in the fact that causal explanations within these perspectives are different from those of African perspective (Gyekye, 1997). For example, according to Roland (1996), in psychoanalysis spiritual experiences are viewed as regression to the early mother-infant relationship. Ancestors are perceived as personified projections of the content of the unconscious in depth psychology (Buhrmann, 1984), or site on which symptoms can be transferred in systems theory (Keeney, 1979). Symbols are understood to have associative meaning, but are not regarded as the language of ancestors or the dead-living as is the case in African cultural contexts. However, the therapeutic value of ritual ceremonies as health-promoting mechanisms for emotional release is recognised irrespective of whether ancestors are present and participating in these ceremonies or not.

What is the psychological understanding of the role of the dead-living or ancestors in the African family system?

This question raises a significant challenge for psychology to review aspects of western cultures inherent in it (Oduyoye, 1993). As long as psychology is identified with Western cultures, it will remain foreign and accessible only to a minority of people.

According to Barton (1974), what we bring to the specialised world of psychotherapy is already “a special world shaped by our own particular histories, specific sensitivity, cultural backgrounds, habits of thought, and social ways” (p.243).

Although African traditional healing and Western psychotherapies developed from different philosophical assumptions, sociocultural and historical milieu, and are shaped by their perspective value system, they share some common psychological elements. Both are processes of healing. Traditional healing, be it African, Chinese or Indian, has psychotherapeutic effects that are not negligible, but makes sense to those who use it (Burkert, 1987; Roland, 1996; Thorpe, 1993). African traditional healing is therefore, parallel to Western psychotherapies, but loaded with its own cultural meanings (Tseng & McDermott, 1975). These cultural meanings account for its difference from Western psychotherapies in stressing the role of the dead-living or ancestors in its healing process. The modal differences or variabilities are what help each individual to function well in his/her different cultural and interpersonal patterns (Roland, 1996; Tseng & McDermott, 1975).

According to Buhrmann (1984) ancestors or the dead-living cannot be adequately understood and rationally explained without being experienced. Hollenweger (1993), Lartey (1994) and Setiloane (1993) argue that Africa has its own way of coming to terms with reality based on resources of Africa's own cultural heritage and insight. The phenomenon of the role of the dead-living or ancestors has not been taken into consideration in Western-oriented psychology because of its spiritual nature. Unlike all other important social groups, the family exist in unbroken continuity of membership with its own past and its future (Bloch, 1984). As Setiloane (1993) points out, every

family has its long line of ancestors it traces itself from. There is no choice regarding one's parents, sex, race, place of birth and time of birth or death (Byaruhanga-Akiiki, 1993). Ancestors are an essential part of family support system. Findings from the analysis of the events of the three case studies within African cultural perspective indicate that beliefs in the role of the dead-living or ancestors promote psychological mental health in families. For example, the perceived presence and participation of ancestors created a wider and supportive context for participants in the three case studies and bound them in their relationship and mutual dependence. Observable presence of ancestors through symbols stimulated the spirit of excitement and enthusiasm. Through rituals, participants both living and dead, entered into a therapeutic bond with one another. Within ritual atmosphere participants could share painful and shameful experiences, anger and frustration and find a listening ear and a caring heart. They could experience acceptance and a sense of belonging. Recognition of the authority and presence of ancestors or the dead-living therefore, provided the living participants a means to deal with conflicts and tensions and the potentiality to generate new ways of relating, understanding and supporting one another.

The invisible world of spirits form a major portion of the psyche. Therefore spiritual experiences need to become an accepted part of the whole subjective inner experience (Von Franz, 1995). The psychological make-up of African people is such that their identity derives from intimate links and bonds within the family. According to Von Franz (1995), "blood symbolizes everywhere the emotional part of the psyche" (p.12). Rituals or scenery for a therapeutic operation (Tseng & McDermott, (1975), help bring out psychological capacities that aid in adaptation to modern experiences, adjustment to varying contexts of relationships, and minimize stress. For example, caught between different modes of being and becoming often leads to conflicts and problems. Ritual ceremonies in the three case studies revived a sense of emotional connectedness and interdependence, members got a platform to air their problems in a holding environment, and their psychological well-being was promoted by a sense of emotional closeness that they developed with one another.

The psychosocial dimension of the role of the dead-living or ancestors is that which promotes

solidarity and cooperation, mutual affection, understanding and harmonious relationships. The ancestors mediate, reconcile and help resolve problems and conflicts among family members. Psychologically, this is necessary because emotionally connected, nurturing relationship is needed to enable people to cope with modern stress. Individuals receive themselves back in the group, their experiences are made authentic by the experience of others and they draw strength from a whole network of meaningful relationships (Von Franz, 1995). Through reconciliation during a ritual ceremony, family members mutually make up their differences and offences. Ancestors therefore, restore the psychological balance of their living kin.

In order to answer the question raised above adequately, an in-depth study of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living is crucial. Such a study can help bring us towards a clearer understanding of what of this phenomenon is universal and what is culture-bound. Roland's (1996) new theoretical approach of decontextualisation and recontextualisation of categories might capture the true variability of this phenomenon, but such a study is beyond the scope of this research. Until such study is done, African traditional healing will continue to exist side by side with Western psychotherapies as an independent approach to healing with its own conceptualisations and methodologies. Multiple psychological problems that modern Africa faces demand mobilisation of all available resources and modes of healing to resolve these problems. Continued critical appraisal of African traditional healing and the role of the dead-living in particular, will lead to a better understanding of how this spiritual phenomenon can translate into modern psychological involvement. Further research of the phenomenon of the role of the dead-living in the African family system is therefore recommended.

5.6 Summary of Findings

According to Gyekye (1997), a tradition that does not accommodate itself to changed circumstances in ways that allow it to function satisfactorily in new circumstances will atrophy sooner rather than later. African traditional healing adapted essential elements from other cultures to local experience, but seems to have maintained its fundamentally religious world view which still affects interpretation of the role of the dead-living or ancestors in the family system. From the observations carried out

in this research, ancestors are an undetected potential source of family support. This potential needs in-depth penetration. Ancestors or the dead-living who are still alive and active within African cultural contexts, sanction rituals and symbols and support African approaches to healing. From the findings it seems it does not matter whether ancestors or the dead-living are remembered by their living kin or not, they are very much part of their families and affect their psychological well-being either negatively or positively.

The reality of the role of ancestors was expressed differently within a Western-oriented psychological context. The meaning of the concept seems to depend on the variety of perspectives found in Western psychology. However, both Western-oriented psychological context and African cultural context recognise the therapeutic value of rituals and symbols associated with the role of ancestors. It is through rituals and symbols that broken relationship bonds are restored. In African cultural context however, rituals and symbols are the predominate mode of African traditional healing, but are perceived to have a therapeutic outcome only when ancestors are present and participating in the process. The ancestors' approval is what gives ritual processes legitimacy and authenticity to heal broken relationships and bring disjointed parties together.

Until proper comparative studies are done, recognition of diversity of cultural experience and attitude of tolerance and acceptance of differences relating to beliefs in the role of ancestors in the life of their kin need to be promoted in psychology (Kleinman, 1980; Roland, 1996; Tseng & McDermott, 1975).

5.7 Research Findings and Literature Review

Several issues were raised in the literature review. Some of these issues will be discussed in the light of research findings. The main research findings have been discussed in section 5.5 and summarised in section 5.6. From the research findings there are some indications that ancestors' presence is palpable because some of the benefits of their therapeutic role are obvious, but some are so subtle that they defy definition (Buhrmann, 1984). The research findings also raised questions and concerns that call for further research into the phenomenon of the role of ancestors or the dead-living in the African

family system.

5.7.1 Positive Outcomes

5.7.1.1 African world views

In section 2.2.1 on African world views it was stated that no distinction between the natural and the supernatural is made because the ancestral spirits are not different in kind from us. They just happen to have a higher status than the mortals. Their actions are within the regular patterns of events (Sogolo, 1993). Remnants of African world views on the synchronicity of natural and supernatural events are present in the outcome of this research. From the observation of the symbolic presence of ancestors during the ritual ceremony performance it became evident that ancestors embody psychic contents (Burkert, 1987). They feel angry, happy, and approving or disapproving. It became evident too that the attitudes of ancestors or the dead-living, namely, rejection, approval or acceptance can be judged from the movements of symbols used, and those symbols that ancestors chose to communicate through.

Psychologically speaking, the concept of a whole person is the base from which African world views operate. In line with these views, an organic person is not divorced from the psychic and the spiritual. A combination of spiritual and healing elements are held together in these perspectives. Communication with ancestors or the dead-living by means of rituals is part of the conceptual framework of holistic healing.

5.7.1.2 African concept of self

In section 2.2.2 it was pointed out that social structures in African societies reflect interpersonal relationships as playing a crucial role in the conceptualisations of self (Georgas et al., 1997). African concept of self like that of the Japanese and Indians, is extended. A significant psychological issue is that a person's self-image encompasses the past as well as the present. Rituals are described by

Roland (1996) as means by which one's humanity is expressed and cultivated. They let people come together in interaction. From the observation of the ritual ceremonies it was evident that rituals could not be performed by an individual alone, but that the participation and co-operation of family members, both living and dead, were required. The participation of family members formed a build-in support system which could promote development of relationships through discussions, confessions, and reconciliations to bring about an atmosphere in which communion could take place. The therapeutic value of ritual celebrations was also evident in how despite tense interactions and heated discussions, embarrassing and painful emotions could be shared in the family or group.

5.7.1.3 Ancestors or the dead-living

The aim of this research was to determine the role of ancestors or the dead-living in the African family system. In the literature review it was pointed out that the issue was not whether a person becomes an ancestor or not, but the influence s/he had (Berglund, 1976). The symbolic reaction of maternal ancestors in the first case study was an example of the importance of influence rather than whether a person becomes an ancestor. The research findings also showed the crucial role ancestors play in ritual ceremonies and symbols to re-establish and maintain communication with their living kin (Thorpe, 1991).

In so far as psychologically speaking ancestors or the dead-living represent the spiritual aspect of the psyche, this spiritual aspect needs to be integrated to effect healing. Since the spiritual and psychopathology can have a complex interaction, disowning the most fundamental part of one's sociocultural aspect may create inner split and nonintegration because different aspects of one's life would be at war.

The issue is how to incorporate sociocultural experiences of the phenomenon of ancestors into Western-oriented psychological theories so that its pathology and psychotherapeutic effects do not remain unknown.

5.7.1.4 African concepts of health and sickness

Although general psychological patterns occur, different cultural and social principles create problems and miscommunication (Roland, 1996). African spiritual concept is intertwined with concepts of health and sickness. Spiritual issues may colour psychological patterns and cause emotional suffering. Ancestors are said to cause sickness, but also assist in the healing process. The research findings showed that ritual procedures, namely, confessions and reconciliations had a therapeutic value with full participation of the living kin and their dead-living members. The visible effect of these procedures was the way strained relationships were thrashed out and discussed until an atmosphere of tension was replaced by one of healthy sharing and talk, symbolised by the calm reactions or movements of the chosen symbols, namely, the animals for ritual slaughter and candles representing the dead-living members. This area requires further investigation to promote creative ways of improving and healing relationships.

5.7.2 Contradictory Outcomes

A popular misconception is that in modern Africa, the concept of the role of the dead-living is limited to rural, uneducated people or “pagans” (Buhrmann, 1984; Hollenweger, 1993; Jung, 1964; Oduyoye, 1993). The misconception may be coming from the surface similarity based on the notion that the nature of therapy and therapeutic characteristics of all forms of psychotherapies is based on similar set of values and beliefs (Barton, 1974; Roland, 1996). Studies by Roland (1996), Thorpe (1993), and Von Franz (1995) contradict such notion. The findings of this study also question this misconception. The first surprise was that the manifestation of the ancestors’ role was not confined by residential area, age or level of education of their living kin in the three case studies observed. The three case studies represented a variety of residential area, level of education and age. Each manifestation of the role of ancestors was however unique to the family or group. The researcher, the traditional healers, and the participants did not know in advance how the manifestation was going to be expressed. Another misconception is that African traditional healers tell what they already

know (Kleinman, 1980; Torrey, 1986; Lartey, 1994). This misconception seems to come from searching only for universals or seeing variabilities or differences as only superficially coloured by culture (Roland, 1996). No evidence was found in this research to support that notion. The traditional healers consulted did not know the people in their day-to-day life, yet from divination they could tell their history. Items of clothing were presented to the traditional healer of good reputation without information on their history except to state whether the owner was a man or woman. It was surprising how her diagnosis tallied with each owner's history.

Psychologically speaking this is where value clashes and miscommunications can lead to emotional frustrations.

The third surprise was how the participants could relate to each symbolic manifestation of the incidents symbolised. For example, it was amazing how some family members could exclaim "that is how he died" to a falling candle representing the presence of their nine year old brother. Psychologically it raises the question of whether ancestors or the dead-living are just projected images of the psyche or whether these supernatural experiences have a reality of their own. However, it is beyond the scope of psychological research to be able to answer these questions. The fourth surprise lay in the power of the ritual celebration in bringing the family members together and creating an atmosphere in which emotions could be expressed without shame, and grudges and tensions confessed freely and openly without pressure from anyone. Psychologically speaking this surprise confirms that African traditional healing is parallel to Western-oriented psychotherapies in creating a containing environment for catharsis. The fifth surprise was how a teenage boy named after the father of the home managed to get his uncle to leave the room and not come back after many attempts by his older cousins and uncles. The revelation of the index person's history through somebody else's item of clothing was also surprising. From a psychological point of view the interpretation of these two events is beyond the scope of psychological research.

5.7.3 Unexpected Outcomes

In section 2.2.3 of literature review it was stated that the influence of an ancestor depends on the

social status or age, and that therefore, children had no power, could not give advice nor exercise influence of any kind (Berglund, 1976). In view of this statement the symbolic reaction of the candle that represented a nine year old boy in the second case study was unexpected. Not only did he demonstrate how he died, but fell into a dish whose contents were going to be thrown out in the bush together with a dice. He seemed to communicate disapproval about gambling in the family. The other unexpected outcome relates to the power vested on traditional healers as mediators between the living kin and their dead members. Traditional healers are described as specialists in rituals and customs, and communicate with ancestors (Berglund, 1976; Buhrmann, 1984; Tseng & McDermott, 1975). It was therefore unexpected when the officiating traditional healer in the first case study did not understand two important symbols. This raises a concern about whether traditional healers are vested with too much unnecessary power to the detriment of African society as a whole.

Unexpected outcomes demonstrate that misunderstanding and miscommunication occur in any human context of interaction, even within groups. However, not understanding significantly different cultural assumptions, and relying on surface similarity of things, can complicate matters and result in bias and adverse psychological distress (Roland, 1996; Thorpe, 1993).

5.7.4 Unexplained Outcomes

Buhrmann (1984) once stated: "A written account pales into insignificance when compared with the actual experience There are things one cannot put into words, only feel them in one's body" (p. 57). The unexplained outcomes raise questions that are difficult to answer. For example, why did symbols react appropriately according to particular experiences and history of the family or group during ritual celebrations? Why did one pair of items of clothing swap histories of their owners and not the other pair? The answer to these questions false beyond the scope of psychological research.

5.8 Critical Evaluation

The question posed by Shipman (1997), namely, "Can there be objectivity in social research?", is

relevant here. Objectivity is a central concern in research, but as Shipman (1997) says, when the research is about humans, there is always controversy. This section looks at how a verification process was built during this research to clarify and check the evidence from observation against that from other modes of evidence. The researcher effects, validity, reliability, generalisability and ethical dilemma which affected this research are examined for the purpose of verification.

5.8.1 Researcher effect or bias

As Shipman (1997) stated, “we see the world through our attitudes, prejudices, values and through the models in the mind that we have learned” (p,72). The personal characteristics of the researcher could not but affect observation and the findings of this research. For example, although the researcher learned Western-based models in psychology, her attitudes, values and prejudices could not be expected to have been changed by these models. Attitudes, values and prejudices would therefore be difficult to control. Mechanisms had to be set in place to safe-guard validity and reliability.

The personal characteristics of the researcher were listed in section 3.3.4. While these characteristics provided opportune access to intimate situations or settings such as family rituals, they also raised ethical problems. What was observed and how the material was interpreted, may have been determined by preconceptions of the researcher inherent in her personal characteristics. The researcher’s personal characteristics therefore, added to the confounding factors inherent in the two qualitative methods employed for collecting data and for analysis, namely, participant observation and case study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

In negotiating a research role some trade-offs and mutual reciprocity between the participants and the researcher took place. The settings determined how the researcher could gain access. Part of negotiating access was to come to a mutually acceptable compromise, namely that she be allowed to use the events in this research study. For example, first, the researcher became a translator in the first case study because the family did not understand the language spoken by the traditional healers.

Secondly, she agreed to be a facilitator of the rituals in all the three case studies. In return the researcher could observe ritual procedures from within and use the observed events for research, but not without threat to validity and reliability of the evidence collected.

5.8.2 Validity

According to Shipman (1997) and Silverman (2000), the evidence is valid if it closely reflects the phenomenon or the world being described. There are three possible weaknesses to this research which are due to the qualitative nature of the data collected and analysed. These are the anecdotal quality of the evidence, the difficulty to determine the representativeness of the findings generated, and the difficulty to entertain alternative interpretation of the same material within the African cultural context. These weaknesses raised the question of validity. One way to promote validity was through triangulation and the other was testing for similarity and dissimilarity of the evidence of the manifestations of the presence and role of the ancestors or the dead-living. These mechanisms were used to supplement participant observation method for data collection in an effort to present a rigorous, critical and objective research.

5.8.2.1 Triangulating Methods

Shipman (1997) describes triangulation as a way of reducing dependence on the one-person, one-model, one-method collection of evidence. He argues that it is an important warning against one single sources of evidence.

In this study, triangulation means cross-checking, seeking second opinions and other view points. It was done to reduce dependency on the one-person and one-method collection of evidence, and to seek a second opinion. For example for validation, observations and traditional healers' diagnostic accounts were compared to overcome partial viewing of the researcher and to verify the findings. First, cross-checking with a traditional healer of good reputation was done after the family rituals took place. Items of clothing were submitted to this traditional healer for assessment without

disclosing who the items belonged to. Secondly, the follow-up of the family or group was done with some members for progress report on the well-being of the family or group. For example, it was through such follow-up and cross-checking that the tension, which was continuing to exist between the maternal and paternal ancestors in the first case study, was identified. Observations were also compared with literature accounts to validate the research findings and to try to make a better sense of the problem under investigation. The methods complemented one another. The arguments of this research are therefore perceived to be valid because they are tested with evidence from other sources.

5.8.2.2 Testing for Similarity and Dissimilarity of Evidence

Testing for similarities and dissimilarities in this research involved selecting three different cases observed at different times, with different set of participants and in different places. This is qualitative sampling. Cases from three different sites and settings were analysed in order to get the sense of whether the role of the dead-living was limited to traditional healers' knowledge of cultural norms and practices. Secondly, to check whether the perceived manifestations of the presence and role of ancestors were limited to particular areas, for example, to graveyards or rural context, to no education or to a certain level of education. The criteria for selecting the three case studies for analysis have been stated in section 3.2.3.2. Although the three case studies varied in background characteristics of the participants, the themes were found to hold in different site and background characteristics. In all three cases some evidence of the role of the dead-living in the African family system was reflected. As far as the cultural context was concerned therefore, there was corroboration not only within cases, but also across cases as well.

5.8.3 Reliability

Shipman (1997) and Silverman (2000) describe reliability as degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or the same observer on different occasions. Concern with reliability is concern about the replication of research results (Hall & Hall, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Triangulation of data and methods explained under validity is

also relevant here. To answer the question of what happens under variation of conditions about the manifestation of the presence and the role of the dead-living, sites with contrasting circumstances were analysed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, the first case study involved prior consultation with traditional healers for diagnosis and treatment, while the second and third case studies did not involve such a consultation. The site characteristics, namely suburb, township and rural, and the background characteristics of participants in the three case studies have been discussed under validity. They hold for reliability too. It was discovered that participants with diverse background and in different situations expressed the same values relating to the role of their ancestors or their dead-living members. The themes reflected the underlying belief in the role of the ancestors in all three case studies. In this way the credibility of the findings was ascertained to promote reliability.

Although the replication of the study is not possible because of the kind of problem under investigation, selecting three different sites to study the same phenomenon followed a replication logic analogous to multiple experiments (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The selectivity of the observation however, still remained a problem difficult to control because of the researcher bias already discussed in 5.6.1. In her role as participant observer the researcher may have seen only the information that fitted her own personal views and saw only activities that confirmed her position (Shipman, 1997). Triangulation of data sources and methods however, helped confirm the findings by distinguishing between analysis based on researcher's concepts and analysis deriving from cultural conceptual framework (Silverman, 1995).

5.8.4 Generalizability

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Shipman (1997), sampling affects generalisability because it implies representativeness. Selection of the cases to observe was opportunistic on account of the intimacy of the settings and contexts. Such selection makes generalisation and claims of representativeness of beliefs, norms and practices concerning the manifestations of the presence and

role of ancestors suspect. The findings may therefore be disputed by other researchers.

Three case studies were selected for analysis of how the role of ancestors or the dead-living is understood to manifest itself and how the manifestations are negotiated within the African cultural context. The criterion for selection was not their representativeness. Selecting these three case studies for analysis therefore, restricted and limited the scope of this research. The choice was determined by the sensitivity of the settings which affected the number of cases available for analysis. The evidence keeps generalisation within the African cultural context and cannot be used for generalisation to other cultural contexts.

The dissimilarity of the cases in terms of the variation of settings and background characteristics of participants gives the confidence that what has been learned from this research about the role of the dead-living in the three case studies holds more broadly in the African cultural context (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). For example, the first two case studies involved the manifestations of the presence and role of ancestors within a family context. The third case study in which participants were a heterogeneous group of African traditional healers served as an additional site to check whether the same themes emerged as in the first and second case studies. In the second and third case studies no prior consultation of traditional healers was done to determine what kinds of rituals were recommended or appropriate. The three cases were also marked by differences in residential areas of participants. Despite the differences mentioned, similar findings emerged, strengthening claims about what was observed and analysed as manifestations of the presence and role of the dead-living in ritual ceremonies and symbols.

5.8.5 Ethical Dilemmas

Codes of ethics, institutional review boards and informed consent statements force the researcher to think out the possible harm his/her work might cause (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The researcher was invited by a family member in the first two case studies and by a co-ordinator in the third case study to facilitate ritual ceremonies. The access was made possible by her personal characteristics already

listed in section 3.3.4. Her acceptance was reciprocated by allowing her to use the events of the rituals for research purposes. However, the gesture did not mean that she is exempt from observing ethical obligations, namely, not to hurt participants emotionally, physically and financially, and to exercise respect and concern for their well-being.

So as not to hurt participants emotionally, the researcher exercised respect and concern for the participants by taking the back-seat as family and group interactions and discussions took place during the rituals. She listened and guided only when there was prolonged deviation from the purpose of the ritual or discussion of an issue. In order not to hurt the participant physically, when the discussions became too heated as in the second case study, she intervened at the risk of harm to herself. She did not charge for her services in order not to hurt participants financially. For example, she agreed to the roles set out for her, namely, to be a translator in the first case study and a facilitator in all three case studies on condition that she was allowed to use some of the material for this research. The researcher has also protected the participants in the three case studies by leaving out names and too sensitive material. She continued to keep in touch with the “gatekeepers” for progress report on the well-being of those who were part of those ritual celebrations after these rituals took place.

5.9 Conclusions and Implications

According to Buhrmann (1984), Kleinman (1980), and Tseng and McDermott (1975), what constitutes effective psychotherapy is a matter of controversy among psychologists because many factors could aid improvement. Although some findings seem to give some answers to the questions posed, other researchers might have come up with different answers from those identified by this researcher because different observers will observe different things and interpret their observations according to perspectives salient to them (Shipman, 1997; Tseng & McDermott, 1975; Wilber 1996). No conclusive answers can be given in this research about such a complex phenomenon as the role of the dead-living in the African family system. Further investigation is necessary to develop the phenomenon to its full potential.

The belief in the role of ancestors or the dead-living in the African family system is a deep-seated view within African cultural contexts (Hollenweger, 1993; Milingo, 1985; Opoku, 1993). This belief is concretely reflected in ritual ceremonies and symbols (Opoku, 1993). The need exists that this phenomenon receive attention in Western-based therapies geared for African people because, "no one institutional model can meet the divergent needs in all societies and in all cultures" (Buhrmann, 1984, p.93; Gopaul & McNicol, 1997; Lartey, 1994). The findings of this research show that ancestors are an existing family resource that needs to be further researched and promoted if modern psychology hopes to play a dynamic role in the upheavals now taking place in African family life (Oduyoye 1993; Sue, 1998). The research showed that African rituals have meaning within their cultural context and are still functional because they create an atmosphere that help reduce emotional conflicts and restore good and harmonious relationships within the family system. These rituals have a spiritual quality which is also culturally congruent and internally consistent within African world views and healing practices (Hollenweger, 1993; Lartey, 1994; Terrell, 1994). The presence and participation of the ancestors or the dead-living in these rituals is what gives them their spiritual status (Lukoff, Lu & Turner, 1992). Therefore, ancestors or the dead-living play a crucial role in the African family system. This African resource is thus worth consideration and recognition in mental health care delivery systems. According to Kalu (1993), we cannot discount our connectedness with our ancestors. Acknowledging the central importance of ancestors or the dead-living in the restoration of genuine and meaningful therapeutic relationships within families might go a long way in recovering family values and identity which can nourish self-esteem and self-confidence within the cultural complexity of modern Africa.

African approaches to healing offer a greater accessibility to majority of African people. According to Shipman (1997), reality is what people define as real. As Kalu (1993) argues, propositional statements of reality are less important for Africa than the living experience of it. In order to promote and harmonise all available resources and to make healing practices meaningful within African cultural contexts, critical appraisal and analysis of the role of the dead-living and the African ritual system should receive constant attention in psychological research.

While this research answered the question about the role of ancestors or the dead-living within African cultural context, lack of a common conceptual framework made it difficult if not impossible to answer the same question within Western-based psychological context. Research and dialogue between African and Western cultural contexts will be important to mutually understand features that are common, different and complementary (Levers, 1997; Tseng & McDermott, 1975; Wilber, 1996).

Complementary not in a sense of one party determining what is lacking in the other, but both contributing equally to the discussion (Castillo, 1997; Greenfield, 1997; Lukoff et al., 1992; Oduyoye, 1993; Segall et al., 1998).

5.10 Further Research

What contribution can African traditional healing make to Western-oriented psychology so that the latter does not remain foreign to Africa and become irrelevant for the life of the people in whose cultural context it is taking root? Research as to whether the role of ancestors as understood within the African cultural context is specific or peculiar to Africans or whether it transcends cultural barriers is recommended. Such research might help shed more light on the therapeutic potential of this phenomenon for the psychological well-being of all peoples across cultures. It might also lead to a clearer analysis of what the real differences between African and Western conceptualisations of this phenomenon are. This may promote tolerance and acceptance of such differences (Ho, 1998; Levers, 1997). The study might also help us gain some wider perspective of the context that nourished African traditional healing (Oduyoye, 1993). Roland's (1996) method of decontextualisation of categories from one culture and their recontextualisation in another might be a useful tool for comparative study of this nature. This will be in keeping with a suggestion by Fischer, Jome and Atkinson (1998) to establish a multicultural therapeutic research, training and practice.

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APPENDIX

The concept *African* is used to include Africa, south of the Sahara which displays a cultural unity born out of similar patterns of ecological adaptations, common socio-historical experiences and the diffusion of similar cultural traits (Lartey, Nwachuku, & Wa Kasonga, 1994; Nsamenang, 1995).

The concept *dead-living* according to this study refers to those who are physically and clinically no longer alive, who have passed away, the departed. Although Mbiti(1989) uses the concept *living-dead*, this concept gives the impression that physically and clinically they are alive; but behave like they are dead. It is to say that "the dead are not dead"; but have "passed away" to another world or place, they have "departed", that the concept *dead-living* is used (Gwembe, 1995, p.33).

Another concept that is employed in this study is *iSangoma* and its plural *iZangoma* to refer to African traditional healers irrespective of the differences that exist among them (Makunga, Edwards & Nzima, 1998).

The term *traditional* is used to mean inherited ancestral elements that have endured through generations, that include cherished values, practices, and institutions passed on by previous generations (Gyekye, 1997).

The concept *healing* is used to mean restoration of emotional, spiritual, physical, and social well-being (Lartey, 1994).

The concept *family* is used to mean members who share the same lineage, both living and dead (Berglund, 1976).

Family system: Denotes interpersonal and interdependence support network.

Rituals: Ceremonies aimed at communion with the dead-living or ancestors.

Reconciliation ritual: Re-establishment and restoration of harmonious relationship bonds with ancestors, and resolution of disturbed interpersonal relationship with one another to heal family wounds.

Confessions: Naming and sharing anger, frustrations, conflicts and tensions in interpersonal relationships, and exposing them to ritual reconciliation.

Ukubuyisa: The ritual of bringing ancestors back home.

Impepho: Ancestral incense.

Umsamo: A sacred place in the hut/house where the guardian spirits dwell. *Ukuthwasa*: Training process for those called by their ancestors to become traditional healers.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:

Gives an idea of where the dead-living are located in the hierarchy of forces in African ontological assumption. It was adopted from Azibo’s (1996) illustration of the African’s extended-self (Pg. 16).