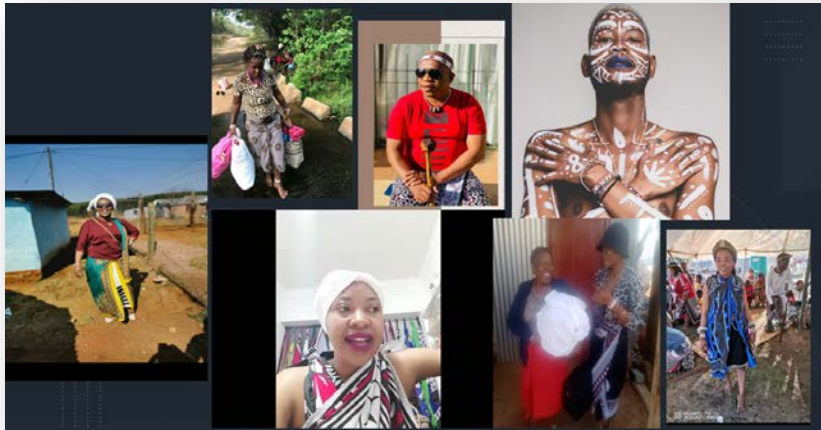


**The ontological reality of spirit and its ways of knowing as a form of embodied
intangible cultural heritage: A case of the oGobela teaching approaches and techniques
within Ubungoma practice**



A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of

Master of Education

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By

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Declaration

I, Venetia Rose Jacobs declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has been not submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university, and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. It is submitted for the Master of Arts Degree in Education under the Education Faculty at Rhodes University, Makhanda.

v. Jacobs

Signature:

Date :08/02/2024

Acknowledgements

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge God and my ancestors for helping me through such a difficult journey. I would like to acknowledge the ancestors from my mom's side, thank you to the Jacobs' and the Errens's.

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Abstract

This study uses an ethnographic lens to explore the lived experiences, learning processes and experiential knowledge of oGobela (spiritual teachers). The study explores oGobela teaching approaches, techniques, and ways of knowing in Ubungoma¹ practice which is known as Ukuthwasa², which is understood as a modality or expression of Isintu. Furthermore, Isintu is defined as Indigenous knowledge systems and ancestral wisdom traditions which include Indigenous expressions of African peoples' interactions with the cosmos, nature, earth and knowledge systems. The study reveals how esoteric knowledge (knowledge from ancestors and divinities) is translated into attainable knowledge in the form of healing techniques. This study aims to dismantle a largely European pedagogy when it pertains to the understanding of religious practices.

An ethnographic lens layered with a decolonial intent worked together as a counter-hegemonic practice in the recentralisation of marginal voices, in this case, the voices of Izangoma narrating their lived experiences. Izangoma refer to people who have graduated as healers from initiation school.

The theoretical framework used to guide the study was the sociocultural theory and decolonial theory. The decolonial theory was useful in my study to re-examine imperial histories through the harmful lens of colonialism. Sociocultural theory is geared towards looking at how learners actually learn as opposed to the way learners are expected to learn. This Vygotskian school of thought believes that human development is not isolated from historical, cultural and social contexts. My methodology made use of the case study, narrative analysis and critical-ethnographic approaches involving semi-structured interviews with approximately seven Izangoma. This included radical embodied participation and reflexive journalling. I also drew on emerging studies on Indigenous knowledge systems such as the “anthropology of dreaming” (Tedlock, 1987, p. 1) and the “institution of drumming and dreaming in Ngoma” (Janzen, 1991, p. 291) to reflect on my experience as an initiate (Gogo Ukukhanya KweMhlaba) and my

¹ According to Gogo Khanyakude Ubungoma is a somatic practice rooted in oral tradition on the ethos of Ubuntu: a human-centred philosophy of a shared existence humanity and isintu: indigenous wisdom lineages and knowledge

² Ukuthwasa is a rite of passage where a person undergoes a reconciliation of their lineages, to commemorate one's life as a healer.

observations of my Gobela and other oGobela learning processes. The study draws a sample pool of both Izangoma and oGobela, to provide a holistic view of the role of oGobela from a teacher and learner perspective. It is important to note that not everyone who is a Sangoma is a Gobela. Becoming a Gobela is an additional calling based on specific instructions from your ancestors.

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List of Abbreviations

AEE	Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer, Intersex and Asexual
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Glossary of Terms

- Amadlozi - ancestral guides
- Amakhosi - royalty
- Amathwasana/lithwasana³- initiate
- Esoteric - spiritual knowledge
- Gida (dance)
- Gobela (singular) – oGobela (plural) – the one who bows to your ancestors (direct translation)-spiritual teacher
- Hlola - consult
- Indumba - ancestral kraal
- Inyanga - directly translated means Moon and often refers to the Goddess of the Moon, but also singular – Izinyanga (plural) - herbalist
- iSangoma/Izangoma (singular) Isangoma (plural) - healers who initiate through song and dance
- Isanusi - the highest form of African healer, one who is all-encompassing of all the gifts under African spirituality i.e a seer, a prophet and a fortune teller)
- Isifundiso - lessons
- Isintu - culture
- Isithunywa - messenger
- Mndawe/Ndawe - foreign spirits
- Mpande/Empanjeni - initiation school
- Phahla - prayer
- Ubizo - the calling
- Ubungoma - the institution of song, and dance and drumming
- Ukuphalaza - to purge
- Ukuthwasa - direct translation - ‘the process of coming out’ or the process of initiation
- Umgidi - celebration
- Umqombothi - African beer
- Umsamo - prayer place
- Umthandazi (singular) - Abathandazi - a prophet
- Umfembi is a person with Ndawe spirits and is trained to heal using ukufemba (exorcism).
- Umhlahli, who is a person who tells you the name of the person who bewitched or stole from you.
- Izithakazelo- praise poems
- Imigidi-celebrations
- Amakhela/ BoMkhulu (male ancestors)-aboGogo-(female ancestors)

³ Please note lithwasana is spelled with a small letter ‘l’ in terms of established protocols.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Motivation Behind the Study

During my Postgraduate Certificate in Education in 2020, I stumbled across the African Traditional Religion section in the Life Orientation textbook, which describes African religion as the worshipping of one supreme God whose force translates throughout human, animals and plants (Christofides, 2012). In the Grade 11 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) textbook *Life orientation for the real world* it speaks about Ubuntu being the centre of African religion (Atwell et al., 2012). The Oxford Publishers CAPS textbook *Successful life orientation learners book* speaks about African religion being about the “the respect for the sacredness of life” (Botha et al., 2012, p. 20). Although these are all concepts that govern African spirituality, they do not clearly articulate what African spirituality is.

This is when I started problematising the term ‘African religion’. According to informal conversations with Izangoma⁴, there is no Nguni equivalent for the word ‘religion’ because it never existed pre-colonially. Therefore, forcing spirituality into the confines of a religious category is a hegemonic practice. For African people, culture and spirituality have never been separate, and culture was created as a way to align ourselves to a higher being (UMvelinqangi). Spirituality becomes a concentric circular process, where the physical, physiological and spiritual mirror each other.

During the contextual profiling exercise that helped ground my work for pre-proposal writing, I was able to identify the inaccuracies and misconceptions in the legislation and literature on African spirituality. I discovered that very little was known about African spirituality, African cosmology and Indigenous Knowledge systems. Ukuthwasa (initiation school) is one of the very few institutions of Indigenous knowledge left due to the erosion of African Indigenous knowledge through colonisation. I became curious to understand how the institution of Ukuthwasa (initiation school) operates and what one can learn from Indigenous knowledge.

⁴ Healers who initiate through song and dance

This was when I decided to embark on a critical ethnographical journey of the Ubungoma⁵ practice, as I was undergoing the process of initiation myself. As someone who is a mixture of coloured (my mother being coloured) and Swazi (on my father's side), I found this space extremely confusing because I was raised by my mother's family and spoke only Afrikaans. Christianity was all I knew up until my hospitalisation in 2018 with chronic depression and generalised anxiety disorder, which led me to seek an alternative perspective. Through this process, I learnt more about how my father's side comes from royalty and a long lineage of Ubungoma healers.

The calling signs I experienced (which I talk about it in-depth in Chapter Two) led me on a journey of self-discovery. The academic in me always wanted to understand the "why" and "how" the esoteric works. I was fascinated by how Nguni cosmology and Amadlozi⁶ work and what it meant for me, as I embody what I call 'polar opposite' lineages.

Upon this journey, I found that Izangoma that I had encountered practised a lot of fear mongering tactics to force me into initiation. I was constantly told that in this space there is no room for questions, so Ukuthwasa become a dreadful term and concept. I embarked on a journey of finding Izangoma who were open to demystify Ubungoma and explain its processes.

It is important to note that the Ngoma trope⁷ has existed for many centuries. My particular focus is the Ubungoma practice, which is a sub-branch of the Ngoma trope. I will write from a Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele) perspective, as the Ubungoma space is largely occupied by Nguni people.

1.2 My Writing Style

My writing style is mainly attributed to my foundations in history in my undergraduate studies where I majored in African History and Psychology and in my Honours in African History. The relationship between African history and oral history is one of transformation over time. Daniel McCall (1960) has called oral history "the heritage of the ears" but also the heritage of peoples lived experiences. I have always thought of myself as an African oral

⁵ The institution of song, and dance and drumming

⁶ Ancestral guides

⁷ Ritual institution in Central and Southern Africa is often referred to, or carries the name, of ngoma, at once the term for drum, as well as drumming or other musical instrumentation, singing, dancing, and the complex of constituent behaviour and concept (Janzen, 1992, p. 290).

historian. In this thesis, I undertake an interactive and conversational tone. I speak to the literature from my own experience and engage with the experiences of the other participants. I chose theoretical underpinnings and a research design that allowed me to weave and thread oral accounts and histories throughout the thesis. There is a power in ‘talking things out’ and conversating with things and people. Most importantly, I believe this thesis encompasses all the disciplines I have ever studied – Psychology, History and Education. I draw on these three disciplines to explore the Ubungoma discipline.

1.3 Setting the Scene

The broad backdrop of the study takes into consideration the political climate that has resulted in the subjugation of African Indigenous knowledge systems under colonisation. This can be seen in the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1895 of the Cape Colony, which was an extension of the Witchcraft Act 1735 in Great Britain. This subsequently resulted in the formalisation of the Witchcraft Act of 1957 under the apartheid rule (Witchcraft Suppression Act 3, RSA, 1957).

The 1957 Witchcraft Act states:

(b) in circumstances indicating that he professes or pretends to use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, imputes the cause of death of, injury or grief to, disease in, damage to or disappearance of any person or thing to any other person; (c) employs or solicits any witchdoctor, witch-finder or any other person to name or indicate any person as a wizard. (Witchcraft Suppression Act, RSA, 1957)

Punishment would be:

(iii) In the case of an offence referred to in paragraph (c), (d) or (e), to a fine not exceeding five hundred rand or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or to both such fine and such imprisonment. (Witchcraft Suppression Act, RSA, 1957)

The Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957 prevented practitioners of African spirituality from practising their craft. The failure of the Act’s ability to distinguish between witchdoctors and Isangoma and Izinyanga shows a lack of understanding by the colonial powers and apartheid government. To clarify, a witchdoctor is someone who uses their gift to bewitch others, whereas Inyanga and Sangoma are people who have initiated and use healing practices to heal others. Furthermore, the Witchcraft Act failed to understand African spirituality and its conceptualisation of body, mind and spirit. To elaborate, this holistic approach is all-encompassing of ones’ psychological, physiological and spiritual well-being. This as well as

the banning of African medicinal practices and African spirituality created misconceptions that in turn made African practices “pagan”.

According to informal interviews with Gogo Khanyakude, Siyabonga Mkhize⁸ and Gogo Zipho during the contextual profiling of the study, the primary function of the Witchcraft Act was to alienate and demonise African ways, thereby spiritually stunting African people for hundreds of years. The biggest crime of the Witchcraft Act is that it convinced most people that African spirituality and culture were demonic and pagan. Furthermore, the existing legacy of colonialism and apartheid resulted in African people being stripped of all sense of spirituality. Bhengu (2013) states that, “Christianity during and after colonial times did not transform the entirety of African society; it did not change the ‘fibre’ of African society. It merely created the ‘modernized’ part of South Africa” (Bhengu, 2013, p. 13). Bhengu’s statement is significant because African ways of knowing have completely been alienated and considered “barbarian”. For many, African culture and Ubizo (Ukuthwasa calling) is considered demonic or pagan.

Ngong (2012) argues that it was Western missionaries who wrote about African tradition and spirituality as a subject of Western modern imagination. The Western imagination of African spirituality has become a microcosm of the dominant stories told about Africans, thus missing the more significant ways true African stories can be interpreted (Ngong, 2012). An example of this can be seen by the narrative created around King Shaka Zulu by the colonial powers to paint him as a “bloodthirsty military genius who was illegitimate child” (Wylie, 2011, p. 4). Moreover, there was a great need to create King Shaka as this barbarian king who goes on a killing spree to conquer other nations. Oral history paints a different narrative of a king who wanted to unite African people under one banner called the Zulu Nation. King Shaka was entirely left to the imagination of the colonialists according to Wylie (2011); he further states there is a great deal we do not know and will never know about King Shaka Zulu (Wylie, 2011, p. 4).

Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978) argues that the West portrays the East as a clear binary. Said argues that this concept of the Occident (the West) and “barbarous, other” Orient (the East) holds what he calls the binary of essentialism. One of the crucial manifestations of this “essential ontological division” is in the language of religion, and in the related stereotypes that

⁸ Spiritual advisor for the Umsamo institute

are perpetuated (Said, 1978, p. 97). Ubungoma is still considered the “barbarous other” to a certain extent. The one most prominent example is the viewers of Radio Pulpit concerns about the condoning of “teaching of ancestral worship in schools” (Ellerbeck, 2022). This comes after the Department of Basic Education in Kwa-Zulu Natal put out a call for abstracts to deal with the influx of ancestral callings within schools in the Kwa-Zulu Natal area. The misconception is that the Ubungoma practice is the worshipping of ancestors. African spirituality believes in God as the centre and ancestors as guides.

Colonial education and apartheid education viewed local Indigenous knowledge as primitive and African culture and languages as inferior. During the colonial era in Africa, knowledge systems were constructed within a scientific phenomenon, while African knowledge was constructed as baseless/non-scientific (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986). This was primarily because African spirituality is an intangible heritage and based on oral history, thus making it easier to discredit or to be considered baseless. This is especially in comparison to Christianity and other hegemonic religions that shaped education systems due to their documented trajectories that aligned with and also produced modern education paradigms. Consequently, there is a need to confine African spirituality within the perimeters of the English language and Western religious format of narration, which perpetuates subjugation of the oral form and creates a sense of othering – issues which I will probe in more depth in the study.

The Ngoma trope date backs to pre-colonial times; it has roots that extend across time, culture and languages which derive from ancient African beliefs systems. The Ngoma traditions and practices vary regionally across Southern Africa, mostly practised in Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa with slight variations (Janzen, 1992). There are many different forms of traditional healers such as:

- Isanusi (the highest form of African healer), one who is all-encompassing and has all the gifts under African spirituality (a seer, prophet, fortune teller).
- Isangoma (those who initiate through song and dance).
- Izinyanga (herbalist) who uses bones for divination and Muthi or herbs for healing.
- Abathandazi (prophet/prophetess) uses elemental energy (Isithunywa), water and candles for healing (Mfusi, 1984).
- Umfembi is a person with Ndawe spirits and is trained to heal using ukufemba (exorcism).

- Umhlahli, who is a person who tells you the name of the person who bewitched or stole from you.

My study chose to focus on Isangoma who are practising as oGobela (spiritual teachers) and the ways they transfer knowledge to their Amathwasana (initiates) in their Mpandes (initiation schools) in South Africa. Ukuthwasa, according to Ogana and Ojong (2015), means a “coming out or a process of emergence likened to the appearance of the new moon” (Ogana & Ojong, 2015, p. 3). Booi (2004) describes Ukuthwasa as a “journey of self-realisation and meaning” or to be “reborn” (Booi, 2004, p. 2). Whereas, According to Xaso (2015), Ukuthwasa is a process of identity formation which is constructed by the knowledge acquired throughout the process. Thornton (2009) describes Ukuthwasa as an Indigenous institution which specialises in traditional expertise and knowledge. This institution transmits knowledge through the formal educational system which involves teachers – oGobela – students (Amathwasana) and ancestors; these ancestors are said to be powerful bearers of knowledge which includes fortunes, illness and misfortunes. Mokgethi (2018) describes Ukuthwasa as a process that not any individual can undergo; it is a spiritual calling that is dictated and “governed by the ancestors who choose the candidate that they feel is best suited to inherit the gift of amadlozi” (p. 10).

I, on the other hand, describe the Intwaso process as coming full circle with oneself and having the ability to have an intergenerational and interdimensional conversation with oneself. Essentially, you are looking inward towards your bloodline and lineage, acknowledging the gifts, healing and traumas (vertically). Then you look at yourself through an interdimensional lens and see how you can ascend to your higher self (horizontally).

In addition, according to Thornton (2009), the purpose of initiation is to harness one’s ancestral gifts and train as a traditional specialist. Furthermore, the author adds that the Ukuthwasa process involves learning to acquire knowledge, interpreting the natural environment and decoding and interpreting messages that come from the spiritual realm (Thornton, 2009). Mokgethi (2018) opens up space for Ukuthwasa to be known as critical pedagogy. The author defines Ukuthwasa as a critical pedagogy that operates as an educational philosophy and social movement. It operates on the collective engagement between the “educator as well the learners the educator as well as the learners and is reliant on reciprocated information between the two parties for dialogue on information from the ancestors to exist” (Mokgethi, 2018, p. 10).

Furthermore, through many informal conversations, I was able to reconstruct a narrative of how Ukuthwasa operates, bearing in mind that because of its spirituality it is subjective for each person. How one initiates depends on the type of spirit one embodies. Each Mpande has a different specialisation; those who specialise in protective rituals (protecting homes, yourself, your businesses), those who specialise in cleansings (death, abortion, etc) and many more. Which Mpande you go to depends on the type of gift you possess. There are many types of spirits with many different functions. I will only list the pre-dominant spirits.

The first branch is the whistling spirits; the Amakhosi (royal bloodline/those who embody a king or queen) and Abalozi (they are great diviners and seers). The Mpande and the Isifundiso will be centred on enhancing clairvoyant (seeing abilities/divination) and claircognizance (knowing) abilities. Some may use whistles and prayers as divination tools and healing agents.

The second branch is Isithunywa or isipropheto spirits; these are universal spirits who prefer to work through the institution of the church. It is also important to note isipropheto and prayer are not only unique to the Christian religion but have been common practices within the African community pre-colonisation according to Gogo Ntombi. Therefore, the Mpande and Isifundiso will be centred on the Bible (decoding of Bible scriptures as a divination tool or motivational upliftment), candles and waterfalls. Some may use praying, fasting and seeking guidance through the ukuphahla as a divination tool and healing agent.

The third branch are the water spirits. The Mndawu/Mndawe spirit which is known as a foreign spirit may appear as Indian/White, or a python or someone who you may not know; this spirit is directly related to issues of identity. There are many different opinions of who and what the Ndawe spirits are, but the common consensus is that these spirits work with the root chakra (womb and spine area) and the healing of reproductive organisms, finances etc. The Mpande and the Isifundiso will be centred on removing evil spirits through the process of ukufemba (exorcism), casting protective rituals with imuthi and healing reproductive blockages. Inzunza/Ngernza (mermaid spirits and other tribes) serve as guardians of the water world inhabits dams, oceans and rivers. Most of the people who possess this gift divine with water and heal with water.

The fourth branch is the Mndiki ancestors (boKhokho) who are the eldest in one's bloodline; these spirits are custodians and messenger spirits. They also affect you emotionally and intellectually. Idlozi yase khaya (Nguni, Mosotho, etc) deal more with psychological well-

being. Misalignment with either one of these spirits can cause Thwasa (sickness, depression, anxiety and in extreme cases epileptic seizures). The Mpande and Isifundiso would be centred on enhancing intuition and divination tools.

The promulgation of the new democratic South Africa by the African National Congress government in 1994 invited a new public discourse around traditional healers in South Africa. The South African government attempted to formalise traditional healing practices by means of the “Traditional Health Practitioners Act (No. 35 of 2004), signed into law on 11 February 2005 by President Thabo Mbeki” (Thornton, 2009, p. 17).

Over centuries, Ukuthwasa (initiation to be a Sangoma) has evolved and its evolutionary nature is still gradually unfolding in South Africa and beyond. Its appeal is growing in and around Southern Africa. It is also changing as Izangoma are exposed to a wide range of other healing traditions and religious views. That is because Ukuthwasa has changed from being perceived by some churches as pagan to be “considered a reality that is acknowledged and openly spoken about” (Mlisa, 2020, p. 230).

The Traditional Health Practitioners Act specifies that “traditional health practitioners” must achieve a recognised practitioner qualification through a specific “traditional” educational and training processes. Furthermore, the act explicitly defines the “traditional health practitioner” (Isangoma and Izinyanga) and the “traditional tutor” (Gobela) – a Gobela can both be an Inyanga and Sangoma) as

the performance of a function, activity, process or service based on a traditional philosophy that includes the utilization of traditional medicine or traditional practice and which has as its object - (a) the maintenance or restoration or prevention of a physical or mental health function; or (b) the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a physical or mental illness; or (c) the rehabilitation of a person to enable that person to resume normal functioning within the family or community; or (d) the physical or mental preparation of an unity; or (d) the physical or mental preparation of an individual for puberty, adulthood, pregnancy, childbirth, and death. (Traditional Health Practitioners Act, No. 35 of 2004)

The Act does not mention anything associated with traditional healing such as initiation schools, spirits or trance states. The exclusion of such important details neglects Isangoma and Izinyanga religious and spiritual commitments, thus, the act wrongfully constructs traditional healing as a lesser form of healing (Thornton, 2009. p. 19). The act implicitly recognises that “traditional health practitioners” are not included among the other professions contemplated

under the Health Professions Act of 1974. Instead, “traditional health practitioners” are labelled under the criterion of “traditional philosophy”. This legal definition fails to encapsulate the essence of traditional healing.

Over time Isangoma and Izinyanga have adapted to offer a wide range of counselling, divination/diagnostic, medical and other services. Some harvest and others bring Muthi in from and prepare Muthi (medicine) to protect clients from some of the following: motor accidents, theft, witchcraft, infection, unemployment and loss of love, lovers or spouses. Moreover, they relieve anxiety and depression, assist clients to make decisions and help to find lost or stolen objects (Thornton, 2009, p. 19). Some generally charge as much as a registered medical practitioner would, yet they are referred to as lesser than another practitioner.

Prospective Isangoma are initiated in Indigenous organisations known as Mpande – entwaseni (schools/school of thought) that provides a sense of spiritual identity based on the Mpande’s specialised expertise and knowledge. Each Mpande has a specific expertise or teaching technique that is transmitted through an informal system of education involving oGobela (teachers) and Amathwasana (initiates). In addition, the children who are brought up in the home may serve as assistants to uGogo, Mkulu and Gobela, etc. They may do incisions on instruction, puncture one with porcupine quills and prepare medicines. Initiates are said to “graduate” after they complete their Ubungoma initiation. My study is geared towards understanding the Gobelas’ teaching approaches and techniques within these Mpande.

To further situate my study within the broader context it is important to highlight that the decolonial movements in South Africa post 1994 have been a difficult process (Jansen, 2003). Decolonial projects, in my opinion, have been a huge failure in South Africa, as the structure of colonialism has survived and very little has been transformed. For example, in South Africa, 74% of its youth is marginalised and are post-colonial subjects without “economic, social and political inclusion” (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2019, p. 2). Recent events such as the #FeesMustFall movement (2016) as well as the looting in certain parts of Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal (2021) as a response to the 46.3% youth unemployment rate in South Africa (Mokoditsoa, 2022) are indicative of the effects of alienation of a largely Black South African youth. Since colonisation marginalised Black people, it is therefore crucial to generate knowledge that adequately reflects the issues of the country, especially issues experienced by the largely Black South African youth. Gogo Khanyakude and various other Izangoma stated in informal interviews that a large

percent of their clients/patients are high school students, where in most cases, these students were forced to leave school to address their callings.

To zoom deeper into my study, the Department of Basic Education in Kwa-Zulu Natal called for submission of abstracts in June 2022 to deal with the influx of ancestral callings within schools – this call came a month after a 15-year-old Sangoma took her own life because the school principal banned her from school because she wore her Sangoma regalia. Furthermore, the department spokesman, Muzi Mahlambi, said that the department had faced several “incidents of this nature” and “we are always found wanting in dealing or responding appropriately, hence we are inviting people who are experts in this field to start a discourse”. Approximately 10 or more schools have reported disruptions in classes where student would pass out, vomit and scream according to the South African website. This tragic event of the suicide of “a young Sangoma” after 29 years of democracy shows that there has been very little policy changes to include the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge. The department of basic education intervened in the case of the learner; however, the emotional damage had already been done and these incidents happen with alarming regularity.

The department issued a notice calling for a one-day indaba to be held in September where cultural and religious experts could make presentations. Spokesperson Muzi Mahlambi said: “Policy formulations emerge from problems, and we (the department) are saying we have a problem here, and as pupils do not find such issues in schools, they come with them from society, we are calling on society to engage with us”. In my opinion, it will take more than a day and presentations for adequate policy formulations and the department of basic education should spend more time engaging with this phenomenon.

Furthermore, Thirona Moodley, Chief Executive Officer of the National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) said that the phenomenon of ancestral calling had impacted schooling in the province: “Our schools are multicultural environments and it’s important that the pupils and teachers understand what the ancestral calling is and how to deal with it. Currently, teaching time is lost, and teachers feel helpless”. This, therefore, links to my point about the department needing to put the right policies in place by taking the time to study the phenomena and preparing a separate workshop to equip teachers to handle ancestral callings. My study aims to raise awareness on the incorporation of esoteric knowledge within society as well provide an understanding of Ubungoma practices.

1.4 Underlying Theoretical Paradigms

Decolonial theory generally can be defined as a lens to re-examine one's own imperial histories through the harmful lens of colonialism. The decolonial theory challenges the notion that colonialism can be considered as a mere episode in African history as colonialization became a part of "major global designs" that became enriched in our everyday life (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485). Decoloniality is concerned with dismantling the legacy of colonialism which is referred to as coloniality. "Coloniality" survived colonialism and resulted in long standing hegemonic patterns that have become entrenched within culture, the social order, knowledge production, gender and labour relations post-colonialization. Furthermore, "coloniality" alienates and "others" marginalised groups (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485). Coloniality survived post-colonialism as neo-colonialism.

For scholars such as Paulo Freire decoloniality lies within the process of "revolutionising and debunking colonial educational pedagogies" that sought to oppress the learner through non-dialogic, teacher-centred learning approaches, which in most cases makes the teacher a compliant agent in a highly mechanised system (2000, p. 77). Decolonial theory also turns conventional teaching approaches and pedagogies on its head. Paulo Freire (2000) argues that classroom teachers should reject what would be called the "banking method" or narrative sickness where the teacher stands and feeds a student knowledge, but rather should seek to inspire dialogue to evoke critical thinking.

Decoloniality within the apartheid education context manifested in many ways including the literal response to the injustices of colonial education which could be seen in the parallels between the student protest of the 1976 Soweto uprising and the #FEEEMUSTFALL movement of 2015. For the sake of my study, decolonial theory focuses on one of Mignolo's (2007) "coloniality envelopes" which is "the control of knowledge and subjectivity" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 156). The ontological bases of decoloniality are to rehumanise marginal post-colonial subjects; in the case of my study, this will be the voices of Isangoma in relation to knowledge and learning. Oral history is used to serve as a corrective counterpoint for the proliferation of documented forms of history which are based on European-centred knowledge. "Normalising" oral history is a contribution to new forms of knowledge production that act as a base for understanding marginal groups and their lived experiences (Geiger, 1990, p. 171). It is important to note that this study is not concerned with Western thought vs Indigenous

knowledge but rather an integrated call for inclusion and diversity of all epistemological practices. The deep ethnographic and sociocultural nature of this study sought to give attention and focus to the lifeworlds and cosmos visions of oGobela pedagogical movements on their own terms, without the constraints of the histories of Western pedagogies. An ethnographic lens examined the concept of knowledge through the eyes of the healers, the spirits that guide the Gobela and the spirits guiding the initiates that play a big role in the teaching and guiding of the Gobela.

Another important theoretical approach in this study is Buhrmann's psychology approach which draws on Carl Jung's concepts of the "collective unconscious" and the "personal unconscious" (Buhrmann, 1986, p. 15). This theoretical approach acknowledges dreaming as an institution of knowledge production that is reflective of the collective unconscious. Buhrmann's psychological approach adds a cultural layer to Jung's approach as it takes into account archetypal projections from a collective unconscious of ancestors and river people (mermaids) that may emerge in a dream form. Buhrmann's extension to Jung's approach on the collective and personal unconscious stems from her experience of working with Xhosa traditional healers, the rituals performed for the water people (mermaids) and the training that healers undergo. Her work is focused on the importance of dreaming as a way to correct the imbalance that arises between ego and the unconscious mind, while also debunking what Western rationalism would label as "untrue and myths" – these are concepts such as ancestors, witches and mermaids (Buhrmann, 1986, p. 92). This theoretical approach was useful as it partially adapts Jung's theory to a South African context while also acknowledging dreaming as an institution of knowledge in the context of initiation schools.

The third theoretical framework employed in this study is sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory emanates from the Vygotskian school of thought that dates to the 1920s. Sociocultural theory argues that human development is inseparable from cultural, historical, social and individual contexts. It is concerned with how individuals, specifically children's mental functioning and learning is related to, and emerges from their social, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 86). Vygotsky theorizes concepts such as the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) which advances learning in accordance with the child's level of development. Vygotsky argues that there is a relationship between development and learning, with learning leading development of higher mental functioning (reasoning, critical thinking and reflection) in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 86). For the sake of my study, certain parts of

sociocultural theory are used and explored through an African decolonial lens. These parts are the ZPD, concept of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and Wertsch's (1991) themes that were identified from Vygotsky's work. The function of the ZPD is to (a) identify abilities that are in the process of developing, and (b) attempt to determine what the learner can potentially do independently in the future.

The concept of the MKO in Vygotskian theory, refers to someone who has a higher level or wider range of knowledge than the learner that can mediate or help to extend support in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 87) in the ZPD. This concept of the MKO is something that this study sought to challenge based on the informal interviews conducted during my contextual profiling.

In formal education settings, the process of learning can become mechanised, over-structured and predetermined by the teacher, legislation and policy. However, oGobela teaching processes have the potential to avoid this mechanisation and can offer alternative ways of teaching and ways of working. This study argues that the role of the Gobela is not fixed but is rather fluid. The role of oGobela is determined by the initiates' esoteric knowledge (instructions of ancestors through a dreamlike state) which inform the type of curriculum that emerges.

For example, in an informal conversation with Gogo Ntombi, she stated that the function of assessment and learning in the Ukuthwasa space (initiation school) is for the Gobela (teacher) to cater to the learners' individual needs and then secondly to facilitate a learning environment. The assumption here is that the learner is already independently able to create their own learning environment in her company, and she (the Gobela) is willing to accompany the learner as defined by the learner's needs. In Gogo Masuku's case, she argues that in most assessments in initiation schools, there is no such thing as a MKO because initiates learn from each other. These insights have implications for the way that learning is conceptualised in this study. The study aimed to explore how learning is constructed in different ways in this context.

The second Vygotskian theme identified by Wertsch (1991) is that human action happens on both a social and individual level and that mediation is used through semiotics which are "tools and signs used to facilitate the creation of knowledge" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 507). Gogo

Khanyakude⁹ speaks of semiotics in the Ukuthwasa space as being the environment. The tools used by the learner will be what they find resonant from the environment or will create from the environment. The assumption here is that the learner will communicate and create the tools they need to aid their learning experience. For example, with the divination assessment in initiation schools, learners are expected to find divination tools from the environment which include bones, shells and objects that hold meaning(s) for the learner. A semiotic in the case of an initiation school is also an initiate's body; often, the body is used as a tool to evoke or summon one's ancestors through song and dance (Mandawe/Nguni dance). These insights stretch our thinking on what mediation and semiotics could mean in this study.

The third theme according to Wertsch (1991) is that Vygotsky's work needs to be studied in its "historical context" and be seen as concepts that are "in the process of change" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 507). This third theme was important for my study because of the need to work with Vygotsky's theory in an African context, with an African example of intergenerational and community-based learning. The theory was adapted to suit an African context with the emphasis on decolonial sociocultural theory being used to explore community-based learning and intergenerational learning processes. The study challenges conventional ways of understanding the concept of learning. Learning in a formal Western setting is only understood on psychological and physical levels. Gogo Khanyakude argues that learning in an initiation school happens on an esoteric level through dreams and becomes transferred knowledge through oGobela interpretation and that of your peers. For example, your ancestors may indicate to you that you have to perform a ritual or assessment near the river – the dream is presented as esoteric knowledge. However, the Gobela will be expected to interpret it for you, by explaining to you the difference between dreaming of still water, ocean and rivers (transference of knowledge) which in turn informs the type of assessment. This expands on the Vygotskian emphasis on mental reasoning to embrace a more spiritual outlook.

As indicated before, during colonial Africa, African culture and African practices were painted as "pagan" through the process of othering which can be seen by the Witchcraft Act; over time, this perception has changed. This study's aim was to dismantle a largely European pedagogy when it pertains to the understanding of religious practices.

⁹ Indigenous knowledge consultant

The outcomes of the study are geared towards conscientising people about the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems. As stated by Siyabonga Mkhize¹⁰, spirituality underlies language and culture. This point critically re-interprets abstracted notions of language and culture in sociocultural theory.

African spirituality is a form of social learning that offers important insights for our times. The reason why African spirituality forms part of social learning is that it is a collective belief in certain Indigenous knowledge communities and a learning space where people come together to learn from one another as a community of practice.

1.5 Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

Research aim:

Ukuthwasa is understood as a modality or expression of Isintu. The aim was to explore how knowledge is constructed in the Ukuthwasa space.

Objectives of study:

- To explore the sociocultural practices deployed in the Ukuthwasa process.
- To investigate the type of teaching approaches and learning processes that inform socio-cultural practices in the Ukuthwasa process.
- To explore how knowledge is understood within the Ukuthwasa process.
- To explore what this will mean for me as a history teacher

Research questions:

- What learning processes are deployed in the Ukuthwasa training process?
- How is the concept of knowledge understood, interpreted and implemented within the initiation process?
- What teaching approaches and techniques are deployed by oGobela?

1.6 Research Design: Case Study

¹⁰ Spiritual advisor at the Umsamo institute

My study focused on Izangoma who were oGobela and Amathwasana and my own experiences with the Ukuthwasa process. The case study looked at the Gobela teaching process within an initiation school. A case study method focuses on collecting information about a specific group, object, event or activity as a unit of analysis. It is an investigation of a particular “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” using multiple methods of data collection (Goddard, & Melville, 2004, p. 122).

1.7 Critical-Ethnographic Inquiry

The study made use of critical-ethnographic inquiry that used the oral history method with eight oGobela. I also undertook a radical embodied participation process through reflexive journalling which made use of my experiences as an initiate (GogoUkukhanya KweMhlaba) and observations of my oGobela learning process.

Critical ethnography emerged in the 1960s in the anthropology discipline. Critical ethnography involves documenting your positionality in relation to the research phenomenon. This methodology was useful to me in this study, because as a researcher I played multiple roles. At the time of writing I was an initiate in an initiation school where I was both an observer and someone who experienced my oGobela’s teaching processes. Critical ethnography allows researchers to conduct research in “unconventional environments” and with “marginalised groups” (Madison, 1999, p. 1). While it has been used in cases influenced by imperialism and colonisation, where it adopts marginalising practices of describing the “other”, in this study, I worked with critical ethnography to deepen my own understanding of this phenomenon. Critical ethnography methodologies value multiple epistemologies: there is no objective way of knowing, and moreover, this methodology tries to amplify marginalised voices (Madison, 1999, p. 1). Besides reflecting on my own experiences in the form of journalling, I interviewed an oGobela as part of this process. Critical ethnography is a particularly unique analytical tool to generate findings as its findings are not based on an organised form of interaction and observation, but rather based on how the researcher *makes sense* of these within the organised setting. In addition, from this perspective the researcher is able to address issues that arise outside the scope of the questions or fill in the gaps if the respondents fail to answer the questions. This methodology lent itself to my positionality, as my lived experiences became part and parcel of the data collection process and the rapport that I had with other Izangoma. My position as an initiate allowed me to be a student and my position as a researcher allowed

me to be an observer; taking up these different identities allowed for a more nuanced and balanced study. Furthermore, this methodology allowed for my positionality as a researcher to be fully immersed within the study.

The interviewing method I chose held a range of both open-ended and closed end questions about a specific phenomenon, in this case, traditional healing. The purpose of the oral history interviews was to develop a rapport and ask both concise and ambiguous questions of the interviewee while listening and not influencing the conversation. With specific reference to this study, I used the “oral history method” which is an interview where some questions are standardised, but the researcher has the ability “to ask follow up questions” (Goddard & Melville, 2004, p. 49). The reason for using the oral history method is because it was an exploratory study. My study is one that had not been done yet, therefore it needed to be semi-structured because as a research project it was not clear what needed to emerge. I discussed this research with oGobela who were willing to be interviewed because of the close working relationships we had. The Izangoma and I maintain a very close working relationship, which allowed me to consult with them at any point of the thesis as a form of member checking.

Within the interview process it was important that I remained alert to the Izangomas’ views and not impose my views and understanding of African spirituality on the participants. The case study analysed the teaching and learning processes from a decolonial sociocultural perspective.

1.8 Validity and Trustworthiness Considerations

It is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure that “measures of validity and trustworthiness” are observed (Strubert & Carpenter, 2003, p. 39). This was done by ensuring that the qualitative study accurately represented the experiences of the participants. My study made use of some of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) model of establishing trustworthiness and validity in qualitative data.

1.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is demonstrated when participants recognise the findings as their own experiences. The researcher has the responsibility to the identified participants to accurately explain “the

purpose of the study” (Strubert & Carpenter, 2003, p. 38). I did this by creating a member checking system to verify the interpretations of the oral history with the oGobela.

1.8.2 Persistent observation

Persistent observation identifies those elements or factors in situations “that are most relevant” to a study and focuses on them in detail while sorting out “the irrelevant parts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). To satisfy this criterion of trustworthiness, I allowed for Izangoma authenticity when narrating their experiences as a Gobela. The presence of the researcher was to observe and capture the nuanced meanings behind the oral histories and processes, hence my reflexive journalling.

1.8.3 Reflexivity

Being cognisant of my positionality within the research was an important aspect of reflexivity. Hence, I needed to be aware that my attitudes and views might influence the study and create subjectivity. The practice of reflexivity made me aware of my possible subjectivity, roles and “preconceived bias” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). To ensure reflexivity, I used in-depth journalling which helped me document the changes in my research over time. It also helped me journal the intergenerational conversations I was having with my ancestors through this process, which inspired me to sleep on the stories I was gathering. I also used in-depth journalling when I did my participatory observations to document what I saw and how I felt when visiting or watching the Izangoma.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

This study involved critical-ethnographic work, using semi-structured oral history interviews with eight oGobela and radical embodied participation (reflexive journalling) in which I made use of my experiences as an initiate (Gogo Ukukhanya KweMhlaba) and an observer of my Gobela and other oGobelas’ learning processes with their permission. I made use of informed verbal consent as opposed to informed written consent in the form of recording participants’ oral consent when it pertained to the interview process. This acted as a decolonial tool because participants can give and remove consent throughout the thesis process. Considering South Africa’s history of consent documents as an act of violence, it is important to shy away from colonial traditional methods when asking for consent.

The consent and oral history interviews were conducted in both English and Zulu to ensure the participants were fully aware of the consent that they were giving. I used ethical dimensions such as confidentiality and respect that comes with participatory observation to ensure that I maintained the integrity and agency of the people that I interacted with in the Ukuthwasa space.

Lastly, the study specifically focused on teaching processes and techniques as embodied knowledge and was not necessarily geared towards exposing sacred knowledge. This is important because it looked at *how, when and why* knowledge is generated from specific rituals and assessments to create an education pedagogy and kept the sacred practices (the what) of Ukuthwasa sacred which protected the integrity of these knowledge systems. This revealed just enough information for the reader to understand the processes without exposing too much knowledge of the practices themselves.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One: Introduction - Situating the Study

The purpose of this chapter was to give a more comprehensive explanation of the research question, aim and objectives. It gave an overview of the research site, research techniques, methods and research process. The role of this chapter was to orientate the reader about the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study.

Chapter Two: Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodology Frameworks

This chapter explains how the study was conducted and the process of the study. Therefore, the main purpose of this chapter is to explain the conceptual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study as they pertain to an African context in general and as they relate to the particularities of my study. Decolonial theory, Ubuntu theory, sociocultural theory, and the anthropology of extraordinary experience approach in my study work together to surface the questions on Indigenous learning spaces. These theories argue and make a case for the development of educational thought by African scholars that are critical in advancing Africa's educational processes.

Furthermore, the study used critical-ethnographic inquiry into and narrative analysis of the oGobela's teaching techniques and approaches through semi-structured interviews. As not all

observations could take place face-to-face due to the ethics that some healers held, I made use of their YouTube channels to do radical embodied participation. Most of my participants were YouTubers who recorded their daily lives as Izangoma by providing clarity for their followers on spiritually related issues or displaying their Mpande routines.

Chapter Three: Insights into the Structure and Components of Empandeni (Initiation School) and the oGobela Teaching Approaches and Techniques: A View from Available Literature and Selected Oral Accounts

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a clear understanding of the components of Empandeni by using a range of methods ranging from academic articles, books and oral accounts of oGobela. This will serve as a balancing act because where the one form of literature is limited the other one fills in the blanks providing a more comprehensive view of what this entails.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the data was collected, analysed and presented. The analysis tool in this study was narrative analysis which focuses on the story itself as the object of investigation, particularly how the participant, in this case, the teller of the story, narrates their story (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). In other words, it looks at how the oGobela experience and transmit their understanding of esoteric knowledge. The data is presented in the form of short snippets and stories that the participants offered.

Chapter 5: Synthesis and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study as they emerged from all the chapters and share the insights that this has for other educational settings and the decolonialisation of education as a whole.

Chapter Two: Research Design: Contextual, Theoretical, Methodological Underpinnings and Ethical Considerations

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have chosen to collapse what would have been ordinarily Chapter Two (the theoretical framework) and Chapter Three (the methodological framework) because as Madison (2011) states “my theory was my method, and my method was my theory” which is the case in this study (p. 21). I specifically use theories and methodologies interchangeably. This chapter will also reference the research tools that aided and enhanced my data analysis and findings as well as the ethical considerations. I found it extremely difficult to collapse these two chapters as African Philosophy and spirituality is all-encompassing; we theorize while doing, feeling and embodying. There is no clear-cut distinction between concept, theory and ways of doing and ways of knowing. Moreover, because the subject matter is not tangible, it becomes more difficult to explain and adapt to traditional and conventional academic norms. In addition, the form of linear writing was challenging to adapt to. Instead, the reader will notice that the knowledge that arrives through this thesis takes on a more cyclical nature deepening and spiralling in each chapter and iteration. It was difficult to fully separate aspects of the emerging knowledge and so the reader will inevitably notice a sense of the knowledge echoing itself across the thesis.

To add to this the actual study took an unconventional approach to research. It started by exploring what exactly it wanted to achieve, and it later identified the theories and methodologies that resonated with this. This ties in with an African circular way of knowing that encourages discipline of thought in different ways.

2.2 Research Design

The research design of this study is critical ethnography case of Izangoma. Critical ethnography is a qualitative approach that “explicitly sets out to critique hegemony and oppression and foster social change” (Madison, 2011, p. 21). All forms of critical ethnography work to dismantle power structures – I chose to work closely with Izangoma where I engaged in a radical embodied participant approach and had ongoing dialogue about Indigenous knowledge.

Critical ethnography according to Madison (1999) is carried out when the researcher helps legitimize and make visible participants' silent realities. The central idea is that knowledge is constructed and interpreted from the vantage point of marginal voices (Madison, 1999). In this case, the study looked at how exoteric knowledge and learning is constructed and interpreted within the Ukuthwasa space by both the lithwasana and oGobela.

2.3 Theory and Methodology

The theoretical and methodological framework that underpinned this study is constructed from the anthropological and educational disciplines. I worked with the 'anthropology of extraordinary experience' (AEE) as a theory and radical embodied participation as methodology. Furthermore, dreaming and radical embodied participation documented through journalling are also methods used. The AEEs open up spaces for spiritual knowledge to be conceptualised in ordinary language and shifts the conventional educational paradigm for Ukuthwasa to be understood as a circular educational process that encompasses the body, mind and spirit. It allows for indigenous spiritual knowledge to move away from a mechanised form of education that operates in set parameters that favours Western epistemology.

Furthermore, sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy opens up the learning processes in general. I then further ground my study in Ubuntu theory. Ubuntu theory is a philo-praxis in which Ubungoma is founded on the ethos of Ubuntu. The study is written using a decolonial lens, and I specifically make use of the chapter on repositioning Umakhulu as an institution of knowledge in the book *Whose history counts: Decolonising African pre-colonial historiography* (2018), which allows the Ukuthwasa process to be grounded in African scholarship.

2.4 Research Tools

The tools that are used in this study are reflexive journalling, the oral history method and dreams. The data was collected through the oral history method; this is because it was an exploratory study. My study is one that has not been done yet; therefore, it needs to be semi-structured as a research project as it is not clear what needs to emerge and there is not much knowledge of this phenomena.

2.4.1 Reflexive journalling

Reflective journals are “personal records of students’ or researcher’s learning experiences” as a way to record learning-related incidents, observations and informal conversation (Janesick, 1998, p. 1). It is important to note that not all observations could take place face-to-face due to the ethics that some healers hold, meaning some healers felt uncomfortable with me observing the sacred places, some healers had busy schedules because they are public figures, and some were just inaccessible because of where they lived. To combat this problem, when it came to the oGobela who were public figures, I made use of their YouTube channels to do additional participatory observation. The other two observations were done face-to-face. After the participatory observations had taken place whether virtually or face-to-face, they were accompanied with informal conversations that gave more insights into the specific things that had been observed.

2.4.2 Oral history method

Oral history interviews use an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, which allocates sufficient time for the narrators to give their story its fullness. The oral history method in this study was two-fold: first, there were the oral literature accounts that were incorporated into the traditional literature review, and second, there were the oral accounts that spoke more directly to the research questions and were analysed in chapter 4. The substance of oral history interviews is grounded in the past and present (Leavy, 2011). Oral history is a collaborative process that must be conceptualised holistically. It relies on the rapport between the narrator and the researcher. Oral history is a method aimed at gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people and communities. Oral history is the oldest type of historical inquiry (Leavy, 2011). I chose this method because a large part of the Ubungoma tradition/trope is based on its orature as esoteric knowledge is passed down through oral history.

2.4.3 The relationship between oral history and narrative inquiry

Oral history within narrative inquiry allows space for the interviewees to move in and out of questions to construct their own narratives. In addition to focusing on the narrative being presented by the narrator of the story, the researcher should also take note of “the tone, mood, attitude and visual description of events given by the narrator” as forming part of the narrative

(Riessman, 1993, p. 25). The oral history interviews were conducted on Zoom and recorded because the study wanted to access different Mpande (school of thought/ways of initiating) groups.

2.4.4 Verbatim transcriptions

The oral history interviews were transcribed verbatim which captured every part of the interview, from the pauses to the “umms”, stutters, stops and starts and everything which formed part of the story and encapsulated the narrative of the story (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006, p. 2). The oral history interviews were transcribed word for word to make the data analysis easier. They were also translated from isiZulu to English. This allowed me to be as accurate as I could. From these transcriptions, the data was organised into themes.

It is important to note that the data analysis had different stages: pre-analysis, transcribing and translating. Most importantly, sleeping on the stories and interviews served as a reflexive exercise as it allowed me to see what was missing from the data set.

2.5 The Relationship Between Anthropology, Education and Culture

Anthropology is the study of humanity’s past and present and is particularly concerned with human behaviour, biology, cultures and linguistics. Culture is the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society. Furthermore, education can be defined as the transmission of knowledge and skills.

In my opinion, my work closely resembles the anthropology of education or educational anthropology. The anthropology of education/educational anthropology/pedagogical anthropology and educational ethnography has its foundation in anthropology, linguistics, sociology, psychology and philosophy and the field of education (Paulsen, 1961, p. 290).

It first emerged a subdiscipline in the 1950s in the United States under scholars such as George and Louise Spindler, Margaret Mead and others. Its primary focus is concerned with how people teach and learn and what they teach and learn across different communities and cultures, and in national and regional contexts (Paulsen, 1961, p. 290). Anthropology argues that education is culturally shaped. Furthermore, culture shapes people’s educational processes. Culture is created and acquired by individuals and groups; as culture changes, so do peoples’ educational environments (Paulsen, 1961).

2.6 Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience

The concept of the anthropology of experience has been explored in the works of Turner and Bruner (1986) and Willis (1999), who drew their earlier writings from the works of philosophers such as Foucault and Freud. My work pays specific attention to the AEE coined in David Young and Jeanne-Guy Goulet's work entitled *Being changed by cross-cultural encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience* (1994) followed by a sequel publication in 2007 edited by Jean-Guy Goulet and Bruce Granville Miller entitled *Extraordinary anthropology: transformations in the field*. In this body of work Jean-Guy Goulet and Granville Miller draw on their experiences of the "extraordinary" during their fieldwork as ethnographic anthropologists. This book recognises other ways of knowing that come from the spiritual realm and the ontological reality of spirit. The AEE shifts the education paradigm to not only encompass spiritual well-being but to move to a higher level of self which can be achieved by "challeng[ing] one's conception of reality in the sense that normal ways of classifying perceptual data are no longer adequate and the boundary between the real and imaginary are blurred" (Young & Goulet, 1994, p. 8).

The AEE recognises human experience as something that "cannot be quantified into scientific results but rather intangible embodied heritage" (Young & Goulet, 1994, p. 11). The AEE explores the ontological reality of spirit and its knowledge system. This theoretical approach is fluid and can be used as a theoretical approach that opens space for the conceptualisation of spiritual knowledge and different ways of knowing, as it reduces the gap between the physical and the spiritual realm. It does so by conceptualising the spiritual experience as something that can be explained and that can be brought nearby. Young and Goulet (1994) argue that "anthropologists should, at a minimum, temporarily suspend disbelief, and attempt to take as seriously as possible informants' reports of extraordinary experiences, as well as their explanations for them" (Young & Goulet, 1994, p. 11).

2.7 Critique of the AEE Experience

Although there are few critiques of AEE, the most dominant or pressing concern is James Lett's critique. James Lett argues that the concept of the AEE often takes place in an altered state of consciousness which proves the falsity of spiritual knowledge as "all claims of paranormal phenomena are false and illusory, and any other conclusion about paranormal phenomena is

unsound and unwarranted” (Lett, 2003, p. 309). An altered state of consciousness is important because it deals with esoteric knowledge that would not be accessible to the naked eye.

2.8 Dreaming as a Method to Substantiate AEE

African cosmology is a key epistemological principle of spiritual knowledge. African cosmology is largely depicted via dreams, as they are said to come directly from the spirit world. The specific timing of events whether it be through dreams, encounters with people or animals are considered to have significant bearings on experience of the ‘extraordinary’; this is what Jung refers to as synchronicity or “a ‘meaningful coincidence’ of outer and inner events that are not themselves causally connected” (Jung et al., 1964, p. 211). To further elaborate Jung’s point, right before I entertained going to initiation school, I often used to have hummingbirds outside my windows in the mornings, which later symbolised my paternal grandmother ancestors, the Tshabalala people, whose ancestral totem was a hummingbird. This later led to me meeting my Gobela Gogo Ntombikayise Ka Tshabalala. This random series of events led to the ‘extraordinary experience’ of my ancestors leading me to my place of initiation. According to Jung, dreams, “do not deceive, they do not lie, they do not distort or disguise ... they are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand” (Jung, 1968, p. 16).

A further substantiation of this is in when Gogo Mpho refers to dreams as being an archive of one’s spiritual activity as they reflect the unconscious mind – dreams reflect the unconscious dialogue one has with one’s ancestors. Gogo Ntombi refers to the unconscious mind as the place where primarily, idlozi yase khaya (blood relatives) and ancestors as a collective unconscious live. This is where one can tap into and out of one’s lineage archive when needed. Idlozi yase khaya (blood relatives) are said to be responsible for your emotional and psychological well-being. Therefore, a misalignment with ones’ blood-related ancestors results in the development of mental instability, as ones’ ancestors are communicating the need for one to aligned with one’s bloodline. Gogo Khanyakude further builds on this by stating that Ukuthwasa is a reconciliation of one’s ancestors and lineage in a psychological, spiritual and physiological way – it is a holistic reconciliation. Ukuthwasa forces you to look inward at your generational traumas and generational blessings for future prospects.

Jung further adds that there are two levels of unconsciousness; the first one being personal unconsciousness which entails the superficial aspects of suppressed thoughts as this rests upon

the deeper layer of the second part of unconsciousness, the collective unconscious, “which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn” (Jung, 1968, p. 9). The word ‘collective’ suggests the universality of unconsciousness in contrast to the personal psyche. The collective unconsciousness refers to modes of behaviour that are similar across the world. These are modes of behaviour that are commonly associated with ancestral callings and messages from Amadlozi when pertaining to ancestral spiritual knowledge particularly synonymous with Ukuthwasa. The knowledge suggested by Jung is inborn knowledge articulated through dreams from ones’ idlozis. These constitute what Jung refers to as significant dreams which are often dreams “remembered for a lifetime, and not infrequently prove to be the richest jewel in the treasure-house of psychic experience” (Jung, 1969, p. 8). These “treasure houses of psychic experiences” become step by step instructions from one spiritual guide’s that inform the Isifundiso (lessons) within the Ukuthwasa space.

Dreams also inform the type of ritual that needs to take place. Dreams may reveal the spirits of certain ancestors that have died and are unsettled and lost. One can dream of ancestors telling you that “where they are, they are cold” which often may indicate a ritual that one must undergo to help the spirit move forward in their soul’s journey. Failure to perform certain ritual etiquettes, such as the slaughtering of specific ancestral animals and not using specific types of alcohol can result in misfortune.

Both Jung and Freud agreed that dreams are a helpful healing tool in psychotherapy because dreams can reflect what you are feeling subconsciously. Thus, psychotherapy assesses both the conscious and subconscious mind to receive a holistic overview of one’s problems. Essentially, for those individuals who find it extremely difficult to talk about their feelings or emotions, dreams reveal “their underlying desires” (Jung, 1968, p. 17). In my opinion, dreaming in the Ukuthwasa space can act as a form of psychotherapy as oGobela and lithwasana are expected to fully explore each dream that there have in Mpandeni, in order to receive a holistic overview of the type of Isifundiso (lessons) your idlozi wants you to undertake. Dreams are a subconscious dialogue between you and your Amadlozi.

Jung argues that dreams are “a living symbol of the dark psyche” (Jung, 1968, p. 17) and the “commonest symbol for the unconscious”. Therefore, dreaming of yourself gazing into a pool of water where you see yourself reflected, forces you to deal with your inner darkest fears and thoughts. To further elaborate, dreaming of water in African spirituality reflects the type of

ancestral spirit you have, the type of ritual you need to perform and how you need to interact with the water element. Water is a big motif within the initiation space. Gogo Lerato argues that this is because water is the source of life – we are made up of 80 per cent water and before we are born, we are incubated in water. Thus, dreaming about water means that you are returning yourself back to sacredness, back to a consciousness.

The most dominant feature of African cosmology is the central importance of connection with the water divinities, the ‘Snake’. The element of water is characterised by the concept of reciprocity and exchange. Although the psychology profession has tried to explain water theories particularly by using the “collective unconscious” and its archetypal symbols, the psychology profession as a whole has failed to recognise the extraordinary experience that comes with “the spiritual understanding through the experience of water” (Young & Goulet, 1994, p. 318). However, most Izangoma believe that water is a different dimension which is governed by deities and divinities, in which people have to ask permission to access this dimension by performing specific rituals.

The Bryant publication *The Zulu people: As they were before the White man came* does a good job in illustrating Zulu mythology. It is believed that people return in the afterlife in their animal forms – he specifically focuses on Goddess “Nomkhubulwana, commonly known as Inkosazana ya-s-eZulweni (the Sky princess)” (Bryant, 1949, p. 665). Nomkhubulwana is described as a great ‘Snake’ particularly a python who is the source of fertility, rain and knowledge. It is said that Nomkhubulwana is a two-headed snake, and it is believed that she sits alongside one’s ancestors under water “when a person is experiencing an illness associated with the call to become Izangoma the person sees a lake where Nomkhubulwana is. You see her sitting at the side of your ancestors, deep in the lake but at the side” (Kendall, 1999, p. 102). With this understanding, most rituals in initiation schools are centred on understanding and respecting water as a consciousness, as it has existed before humans and will continue to exist after humans. Thus, it is one of our ancient forms of consciousness.

2.9 Radical Embodied Participation Methodology

The concept of radical participation or radical embodied participation introduced in Goulet and Miller (2007) calls for anthropologists to set aside their “single minded pursuit of data within a clearly defined research agenda” (Goulet & Miller, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, the authors call

for the active participation and joining in the lives of your participants by becoming co-actors in their story, which transcends beyond just observing, questioning and listening.

The shift from participatory observation to radical embodied participation as a method allowed me to open myself up to the extraordinary experience of my participants through the medium of storytelling and observation. Some anthropologists use this method when performing rituals or ingesting herbs. The act of radical embodied participation is expressed in many ways in my thesis. The first act is to have a gift and to be a practising Sangoma or Gobela which is a radical embodiment of one's ancestors. Secondly, the act of ukuphahla (seeking guidance) by all my participants is an embodied experience. The Sangoma regalia throughout the interview process was also an embodied experience as well as the participants' homesteads that I could observe face-to-face. Most importantly, sleeping on stories and receiving confirmations were embodied experiences as well.

2.10 The Calling Itself as a Methodology

Mokgethi (2018) argues that Ukuthwasa is a critical pedagogy because it provides a holistic liberation of the individual. "Critical pedagogy" coined by Paulo Freire through his 1968 book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* provides students with the platform to critically challenge society's accepted hypotheses by urging individuals to engage with society and their educational environment (Freire, 1968, p. 32). Furthermore, Freire (1968) argues that critical pedagogy helps students become empowered by achieving self-awareness and self-actualisation to transform their lives. As a result, it challenges traditional methods of education, and introduces concepts such as "critical thinking-based education and dialogue" (Freire, 1968, p. 32).

Mokgethi (2018) uses "the development of the critical consciousness as a framework for studying the learning process of Ukuthwasa" – this "allows one to assess the way in which knowledge is acquired, transmitted and shared amongst initiates" (p. 28). Critical consciousness refers to an in-depth understanding of the world, based on the exposure to political, social and political elements (Freire, 1968). This framework also assesses how Ukuthwasa serves as a cultural synthesis between the two worlds, in which this synthesis works for the betterment of the two worlds.

Mokgethi's (2018, p. 64) findings were that problem posing happens in the Intwaso space when the "lithwasana dreams and shares with oGobela for analysis and interpretation". The dialogue

between oGobela and lithwasana is a form of collective engagement where exchange allows for the enhancement of the lithwasana transition to becoming Izangoma as well as oGobela teaching and learning practices (Mokgethi, 2018). Mokgethi (2018) further argues that it is only the ancestors who will guide the lithwasana on the journey through dreams, signs and symbols. The unconscious mind, in this case the spiritual realm, is the only place that one can acquire information needed for the process of conscientisation.

Mokgethi (2018) uses Erickson to define the Ukuthwasa process as an identity formation and a constant process “that allows an individual to transition and gravitate towards ideal self and ego through information gained through rites of passages” (p. 26). It is for this reason that the Ubizo of the initiate and the Gobela should be made the object of investigation as it determines if the initiate should or should not initiate, secondly, who the Gobela should be, and thirdly, what the initiation of the initiate should look like and how the knowledge should be interpreted and transmitted.

2.11 Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural theory opens up my study and acts as a starting point for explaining learning processes in general. The theory argues that human learning does not happen in a vacuum; learning happens in conjunction with the cultural, historical, social and individual contexts. The theory is concerned with individual mental processing and functioning (Vygotsky, 1979). One of many things we as initiates are asked to do when entering the initiation space is to empty our learning “cups”, the first ritual being uvuma ukufa. It is believed that one cannot learn from a full cup. All assessments are geared towards growing an individual spiritually from an infant to an independent healer. As stated in the introduction, I focused on the ZPD, MKO and Wertsch’s (1991) themes. I also worked with the book *Fund of knowledge; theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* to deepen my understanding of sociocultural theory and build on Wertsch’s themes. The ZPD examines the fine line between what an individual can do without assistance and what they can do with a MKO (Howard & Lipinoga, 2008).

The MKO in Vygotskian theory, refers to someone who is an “expert on the subject matter” in question, in most cases that would be a teacher (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 87). In the case of Ukuthwasa, as I said in the introduction, there is no such thing as the MKO when learning is community-based exercise. I would like to add that the Amathwasana’s ancestors are the ones

that are more knowledgeable. Why do I say that? The Isifundiso (lessons) are based on the needs of the learner. That is why Gobela means “someone who bows to your ancestors”; essentially, your Gobela’s response creates ways to help you channel your ancestors based on the instructions that come from dreams (your’s and the Gobela’s dreams). An example of this, is when my Gobela allowed me to use candles and cards instead of bones as indicated by my dreams.

Wertsch (1991) identifies the second theme in Vygotskian work, which is that human interaction happens on both social and individual levels – I would like to stretch this to include the spiritual level as well, which guides using semiotics to create knowledge (Wertsch, 1991). Furthermore, Vygotsky concentrated primarily on what he called “psychological tools”. These “psychological tools” mediate development and thinking which is in connection with the ZPD (Howard & Lipinoga, 2008, p. 20).

I would like to argue that everything is semiotic within the initiation space and over time, I believe the lithwasana subscribes meaning to objects and that then becomes a medium for messages. To further substantiate my point, let us take idlozi yase khaya, particularly the (Nguni ancestor) as an example, who is responsible for giving you the gift of mediumship through bones as a way to Hlola (consult). The lithwasana creates their own bag of bones – they can range from things such as shells, coins, bones of different animals (chicken, goats, lion), plants (seeds), dominoes and die. These bags of tricks symbolise the different aspects of one’s life dice (fortune), coins (financial standing), shells (water spirits) etc. These are just ordinary objects and the lithwasana subscribes meaning to their bag of tricks (bones). These bones will only make sense to them and no one else because it has been shown to their idlozi.

Wertsch’s (1991) third theme is that Vygotsky’s work needs to be studied in its historical context, and adapted in accordance with concepts that are in the process of change. This theme was very prevalent in this study as each participant’s experiences needed to be studied in isolation as no two initiation processes and the Mpande are the same. I aimed to demonstrate this throughout the thesis.

2.12 Ubuntu Theory

The third theory that was deployed is Ubuntu as a philo-praxis; this is because Ukuthwasa is grounded in the ethos of Ubuntu. Ukuthwasa in my opinion functions on the principle of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is best explained by the Xhosa and Sotho proverb, “umntu ngumntu ngabantu/Motho ke motho ka bangwe” (man is a man, through others) which means “I am because we are”. There is a collective “I”, meaning that my humanity begins and ends with you (Mbigi, 1997, p. 2). With this understanding, that means we are responsible for each other and most importantly we are each other.

I have my own adaptation and understanding of this proverb, which is “I am because we are, yes ... but also because my ancestors were”. Meaning, I only know how to be because of how my ancestors were and taught me to be. Maluleke (2000) adds to this by stating that “Ubuntu is a way of being human in Africa that is at the core of humanness” (p. 20). Deploying this philo-praxis does not mean submitting to a romanticised understanding of the African proverb and I used this philo-praxis to describe the learning processes in Ukuthwasa.

Mugo (2021) describes Ubuntu scholarship as creating and promoting scholarship that “can be conscientising, humanizing and liberating, creating new human beings with the agency to transform the world for the better” (p. 4). The author argues that “the production of knowledge is the vocation of all human beings and of all cultures. Imperialist cultures have dominated and colonized and created a false sense of idea of a monopoly of knowledge” (Mugo, 2021, p. 9). Ubungoma (Ukuthwasa) is a sub-branch of the Ngoma tradition, being an ancient practice that has existed for many centuries. Therefore, learning about this circular educational process allows for the understanding of spiritual knowledge.

Khoza (1994) writes about Ubuntu as an African view of life and worldview. The author writes of the “collective consciousness” of the people of Africa in which the distinctive “collective consciousness” of Africans is manifested in their behavioural patterns, expressions and spiritual self-fulfilment in which holds values such as the “universal brotherhood of Africans” (Khoza, 1994, p. 3). In connection with this, Gogo Ntombi argued that everything boils down to a single level of consciousness – meaning that all things are interconnected. One of the main lessons within the Ukuthwasa space teaches the lithwasana to tap into a single collective consciousness that is tied to everything; for example, to tap into the collective consciousness

of those who came before you by constantly seeking guidance through the ritual of ukuphahla, dreams and the institution of song and dance.

There are a couple of examples of tapping into the consciousness of elements (earth, air, water and fire) by enhancing the five senses (eyesight, hearing, taste, touch and smell) in the Ukuthwasa process. The element of air is enhanced by the sense of hearing. This could be deduced by the activity of finding “Imfihlo”, where the Gobela beats a drum and asks the Thwasana to find “Imfihlo” (the item that was hidden by the Gobela). The drum is used as a trance agent where the Thwasana is expected to use the frequency of sound to find the item. The idea here is that the frequency released by living organisms is very different from the frequency emitted by an inanimate object; therefore, the lithwasana is expected to be able to differentiate between the two by learning to focus on the sound that the Ngoma drum makes.

To further substantiate this, tapping into specific frequencies from the beating of the Ngoma drum by oGobela teaches the lithwasana how to Gida (dance) for the specific types of ancestors, mainly the Nguni (blood relatives and land base spirits) and Ndau (water-based/foreign ancestor). This process teaches the lithwasana how to use the specific vibrations of sound and air to heal specific ailments of the body. In addition, using a low vibrational frequency on the Ngoma drum evokes one’s Ndau ancestors that reside on the root chakra. This could mean you are dancing for infertility problems, spinal and womb discharge or simply just tapping into the sacred feminine and the consciousness of water.

A deeper sense of touch and smell is enhanced by the elements of earth and water. The Hlola (consultation) tools, i.e. the bones, are often made from natural objects found in nature like a chicken bone, cowrie shell, stone, bottle lids etc. This is the lithwasana’s way of engaging with the element of the earth. Water is also used as a tool, for example, when a patient comes in for a cleansing, they would be placed in a Muthi bath or isiwasho (bath salts).

According to Teske (2000), African personhood can be described as an “ensembled individualism” which means that there is fluidity between the boundary of self and other (p. 200). This concept is constantly reinforced by many activities within the initiation school. For example, the activity of cleaning where the Amathwasana are expected to clean the homestead together and function as a single organism, meaning the household/homestead is expected to run efficiently as if there is only one person charged with the responsibility of running the homestead. In some Mpandes, Amathwasana are expected to Hlola (consult) that person as a

group exercise. Lastly, Amathwasana are expected to eat, bathe and sleep together. The idea here is that one's sense of self is established in a community and if your spiritual sister/brother is unable to finish a task then you have not finished your task.

Teske further elaborates on this point by stating that "Ubuntu, as an African Philosophy, limits individualism and stresses that social interrelations and responsibilities are a precondition for human life" (Teske, 2000, p. 200). Here, the individual can only have meaning in relation to an experience of community. The Mpande is a community of practice where there are no hierarchies but a constant effort of "give and take".

Broodryk (2006) argues that the concept of Ubuntu is derived from a worldview which holds the basic values of humanness like caring, sharing, respect, humility and compassion. Echoing these thoughts, Gogo Khanyakude argued that healers can only heal from a place of compassion and respect, meaning that you cannot treat a patient if you do not have respect and compassion for them. The concept of learning to die to self "vuma ukufa" (the ritual where you accept your calling) in initiation school best explains healing from a place compassion as a selfless act. Moreover, this concept of "vuma ukufa" encompasses the act of caring by understanding that truly caring for someone means that as a healer, you need to understand that you do not always have the answers; therefore, one should not operate from a place of ego but from a place of care.

Teaching the act of humility happens with many activities in initiation schools. To elaborate, when the lithwasana is expected to leave their home and live at the Gobela's house they are leaving the comfort of their own personal space to go and live with a stranger. Secondly, the act of walking on your knees in some Mpandes signifies returning to your childlike state, with your Gobela constantly standing above you to teach the act of surrender, learning to bow to someone else and their ancestors.

Mentiki (1979) states that "Ubuntu can enrich the quest for universal peace by fostering a holistic understanding of the universe" (p. 158). For me, this means that Ubuntu as the centre governing principle in the Ukuthwasa space emphasises that life and learning are circular processes and in order to obtain a holistic understanding of something one must adopt body, mind and spirit approach. One should not look at something in isolation but in its full context. Ukuthwasa is as much a psychological (mind) process as it is a physiological (body) and esoteric (spiritual) process.

To substantiate this point, the wearing of beads, red clay and ancestral cloths is a demarcation from ones idlozi as it represents the type of spirit you have i.e. land-based spirits (red, yellow and green beads) or water-based spirits (light blue, dark blue, purple and white beads). The beads also symbolise an African psychology. The psychology of wearing beads and ancestral cloths allows you to mentally pace yourself for the journey, i.e. one's bead size increases as you progress within the journey and colours change as you mature, or as different ancestors help you with specific tasks. If I am learning the task of consulting, then it would be my Nguni ancestors that help me learn how to read bones as opposed to if I needed to learn how to Femba (do an exorcism) it would be my Ndau water-based ancestors that would step forward to help with that task. The idea here is that spirits help and guide the learning process during different tasks that require different expertise.

Beads can also heal physical ailments by wearing specific beadwork i.e. wrist, waist and ankle pain. Often before the lithwasana can become a healer, they suffer from the ancestral calling in ways that can result in physical ailments. In order to cure these, the Gobela would either instruct you to make your beads or make them for you. Simply, as with a patient, you as a healer would be required to make the beads shown to you by the ancestors to heal a specific ailment such as infertility, back pain or swollen feet. In addition, beads can also be a spiritual conduit for ancestors, meaning that beads make it easier for ancestors to channel through the healer.

Ubuntu emphasises the “richness of people's cultural heritage and goes a long way in providing application principles” (Mentiki, 1979, p. 157). In initiation school you are taught to love and understand your lineage and cultural history because it in itself is encoded science. Izithakazelo (clan names) according to Gogo Khanyakude is an oral history of your bloodline, what kind of people they are, where they come from and their character traits –for those who go into initiation school it is also indicative of the type of healing agent you would use (water or herbs).

To further illustrate this, I would like to reflect on my own experience – the first part of my paternal grandfather's **Mdluli izithakazelo** (clan names) are:

Mdluli – meaning the one who passes by. Moreover, referring to people who are initiators.

Bhekiswayo – where are we headed? Meaning, what do you want to do?

Ndzindzindzi – everywhere but nowhere.

Wen' Indlovukati Matala-Nkhosi – Queen who gave to king/referring to royal bloodline and the Regent Queen mother Indlovukati Labotsibeni Mdluli who stopped the British invasion in Swaziland and gave birth to a King.

Wena wabhekis inkosi' elusaneni – refers to what direction you are taking as king.

BakaMdluli abayidli inyama yembuti – goat meat is a sacred animal for the Mdluli and is the animal that is used in rituals.

The oral history in the form of the Izithakazelo was a starting point for me in initiation school. It indicated to me that I was going to initiate Nguni (I am Swazi), Amakhosi (royalty) and Ndaun ancestors (Mdluli people are nomads as indicated by the name itself). The animal that would be used for my graduation ceremony as a Sangoma would be umbuti (goat) as it was held sacred by my ancestors. In the second part of the Izithakazelo, which I did not insert because of its longevity, it goes on to mention the significance of the ancestral totem being the long-tailed widowbird which speaks to the fact that birds do not stay in one place – they migrate from place to place (Mdluli – one who passes by). It also indicates that one of my gifts would be as a seer or fortune teller because birds see clearly from a bird's eye view. The significant ancestral cloths would have to be an elephant to represent the matriarchal energy of the Regent Queen Mother as well as the cloth of the bird with the long tail. Lastly, it mentions a river which means that one of my agents would probably be of water.

“Utu/Ubuntu urges us to move beyond ourselves and to transcend our comfort zones because other people, their experiences and sites of knowledge are a part of who we are; just as we are a part of who they are” (Mugo, 2021, p. 4). In the case of the learning process and knowledge production within the Ukuthwasa space is the understanding that everyone is a site of knowledge because they are a living archive of their experiences but also because of their ancestors. Furthermore, in the Mpande, the Gobela and initiates are constantly engaging in the act of moving in and out of each other's sites of knowledge through the act of ukuGoba (bowing)/surrendering to their peers, patients and Gobela.

2.13 Decolonial Theory

In the book *Whose history counts: Decolonising African pre-colonial historiography* (2018), the chapter on “Repositioning Umakhulu as an institution of knowledge” provides a very important trajectory on custodianship of knowledge. The chapter aims to re-address the questions about decolonisation of knowledge. It calls for the reconstruction of history and historiographies and poses critical questions on how history is researched and written about and who is writing the history.

The chapter aims to reposition Umakhulu (grandmother) as an institution of knowledge that not only transfers knowledge from folklores “but also a body of Indigenous knowledge that stores, transfers and disseminates knowledge and values” (Bam et al., 2018, p. 76). Magoqwana (2018) argues that language represents a specific ontology and worldview, in this case the worldview of Umakhulu as a “senior mother/grandmother” representing an invisible embodied knowledge, an intangible heritage that comes with everything Umakhulu embodies. Furthermore, Magoqwana (2018) urges the reader to go beyond thinking that gender is clear cut. There is an understanding that Umakhulu is a “historical foundation”, as she builds the foundations of African households through the socialization of children as an oral historian and a spiritual labourer (Bam et al., 2018, p. 76).

Magoqwana’s chapter also draws from the work of Mama Tisani that challenges “patriarchal bias” and centres its focus on matriarchal energy. Umakhulu is an ontological foundation “she lives in me” and further adds that the maternal grandmother is important in the institution of Ukuthwasa as she represents how we know what we know (Bam et al., 2018, p. 80). When uMakhulu narrates Iziduko/Izithakazelo, she becomes a fundamental base for understanding oral histories. Her historical knowledge makes her the centrepiece for spiritual forms of education and the Ukuthwasa process, thus making her an ontological spiritual foundation when she passes on to the ancestral plane (Bam et al., 2018).

Magoqwana also argues that the genealogy of the family becomes useful in the Ukuthwasa process. The word uGogo directly translated means grandmother in isiZulu but in the Ukuthwasa space it means spiritual elder – the ancestor of those who have gone to Thwasa. Therefore, the female designation to be uGogo transcends gender and physiology as the term Gogo can be given to both males and females; it is a transferrable term, as there is no such

thing as gender in the spiritual realm. uGogo in Ukuthwasa helps you with your spiritual aspects, and uBaba (father) helps you with the physical world (Bam et al., 2018).

In my journey, my maternal great-grandmother played an instrumental role in my initiation journey because she appeared to me as Isithunywa (messenger spirit) and a guiding spirit. She was a White woman who used to practice mediumship and consult people through cards, candles and tea leaves, and I inherited her gift of mediumship. She made it known to me in a dream that my medium for consulting (Hlola) would be candles and cards which was different from other Amathwasanas who used bones. She is normally the first ancestor to respond when I have Phahla'd in comparison to boMkhulu (male ancestors). Moreover, on my paternal side, my aunts and grandmothers are custodians of oral history. The matriarchal energy of both the Swazi (paternal side) and coloured (maternal side) have worked together in my journey.

2.14 Ethical Considerations

It is important to note that there are different types of ethics. There are ethics that govern the academic space and there are ethics within the Intwaso space (*umthetho we shoba*). Throughout this journey there was always a dance between the two. Often, I had to suspend the ethics of academia to fully access the Intwaso space and obey the ethics of each Mpande.

2.14.1 Ethics in academia

I needed to submit my proposal and research questions (see Appendix A) on the Rhodes University Research Ethics committee platform which allowed for pre-research ethics applications for contextual profile understanding. Only after my application was approved could I conduct interviews or continue with my study. This was done after obtaining verbal informed consent (see Appendix B); thereafter, pre-approved semi-structured interview questions were used as the interview schedule (Appendix C).

2.14.2 Research design, theories and methodology informs ethics of care

The research design I chose for my study, critical ethnography, informed the ethics of care I wanted the study to embody. This included Ubuntu ethics, which refers to both the philo- praxis and the practice of Ubungoma that are rooted in the ethos of Ubuntu. Ubuntu ethics emphasises the importance of “survival, spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity” (Mbigi, 1997, p. 33).

I approached the ethical dimensions such as confidentiality, dignity and respect in various ways. Firstly, Izangoma were reluctant to do interviews and sign consent forms because of the long violent legacy of apartheid. During apartheid, Black people were made to sign consent forms and documents that they could not read nor understand because of the language it was written in. Moreover, there has been an exploitative relationship between the anthropology discipline and African spirituality, which has resulted in distrust among the Ubungoma community.

This resulted in needing to develop ways around issues of consent with Indigenous communities both psychically and spiritually. An important tool that helped with verbal informed consent was the oral history and the narrative analysis which focuses on the story itself as the object of investigation, particularly how the healer narrates their story and then secondly, how the researcher interprets the story after the healer has narrated it (Riessman, 1993). Furthermore, member checking took place in the spiritual and physical realms. Spiritual member checking was done through the ritual of ukuphahla and sleeping on stories. Physical member checking was done through various phone calls, sending pictures of the write-ups I had done or emailing copies (to those who had access to internet). Lastly, after the final product I asked my participants to handwrite a letter explaining how they felt about the final write up.

With critical ethnography, Madison (2011, p. 197) maintains that

a description of who the researcher is, the purposes behind the study, planned forms of representing data, selection processes, benefits and risks for participants, questions regarding confidentiality and anonymity, and considerations for data collection in tune with the participants' culture are crucial in order to be accountable to the researched community.

I maintained this through the tool of member checking, which was done in all realms – physical, mental and spiritual. All participants phahla'd to ask permission to be participants in this study and disclose information. Confirmations would often come through sleeping on stories for both the participants and me.

2.14.3 Attentive listening

Collaborative narrative building in oral history needs the critical researcher to understand, accept and embrace different narrative styles. In this study, the difference in narratives is where nuances were created.

2.14.4 Non-disclosure of sacred information and rituals

Ukuthwasa is a sacred process with rituals that are very specific to the individual. Participants asked permission from their idlozis and oGobela to partake in this study. Information that was considered too sacred to disclose was not included in the research.

2.14.5 Triangulation of theoretical and methodological frameworks

Triangulating means applying several different theoretical and methodological frameworks in a research study to address the research question. It is a research strategy that helps the researcher enhance the validity and credibility of their findings and create unbiased work. The use of multiple theories, methodologies and methods of collection in this study aimed to minimise its limitations.

2.15 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theories, methodologies and methods deployed in this study that helped to analysis the data. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the sampling techniques deployed. This chapter also speaks to how the theories and methodologies are linked to the ethics of care deployed in the study and makes mention of the various ethical considerations, such as attentive listening, non-disclosure, triangulation and member checking.

Chapter Three: Oral Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

As stated previously, I used the concept of concentric ways of knowing which explores a non-linear way of thinking. This concept of concentric ways of knowing explores everything happening in a circular motion, as all-encompassing; “we theorize, when doing, when feeling and embodying” (Eze, 2017, p. 4). After engaging with my conceptual placing of the study and identifying my theories and methodologies that were used interchangeably, I now navigate the literature that exists both in the esoteric form of oral history and written published works interchangeably.

For the sake of my study, I made use of Portelli’s (1991) definition of “oral literature” or oral accounts, which “serves as a verbal form of literature that precedes written forms of literature. This form of literature named ‘orature’ is passed on from one person to another through word of mouth” (Portelli, 1991, p. 16). Oral literature not only contains “folk tales, ballads, dance, myths but it also serves the purpose of imparting moral and ethical lessons to individuals” (Portelli, 1991, p. 16). This reflects a broader understanding of the concept of literature beyond published written work. There is an increasing recognition that the meaning of literature includes written texts but also lore (Portelli, 1991).

I drew on both written and oral forms of literature to construct an accurate account of the structure and components of Empanjeni (initiation school) and the oGobela teaching approaches and techniques. This review was written using different methods; written literature (books and articles) and oral accounts by oGobela in conversation that were transcribed into written accounts with my own observations as an initiate. This served as a balancing act because where the one form of literature was limited the other one filled in the blanks. Pre-colonial African history is based on its orality, therefore making written literature on initiation schools very limited because of the sacredness around the Ukuthwasa process and the orality that surrounds this Indigenous knowledge. In addition, this oral literature view lays the foundation for the data analysis chapter as it attempts to contextualise concepts that will be later explored.

3.2 Insights into the Structure and Components of Empandeni and oGobela Teaching Approaches and Techniques: A view From Available Literature

3.2.1 The Ngoma tradition in Southern Africa

Janzen (1991) states that the Ngoma tradition or the Ngoma trope refers to “the institution the song, drumming and dance”. Ngoma foundations are found throughout the larger Central and Southern African settings. In my study, I make specific reference to the Ubungoma, practised in Southern Africa. “The Ngoma trope/tradition creates a therapeutic setting that opens a space for prayer, utterance, and a trance like state” (Janzen, 1991, p. 290). My experience after observing Izangoma imgidi (celebrations) is that Izangoma who Gida (dance) often go through this trans-like state where they sing, Gida and cry. My understanding of this is that when Amadlozi embodies your body, it may sometimes be a painful experience, hence the crying. In addition, you may embody the emotion of the Amadlozi (sadness, anger, etc) which may become apparent when one dances. The Ngoma institution of song, dance and drumming embodies spiritual knowledge, which is what Janzen refers to as “let the sufferer talk” or sing (Janzen, 1991, p. 291). The idea of “let the sufferer talk or sing” refers to the fact that the beating of the drum acts as a conduit for ancestors to channel through; it allows one’s ancestors to fully express themselves through dance. The trans-like state that the Ngoma drum emits allows for one’s ancestors to express themselves through movement and art. Gogo Khanyakude speaks of “cellular memory”, your soul knows what to do and how to move because it has been here before, as all energy is borrowed from the universe.

The Ngoma trope or tradition is referred to as a form of African healing therapy that provides its patients healing through song, drumming and dance (Janzen, 1991). It is said that the Ngoma drums release specific frequencies that have healing properties for specific ailments such as infertility, spinal cord problems and indigestive issues (Janzen, 1991). The article “Doing Ngoma: a dominant trope in African religion and healing” focuses on the widespread rituals in South Africa known as Ngoma and the complexities of the institution of drumming and dancing as it is said to heal specific ailments. The author speaks of how the institution of “‘Ngoma’ provides relief to sufferers” who are experiencing reproductive disorders and lineage identification issues (Janzen, 1991, p. 300). The Ngoma trope was important for my study because Ubungoma is the sub-branch of the Ngoma tradition. Song, drumming and dancing

are a crucial part of the Ukuthwasa process and its knowledge production, particularly because of healing associated with sound and frequency.

The book titled *Some spirits heal, others only dance: A journey into African selfhood in an African village* presents a different side to the institution of drumming. The research is based on the Lungu people and the Ngulu spirit possession and healing cults which are situated on the “southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika in the democratic Kingdom of Congo” (Willis, 1999, p. 1). The book presents two main theories. The first one concerns the theory of self and its development; the other is the notion of “making” ethnography. The theory of self and its development is an “expansion” of the self that comes from one’s interaction with the environment and, in particular, the spiritual domain (Willis, 1999, p. 15). There is a sense of flowing of spirit or spiritual knowledge because the drumming and dancing dissolve “the boundaries of ordinary selfhood”, which helps individuals transcend the boundaries of their individual selves and experience a broader spiritual community. The second theory “making” ethnography, reflects a process of making sense of the experience of drumming or dancing through “spiritual empathy” (Willis, 1999, p. 15). This analysis is useful because it provides insight into the institution of drumming within African spirituality. Gogo Khanyakude speaks about the relationship between African people and drumming. According to him, pre-colonially, most African homesteads had drums. Folklores were told to the backdrop of drumming. It is important to note that the institution of dancing, song and drumming is an individualistic process that helps the initiate establish a sense of self within society.

Thornton (2017) adds to the above by explaining the philosophy of the drum Ngoma as an embodied knowledge system symbolised through drumming and dance. He states that “the connection between drums and dancing forms the construction of language, music, knowledge and altered consciousness. Rhythm is the central organising theme for both knowledge and practice, knowledge in this case refers to the pulsed flow across bodies and disembodied persons (spirit)” (Thornton, 2017, p. 23). While the central motif in Bungoma is the institution of drumming, song and dance, the author adds that there are six main disciplines within traditional healing. “1. Ukuphengula (divination); 2. Knowledge of medicinal substances, local ecologies, and landscapes; 3. Knowledge of the Nguni ancestor and emadloti and ways to communicate with these ancestors known as ukuphahla. 4. Knowledge of foreign and water spirits, together with healing agencies known as kufemba; 5. And the relationship between lithwasana (initiate), Gobela (teacher) and Mpande (school)” (Thornton, 2017, p. 23).

These three pieces of literature “Doing Ngoma”: a dominant trope in African religion and healing” (Janzen, 1991), “Some spirits heal, others only dance: A journey into African selfhood in an African village” (Willis, 1999) and “The transmission of knowledge in South Africa traditional healing” (Thornton, 2017) provide the skeleton of what exists within the Empandeni. This was helpful for my study because it aimed to explore the type of curriculum within Ukuthwasa and how the Gobela imparts knowledge, while also taking into consideration that every Mpande is different. Drumming and dancing are also important because it is initially used as a tool by the oGobela to heal and ground the initiate from the “calling” and at a later stage within the initiation process it becomes a tool used to channel the knowledge of one’s ancestors. In this way, drumming and dancing are not only functional, but an expression of being one with your ancestors. It is important to note that every lithwasana is different and therefore, some lithwasanas do not dance or drum because they are not meant to.

3.2.2 The function of dreaming in African spirituality

In the thesis titled *The role of dreams for Zulu indigenous practitioners*, the author (Mfusi, 1984) argues that ancestral spirits are the most important because they symbolise a relationship between the dead and the living descendants for Zulu practitioners. The author further makes the distinction between Izangoma (those who initiate through song and dance), Inyanga (herbalist), Abathandazi (prophet/prophetess) and ordinary people (Mfusi, 1984, p. 20). In most traditional Zulu households, it is considered disorderly to not dream, as everyone has a guardian (Amathongo) that is entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of someone within their lineage. Dreams are portals that are channels that connect the living with their ancestors. It is important to note however, that idlozi speaks infinite languages, in which dreaming is the most common form of communication.

Mfusi (1984) argues that dreaming is not only for those who have Ubizo (ancestral calling) but for everyone who is living. The author further adds that Zulu practitioners are considered to be a “house of dreams”, as dreaming is directly linked to their livelihoods (personal life, relationship and careers) (Mfusi, 1984, p. 20). Lastly, the author mentions a co-existing relationship between God and ancestors, as ancestors are guardians and God is supreme. Mfusi’s (1984) thesis has helped with the understanding of dreams within the Nguni cultural contexts of Zulu people and their effects on the everyday lives of Zulu people, as dreaming is

central to their existence and is a medium for them to receive messages from their spirit guides (Mfusi, 1984).

Moreover, the area of sleep research in psychology called lucid dreaming, is said to explore hidden truths/meaning about ones' life. Lucid dreaming refers to the state when a person knows that they are dreaming while they are asleep; it is the kind of dream they can vividly recall when they are awake (Voss, 2010). Lucid dreaming has convincingly shown that consciousness is a state, which is concerned with how the brain is responding to an external environment. I would like to argue that the pre- and post-Intwaso stage one practices an element of lucid dreaming because one's dreams inform the next steps one is supposed to take, as dreams are the primary mode of communication for ancestors. It is important to vividly remember your dreams in order to move forward within the initiation process.

In addition, in the thesis titled *Messages from the deep*, the author is concerned with esoteric knowledge; in this case, knowledge that comes from ancestors and waters divinities through dreams and an altered state of consciousness through what anthropologies have coined the "anthropology of dreaming and anthropology of extraordinary experience" (Bernard, 2010, p. 15). These types of anthropologies help us understand the important role of dreaming. This links to my research because dreaming is the centre piece of Ukuthwasa and determines the role of the Gobela and the initiates throughout the training process – without dreaming, both the Gobela and initiate would not be able to finish the initiation process.

These three pieces of literature, *Messages from the deep* (Bernard, 2010), *The role of dreams for Zulu indigenous practitioners* (Mfusi, 1984) and *Lucid dreaming* (Voss, 2010) were useful for my study because they explored dreaming from psychological and cultural perspectives. The institution dreaming is one of the main focal points and main medium through which the ancestors communicate with the initiate, but also a portal where one can access different knowledges.

3.2.3 Ukuthwasa sickness: Ubizo signs and symptoms

According to the article "A study of literature on the essence of Ubungoma (divination) and conceptions of gender among Izangoma (diviners)" (Ogana & Ojong, 2015) the physical, psychological and social symptoms of Ubizo are: "anxiety, sneezing, hiccupping, yawning, restlessness, sleeplessness, mental confusion, suffering pain in shoulders and between shoulder

blades, and withdrawal from social life” (Ogana & Ojong, 2015, p. 3). At an advanced stage, the Thwasana suffers emotional or mental distress, lapsing into unconsciousness. The longer “ubizo remains unanswered”, the more the ailments progress (Ogana & Ojong, 2015, p. 3).

Gogo Ntombi further elaborated on this article. She stated that the general calling signs include all the ancestral spirits, namely Amakhosi, Abalozi, isipropheto, Mndiki, Nunza, etc. The common signs most seen in people with an ancestral calling and who are called to be Izangoma are:

1. Life changing events that are sudden, feeling as if you are no longer living your own life.
2. Body aches: Most people with Ubizo lwedlozi (ancestral calling) experience sore feet, painful joints and backache.
3. Always needing solitude and quiet, excessive cleanliness.
4. Panic attacks or Ukushaywa luvalo: This happens mostly when your ancestors either seek your attention or a signal of something, be it danger from something that you urgently should be aware of.
5. Experience extreme mood swings: manic highs and depressive lows.
6. You seem to not last in relationships.
7. Lack of patience and the feeling that the world around you is just too slow – you become irritable with people.
8. Feelings of being stuck in life.
9. Strange dreams: Dreams of snakes, dogs, water, beads, animals, cloths, ancient caves, flying and old people.

The Ubizo symptoms I have experienced can be characterised into two parts. The medical problems that I was diagnosed with and that never went away such as: irritable bowel syndrome, migraines, spinal arthritis and endometriosis. Concerning the spinal arthritis, it felt like water was being thrown down my spine. The irritable bowel syndrome felt like my stomach was constantly bloated and constipated. The migraines felt as though someone was hitting me on the head, which sounded like a drum.

Psychological symptoms: I was diagnosed by a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist and educational psychologist with generalised anxiety disorder, depression, dyslexia, paranoia, chronic insomnia or sometimes hyper insomnia. For these conditions I have received anti-

depressants and concessions throughout high school and university. These concessions included having a reader and extra time during exams where I would write in a separate venue.

I would often hear sounds of drums, whistles and waterfalls in my ears, and I would wake up smelling of Umqombothi (African beer). I also had intensive dreaming of animals, vast hectares of land with waterfalls, huts under the ocean and myself being initiated. When I requested an African traditional perspective, I did a consult with Gogo Ntombi who uses bone mediumship. She told me that six spirits appeared. The first one was Isithunywa who was my maternal great-grandmother, an Abalozi spirit from my maternal side, spirit Mndiki an old man from Mozambique, Mndawe an old man from Zimbabwe, an Amakhosi spirit from Swaziland and Nzuza (a mermaid spirit) who presented as a female presence. She explained that I would have to initiate, and my Nguni Amakhosi spirit was giving isikhwama zokulapha (referring to the bag of bones for healing). She further added that we normally Thwasa the three dominant spirits as not all spirits have the same ranking. She explained that my spirit ranking went as follows: Isithunywa, Mndawe and Amakhosi +Abalozi¹¹.

I was told that the water spirits particularly the Mandawe or Ndawe spirit resides within my root (spine and womb) area, and they cause digestive problems. Regarding the sounds in my ear, Gogo Ntombi described the low pitched Abalozi and the high pitched Amakhosi which are both water spirits, and they are signalling to me that they need a channel. Furthermore, the crown chakra area according to Gogo Ntombi is where idlozi yase khaya resides. The paranoia (hearing of whistles, waterfalls, birds and the smelling of beer) was the Amadlozi speaking in different voices, as spirits speak infinite languages. Moreover, Gogo Ntombi described hearing an influx of voices talking all at once during our consults.

She explained that only when the Amadlozi settle – often through the process of initiation – will there be unity and one single voice. As for the depression and anxiety, Amadlozi communicate with you through your subconscious mind; often severe cases of uvalo (anxiety) are a reminder that one's ancestors have come to visit. Understanding the calling signs is useful for understanding “Thwasa sickness” – before a lithwasana can heal, they must be a patient first.

¹¹ The + here denotes that these two are a pair

3.2.4 Gender and sexuality within the space of Ubungoma

Mnyadi (2020) argues that Izangoma gender identity can sometimes be dependent on which ancestor embodies the lithwasana's body. If a male Izangoma is embodied by a female idlozi, he may take on the female characteristics of dress, walk and voice and vice versa for female Izangoma. The author further argues that Izangoma calling is based on matrilineal lineage. The author infers that "gender is fluid" and predetermined by one's idlozi Mnyadi (2020, p1). Furthermore, according to Ogana and Ojong (2015), the Ubungoma practice lies almost entirely in the hands of females in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Female Izangoma outnumber their male counterparts by far at a ratio of 10:90. Female Izangoma head the "African traditional healing hierarchy" in the province (Ogana & Ojong, 2015, p. 3).

Gogo Khanyakude stated in an informal conversation that *"When we look at sexuality the root word stems from 'sex' which means the physiological thing. I am born male; I am born female"*. He argued that when we look at sex or intercourse in African languages there is actually no term for intercourse because it is not something that is openly spoken about. Moreover, he noted that in the language of our African indigenous people you find that gender is not something that is an important thing, hence the struggle with "he and she" in most Nguni languages. In addition, sex is not something for public discussion which is why there is not a Nguni word for sex; in siSwati, it is licansi, which also refers to a mat or something one can sit on because it is a respectable act. It is something that is intimate between two partners. As for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) community, there has always been a space in which it existed, and it has never had to be explained.

In an informal interview with Siya Mkhize, he speaks about the sophistication of African spirituality in that females can embody a male idlozi and vice versa; this blurs the lines of gender as we understand it. Gender in the initiation space is an important aspect. According to Gogo Lerato (per informal conversation), spirits are genderless, however, Amadlozi can choose their gender when they appear to you. Therefore, there needs to be constant compromise between the host/initiate's gender personality and the Idlozi's gender and personality. However, my mameza spirit (delegate of all the ancestors) which is often the spirit that speaks for all ancestors and gives you the name is female, hence the term 'Gogo'. My dominant spirits

are mostly male. My understanding of this is that it balances the divine masculine and divine feminine within my vessel. A masculine host with male spirits dominates Amadlozi which creates hyper masculinity which is never good.

3.2.5 The relationship between Ubungoma and water deities

According to Shaw and Francis (2014) the feminine mermaid deity is known as Inkosazana or Nomkhubulwana to the Zulu people of the Kwa-Zulu Natal region. Inkosazana is referred to as a shapeshifter and the source of all fertility and prosperity. The narrative around Inkosazana is that “certain chosen people who are called under water by fish-tailed and serpent deities, where they are taught the skills of healing and given great divinatory powers” (Shaw & Francis, 2014, p. 5). For Zulu diviners, the relationship between Ubungoma and mermaids are complex, as they believe that their ancestral gifts come from the water deity Inkosazana. Inkosazana is said to work in conjunction with one’s blood relatives. The great python is the central motif as it connects us to our water deities within the Ubungoma space. The deity’s main source of communication is dreams (Shaw & Francis, 2014).

3.3 Aspects of Traditional Healing

The author Mlisa (2020) gives an account of the evolutionary nature of Ukuthwasa over decades. Ukuthwasa was perceived as pagan or heathen by the church but is now slowly being acknowledged as part and parcel of South African society. She describes Ukuthwasa as a transformative process and “a rite of passage” that resolves inner conflicts created by afflictions, separation and identity crisis that lead to the feeling of ambiguity (Mlisa, 2020, p. 230).

The stages of Ukuthwasa form a cycle of birth, maturity, incarnation, cleansing and burial. Mlisa (2020, p. 231) links the transformation process that happens in the Ukuthwasa space to Pan-Africanism which holds the concept of “oneness and uniqueness within us, between us and others”, as all ancestral linkages are interlinked throughout the universe, irrespective of diverse cultures, languages and differences in religious belief systems. The author also adds that there is a constant struggle to accommodate Christianity within traditional ways, and that if one successfully learns to accommodate both it can lead to transforming oneself into a constructed holistic version of oneself (Mlisa, 2020).

My understanding of Ubungoma practice is that it is constantly adapting and evolving. An example of this was after the Witchcraft Act was implemented. African people used the Bible and adapted to Christianity while also practising their African spirituality in churches like the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), Shembe and St John's. People who had Ubizo (callings) in these churches were made to ukuphanyiswa kwesithunywa sabo (to lift up their messenger spirits). The process of lifting up required a lot of fasting, praying and meditating on the Bible. The Isithunywa (messenger) spirit is the purest form of energy that operates mostly in natural elements (water, air, fire and earth).

3.3.1 Different types isithunywa spirits represented in Christian churches

Africans also adapted Sangoma regalia into isipika relying on Isithunywa saka umvelinqangi (the messengers of God) to help them adapt. For example, in the St John's churches instead of wearing blue and white beads, their uniform is predominately blue and white which works well with Isithunywa samanzi (messenger of water/ water spirits); this can also be deduced through the use of holy water, isiwasho baths and constantly going to the ocean to baptize members of their communities.

The ZCC and Shembe church work more with Isithunywa santabani – this can be seen with the green and white jassie and isphika as church uniforms. To substantiate how they work with Isithunywa santabani, they use Joko tea (comes from a plant), coffee and tobacco and most importantly have church religious places called Moria where people pray around mountains and in the natural environment.

3.3.2 The displacement of African spirituality by coloniality

Willerslev (2004) argues that spiritual knowledge should be analysed through the eyes of the present (colonisation). Jochelson and Bogoras devised new ways of dealing with spiritual knowledge in the field of anthropology which entailed “the historical reconstruction of native cultures in Siberia into their original form”, before they were completely displaced by Russian colonial civilization (Willerslev, 2004, p. 395). In this way, cultural behaviour of the present was understood by them to be less important than the *informant memory* of the way things had been before. Shamans were understood to be bearers of ancient spiritual knowledge, and so instead of examining them “through lenses of the ‘now’” it is important to look at them through the lens of the past (Willerslev, 2004, p. 396).

The knowledge system of the Shaman is that “cultural intellectual knowledge” constitutes the core of the cultural legacy of a community (Willerslev, 2004, p. 397). It explains to people how the universe is built. Therefore, language results in the knowledge of a particular cultural tradition being shared between people. With the loss of the language, an entire knowledge system is lost too. Ancestral languages are believed to be cultural knowledge handed down from time immemorial to future generations. The author brings out important points, the first one being the dangers that classical ethnographies pose when it comes to the lens in which one views fieldwork. He helps us understand that it is important to meet your participants where they are (Willerslev, 2004). The article makes the point that Gogo Khanyakude made in an informal interview that “*language is a coded science and spirituality*”. The customs and knowledge system lies within the language. This was important for me to remember when translating document from isiZulu to English.

3.3.3 How knowledge is transmitted in the Ubungoma practice

Thornton’s article titled “The transmission of knowledge in South Africa traditional healing” focuses on the relationship between lithwasana (initiate) and Gobela (teacher) and provides insight into the structure of the Mpande (initiation school). Before the Gobela can become a teacher, they have to heal the initiate first from their Thwasa sickness. This is done by first diagnosing the patient or potential initiate through a divination process to assess whether or not the patient has a calling (Thornton, 2009). Secondly, the Gobela will interrogate whether the patients have had dreams or visions and their mental state in this case referring to episodes of depression/anxiety or bipolar. The dreams and mental state will serve as confirmation to what the Gobela has seen during the divination process. Thirdly, the Gobela will arrange for a cleansing for the patient in preparation for the initiation process. The final stage will be to Phahla (seek counsel from ancestors via a prayer place) – both the patient or potential initiate and Gobela will have to seek confirmation from their ancestors as to whether the initiate should be initiated by that specific Gobela (Thornton, 2009).

After the spirits have reached a spiritual contract the Gobela is expected to train the lithwasana to make sense of the explicit knowledge which emerge from dreams into implicit knowledge; for example, teaching the initiate about the divination process or the interactions between the Sangoma and the client. Furthermore, the Gobela is expected to teach the lithwasana how to interpret esoteric knowledge from one’s spirit guides and environment within a period of

around a year (Thornton, 2009). The teacher-learner relationship is described in idiomatic language where the Gobela is referred to as Gogo (grandparent) or rather spiritual elder and the lithwasana “grandchild”; it is never described as a child/parent relationship. The relationship between learner and teacher is based on a spiritual contract – the lithwasana is said to dream about the Gobela before entering the initiation school as confirmation of who their Gobela needs to be. This article provided a foundation for my research because essentially my study was concerned with the relationship between the Gobela and lithwasana and the type of classroom that emerges because of that relationship (Thornton, 2009).

In the study “Traditional healing among the Nguni people”, Mpono (2007) focuses on the role played by traditional healers in health care among the Nguni people in South Africa. The study looks at how traditional healers are trained, how “they practice their profession” and how they consult (diagnose and gather information) (Mpono, 2007, p. iv). It focuses on the skills traditional healers develop throughout their training this includes “herbal medicine, interpersonal interactions, group healing” and curing of disease (Mpono, 2007, p. v).

These three articles provided different views of Ukuthwasa. The first article documents the evolutionary nature of Ukuthwasa. In addition, it sees Ukuthwasa as a transformative process and a rite of passage that resolves inner conflict created by afflictions, separation and identity crisis that leads to the feeling of ambiguity (Mlisa, 2020). The second article by Willerslev (2004) shows that shamans are holders of ancient knowledge and therefore highlights the need for one to understand and respect the knowledge passed down from one generation to another. Lastly, the article by Thornton (2009) shines a light on the dynamic relationship between the Gobela and the lithwasana.

The above section covers the written body of literature that I was able to identify as being relevant to this study. However, there is a paucity of literature related specifically to Ukuthwasa. Thus, to complement and extend the written literature, I drew on three oral accounts obtained from the Gobelas to offer the fuller picture necessary for situating this study. These oral accounts are not the same as the oral history interviews done for more specific analysis – these are contained in and analysed in Chapter Four which directly speak to my research questions. These are broader orientating themes that I felt could not be left out when situating the study.

3.4 Additional Oral Orientations on Ukuthwasa

This section presents some of the preliminary findings of the healers' oral literature accounts which offer more orientating thoughts about the Ukuthwasa process. These are direct accounts from the healers with light editing for grammatical purposes.

3.4.1 Isithunywa – connecting with the creator (God) – Gogo Ntombi

Isithunywa directly translated is “the one who has been sent” or “a messenger”. Gogo Ntombi argued that in African spirituality God is seen as a messenger. The understanding of Isithunywa in modern times has been confined to the church and the Bible. Pre-colonially it was understood as connecting to the source (the creator) through the natural use of the elements (earth, wind, water and fire). Isithunywa is not only limited to the church; pre-colonially, there were African people who went up to the mountains, the oceans and the natural environment to pray and fast, before the institution of the church.

To understand Isithunywa one must unlearn the highly westernised understanding that there *is this White God, who sits in heaven and is ready to punish us whenever we do something wrong*. In African spirituality we are God – we do not seek God externally but internally. Moreover, God has many faces and therefore, different manifestations which can be feminine or masculine depending on what you need.

In addition, Isithunywa can use any medium to connect you to the source of creation (the Quran, the Bible, Wicca etc). My Isithunywa spirit manifests itself through the study of many religions. Throughout my spiritual journey I have attended and still attend mosque and read the Quran, I read the Bible and occasionally I would go to church. I would read about the Wicca religion and study the Yoruba culture and religion which has striking similarities with Nguni cosmology.

Moreover, ukuphakamisa isithunyiwa sami was done at St. John's Apostle Church of South Africa. St John's church is rooted in African spirituality, and it is also the church that my maternal grandmother went to and became a prophet within the church. Isithunyiwa is a free-flowing energy, it requires a lot of cleansing with isiwasho and water; it requires one Phalaza (purge) a lot and going through a series of intensive fasting. Isithunywa for me, forced me to have a lot of conversations with myself, as it required a lot of stillness and introspection as well as opening yourself up to become a clean vessel.

I primarily use the Isithunywa spirit, as it is one of my spiritual gifts that has been fully activated. My Isithunywa energy is not only confined to church but also through tarot cards, numerology and candle work. My Gobela essentially told me that I should consult more using my Isithunywa. I started consulting with tarot cards. Essentially tarot is the breaking down of the elements. Tarot looks at how the elements influence us based on the ancient Indigenous knowledge system. I would also consult people with candles. Specific candle colours and how the flame burns indicate to me what the problem is. White candles are meant for ukukanyisa (to give light to a situation), yellow is meant for abantu badala (Amadlozi) or isipropheto. For example, if the candle flame spits fire and makes a noise that tells that the individual I am consulting is going through a spiritual warfare; if it is struggling to burn that is representative of where the person is in their life i.e. (feeling of being stuck). Candles mirror one's energy, a lot can be told by how a candle burns when an individual sets it alight.

3.4.2 Nguni cosmology – creation story – Bab’Kumalo

According to Bab’ Kumalo, the Nguni cosmology states that the universe works on a “cause and effect” principle. The first being to be created was Umdali directly translated as “the causer” –we all exist because of this being. The second to be created was Umenziwezintozonko which directly translates to “the maker of all things”; this is through atoms, as atoms make up everything. Then Umdali divided its being into sub-group deities to further express its being through all creation. The first deity to be created was Usodumo which was observable matter directly translated as “to be known everywhere because you are everywhere”. Usodumo was the first deity to be conscious of itself hence the term “omniscient conscioues”. All the above are androgynous forces.

The first principle to be executed in the Nguni cosmology is feminine. Therefore, one can argue that Nguni cosmology operates on feminine principles. This can be seen in the first deity created, Unomkhubulwane, which is visible earthy substances such as sand, rocks, etc. After this was Usomandla, which is masculine (sun) energy. Usomandla is responsible for growth and nourishment of life. Ilanga (the sun) is such an important symbol throughout initiation for most people – it symbolises a new life.

The third deity is Unohoyi the water deity; all Goddess life comes from water, and it returns to it after death. She is a collective conscious. Water serves as a parallel universe. This why we collect and cleanse our ancestors from the ocean when we initiate. This is why water rituals are

central in African spirituality. The fourth deity is Inyanga, Goddess of the Moon. This one controls the tides of the ocean. We are taught that women's menstrual cycles are controlled by the moon. Lastly, we have UMAH – she manifests herself through plants. She was the first deity to manifest herself in human form; she is everywhere because we are her children.

3.4.3 Mandawe or Ndawu ancestral spirits – Gogo Lerato

Ndawo-Bondawo can be directly translated as “those that need to find refuge”. They are those who are connected to your lineage through either trade or conquest. It looks at your lineage before idlozi yase khaya, your immediate cultural nucleus, meaning, before you are known as Zulu or Sotho, as these labels are fairly new terms. It helps you trace your lineage pre-colonially. This spirit uses a very pan-Africanist approach and dismantles tribal barriers.

3.4.4 Gogo Moyo – (2022): Amabhayi (ancestral cloths) and Ubuhlalu (beads)

The ancestral cloths and beads are significant in indicating the type of gift you have, how you will be initiated and who exactly your ancestors are. It is important to add that this is a post-colonial trend as cloths did not exist before and they have become a commercialised trend – the cloths are made in China. The dress code of a Sangoma highlights the importance of their relationship with the ancestors. This is called an ancestral image – your ancestors decide the spiritual expression they want to maintain in the form of bead work and cloths and Sangoma regalia. This forms part of the Isifundiso within Ukuthwasa as it covers knowledge that can only be seen and not heard through the patterns, shapes, colours and animals. The cloths speak to a time and period in your life. They share some things that you are going through as well as what your gift will be. Essentially, the cloths and beads provide a clue as to what your spiritual name will be; technically, these are building blocks leading up to your naming process. For example, the njeti cloth is synonymous with water spirits. The print is maroon and white symbolising those who have died because of bloodshed – it has a femba plant accompanied by white and red beads which symbolise those people who are able to divine with water through isiwasho (cleansing herbs).

Cloth prints with leopards (royal igwe) represent kings and the gift here is prophecy. Birds, chicken and guinea fowls symbolise those ancestors who are quick to respond. When a lithwasana speaks to them, those who bring news or those who are teachers are indicative of their Isithunywa (messenger)/ma-memeza spirit (one who calls out) accompanied by white,

blue and yellow beads. This spirit is instrumental in guiding the initiate through the initiation process.

Lastly, Nguni ancestors are symbolised by animals, spheres and shields in only three specific colours red, black and white. Most black cloths symbolise maturity, respect and finished graduation. For example, the colour black creates a distinction between a regular Sangoma and someone who is ready to teach (Gobela) who wear big beads. Initiates ordinarily start off with plain white and red cloths; the white symbolises innocence, a new beginning and light; the red symbolises an initiate. They wear small beads on the head, wrists and ankles. When the initiate graduates to the next level their ancestral image starts to emerge when they dream about cloths.

3.4.5 Ukuphahla – Gogo Mpho

Ukuphahla is the main mode of communication with your ancestors within the initiation process. Ukuphahla can be described as a ritual that allows you to communicate with your ancestors in the form of creating a prayer place where you seek counsel and guidance from your ancestors. This is usually done three times a day within the initiation school: 3am, 12pm and 6pm. These hours are said to be specific to when the veil to the spiritual realm becomes thinner and it becomes easier to speak to one's ancestors. This act of constantly seeking counsel is done by both the Gobela and the initiate in the indumba (kraal) to make sure that they are going at the same pace.

The technicalities needed to be able to Phahla is to create an Umsamo prayer place or counsel place for the ancestors using candles, imphepho (incense) or snuff (tobacco). When addressing your ancestors, one must do it with respect by bowing down (Kugoba), ensuring that one's head and shoulders are covered. If you are a female, wear a dress or skirt that covers your knees. The structure is:

1. Acknowledge God.
2. Acknowledge both your maternal and paternal ancestors – those who walk in the light as well as your Gobela's ancestors.
3. Introduce yourself.
4. State your case, plea or ask for guidance.

3.4.6 Umthetho we Shoba – code of conduct or ethics – Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu

The umthetho we shoba is different for every Mpande/iphelo (initiation school). These are verbal agreements/contracts that you commit to before entering that specific initiation school. The first and most sacred one is the commitment to healing and being a light worker. The second is to respect and honour the sacredness of knowledge that is imparted to you by your Gobela, ensuring that you do not break this commitment. The third one is to conduct yourself with respect whether it be with the dress conduct (wearing your Sangoma regalia at all times), addressing people with Ubuntu or not putting yourself in a position where people question your training. These codes of conduct acknowledge the fact that Ukuthwasa is observed within a community of practice, therefore, how you conduct yourself reflects your Mpande. This is important because it shines a light on the ethics within initiation schools which are different to the ethics within academia, and it was important to take note of these when documenting my research.

3.4.7 Muthi as a source of creation – Gogo Khanyakude

Muthi is a living consciousness that lives both energetically and spiritually and carries the consciousness of creation. It carries with it an imprint of the places where it has travelled. It can be found in oceans, lakes, dams and mountains. Muthi is mainly used by healers and is sourced from trees, mountains and water. Muthi feeds our spirits, realigns ourselves and also heals us. It works in a continuum. Children inherit the Muthi ingested in their ancestry through the womb of their mothers. Even in death, Muthi is used for certain rites of passages to guide the spirit to where it needs to go.

The effectiveness of Muthi is based on intention. There needs to be an intention to heal. Its process cycle goes as follows: the tree, digger, processor to the healer and then patient. The interdependent relationship of people and Muthi has spanned centuries. Our ancestors had inter-co-dependent relationships and understood the seasons that Muthi could be harvested in.

3.4.8 Totemism, Izithakazelo and animism – Gogo Khanyakude

As African people we see animals as an instinctive being or rather we see deities within animals. Certain life lessons are learnt from animals in our African spirituality. For example, the lesson of umuthi is learnt from animals as animals do not go to doctors; they self-medicate

– it is something that is inherently built into their instincts. Animals are aligned with the natural rhythms and cycles of the natural environment.

Animism then when it is practised becomes totemism. Totemism is where each tribe will have a particular animal that they are attributed to. This idea of communalism as African people is taken from the natural order of the animal kingdom. uBokhosi (royalty) or the monarchy is very important within the structure of the community; it is a place or a people that bring together all people. All kings have an association with the leopard skin and then the lion skin. The reason why kings are portrayed as lions and leopards is that lions are the most dominant predators. Leopards are ingenious, saint like – their thought processes are unique. They can innovate outside their natural habitats and also crave solitude. A king is supposed to have all these qualities to lead their community.

When we look at the Bantu people, we understand that African totemism informs how they recognise deity. The origin of the Bantu people is from the Kalanga people – these were people that were very in touch with nature and the cosmos. Each and every one of these surnames or totems are associated firstly with nature conservation. If animals that belong or are seen as kin or represented as your father or brother (ancestrally) are threatened by human existence, then there would be certain protection provided because there would be an understanding of the divinity within each animal.

A totem does not necessarily have to be an animal it can also be a natural element or deity like Swazi surnames, Manzini (water), Mnisi (rain makers), Mabaso (to start a fire), Nunza (mermaid) and Ntabatsi (soil or earth). The animal you are attributed to in your izithakazelo is based on your bloodline's affiliation to that animal/deity of a natural element. For example, if your surname is Manzini that means that your people had access to large bodies of water and recognises water as their source of deity.

3.4.9 Intwaso as a rite of passage and naming process – Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu

My understanding of Intwaso is as a rite of passage. It is an ancient practice where pre-colonially in each community and family there needed to be a healer. This is because Amadlozi need a custodian in human form; there needs to be someone who will take on the responsibility of taking care of the family's cultural and spiritual well-being.

My naming process was informed by my Isithunywa spirit. My Gobela spoke about getting a vision of the bright light and one of my ancestors stepped forward as well hearing the Dlamini izithakazelo “Chikaza ilanga lomhlaba” meaning “the bright shining light of the world”. After a few months I had a dream where the exact name was given to me in isiZulu not in IsiSwati – Gogo Ukukhanya KweMhlaba. The naming process is very important as it is supposed to indicate to you what your purpose is supposed to be. For me, my spiritual name is about the importance of light work, doing good and shining light on Indigenous knowledge.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to orient the reader in components of the initiation process. In this oral literature review I aimed to broaden the understanding of the concept of ‘literature’ beyond published written work (Portelli, 1991). The oral literature review lays the groundwork for concepts that are found in the data analysis chapter. This chapter dealt with concepts that inform the creation of the new identity of a Sangoma and Gobela and the mechanisms needed in the Mpande for the Isifundisos to develop.

Chapter Four: Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings: oGobela Teaching Philosophies and Teaching Processes

4.1 Introduction

This chapter showcases the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data. The final sample comprised eight participants from all over South Africa. The data are presented in the form of short stories. The narrative accounts that I as the researcher chose to write about are linked to the evolving research questions shared below and take into account the contextual and theoretical frameworks of the study. In the following section I describe the research instruments used to generate the stories, including the evolving research questions, a brief reorientation to narrative theory, the way I went about coding the data and the different sources this came from. From there I proceed to explore the themes emerging from this study.

4.2 Interview Questions

1. What kind of Isifundiso (lessons) would you say emerges in the Ukuthwasa space?
2. What role do you play in the initiation school?
3. What kind of teaching tools do you use to aid the initiation process?
4. Which teaching approaches and techniques do you use in the Ukuthwasa space? And why?
5. How do you create a socio-culturally diverse learning environment?

Questions in Zulu

1. Hlobo luni lwekharikhulamu ongathi luvela esikhaleni Ukuthwasa?
2. Chaza iqhaza olibambayo esikoleni sokusoka?
3. Hlobo luni lwamathuluzi okufundisa owasebenzisayo ukusiza inqubo yokuthwasa?
4. Yiziphi izindlela zokufundisa ozisebenzisayo endaweni yokuthwasa? Futhi ngani?
5. Uyakha kanjani indawo yokufunda ehlukahlukene yezenhlalo namasiko?

4.3 What is Narrative Data Analysis?

Narrative analysis was used in this study to explore the themes in the Gobelas 'narration of knowledge transmission and teaching techniques. The term 'narrative analysis' was coined by Riessman (1993) as an approach that focuses on the story itself as the object of investigation (Riessman, 1993). Riessman considers it an act of looking inward at the story itself and how it is organised through its narration. Narrative analysis provides a dual layer of interpretation: the first layer is how the research participants themselves make sense and meaning of their own lives through narrative. The second layer is how the researcher "interprets the construction of the narrative" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1).

For the purpose of this study, narrative analysis opens up spaces for the creation of different 'knowledges' as it allows for the constant centring of the teller's interpretation and sense of meaning-making when it pertains to their lives (Riessman, 1993), unlike textual analysis where the researcher is responsible for deriving meaning from the transcribed text that has been collected (McKee, 2001). In narrative analysis, the researcher becomes a secondary participant whose job is first to listen and then respond. Narratives refer to the way human beings organise and understand their society: it is the process of gathering information about a specific phenomenon through the medium of storytelling (Riessman, 1993). This allows the narrative to be shaped by the teller of the story which negates the tendency researchers have to ascribe meaning and impose it onto the data (Riessman, 1993).

Narrative analysis within an ethnographic study provides a particularly unique analysis tool to generate findings as its findings are based on an organised form of interaction and observation where the participants are allowed to narrate and own their stories. Riessman (1993) has categorised narrative analysis into three dominant forms. The first is topical stories which focus on one specific moment in time but not the person's entire life story. The second is a personal narrative which comes "from a long interview or a series of long narrative interviews that give an extended account of someone's life" (Riessman, 1993, p. 65). The third is the entire life story which is constructed from interviews, observations and documents about a person's life. My study made use of personal narratives through semi-structured long interviews and continuous informal conversations as part of a participatory observation process that helped construct the participants' personal narratives.

4.4 Coding of Data in a Narrative Analysis

My study used inductive inference in the analysis of narratives, treating the participants' complete story as individual pieces of data instead of splitting up answers into smaller pieces and groups which is commonly done by other coding methods. The inductive method of narrative analysis uses interviewees' answers in their entirety to keep "individual narratives intact" (Riessman, 1993, p. 66). This served my study well because it strengthened the ethical requirement of care: each participant was seen as a whole individual and not just a fragmented informant. These stories will be presented in italics. I adopt an approach of thick description where I describe what I witnessed in each of the Gobela's Indumbas. These thick descriptions are key ingredients of critical ethnography and radical embodied participation.

4.5 Using YouTube as an Alternative Learning Site for Observations

Tan's (2013) study of 'Informal learning on YouTube: exploring digital literacy in independent online learning' revealed that YouTube is widely used amongst 18- to 40-year-olds as an informal learning space that allows learners to deal with information and learning in a different way from learning in a classroom. The internet has "facilitated and enabled self-directed, independent and informal learning outside of the confines of the online classroom" (Tan, 2013, p. 2). The YouTube environment is geared towards discovery and self-directed exploration in which the purpose of learning is educational: it is enjoyable because the teacher is removed from the situation and the learners' "decisions" (Tan, 2013). According to Tan (2013, p. 3) informal learning has several strengths because it is "open-ended, non-threatening, enjoyable and explorative" which poses the question of how students are learning in these spaces and how they perceive the efficacy of these materials in supporting and enhancing their learning.

The research participants – who are public figures and YouTubers – have enhanced my learning experience because I was able to observe different video clips around their Ukuthwasa space. This allowed me access to different aspects of their initiation schools and their lives which I would ordinarily not have been able to access because of the time constraints I faced in this research project. The YouTube channels served as a digital diary or journaling through the eyes of the participants which formed part of their narrative, creating a nuanced understanding of each person's contribution. Working with their YouTube content also allowed me as the researcher to work around the ethics that oGobela hold as I was only able to observe what they wanted me to see. Furthermore, the video stimulants encompassed folklore stories, specific

rituals and conversations. These were useful because they helped me to understand how my participants described their lives and how they engaged with their calling on a day-to-day basis. Videos are referenced as footnotes only for ease of reference.

In the next sections I describe in detail the themes emerging from these different sources of knowledge. In each case I alert the reader to where I gained this information.

4.6 The Understanding of God in the Ubungoma Space: Highlighting the Role of the Feminine in Practice

In this section I explore my participants' understanding of God and how they engage with their perception of God. I move away from the universal 'Christian' understanding of God and look at how God is understood in the Ubungoma space. Moreover, I look at how a multifaceted God informs their initiation process. These responses highlight the kinds of lessons that emerge in the Ukuthwasa space. To do this I will rely on the Zoom interviews and YouTube videos.

A woman is the only... feminine that can create a God-like act of creating life, only feminine energy keeps us alive... female plants bear fruits... if I twasa'd and I am an mngoma, I have to collect my ancestors from the ocean. And what controls the ocean? The moon. Our spirituality is governed by feminine energy.

We are spiritually and intellectually starved because new philosophies ignore the divine feminine leaving the creation force behind...

Gogo Khanyakude refers to the divine feminine as an intellectual energy and force of creation. uGogo further elaborates that African spirituality centres on feminine principles that are all embracing of the divine feminine. This is an extension of oral literature review 2.10 *Nguni cosmology*, where I attempted to explain how African people understand God based on the language as encoded science.

Most rituals in the Ukuthwasa space are centred on large bodies of water, which is referred to as feminine energy. There is this constant motif in the Intwaso space of going back to a body of consciousness (water) as it is responsible for innovation, intellect, rebirth and creativity.

As Africans we strongly hold Christianity above our own African beliefs as there are more Christians in Africa than any other continent. In the Bible there are ancestors that we call upon for different things: Moses — we call upon for the power of overcoming; Abraham — we call upon for the power of wisdom; David — we call upon overcoming Goliath.

We too have ancestors we can call upon to do these things. The sophistication of Christianity is that it is written in a book; it has a holy trinity where Jesus is the intercessor; it makes sense as a system, as most people think we worship our ancestors, and we never had a God. If we take it from an African perspective in Sotho, there are also three echelons of divinity: Ramasadi; Modimo and Badimo.

As African people we don't believe in a singular God; they are different manifestations of God: the feminine and masculine manifestation. There's Umah the first one to be ever created. Nomkhubulwane - the Goddess of the ocean and Nomhoyi - Goddess of the rivers

Our divinity is more inclusive because it is not an externalisation: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteous shall be added unto you" because the kingdom is within us ... it is not one that is masculine - the alpha and omega - as there are both the divine masculine and the divine feminine in the tale of creation. Each religion and spirituality are just modalities, conduits to a higher power.¹²

Gogo Khanyakude refers to three echelons of divinity that are neither masculine nor feminine but rather an androgynous force. He further goes on to add that various religions are different mediums that connect to God. Gogo Khanyakude speaks about the Bible as a historical story that we can connect to our own lives. We as Africans also have ancestors that we can call upon for various traits. It is also important to realise that Badimo (ancestors) form part of the lowest echelon because our ancestors are placed in spaces of religious activity to connect us to our creator (Ramasadi). Gogo Khanyakude later explained that we can access uncolonised versions of who God is through engaging with our ancestors; we can also understand that God is not an external force but an internal force that we can access by looking towards our bloodline and nature.

We are differentiations of God; the source has remained, has been and is being itself. The source has decided to actualise... what does that mean? 'Let me make men in our image'. The source thought 'Let me make the reality of what I am.' Where am I going with this boGogo nabo mkhulu?

Feminism is giving equal opportunity to women, not the same. Femininity is giving the opportunity to actualise. Actualise means to make something real or to give the appearance of reality. The source actualised into people, nature and many levels of spirituality. God is the definition of actualisation; as I actualise so should you actualise'.

A child is their mother's and that is culture. We look at the rain queen Modjadji ... that matriarchal lineage ... and today we think of it as nonsense ... but in actual fact reading through lots and lots of information in Africa pre-colonially women were the rulers of society ... and I

¹² Afrosavvy. (2020, June 26). *In conversation with Gogo Khanyakude (S02 Episode 6)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_XTubqZ-hs&t=168s

am not saying we should go back to that but Badimo are saying we should go back... we should go back or rather we should sort of assume that role again. In African spirituality if you want to goThwasa you will always start with your mom's family.

Gogo Lerato speaks of the SOURCE being the creator and how this is the ability to actualise itself into many manifestations of deities and human beings. Gogo Lerato speaks on femininity needing the opportunity to actualise and this is difficult because of the infiltration of colonisation. Actualisation in her words is to become a visual representation of everything we see around us.

Therefore, when seeking further clarification Gogo Lerato referred to African culture being a medium that acknowledged the role of women. She further added that a child belongs to her mother; we may not always know who the father is, but we always know who the mother is. She spoke of the mother as the plantation and the father as the seed. She further elaborates that even science acknowledges this referring to mitochondrial Eve, which is mitochondrial DNA only inherited from the mother. This is the only DNA that can be traced back to the biblical Eve or what uBaba Credo Mutwa calls uMa.

To further substantiate: this is why in Nguni African culture, fathers are made ukuthenga isibongo or ukuthenga ingane. Directly translated this means 'to buy a surname - to buy a child.' This is because Africans understood that a child belonged to the mother and the father needed to ask for the rite of passage for his child to be given his or her surname.

In Ubungoma space, the first port of call is being your mother's ancestry. We are taught that your mother's bloodline is more powerful than your father's. She explained that women were the spiritual leaders in their households.

Ukufukama emlanjeni refers to connecting to water spirits as well as snake; in this case snakes refer to your rebirth; shedding of the snake's old skin into its new skin symbolises your new life as an initiate.

In further conversation with Gogo Ntombi, she said that Umnikazi wamanzi directly translated meant the owner of the water. This is the name of the giant python that some refer to as Inkosazana which I also referenced in the *oral literature review 2.5*. She is said to appear to some healers when they are about to embark on the Intwaso journey. She works in conjunction with one's blood relatives to bestow gifts. A snake in African spirituality usually symbolises a new life; the shedding of your old life to embrace a new life as a healer is important.

Isithunywa is umoya (spirit) that is independent of you going to Thwasa. Isithunywa is the intuition you have been given by God. Isithunywa is not only prophesying about the future but is about the summoning of God in the current moment.

Gogo Lerato elaborated on Gogo Khanyakude's point about God seeking God internally through the medium of Isithunywa, the purest form of energy. She spoke about Isithunywa being greater than any mngoma spirit; it relays messages through the medium of intuition.

In the section above I explored the understanding of God and deity amongst the healers. The common consensus is that there is no single understanding or manifestation of God. God uses both the masculine and feminine forms depending on what we need its being for. Furthermore, Izangoma have a strong co-dependent relationship with water deities as they work in relationship with their blood ancestors to enhance their gift. The divine femininity is the driving force in African spirituality hence healers look at the mother's ancestors as the first port of call to find out how to execute the gift. This is followed by the ritual of collecting one's maternal ancestors from the ocean and lastly, the visual representation of deities or God-like entities as feminine which can be seen by Umnikazi wamanzi the great python.

4.7 The Indumba as an Expression of OGobela Beliefs

This section relies on the data gathered in face-to-face interaction as well as the YouTube videos of oGobela indumba. This helps us understand the questions around teaching approaches and techniques. It also explores my participants' meaning making of their ancestral calling and esoteric knowledge. In this section I use thick descriptions of each indumba witnessed in person or on YouTube.

An indumba is the first thing a graduate Sangoma erects after graduating from initiation school. It is the centrepiece of everything; it has everything that the healer has accumulated over time. It is where their ancestors reside and most importantly, it embodies their belief systems. With each indumba one gets to know the Gobelas on a personal level, as it embodies so much of what cannot be spoken. The indumba is also where the client or potential initiate gets a diagnosis for the first time and where the healers go to seek answers.

4.7.1 Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu's Indumba

I recently had the opportunity to visit Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu from the Nkosi Mpande of Mozambique at her residential home in Soweto which was not far from my home. She had allowed me to see her Ukuthwasa space. The day started off with me waiting outside the gate and needing to vusa (evoke) my idlozi so that I could greet Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu spiritually.

Upon arrival Baba took me to her indumba, a backroom at the back of her maternal home. The first thing I noticed was the compartmentalisation of the indumba. The left-hand corner had the Ndau attire and healing tools particularly the femba shoba (exorcism tools). Under the njeti cloths which were maroon and white and white and red, there were drums placed in a hierarchical order: the middle drum was the tallest while the ones beside it were shorter. The maroon and white njeti cloth had a femba plant on it; this is the herb that is used in the exorcism process. This cloth symbolises ancestors who had died through conquest.

Baba explained the history of the Ndau people and why it was important to understand one's cultural lineage. Ndau means a spirit that is seeking refuge and space to heal because it has been robbed of its land through conquest at the hands of the Nguni people. She further explained that Ndau were the original inhabitants of the Kalanga Kingdom, who were forefathers of all Bantu ethnic groups that migrated through oceans and rivers to Southern Africa. This is why it is considered a water spirit and why it divines with water. She spoke about the Ndau ancestral spirit having a call to unify all nations regardless of race which is why the majority of people in Southern Africa initiating any form of Ubongoma have Ndau spirits.

On top of the cloths and drums there was a garment almost like a bulletproof vest made of pure goat skin. She described this as armour that protected her from witchcraft. This is what she wears when she is dancing to keep evil spirits away. In the right-hand corner was the place where the Nguni ancestors were placed. In the corner there were bottles of Muthi (herbs) and iziwasho (bathing salts) arranged in descending order. The colour of the amabhayi here was red and white. There was a red rope together with the red and white ibhayi of a guinea fowl which represented her messenger spirit (Isithunywa), ancestors who can be quickly summoned. There was also a red and white cloth which she explained represented one of her ancestors who was the iyanga for the Zulu royal family in the past. She further explained why the Nguni ancestral corner was far away from the Ndau ancestral attire.

In the middle of the room was her Umsamo place, or prayer altar; her seat was covered with the blue and white Swazi cloth that had King Swati's face on it. She placed her seat in the middle so that she could hear both her Nguni and Ndau ancestors' voices when divining. She described her indumba as a house where all her ancestors resided.

Baba's indumba expression was one that resembled her history and lineage from past to present. As she took me through the different compartments of her indumba, she was able to fully encapsulate emotions of pain because of the painful history of her lineage, but also joy because her ancestors had given her the gift of healing; she was the one who called for the unification of all people.

4.7.2 Umakhosi Mdluli's Indumba

The second indumba expression was of Umakhosi Mdluli. Umkhukhulu dabula manzi kaBhodala Umlilo was a distant relative from my father's side who was next in line to initiate me and had been a great help. I had been to her indumba many times when I went to visit my father's side of the family. Makhosi has the gift of Amakhosi (kings) because she comes from royalty.

Makhosi's indumba was a big shack at the back of her homestead in Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu Natal. Makhosi indumba was also compartmentalised. There were many ropes hanging from one end of the shack to the other end, on both the right- and left-hand sides. The right-hand side had displays of her prophetic and Ndau attire. She said her prophetic spirits together with Ndau spirits worked well together because they made use of elements, Ndau being water and prophetic spirits being air.

The rope at the back had her prophetic cloths in plain blue and yellow, with clothes hanging like curtains which she explained belonged to her ancestors and her bloodline that belonged to Shembe church. The second rope had a plain blue cloth and two umqhele (Zulu traditional headbands), umyeko (which is a Sangoma wig that is made of beads), the royal igwe cloth (leopard) and the njeti cloth for her Ndau warrior spirits. There were also different coloured ropes (white, red, blue and yellow) hanging horizontally and diagonally from the ceiling which Makhosi said symbolised her Isithunywa (messenger) spirit. In the same corner there was a bird's nest which symbolised her Abalozi (whistling) spirits.

In front of this was a long table with different containers: paint containers, empty Smirnoff bottles, mayonnaise containers and Parmalat yoghurt containers containing different Muthi. Some were open and some were closed. She explained that some Muthi was premixed and ready to cater for clients' specific problems and sicknesses.

In the centre of the room was the Umsamo place for bowing and praying. The Umsamo was dedicated to the Ndaus spirits; it was surrounded by goats' horns. Makhosi explained that there were ancestors that resided there in spiritual form, so these things represented them. These Ndaus tools were used when Makhosi performed a water ritual.

On the left-hand side of the Indumba there were Imbenge which were woven baskets made from grasses and palm leaves which had Muthi that protected her healing establishment. The woven basket also helped to connect her to her Ndaus. She further explained that there were Ndaus spirits that were connected to the land, the mountains, the air and water. Imbenge helped her to connect to the different Ndaus spirits. There were also prophetic attires: isphika, red and white, prophetic ropes and bhesu, which is traditional Zulu attire for male ancestors. Makhosi had another Umsamo which had imphepho and candles, bones and a pillow on the floor; this is where she divined for clients. Behind her she had three bags. The black bag was used for graduation or for initiates which her ancestors had directed her to use. The black and purple bag was for her clothes and Umgidis (celebration ceremonies) and the third one always had something inside.

Makhosi Mdluli's Indumba felt like it was within nature with its vivid images of goat horns, goat skin, birds' nests and leopard skin, each with its distinct smell, together with the smell of Muthi. Her unique understanding of the elements and how they influenced spirits was captured within her Indumba. Judging from the conviction in her voice she was proud to be a Gobela.

4.7.3 Gogo Lerato's Indumba on YouTube

The third observation was Gogo Lerato's Indumba which I observed on her YouTube channel. It is also important to add that Gogo Lerato's Indumba had changed three times since she started

the YouTube channel which is why I have a compilation¹³. When I had an informal conversation with her she explained that her Indumba reflected the personal relationship she had with her ancestors. At first glance when observing her Indumba it looked and felt like a museum filled with a wide array of ancestral clothes from the royal Ingwe (leopard), the lion, a lot of bird clothes and Sphika (prophetic caps). She added these because her gift was one of prophecy. She had been shown how to get all ancestors to connect her to ancestral spirits. This could also be observed by the way she dressed. Gogo Lerato would often wear an ancestral cloth as a hand wrap. Over the hand wrap she would wear a Hindu hand band, a prophetic cap and various cloths around her waist.

She further explained that the reason why most of her ancestral clothes had predominately animals on them was that the Nguni mythology viewed everything in terms of animism. Animism believes that all things - such as animals, plants, rocks, rivers and weather systems - are alive and have a spirit. This can be seen by the Izithakazelo (totems) where certain clans are attributed animal or plant-like characteristics, a direct representation of how our predecessor's viewed nature and the environment.

Her YouTube site was unlike the other Sangoma's YouTube pages. Hers was about ancestral lectures on the different spirits and the history behind them. There was a symbol of a rainbow and Ilanga (the sun) at the back of the room. This was significant as the basis for Gogo Lerato's spirituality was rooted in Egyptian mythology, specifically the sun God Ra. Furthermore, Gogo Lerato stated that the Ilanga cloth was often the first cloth given to initiates to symbolise the birth of a new life. In front of the Ilanga cloth there was a Bible, the book of Enoch, tarot cards, different coloured candles (gold, white, red, pink, blue, yellow), the Quran, and two flower vases filled with flowers. There was also an Arabic mat which she normally sat on when she was doing consultations.

She further explained that she used different mediums of divining depending on who her clients were. For example, if there was a client rooted within Christianity she would divine with the

¹³ Leratounplugged. (2021, September 24). *Dreams. Ndau and Msamo* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeWyxCuYEzU&t=1016s>

Bible. Furthermore, Gogo Lerato spoke about an Indumba being a person rather than a place. She spoke about it not really being a building but about your relationship with your ancestors.

In the above section, I aimed to portray how my participants Indumbas was a mere extension of them. It reflected the relationships they had with their ancestors, the journey they had embarked on as a healer as well as their ancestors' place of refuge. Umakhosi Mdluli as well as Baba Magwaza spoke of the Indumba being a place where their ancestors' spirits lived. This was an essential part of their role as Sangoma and was an extension of the work they did.

4.8 Everything in the Homestead Serves as a Lesson, a Teaching Tool or a Technique

In this section I rely on my radical embodied participative observations done face-to-face and the Zoom interviews to explore how the initiates used their Intwaso space and ascribed meaning to it as a semiotic, that is, signs and symbols.

When observing Baba Magwaza's Ukuthwasa space I was able to see the initiates' sleeping stations. The initiates slept on grass mats; on top of their grass mats were the ancestral cloths. Baba's initiates were dressed in plain white t-shirts, red skirts and small white beads to symbolise their initiation process. Furthermore, Baba described walking barefoot, on your knees and sleeping on the floor as a grounding exercise, returning to your childlike state where you were learning to walk and connect with nature. The idumani red clay was placed on the initiates' head and body to symbolise a period of mourning as the initiate was being born into a new life. In a sense the initiates were mourning their old lives and praying for a peaceful transition into their new lives as healers.

Everything in Baba's Mpande was made from scratch from the food they ate. Mealies were ground into maize meal; vegetables - mainly spinach, cabbage and carrots - were grown in the yard. Baba believed that one should grow and make one's own food to ensure that one is not ingesting unwanted energies. Initiates would also collect firewood which was cut down from the trees at the back of the house. All the food was cooked on a three-legged pot on the fire. Furthermore, she added that ancestral spirits preferred a plant-based diet because it came from the earth; no innocent life of an animal needed to be taken.

Moreover, the initiates ate in metal plates using metal cutlery and washed in a metal washing basin. Metal has healing properties, but it also acts as an agent that keeps spirits at bay. Moreover, initiates were expected to create their own Ngoma drums from goat skin and wood formed into the shape of a calabash. This process was expected to teach perseverance as the wood was softened through a process of working on it and polishing it daily to ensure that the wood did not rot. The goat skin was hung in the sun to dry the skin.

As Thwasana ... well I have finished ... graduated ... my duties neh ... I had to make sure the yard is clean because an idlozi does not live in a dirty place. As much as when you wake up you cleanse yourself so people must come to a clean yard. And then I will make sure that... okay maybe I will make breakfast, because in the rural areas it's not as busy as here ... and the work

is not the same as here. You don't have to clean the windows, mop and things like that. I mainly took care of the Indumba.

Gogo described cleaning the homestead as part and parcel of the curriculum. She spoke about understanding the kind of environment ancestral spirits preferred to live in, which is a clean environment. Furthermore, the task of taking care of the different Indumba where ancestors were said to reside was entrusted to the initiate. She spoke about the need for the initiate to surrender to their calling. Cleaning someone else's house teaches you humility and how to surrender. To bow to someone's ancestors is an act of surrender.

So the homestead in itself is a teaching tool; everything which is found in the homestead where the Thwasa is initiating can at any moment become a tool of teaching. For example you can take a common housework with things such as a broom and how it is that someone sweeps ... because body language is communicative so the stances and postures we have when we are doing certain actions reveal our attitudes and level of presence at a stage, so you can see the way someone is sweeping that there's no direction, there is something that is distracted. Sweeping the yard is a certain action which is rhythmic; the action is repetitive; you end up getting into a meditative state where you are now doing this action ... that can be turned into a lesson on how to bring yourself through the action of sweeping the yard to the presence of here and now, to bring yourself to a place of meditative and reflective practice.

The Gobela's observation of the way the initiate carried out their duties could be linked to the current headspace they were in. This shows that oGobela were not only there to instruct but they were also there to observe and help the initiate get to a place of mindfulness and reflective practice. Ordinary tasks are rooted in lessons.

In terms of your role, everything involves the Indumba, particularly in the morning. We will start cleaning the Indumba. If a client comes in, we as the initiates will attend to their treatment. The entire day is spent between consultation in the Gobela's Indumba and you as the initiate learns to administer Muthi and guidance.

So firstly, the students/Thwasa come into a space where they will have to understand the rites of passage, the north Sotho pula ways and how that works as introduction. Understanding the Nguni ways, the Tsonga Ndau way of doing things which is part of the homestead they are going to taught.

Here Gogo Khanyakude said the initiates were expected to understand their Gobela's culture in order to maintain the homestead. The cultural artefacts collected and placed within Gogo Khanyakude's indumba required initiates to do research and understand their culture. This required a sociocultural collaborative effort where the Gobela and initiate had to understand each other's cultures and languages in order to enhance the learning space.

In the above section I explored the semiotics referring to the tangible matter found in the Intwaso space and how they worked together to train the initiate. Gogo Khanyakude spoke about cleaning as a mediative practice to teach the initiates to focus their energy. Baba Magwaza spoke about meaning making by creating all your semiotics yourself, such as the Ngoma drum, beads and food. All of this added to the story of the initiates' journey.

4.9 The Role of the Gobela at Different Stages of the Initiation Process

In this section I rely on the in-depth Zoom interviews I conducted to explore the different stages in the initiates' journey and the various factors at play.

Let's use the analogy of the baobab tree. You as the Thwasana are that tree in different stages. Initially the tree would need roots first to ground itself and that's when you need your Gobela; we are only there for foundational work - Gogo Lerato.

With this analogy in mind, I will explain the multifaceted role that Gobela plays at different stages of the initiate's life. Before the Gobela can become a teacher, she/he has to heal the initiate first. This is done by first diagnosing the prospective initiate through the divination process to assess whether or not they have a calling, what - if any - spiritual knots are hindering the person from exercising their gift and whether or not their ancestors have agreed for the Gobela to help the patient.

Subconscious has to do with the soul and the individual, and the permission. For me, without permission you should not interfere and divine in anyone's personal space. For example, if you have come to me and you are having a consultation and you have requested a consultation, then I have the permission to divine you. That's not to say you yourself have not been divining: you are just asking me to clarify certain things about the dream that you had talk to me about last night ... you were on the river ... that was you divining.

Then I say thokoza Mkhulu they said I should ask for you about the dream you had last night? It's not my dream; it's his dream. So, what am I ... the dot connector?

Gogo Ntombi raised questions around permission and ethics within the esoteric realm before anything can be done. One must first seek permission from the client and their ancestors to access their subconscious mind space. Amadlozi and divination deal a lot with a person's psyche which is translated through bone mediumship and dreams.

I first assess them to see what their problem is really is or what's bothering them spiritually and, in their body; and I then ask them what food they are allergic to. I do this because in the initiation

school there are things that we eat so it is important to know what your sickness is first. I firstly deal with those sicknesses before I can proceed.

Gogo Busi takes a dietician/physician approach to determine what type of gift the initiate has. Certain ancestral gifts have sensitivities around specific foods because of the type of ancestral spirits they are. For example, land-based spirits have sensitivities around meat and water-based spirits have sensitivities around seafood. Finding out what the initiate is allergic to helps equip the Gobela to prepare and administer specific treatments that will help the initiate before they can enter initiation school.

Yeah, the Gobela is only there to untangle certain things, certain ancestral ... certain traditional knots. Typical example will be when a learner has had maybe abortions, miscarriages before there processes of ukuthwas. Ancestors - particularly Ndaun ancestors - are psycho spiritual. By the Gobela cleansing the Thwasana from the abortion two things have happened: they – Thwasana - are now aware that they have gone through a process of change where the Bible will call the cleansing of your sins, so psychologically the Thwasana already feels entitled to the gift because now that they know they have been cleansed.

Gogo Lerato takes a psychological approach towards healing the patient first before initiation. As explained above she works with a practical approach to emotional trauma. In an informal conversation she explained that everything in initiation school had a psychology behind it. For example, the wearing of beads and cloths is as much for our ancestors as it is for initiates' mental state; it signals to the initiate that they are in a process of transitioning.

A Gobela is your mentor, the Gobela is also growing spiritually, and as much as the Gobela has a spiritual child the Gobela has to raise their spiritual child which is another challenge.

Baba Magwaza-ka Zulu uses the analogy of raising a child and incorporates that as part of her Gobela teaching approach. She believes that the more her spiritual children/initiates grow spiritually, the more she grows and earns her title as Gobela. Like a child needs patience, care and understanding so does an initiate.

My Gobela helped me in terms of doubts - 'no I don't think I can... I don't think I am good enough.' She would coach me through those human traits ... she would say 'Bazukile did not come here, Makhosi came here to grow.' You need to start separating the anxieties of an ordinary girl and realise that you are here to nurture your spirit; it is not about you as a person, and it's about growing spiritually. Knowing that at the end of this, someone new will be born which is Makhosi.

Gogo Diko reflected on her time in initiation school and described her Gobela who also happened to be her stepmother as a therapist, as someone who trained her to give up her human traits and listen and surrender to her spirit guides. Her Gobela encouraged her to believe in herself and her craft.

After the Gobela has focused on healing the patient then they can step into the role of a facilitator and teacher. It is important to add that the titles Baba, Mkhulu and Gogo symbolise someone who is a spiritual elder; therefore, the relationship between a Gobela and a Thwasana is similar to that of a grandparent and grandchild. The common consensus in all the interviews was that the standard Isifundiso (lessons) in the Ukuthwasa space is ukuhlola (divination), imuthi (herbs) and how to harvest and process them, Ukuphahla (communication with ancestors), knowledge of water and land spirits and their healing agencies, Ukugida (dancing) and the relationship between Gobela and Thwasana. Furthermore, the role of the teacher and facilitator are executed differently for each Gobela.

Firstly, before I accept and welcome a Thwasa I consult with my Gobela and inform him that I want to initiate a Thwasa; sometimes she will also pass on the message to other Gobelas who are superior to her. We thereafter sit the Thwasa down and teach her ways on how they must conduct themselves during the course of their initiation, because now they are embarking on a new journey.

The way I initiate or do things, I do them in accordance with the Mkhulu that is living inside me. The first thing that I teach them is respect, and how they must treat idlozi and also how you have to conduct yourself when you have idlozi or Isithunywa because it is not everyone that will initiate idlozi.... I want my initiates to have a good experience and pass it to another generation of initiates.

Makhosi Mdluli speaks about her having to report to her Gobela and ask for permission to take on an initiate before she can facilitate any training. This act is standard practice amongst Gobelas. She as a Gobela has to also be held accountable to the people who have trained her and her ancestors, as a sign of respect.

This thing is like a school, in school you cannot learn everything on a single day, I take you step by step; today you teach him/her that this thing stands for this ... I give them enough time to learn and digest everything. Then the following day I continue and teach them new things and also ask them what they learnt the day before and so on. I take them by baby steps until they fully understand.

The section above explored the different approaches oGobela takes to healing the lithwasana as a patient before they can actively embody training as a Sangoma. Some healers take the

approach of dealing with the patient's psychological state; others deal with the initiates' physiological health, while others seek guidance from the esoteric.

4.10 oGobela as a Student-centred Facilitator and Teacher of Knowledge

In this section I use Zoom interviews to explore oGobela as the facilitator and teacher. In order to facilitate the healing techniques Gogo Busi takes the approach of teaching her initiates as if they were in school; with each grade the tasks become more difficult. As initiates grow spiritually so do responsibilities and duties they are given.

A lot of it is housed around a practical actioned approach; it is practical in terms of it being ritualised. Everything is in a regimen, structured around always bringing everything to the body or the connection to the body as I am ... say, for example, the dances and the rituals etc. In terms of being a facilitator, because there is communication which is communicated through the messages that come through the Thwasa and you then as the Gobela must facilitate those rituals and those rites of passage that need to be done. So, in that way you are a facilitator and you also facilitate the space in terms of preparing the space and making sure that all the tools are there for the process of initiation.

What can be deduced from what Gogo Khanyakude was saying was that her job as a Gobela was to listen to the initiate and then provide what it was that the initiate had seen via a dream or vision or even heard through voices. It is from this we can conclude that the initiate is not an empty vessel but just someone needing help with finding the right tools which the Gobela has.

A spiritual gift from your ancestors should come naturally... it does come naturally actually... without any invention from anyone.

At root level I must look at your culture and your ancestors. What nationality are they? At a root level if you are Xhosa, my best bet would be to start looking at Xhosa traditions and try to figure out how your ancestors would want me to implement your spirituality through a cultural point of view, right?

Gogo Lerato shared the same sentiment as above, and further added that a gift could be best initiated through investigating the initiates' cultural heritage and then the job of a Gobela was to tailor make the initiates' curricular suit that of their culture. Furthermore, in an informal conversation she spoke about the need to create a sociocultural space as an initiate may embody Amadlozi (many spirit guides) from different ethnic backgrounds, so fostering that space allows them to fully explore their spiritual identity.

My Gobela uses practical on the job experience.... If someone comes to consult, it starts with the youngest initiate in the initiation school to the eldest, so if there is amathwasana the last one who comes in will start until everyone in the initiation school has divined the client.

This approach allows for a peer review system which ensures that by the end of the initiation process the initiate is comfortable and confident within their healing abilities; moreover, it establishes a sense of teamwork or a sense of community as all initiates feel supported. Community is the basis of Ubungoma as learning is done with other people as a community.

Then there are also other different things that we make them do, but I will highlight some of them. I tell you which types of clothes you will wear things that you will have to do since now you are in the initiation school. Some of the things can be to dance, pray, the use bones Not everyone we teach how to use bones ... some you will find that we teach them to use other things because their dlozi doesn't allow them to use bones.

Although bones are a standard part of the curriculum within initiation school, the onus is upon the Gobela to consult with the initiate's spirit guides as stated by Makhosi and ask if that was the way the initiate should divine. She spoke about bones or other divining tools as being a spiritual map of the client's past and present; they served as a confirmation tool for what the Gobela had dreamt or had visions about. Therefore, each student was free to choose the divination tool of their choice. In an informal conversation with Makhosi, she explained that in her 3 years as a Gobela she had initiated two students who never used bones: the one used a pen and paper and the other used a mirror to divine and she was more than happy to allow that.

We have the standard method of helping an initiate develop from a spiritual perspective where we focus on grooming idlozi and making sure that the connection is solidified between them and Amadlozi.

Mkhulu Manzolwandle Ntsizwa ka Ndlovu spoke with conviction saying that the most important part of initiation school was training the initiate to listen to their own spirit guides. The curriculum was created by the initiates with instructions which their spirit guides had left through dreams and vision. The Gobela was ultimately there to solidify that connection.

A lot of the teaching tools in initiation school ... some were visual; you watched and sat in while listening to some of the trainees' experiences. Some of the tools that were used to divine were the bones, angel cards, numerology ... some people use water or smoke.

Some messages come from dreams most come from dreams...not necessarily through yourself, sometimes from other initiates around you... sometimes of Gobela himself/ or herself or a vision.

Part of what you also teach is the sacredness that comes with how you interact with the natural world, with self, with community and just with spirit. All of that is passed on through storytelling, sharing of anecdotes, unpacking of certain songs, because song is an oral account that records: the history the behaviour the attitudes, the views in which our ancestors come from. All of that ... you teach the Thwasa to decode oral history.

In a follow-up informal conversation Gogo Khanyakude elaborated on this by explaining that language was an encoded science; our languages held knowledge about the type of people our forefathers were and how they made sense of their environments. He said that the main thing a Gobela could teach an initiate was how to decode oral history through storytelling and share anecdotes and songs because healing was encoded within these.

If you say that you are practising from a place of umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu - I am because you are and my humanity begins because I recognise you.' It means that you must intentionally cultivate spaces where nobody is left behind. So that is the main ethos. It is an inclusive space with practices of a place of non-judgement and compassion, because those are the principles of Ubuntu and compassion means that you are sort of able to understand, no matter how different ultimately is a person.

Moreover, Gogo Khanyakude added that it was important for a Gobela to be an advocate of Ubuntu, to show and teach compassion and humility to initiates because being a healer was walking in the shoes of other people without any judgement.

Thokoza Gogo, the Thwasa 'ring journey is more student centred. I would say this because there are rituals that are done for you to evoke these people in you... that's where you get your name from ... from there that person says what they are about in terms of what you actually learn there... generally speaking, it depends on what you went in for Amakhosi, Mandwae, isipropheto and everything. From there is knowledge of the Gobela that guides you in communication with your ancestors for you... the clothes that they wear in the form of the regalia, the language that the spirits speak, where they are from.

In the above section I explored the different teaching styles and techniques in the different Mpandes. Gogo Diko relied on a peer review system where the onus was on the Amathwasana of that Mpande to help a client, which builds on the student-centred narrative. Gogo Lerato and Gogo Ntombi, on the other hand, took the role of historian to look into the initiates' bloodline to better seek answers about the type of initiation the student needs. Mkhulu Manzolwandle developed the initiates' sense of self-worth, while Gogo Khanyakude took the approach of walking in the initiates' shoes to be better able to help them.

4.11 Harvesting and Processing of iMithi (Ethno-medicine)

Another important part of initiation school is the harvesting of Muthi. I watched Gogo Khanyakude's video and had an informal conversation with her about it. Gogo Khanyakude started with the story of uMa and the tree of life which was inspired by uBaba Credo Mutwa's books on African mythology. Legend goes that uMa was the first human to be born and she danced with the tree of life and asked for a partner. From this the roots of the tree, man, was born. This story is a centrepiece for most Sangomas as it explains why they initiate the way they do; Ubongoma means those who initiate through dance. uMa, being our first ancestor according to African mythology, was dancing with the tree of life; song and nature were regarded as central to healing in Ubongoma.

With the above explanation in mind, when observing Gogo Khanyakude's video on harvesting ethno-medicine one can understand why song was needed throughout the harvesting process: "We sing to heal nature first as an offering, before taking from her. Land is central to accessing our ethno-medicine". This was evident when Gogo Khanyakude and his initiates arrived at the site where they were supposed to collect plants and they sang when hiking for long distances. They were singing in silence in a meditative process.

Khanyakude spoke about the way our ancestors learnt about particular plants through watching animals interact with nature. He gave the example of a dog with digestive problems; the dog knows it needs to eat grass. This is where the concept of Ukuphalaza (to purge) comes from which is done within the initiation process; an initiate is expected to do this as a way of removing toxins from the body.

This is the departure point for Gogo Khanyakude's story of understanding Muthi. Muthi was birthed by the tree. Therefore, Muthi feeds our spirit and realigns us with nature as it centres us. An initiate is taught that to collect Muthi they must go into a place of mourning, a place of mediating, fasting and cleansing as the Muthi goes through different stages from chopping it into smaller pieces to processing it; this is with the understanding that energy never dies. We are shown the different stages in the video. Gogo Khanyakude added that the bark and roots of big trees - such as Mpesu and the intabazane - cure ailments such as ulcers and digestive problems. Muthi can be harvested during the winter solstice around June and July because the earth is quiet, and everything is still. Winter solstice refers to a time when the sun is furthest from the earth; the sun appears at its most southern position. This time – according to Gogo

Khanyakude – is the only time the trees are able to give to us because they have not had children yet; they are bare.

In this section I engaged with Gogo Khanyakude's videos as well as follow-up interview to further understand the sound-based and seasonal processing and harvesting of Muthi and how the fundamental aspect of iMuthi is the intention to heal.

4.12 Dreams as the Manifestation of Ancestors' House of Dreams'

In this section I engage with the stories of oGobela about the importance of dreaming pre- and post-Intwaso. I explore how dreams are interpreted and decoded as part and parcel of the Isifundiso in the initiation space. I also reflect on my own journey as an initiate along the way.

Before I knew I had a calling I was an excessive dreamer, a 'house of dreams'. I often dreamt about people who were no longer alive, talking to me and guiding me. In particular, I dreamt about an old man with Mpangele (bird) feathers calling me to the mountains. In the same dream I would see ancestral cloths, particularly the black and red shields and the cheetah. This was significant at the start of my calling because the red and black shield cloth signified Swaziland and a Swazi lineage. Moreover, it was an Ndaun cloth. The man I had dreamt of was one of the Tshabalala kings in Mpumalanga, in the Piet Retief area. I knew this because unlike most of African history, which is oral, royalty kept a clear family tree with pictures. I was able to pinpoint exactly who my spiritual guide was through my family tree collection. Just this one dream put my life into perspective. I knew I needed to Thwasa because the dream had revealed my paternal grandmother's family totem which was a bird. It had revealed one of my spiritual guides and it had also revealed that I would work with water healing agents. This also pointed to my Gobela who also had Shabalala ancestry. By the time I met my Gobela, her ancestral cloths matched mine which was a confirmation that she was meant to help me. My spirit guide played the role and still continues to play the role of the umameza in my dreams. Mameza loosely translated means 'the one who shouts'. This spirit is responsible for relaying messages from the spiritual realm; one who is quick to be summoned and informs me on my next steps.

Dreams are portals to different dimensions that channel through the living to connect. It is considered to be disorderly not to dream according to Gogo Khanyakude because everyone has a spiritual guardian (idlozi/amathongo). Not only did the dream above help with my calling

and understanding of my lineage, but it has allowed me to experience the presence of someone who lived centuries before me on an esoteric level.

Dreaming is the centrepiece that determines the role of the Gobela and the initiates' training process. Without dreaming neither the Gobela nor the initiate would be able to finish the initiation process. My dreams guided and informed me on what to do next. I knew that if I was dreaming, I needed to take time out to reflect and meditate. Moreover, dreams are an institution of knowledge and direct messages from the spiritual world. For example, I learnt about water divinities through my dreams. I would often dream of myself near waterfalls and rivers praying and cleaning up around the area. In this dream there was a clear need expressed by water bodies for us to protect our ocean life. My Gobela further explained to me that dreaming about water symbolised purity and cleansing and returning to one's original form. She added we were 80 per cent water and water was the giver of life. Dreaming is a medium for opening up other realities and states of consciousness.

Dreams inform how someone is going to Hlola or how they are going to be trained ... how do you know that this one is supposed to be mfundisi and so on...

Makhosi explained that the type of dreams you have determine what kind of training you may undertake, for example whether be to a prophet or a Sangoma. She later elaborated in an informal conversation that the spirit guides informed both the Gobela and initiate on what course their gift would take. In her Mpande the Gobela and initiate would compare notes about what it was that they dreamt about the day before and Phahla about it. Dreams play a role in shaping the curriculum.

Sharing experiences through dream interpretation conversations, you are able to heal and understand where the individual is ... what it is they are seeing in their subconscious at the time as it relates to their own journey ... uhhh other techniques they use are allowing initiates to do reading on their own, encouraging them to trust their intuition because everyone has their own connection to the spirit.

Gogo Ntombi reflected on an exercise she did in her Mpande which was to share dreams with each other as Amathwasana. This allowed their peers to help decode messages from their dreams.

This is an example of how dreams indicate what your training should be. I used to dream of myself wearing an isphika (prophetic cap) which was a sign that before I could initiate

Ubungoma I needed to focus on my prophetic gift. My Gobela explained to me that not all prophet gifts were linked to Christianity or the Bible. Some African people were said to go to the mountains to fast, pray and meditate. Umvelinqangi (the creator/supreme) was said to have his angels that protect different parts of the elements which were Isithunywa sa Mazini (messenger/angel of the water), Isithunywa sa intabeni (messenger/ angel of mountains), and Isithunywa sa moya (prophecy). However, the Bible and the book of Enoch are often used by oGobela as tools that give analogies that can be translated into real-life contexts. Only after completing my foundational work in the church did my dreams indicate to me that now I had to embark on the journey of initiation school. God and divine pure good energy had to be the foundation of my healing process.

She would say 'Take out your books. Write down what I am going to tell you.' We maintained our books from day one until we left ... kept record of the important bits of knowledge. Amathongo (dreams) we would give feedback to our Gobela time where my ancestor would want specific things. I would communicate with Gobela and try to understand what it is they want, outside of what she would have ordinarily done for others.

I was lucky ... people complained about Gobelas disregarding their dreams. I didn't have that situation for my vuma idlozi. My Gobela was Zulu. My idlozi sent me there ... back story to that was my idlozis from home recognised my Gobela. She was my father's second wife. I had entered another initiation school and they had removed me ... then they showed me all along they wanted me to go home. You know? My stepmother; my ma ... she is Zulu.

Gogo Diko was made to keep an accurate account of all her dreams to ensure that she kept revisiting her dreams as each one had an encoded message that would build up to her graduation. As stated above, her dreams indicated that her graduation ceremony needed her to wear different attire from the rest of her Mpande.

In this section, I explored how dreams were interpreted and decoded for the initiate to continue their journey of initiation. Some initiates, like Gogo Ntombi, relied on sharing their dreams with their peers so that they could help each other. Also, through the sharing of dreams, one was able to access one's subconscious self. Others relied on dialogue between oGobela and initiates in the form of problem posing and problem solving.

4.13 Ngoma: The Drum as a Central Organising Approach in Knowledge

According to my Gobela, Ngoma refers to an embodied knowledge of song and dance. The different variations that the drums emit create different frequencies that are able to heal on an

esoteric level. Furthermore, drumming is said to provide an altered consciousness. It is a fundamental tool within the Intwaso space. As stated above, the story of uMa provided to us by uBaba Credo Mutwa showed that we were people of sound. Song and dance are the central organising themes for knowledge in this space, knowledge in this case referring to song.

When observing both Khanyakude's YouTube videos on imigidi (celebrations) one can actually see the spiritual expression of each ancestral spirit when it pertains to the dancing and evocation. For example, the Nguni ancestor is calm and peaceful¹⁴ when it dances and drums. By comparison the Ndaui spirit is loud and dances either on its legs or feet depending on where the Ndaui spirit is from.¹⁵ Moreover, as stated above, the 'Ngoma' drum is predominately used in Ubungoma initiation school and deals with the root chakra, the Ndaui spirit. Because it is a water spirit it is said to reside in the root chakra. The Ndaui spirit is responsible for wealth and fertility. Drumming and dancing while focusing on the root chakra is said to release positive energy that deals with muscle memory. In this way drumming and song are able to reprogram your muscles and help you manifest positivity like money and success.

Song gives us a language to process experiences we cannot or are not willing to express in thoughts, language, naming, awareness, and action. The essence of praise and worship songs bridge the lexical gap to commune with the divine self. We carry these songs and relate them to our experience, subconsciously married with the outward action of singing.

Song softens us to being vulnerable to ourselves and may teach us to all allowance to be with all that is there, here for us and lean towards this as a window into an inner being an infinite abyss.

Gogo Khanyakude spoke of how Izangoma used song as an orature to narrate various stages of being, history, knowledge and instruction. When correctly employed, song is an embodied experience which can convey messages effectively in a memorable way which can be received by all. Izangoma is a collective conversation which calls everyone to deep processing and witnessing in the here and now, bringing all one's awareness and attention to the here and now.

Mnguni ancestor will come forth and begin with the familiar tune ngikhulekele/bingeleka (a greeting and a prayer). This gesture is repeated throughout the hlehla process. The intention is

¹⁴ Gogo Khanyakude. (2022, May 25). *Intwaso // Sangoma Songs // Gogo Maina // Inkani Yaba Make - YouTube* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZiNxKYbFSQ>

¹⁵ Gogo Khanyakude. (2022, April 26). *Sangoma Songs // Ngobekezela // Gogo Nyamgamfana // Kuthwasa - YouTube* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhAQuhAHRnk&t=135s>

to emphasise the importance of open communal conversation within the Indigenous knowledge lineage.

Lulwandlelwabangoma: The primordial water vusela is an integral part of the idlozi and Thwasa experience as it is also a significant marker of identity. We identify others and ourselves through song and greetings.

4.14 Spiritual Alchemy¹⁶ of the Body, Mind and Spirit

In this section I explore the spiritual alchemic processes of the body, mind and spirit by using the Zoom interviews.

The use of wildebeest tail as i-shoba, an alchemic essence has been done to it. Western science will say its alchemy on the mind and body by asking of the animal to give its use tail the ability to divine. When danger is imminent, the wildebeest can find a path out. Izangoma uses it to divine when danger is imminent.

Above, Gogo Khanyakude spoke about how animals – particularly the wildebeest – gave the power to divine to the practice of Ubungoma. He further added that the wildebeest had been chosen for its ability to sense imminent danger. I-shoba is often deployed when Izangoma Gida is used to sniff out any evil spirits.

Bones don't say anything on their own, you tell the bones what to look for. Isithunywa makes the healer perspective of what the bones are saying. Isithunywa makes your medium accurate.

For Gogo Lerato, it is the spirit of God that is the alchemic essence because it is the purest form of energy that generates alchemy. She spoke about how the activation of its Isithunywa helps the healer see what the bones are saying.

The clothing around isipropheto ... in my experience it comes from different people. Isiphika are not all the same colours, size, and shape ... similar to amadoek.

In terms of the colours and in terms of what they are saying, it has taught me the seven-point star ... which then uses a lot of colour codes right ... it associates different colours to different forces of nature, which associates it to different Isithunywa right? And directions. Then you would know that if uGogo then is coming with white siphika ... then we know that this Gogo would work with

¹⁶ Spiritual alchemy refers to the act of inner transformation.

things that are motherly umah, who is responsible for our happiness and making sure we are well fed.

Oh okay ... we need to do work to reveal/ shine on specific issues for people. Then she's the perfect person I need to channel at that time. How do I channel her? I go and get her siphika and wear it, and I will wait for her and know when she's finally arrived.

Then you will have times where you are wearing amajassie right ... it's for abomkhulu because it's not only boGogo that are isithunywa's. Umvelinqangi also has their own attire as in his own essence he is Isithunywa.

The tools used in amapropheti is the Bible in the sense of using the metaphors in the Bible in relation to what clients may be experiencing in the present day. Isiwasho is used to aid people's ailments. A lot of food items are used to heal ... eggs, milk, coffee and tea as well.

The alchemy of one's prophetic/Sangoma regalia in the process of meaning-making is important. Furthermore, uGogo argued that what one has been shown in a dream or vision when made activates one's gift and acts as a conduit. The alchemic process here is executing what has been shown in dreams into reality as a way to progress spiritually.

4.15 Sacredness of the Womb

In this section I rely on songs that are sung Empanjeni¹⁷ as well as the oral accounts to understand the sacredness of the womb.

Ebaba ndingwenze, andina mkadzi, ndingwenze.

Eba ndingwenze mina, ndingwenze andina mkadzi, ndingwenze

Ngiyingwendze anginamfati, ngiyingwendze, baba ngiyingwendze¹⁸

This song is about an asexual man who has lived his life without a wife.

This song refers to other identities that exist, to the point where even in our sacred songs we sing of identities like that ... we speak of it being a ndazwe song ... anyone that knows about the Ndawe spirit is associated with living here ... in your sacral chakra. A large aspect of Ndawe is charged with sex, your sexual life and your fertility.¹⁹

¹⁷ Initiation school

¹⁸ Oh father I am an asexual man I have no wife... (repeated)

¹⁹ Afrosavvy. (2019, October 7). *In conversation with Gogo Khanyakude | S01 Episode 3 - YouTube* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4mbzQqr5C8&t=515s>

The fact that Ndawe openly embodies, represents, sings and honours such identities shows the inclusivity of the LGBTQIA+ communities. At the highest echelon that we have in our practice of spirituality different cultural identities are embraced.

Furthermore, the Ngoma drum predominately used in the Ubungoma space emits low vibrational frequencies that are said to deal with the root chakra which is located at the base of the spine at the centre of the womb. My Gobela explained to me that ever since she graduated and practised as a Sangoma drumming has provided her with a sense of relief from severe back and womb problems. Legend has it that the institution of drumming provides relief for initiates who are expressing reproductive problems and spiritual identity issues.

The rope we wear is the significance of the umbilical cord. If I am going to take you in the water and I am going to say: 'This is the colour of the umbilical cord given by my ancestors and I wrap you with it'. It means I am connecting you with my ancestors so that amapropheti within my lineage can intercede on your behalf.²⁰

Ubuproheti regalia express the divine feminine. The rope is used in a metaphorical sense signifying an umbilical cord which is considered protection. When you heal someone, you place them under the protection of the deity uMa and Isithunywa saka umvelinqangi (the messages of God).

Yes, Gogo when you have Amadlozi you tend to have isusu (bloated stomach) because Mndiki and Ndawo ancestors live in your stomach.

uBaba Magwaza spoke of the womb being a dimension of its own as it houses water spirits. She stated that this was because the womb or uterus was a female reproductive organ that could carry life. She compared the womb to water because they were both a source of life.

4.16 Infinite Spiritual Languages

Ubupropheti is not only limited to church ... it is broad ... can begin in nature... I had had to learn how people who are no longer in this realm communicate when you are called to office, you have to become conscious of the different realms and how the messages are coming through.

My people came through from different generations and told me that isipropheto in this family is a seven-point star - and I had to ask them 'What do you mean by a seven-point star?'

²⁰ Camagu. (2021, Oct 31). *isiProfetho ft Gogo Velabahlinze (Buhle Radebe)* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX-uKdljHlw>

I had to activate my gift through conversing. Then they responded by saying seven days of the week, seven lamp stands, seven universal colours, seven chakras, seven musical notes. Furthermore, they would explain that the number seven is for completion, perfection.

My gift keeps being activated through prayer, fasting and going to waterfalls through Isithunywa saka umvelinqangi ... in our culture people who worked with isipropheto understood through isithunwya saka umvelinqangi.

The activation of Ubupropheti for uGogo was through conversing with her ancestors and seeking clarity through the medium of fasting and praying. Through the act of conversing with her ancestors she was able to identify her ancestral image and language. That was monumental progress within the initiation space.

When we speak about initiation school you need to stay in a constant state of uvalo (a state of severe anxiety); uvalo labamngoma. If you don't have uvalo, then you should question if you have idlozi or not? (burps)

Uvalo must be a constant state of mind as it needs to teach you respect, submission and that you have entered the presence of idlozi.

When someone evokes their idlozi there is that uvalo inside you that calls you. Uvalo is such an important communicator for spiritually gifted people, to show you that this is holy ground this something sacred.

As healers when we say umelaphi wendabako - we work with life and death and if you are too slow to respond you can heal someone or watch them die

Language carries certain divinity, certain knowledge, certain cultural encoded wisdom, idioms, mythology and umfihlo.

Some people are not dreamers; spiritual languages are infinite. Before I went to Thwasa I would lying if I said I dreamt.

If I had met a Gabela who had said I won't Thwasa you until you dream, when was I gonna Thwasa? I went to Thwasa when I started losing my mind after finding myself waking up and walking in the direction of Mozambique.

Spirit speaks infinite languages, for some people birds bring them news which can speak to their bird totemism, for some people their need to beat drums for their ancestors to communicate with them, other people go to sleep and dream about a client that is about to come. It is important as a Gabela to not remove people from their vibration. Why should I distract you from your expression of your gift?²¹

²¹ Afrosavvy. (2019, October 19). *Spirituality in language | Gogo Khanyakude and Mkhulu Phillip - YouTube* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHi97-y7N3M&t=392s>

Above, Gogo Khanyakude speaks about oGobela needing to tune and customise the learning to the vibration of their students by first figuring out the spiritual language that their students' ancestors speak. He provides an alternative for dreams as the main spiritual language. Furthermore, uGogo added that once the initiate figured out the language and vibration their ancestors communicate in, it was easier to attain the esoteric knowledge of that bloodline as well as their concepts of divinity.

4.17 Manifestation and Idlozi law of attraction

Okay how does idlozi help us manifest?

When each of us starts to be aware that we've got a spiritual gift that is the first place of reckoning now that is where there is a first place where we begin to turn the wheel around so we have been negatively manifesting things that we don't want because a) our lives we are on autopilot and we don't know what to do about it and you know and then by the time you get told you've got a spiritual gift as frightening as it is that is actually the beginning of your manifesting how?

When you start to Phahla...

For the first time your intent ... your intention is what starts to make things happen and can I tell you it's one of the biggest problems that we encounter with our spiritual gift right? We know we are gifted ... we want to see the gift of prophecy but we would really like to skip out the part where we Phahla and pray all the time. It seems tedious; it looks like a useless exercise but actually what that does is that it starts to put your intent forward every time you do it. Ukuphahla and pray going on a date with your idlozi.

Gogo Lerato speaks about how ukuphahla - acknowledgement of the gift and the understanding of one's gift for the first time - allows the initiate to manifest positively because at this point the initiate has realised that they have been manifesting negatively. She went on to reflect on her life; she spoke about failed relationships, falling pregnant in high school, dropping out of university and being unable to sustain businesses. She spoke about how that was negatively manifesting because you were not able to love someone else, without loving yourself. Additionally, she spoke about her idlozi's taught her self-worth which was not tied to material things.

4.18 Conclusion

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed the data. The data were presented as a series of short stories that were constantly in conversation with each other. Narrative analysis allowed for each participant's story to act as a piece of the puzzle, as each narrative in and of itself

painted a vivid picture of the different components needed to transmit esoteric knowledge. Analysis allowed me to maintain the integrity of each individual's experiences. The next chapter summarises what I feel to be significant themes emerging from the combined knowledge shared by all the participants in conversation with my own understandings.

Chapter Five: Claiming the World That Sits Within the Teaching Approaches and Techniques Used in the Ukuthwasa Space

Essentially, the Africana womanism position is that the framework for a world free of oppression already exists within traditional African philosophical world view – if only the Africana women will claim it. (Yaa Asantewa Reed, in Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010, p. 619)

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to understand Ukuthwasa as a sociocultural process grounded in the ethos of Ubuntu. In this thesis I traced the politically oppressive history of South Africa to understand African indigenous ways. The thesis uncovered many thematic elements that highlight how the Ukuthwasa process conscientises and liberates the individual through relational approaches and techniques that rely on the natural world and how we interact with it. If we slow down and look at what has emerged through this thesis, there are strong elements of a world free of oppression in the way that Yaa Asatewa Reed in the quote above describes it. In this chapter I wanted to highlight some aspects of the world free of oppression that exist within the sociocultural practices of Ukuthwasa, and I wanted to relate these findings to other educational contexts. To do so, I wanted to open up what formal educational processes can learn from Ukuthwasa.

There is a belief in African proverbs that the physical mirrors the metaphysical (esoteric). I have always been told by my different healers that I needed to become a Gobela, yet physically, I am a teacher. As a newly appointed geskiedenis (history) teacher in one of the public schools in Makhanda I am very aware of how the sociocultural world in the Ukuthwasa space is completely different to the kind of teaching and learning we experience every day. In this way, the findings of this thesis have helped me think through what education means in a formal teaching setting. In this way, this thesis could help us re-imagine education in a broader sense by keeping it grounded in the philo-praxis of Ubuntu.

I will now explore the generative themes that emerged from this thesis and what they offer us in terms of a broader understanding of education that can liberate and conscientise the individual in ways that ultimately could create a free world.

5.2 Power of Continuing the Legacies and Learning Rooted in Orature

The power of orature within this thesis served as a tool of agency, that is, untainted by colonialism. This oral tradition has been kept through songs, sharing anecdotes and storytelling. Izangoma based their knowledge on stories and lived experiences that have been passed down from one generation to the next which serves as intangible heritage. It serves as a measure to preserve, gather and interpret esoteric knowledge. In addition, my participants weaved together their own stories by conversing with their ancestors and their peers. Language here served as an encoded science that revealed a lot about the type of ancestors one embodies, how ancestors interact with their environment and how they understand divinity. All through this thesis, I have sought to honour oral accounts that create a more accurate picture of the Ukuthwasa space and how it relates to the practice of Isintu. This focus is one that takes seriously the need to respond to “epistemicide” and trashing campaign that continue to misunderstand African indigenous ways” (De Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 153).

As a teacher, I also try to honour this legacy by incorporating oral accounts as a counter-hegemonic response to largely Western narratives in textbooks, particularly when dealing with topics such as apartheid. I have found that with topics based on Southern African history, such as apartheid, Mfecane and Shaka Zulu, the students are able to engage with oral accounts passed down to them through intergenerational stories. This in turn makes the curriculum more attainable because it is something they can relate to as this information and knowledge is part of their ancestry. Orature is an important generative theme to carry forward from this thesis for it shifts our understanding of how learning can be passed down to the next generations in living ways.

5.3 Resurfacing the Power of the Divine Feminine for Balance

Most Southern African cultures operate on feminine principles such as the Nguni cultures and Khoi and San culture. Bam (2021) states that knowledge among the Khoi and the San are passed down through the matrilineal line in the form of stories, music, visions and dreams. These forms are said to be critical source of scholarly engagement as it allows a person to tap into the divine sacred feminine, which has been displaced by colonality (Bam, 2021, p. 20). Furthermore, the relationship between Ubungoma and the divine feminine is one of complexity, as feminine principles govern the entire Intwaso process. Divine feminine energy

is said to be the driver of intellectual thought, creation and creativity and other aspects previously explored. The archetypes of Unomkhubulwane, Unomhoyi, Inkosazana and Umah demonstrate this.

The centrality of the feminine within the Ukuthwasa space is a very powerful anathema to the rampant patriarchy, misogyny and femicide we see in today's society. Learning in detail about all these deities changes one's understanding of the role of the feminine in creating balance in the world. Furthermore, the fact that both male and female Izangoma could be seen as holding feminine (or masculine) energy creates a space where one does not judge the offerings of a healer based on their gender. Instead, a gender fluid space is created that holds reverence for the work that both the masculine and the feminine do in the world. In the world of Ukuthwasa, the abuse or subjugation of the feminine does not exist. It is unAfrican to not honour the feminine. This knowledge has the power to fundamentally change the pain we see in society today. This embrace also extends to the LGBTQIA+ community, for ancient African knowledge did not require one to explain or disclose one's sexuality in order to belong and there is evidence of the acknowledgement of other genders and sexual preferences in Isintu. There is no such thing as gender in the spiritual realm. All have a part to play within Isintu. This is a powerful challenge to patriarchal exploitation.

As an example of how this understanding has changed me, in my first month as a newly appointed teacher, I went to the South African Council for Educators training for young educators. One of the facilitators mentioned that being a teacher meant being a parent. This definition in the training helped me move more into my feminine energy, rather than operate in the masculine energy which I was used to in my initiation space as I was operating primarily from the space of Amakhela (boMkhulu) "being tough, bold, brave". The embodiment of the sacred feminine is more about giving, nurturing, guiding, creating and being drivers of intellectual thought. I learnt to take care of someone other than myself, I had to take care of my learners. This pushes me beyond my comfort zone. I am learning to understand issues from the eyes of my students. My training as an initiate has helped me step into the feminine side of my care even while I know that the masculine side also exists. This kind of training is valuable for all, as we all have aspects of the masculine and feminine inside us regardless of our gender. Sharing this knowledge as a teacher both in the way that I show up in the classroom and as an

example for young people, could have powerful effects on the hypermasculine drives that often dominate our ways of being.

5.4 Building Intuition, Strong Sense of Self and Problem Solving

The entire initiation process in my opinion is set up to build your self-esteem and self-worth. oGobela repeatedly shared how they learnt their worth through a series of obstacles. They did not base their worth on their degrees, money or love but rather on themselves. This way of working can also be deduced through many things, such as the setup of the Mpande and the way the initiate is taken away from home and is expected to live at the Gobela's homestead until the completion of their journey. One is expected to bathe with cold water, to sleep on grass mats, to clean the homestead, to walk barefoot or on your knees – and there are no cell phones and no makeup. Ukuthwasa initiations happen in isolation, in the absence of luxuries such as a bed and electricity – this is to teach the initiate that they are more than what they have materially, and that this journey is about learning independence. This is about emptying one's cup to become a clean vessel.

In Ukuthwasa, the initiate is their own diviner; oGobela are merely the “dot connectors” and guides. This is about learning to give up inherent human traits and building intuition and growing one's ancestral spirits. Each initiate needs to learn their frequency or vibration and their infinite spiritual languages to help them become more confident. These traits are critical for the development of everyone, not just initiates. Imagine if our schools took this as their central purpose.

Problem posing and problem solving is also needed when learning to become an effective healer. A healer is expected to always find solutions to a problem as every client is different because every lineage is different. Examples of problem posing and problem-solving acts are when the lithwasana engages in dialogue with the Gobela about the dreams, visions or physical symptoms they are experiencing. Through collective dialogue, the initiate and Gobela come up with solutions.

The CAPS history document states the need to “equip learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfillment, and meaningful participation in society as

citizens of a free country” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 10). This, according to me, speaks about the need for education to create self-assured and confident individuals. Each grade is a step further to their self-actualisation which needs to be nurtured in the classroom in the way these learners relate to the curriculum. The instances where this is not happening are prevalent within our schooling system. My teaching pedagogy tries to instill this into the classroom through problem posing methods, which grounds the history topics I teach in current affairs. I try to invite learners to participate in their own self development in the classroom even though it is sometimes difficult for they have been a part of system that does not always value their voices and ways of seeing things. Remembering that the purpose of education is liberation and conscientisation is an ongoing challenge in formal education spaces that needs continual work.

5.5 Teaching the Power of Community

In Ukuthwasa, there is great fluidity between each initiate and their fellow Amathwasana peers. This is to teach the initiate that no man is an island, we exist in a community. But we exist and can contribute to that community when we are sure of ourselves. This is also to teach empathy – the ability to “literally walk in each other’s shoes”. The result of this is that you become one organism in the Ukuthwasa space. Cleaning the homestead as a single organism, singing together, sleeping together, sharing dreams and assessing each other’s mental health status through dream sharing are consistent team building practices. There is a constant dance between submitting to each other’s idlozi and holding space for each other. Moreover, the initiate is re-introduced to society after their initiation by having a graduation ceremony where the members of the community, including the family, are invited to bear witness to the initiate’s new identity as a Sangoma. The status of being a Sangoma is not for one’s own benefit but holds communal ownership. The sense of community that is created here is immense. It really brings to life the understanding of Ubuntu – that one is through other people. There is a great element of nurturing each other, not as competition, but as a way of really knowing that you all serve the same thing and need each other along the way to make it happen. One leaves the Ukuthwasa space knowing that relating to each other and to nature is a fundamental way of being. This flies in the face of the separateness and competition we are taught in everyday life and serves as a powerful counterpoint to this.

I try as much as possible to generate this sense of community in my classroom. In my classroom, a sense of community is encouraged by debating and doing activities together. In this way, there is a lot of peer education taking place. The learners and the teacher are working to reach a common goal. But there are many challenges in actualising this space, not least how time constraints impact one's ability to fully engage with the learners. Within the Ukuthwasa space, conceptions of time are completely different. The past, present and future are explored concurrently and there is spaciousness to accommodate them all. Formal education settings have a lot to learn from these ways of being.

5.6 Teaching Spiritual Alchemy: The Intention to Heal as the Most Important Thing

The central premise of Intwaso is the element of lightwork which is the intention to heal effectively. This is done through various steps that have been explored in the preceding chapters. To heal someone, one needs to learn submission and the ability to centre and anchor oneself spirituality. The act of speaking things into existence and meaning making which is spiritual alchemy is the basis of what is learnt. Perseverance, diligence and independence are traits that are needed in order to be an effective healer. The lithwasana must perform tedious processes that teach the initiate discipline.

Woven into all these activities is a very personal experience of inner transformation that is led by acts of surrender and submission and practicing making things – manifesting things through words and deeds. The intense nature of these practices is valuable regarding the way we think about the transformation of students. There is a sense of focus and dedication inherent in all these activities that seldom play out in the fragmented way that formal education presents itself. There is also an inherent sense of ownership embedded in these activities that challenge each initiate to rely on themselves and limit the influence of unwanted energies. This is self-sufficiency, something that the youth of today are seldom taught. These lessons are essential aspects that strengthen a sense of belonging and purpose in life. The intensity of these lessons is a very important feature of what a broader education could consist of.

5.7 The Medium of the Body in Ukuthwasa

I would like to argue that the body is the main semiotic in Ukuthwasa as it subscribes meaning to everything else. An example of this is dancing and drumming; the soul and the idlozi ancestral image of the initiate are reflected through the movement of the body. The body

together with the drum are conduits for esoteric knowledge. Sound and the frequency it emits carries healing properties that expand our consciousness. The Ngoma drum is a tool to unify people through the medium of dance and storytelling, assisting in health and the communication with the spirits.

Elevating the power of the body as the main medium for learning is an important finding of this study. I work at one of the most disadvantaged schools in Makhanda where basics such as chairs, desk and textbooks are in short supply; often the printers are not working or there is simply no printing paper. Often there are barriers to learning such as illiteracy (including language acquisition), fetal alcohol syndrome, learning and mental disabilities and hunger. When one is faced with these issues, the tendency is to want to fill the gaps with the many things that are missing. While these are important social justice issues that need to be attended to, my learning in the Ukuthwasa space also gave me the opportunity to strengthen how we work with the body in formal education. To be honest, the body can often be forgotten as an important medium for meaning making. As a response to this, I found myself having to come up with creative ways to teach the curriculum amid the lack of resources. I often turn topics into a play or a rap song for the learners. I have created a circle where my learners come to read, share and relate with each other. The semiotic of body and ascribing meaning to something through an alchemic process is something I did in my initiation process. I am trying to teach my learners to ascribe meaning to their memories and their art as a way to remember the content of their historical work. In this way, the learning embedded in the Ukuthwasa space can in some ways translate to formal educational contexts.

5.8 Ukuthwasa as a Diverse Sociocultural Learning Environment

Ukuthwasa is a diverse learning environment which is consistently evolving. No matter what clan the initiate comes from, the understanding is that there is a commonality as all ancestries are interlinked throughout the universe, irrespective of culture. In addition, there are various examples of how the Gobela adapts Isifundiso to the initiates culture, as it is the job of oGobela to completely understand the initiate's culture. This element of cultural adaptation is a fundamental cornerstone of the Ukuthwasa process. Here, culture is constantly shifting and moving while it stays connected to the same source. This sense of evolution is important for it makes the Ukuthwasa process a fluid one. This learning inspired me to notice the diverse cultural environment at my school and how this plays a role in learning. The school is a

Christian school that also accommodates learners who have ancestral callings. There are three different languages spoken at the school which creates a rich sociocultural space. In class, learners often speak in their mother tongue when expressing themselves as a way to draw on their cultural experiences. I find that honouring our inherent intercultural diversity really opens up learning in different ways, making deeper, more authentic connections with learning and knowledge. Nurturing a diverse sociocultural learning environment ought to be a priority for how education plays out in different settings. This is also linked to the cry for epistemic justice that is sorely needed.

5.9 Ukuthwasa as a Pedagogy that Helps Us Face and Address the Effects of Climate Change in Situated Ways

The climate debt faced by indigenous people due to settler colonisation led to land dispossession and the dispossession of rights. In my opinion, all of these elements when combined have resulted in the destabilization of the land and climate. Our forefathers learnt from nature and the seasons which allowed them to adapt effectively and adequately. Ubungoma is about healing from the elements, but most importantly healing from the land. Izangoma have very close relationships and connections to the land, water and ecosystems. This connection has been interrupted and my initiation showed me how essential this knowledge is, not only for initiates but potentially for other learners who feel displaced by modern ways of living. All of this has challenged me to think about how we can better integrate knowledge about the land and nature into the more formal way we teach. It strikes me that this knowledge is often overlooked or only dealt with in specific subjects without fostering a sense of situated connection for the learner.

5.10 Epilogue: Embracing the Balance Between Academic Knowledge and Metaphysical Knowledge

I embarked on this study because I wanted to understand myself and what my initiation journey entailed. I found everything about this journey completely challenging because I had to operate in two very different worlds; the physical and the metaphysical. The constant dance between the two made me struggle to find myself. Despite this, there is a beauty that comes from working from the wound. It is therapeutic because it allows one to work with one's longings and helps one speak through and transcend them. This makes everything worthwhile.

I particularly struggled with this thesis because academia places a burden on “proof”, whereas Indigenous knowledge prioritises the gift of “intuition”. In the initiation process, when you are given an instruction via dreams and visions, you can confirm it and go for it, whereas, in academia, we keep overworking our academic work to consistently provide substantiated proof. The esoteric provides a layered sense of knowledge that comes in waves and circles making its content feel like it is saying everything and nothing at the same time. One can feel elements of this in the way the thesis is laid out. I felt that some parts of it were overworked but at the same time it did not make sense to try and over-sanitise the content and how it organically arrived. There are no easy, clean, clear-cut categories in which the knowledge gained here can be represented. Everything is intensely related to each other. This is the nature of the metaphysical.

Throughout this journey I had conversations, interactions and interviews with African linguists, spiritual custodians and traditional healers to provide a more nuanced understanding of esoteric knowledge. With this thesis, I aimed to see Indigenous knowledge in its own light, without the burden of the binary of Western knowledge versus Indigenous knowledge. I believe that Indigenous knowledge can provide a fuller understanding of the purpose of education because it takes on a body, mind and spirit approach as demonstrated throughout this thesis.

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Cited healers:

Baba Magwaza-Ka Zulu

Gogo Lerato

Gogo Moyo

Gogo Zipho

Bab'Khumalo

Siya Mkhize

Gogo Diko

Mkhulu Ibrahim

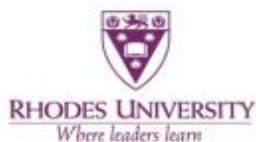
Mkhulu Manzolwandle

Mpho wa Badimo

Gogo Khanyakaude (Indigenous knowledge consultant at Ukudloza)

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



Rhodes University, Education Faculty
Research Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8393
Fax: +27 (0) 46 603 8028
email: e.rosenberg@ru.ac.za

<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

23 March 2022

venetia.jacobs

Education Department

g16j3786@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Miss Venetia Jacobs

Re: Embodied experiential knowledge as form of social learning: an ethnographic case study of the role the Gobelins' teaching process

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2022-5344-6639

This letter confirms that your research ethics application has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (EF-REC). Your permission letter(s) where applicable have been received and you are free to proceed with your study.

Approval is granted for 1 year. An annual progress report is required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the progress report is due.

Should any substantive change(s) be made during the research process, that may have ethical implications, you should notify the Education Faculty REC Chair via email. This includes changes in investigators. The REC Chair will advise as to whether a new application is necessary.

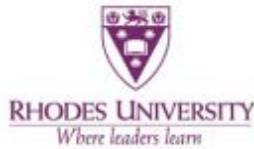
Do keep this clearance letter secure and accessible throughout your study and after its completion. It will be needed when a thesis is examined and when publications are submitted to journals.

Please also submit a brief report to the REC Chair on the completion of the research. This can be done via email. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully and whether any ethics-related matters arose that the committee should be aware of, in order to guide future studies.

Sincerely,

Prof Eureka Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee



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Research Ethics Committee
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Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Letter of Participation and Informed Consent



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Please also submit a brief report to the REC Chair on the completion of the research. This can be done via email. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully and whether any ethics-related matters arose that the committee should be aware of, in order to guide future studies.

Sincerely,

Prof Eureka Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee



To whomever it may concern.

This letter calls for volunteer participants to participate in a Rhodes University study titled: **Embodied experiential knowledge as form of social learning: An ethnographic case study of the role the Gobela's teaching process.** The purpose of the research project is to explore the Gobela's lived experiences, learning processes and experiential knowledge through the Medium of Ukuthwasa, without compromising the sacredness and integrity of this institution. Volunteer Participants will be contributing towards to a small but emergent body of work that focuses on Indigenous knowledge systems.

Participation is entirely voluntary and should a participant wish to withdraw at any stage, there won't be any negative consequences. There are no risks associated with participating in this research. Furthermore, participants will not be compensated for participating in the research.

I trust that you would find this research worth participating in. Studies with a strong focus on decoloniality will help us fully respond to the impacts of both short and long term global change.

Kind regards,
Venetia Jacobs



PARTICIPANT INFORMED VERBAL CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be read to research participants and consent will be given as verbal informed consent which will be recorded)

Research Project Title: Embodied experiential knowledge as form of social learning:
An ethnographic case study of the role the ~~oGobela~~ teaching process

I recognise that, ~~Veneia~~ **Rose Jacobs** from the Department of Education, Rhodes University, has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to explore the ~~Gobela's~~ lived experiences, learning processes and experiential knowledge through the Medium of ~~Ukuthwasa~~ without compromising the sacredness and integrity of this institution.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (**Ethics Approval Number**) and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).
3. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards to a small but emergent body of work that focuses on Life Orientation and Indigenous knowledge systems
4. I will participate in the project by answering questions around ~~Ukuthwasa~~ learning processes
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.
7. There are no risks associated with my participation that I am aware of.
8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a Master's Thesis. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and

my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in conducting the research, unless I indicate to the contrary/recognise that as a public figure, my identity will inevitably be/become known in which case I agree to and accept the loss of confidentiality.

9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity will be achieved. I may request to know how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored, and whether it is likely to be used again in further research.
10. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of a member checking system to verify the interpretations of the interviews that are undertaken with me and the Gobeles in this study, before using participants answers in the thesis, unless I elect not to receive feedback.
11. Any further questions that I might have regarding the research or my participation will be answered by Venetia Rose Jacobs at venetia.jacobs24@gmail.com, and any further enquiries can also be directed to the supervisor of Ms Jacobs, Dr Injairu Kulundu-Bolus, email: i.kulundu@ru.ac.za
12. By agreeing this verbal informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
13. A copy of this recording and verbal informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, have understood the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all the questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the abovementioned project.

I agree/disagree (SELECT APPLICABLE) to the Researcher's request to take photographs and/or videos of me as part of this research project, recognising that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this does not happen if my approval is granted.

I agree/disagree to the Researcher's request to voice record my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded