

Dislocating the Body and Transcending the Imperial Eye (I)

The role of Abaphantsi, through iiZangoma, as pioneers for transformative research methodologies and organic intellectualism.

Li'Tsoanelo Zwane ZWNLIT001

A minor dissertation submitted in *partial fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Philosophy: Theories of Justice and Inequality



Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2021

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Glossary of terms

uMakhulu -Grandmother.

uTamkhulu -Grandfather or father's older brother.

uKhokho -Great- grandparent (this term is gender-neutral)

Ukuzalwa wombethe -Being born inside 'the veil' or the amniotic sac.

iSangoma -Someone who has answered an ancestral calling, through the process of ukuthwasa (see next line) and conducts divinations. One of the main distinctions between a Sangoma and *iGqirha* (Xhosa diviner) is that a Sangoma can channel an ancestral spirit through ukuvuka kweDlozi (see further down).

Ukuthwasa -The formal process of initiation a Sangoma undergoes in order to receive training for divination and prescribing imithi (see further down) for treatment and managing the ancestral spirits sharing their corporeal body with them. This process usually involves the trainee *Sangoma* going to live with a Gobela (see next line) for the duration of the training.

Gobela -A senior, established Sangoma who facilitates the training process of trainee Sangomas.

Iphehlo -The formal name of the training school where a novice Sangoma is initiated.

Indumbha -The space where Sangomas conduct their divination work.

AmaDlozi/ Abaphantsi -Plural term for ancestors.

iDlozi -Singular term for an ancestor (usually the one who has specifically called you), but this can also refer to all the ancestors who have called a Sangoma.

iSthunywa - A messenger ancestor who provides guidance and insights (typically amongst faith healers- see below).

Ixhwele -A traditional herbalist who administers herbal treatment. Traditional herbalists also go through a process of apprenticeship with an established herbalist in order to gain herbal knowledge.

Imithi -Plural form of umuthi/umthi which means herbs (specifically the ones which are prescribed by Ixhwele or a Sangoma for treatment).

Umthandazeli/Umthandazi/Umprofeti - A faith healer who heals through prayer, steaming and baths. Faith healers are predominantly known for being able to prophesy and interpret dreams.

Inhlolo -Divination (typically for Sangomas).

<i>Inhlahlubo</i>	-Divination (typically for faith healers).
<i>Iintsimbhi</i>	-Beads which Sangomas wear.
<i>Ihiya</i>	- Ancestral cloths worn by Sangomas.
<i>Ikhukho</i>	- Reed mat.
<i>Ingxowa yamathambo</i>	- The bag of bones used by a Sangoma to divine.
<i>Isambhatho</i>	-The garments which faith healers wear when they perform their work.
<i>Ukuvuka kweDlozi</i>	-The process, during which, an ancestral spirit rises in the corporeal body of a Sangoma and places the Sangoma in an altered state of consciousness.
<i>Isazela</i>	- Conscience. This can also mean being able to distinguish between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’.
<i>Izithakazelo</i>	- These are clan names and clan praises which depict one’s genealogy.
<i>Umbilini</i>	- Intuition.
<i>Amabali</i>	- Stories.
<i>Intsomi</i>	- Folktales.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my first ancestor; God, uMvelinqangi, uQamata, uSomandla for giving me the mental and spiritual fortitude to complete this work. I was in the process of ukuthwasisa (initiating a trainee Sangoma) whilst working on this dissertation, but uMvelinqangi (together with my ancestors) carried me through. Ndiyabulela Smakade, igama Lakho malibongwe!

Thank you to my paternal ancestors uZwane, uMangethe, uZikode, uMntungwa, Nsele, Linda Mkhonto. Mosia, Motobatsi. Ndimandi. Mofokeng.

Thank you to my maternal ancestors uSkhoma, uTshangisa, uRhudulu, Jola, Manz'amnyama. Ndungwane, Diya, Bhejula, Qwesha. Qwathi, Noni, Dikela.

To my grandmother, Mamokete, thank you so much Mama. We did it. Thank you, I love you and I will love you in this life and in the next.

Ndiyabulela kuni nonke maDlozi asekhaya (I am grateful to all of you my ancestors). In you, I find great strength, courage and bravery to triumph over all challenges in my path. Thank you for always holding me and keeping me together even when unraveling seemed imminent.

To my parents, Mzwandile and Vuyiswa Zwane, thank you for everything you are to me and for everything you have raised me to be.

To my siblings, Neo and Tumelo Zwane thank you for your support and for always believing in me.

To my research supervisor, Dr June Bam-Hutchison, thank you for being a lighthouse, a reassuring source of wisdom and insight. Thank you for believing in my research and my vision. May the ancestors continue to bless you.

Isaiah 60:22 *“When the time is right, I the Lord will make it happen.”*

Camagu!

Dedication -

Existing Beyond the Grave: Remembering uMakhulu wam (my grandmother)

uMakhulu wam, Mamokete Laurentina Ndimandi (Letlala previously), was born on the 9th of October 1945 in Burgersdorp in the Eastern Cape. uMakhulu was raised in a strict BaSotho home and she was the second of three children (she had an older sister and a younger brother). From a young age, uMakhulu displayed signs of an ancestral gift which made her have bursts of rage which also affected her schooling and she only managed to receive a primary level education. uMakhulu had an arranged marriage at the age of 13 and my grandfather, Joseph Zwane, was 28 at the time. She had utamkhulu Vusumuzi (my father's older brother) when she was 15 and had my father, Mzwandile, a year later. Her marriage to uMkhulu (my grandfather) did not last and the two separated with my Mkhulu moving back to Kwa-Zulu Natal- where he was from.

uMakhulu's ancestral gift was increasingly becoming difficult for her to manage and she started her journey into ukuthwasa, supported by her biological paternal family. After uMakhulu was born, her parents separated and uKhokho Maltsiema (great grandmother) married uKhokho Armando Ndimandi (my great grandfather). Due to being disillusioned with her ukuthwasa process, she opted to go the prophetic route instead and joined St John's Apostolic Faith Mission where she used her spiritual gifts to heal people. After a short while of having joined the church, uMakhulu denounced her ancestral calling to be a Sangoma and did a 'denouncing' ritual of throwing her beads into the ocean and offering a goat to the ancestors as a 'peace-making' gesture. Unfortunately, the ocean is an archive which does not forget. Ancestors gave her one last opportunity to retract her decision by informing her that she would need to do a ritual and offer a cow to ask for forgiveness. uMakhulu wam was quite a stubborn, head-strong woman and opted to do the ritual the prophetic way and in line with her church's procedures. What followed this was a series of illnesses where ancestors reacted punitively against her. uMakhulu worked as a domestic worker and whilst at work, she fell and had a peculiar spinal injury which forced her to retire early. I remember the days when we would sit on her bed drinking tea and eating biscuits with the radio playing in the background and she would tell me how excited she was

about finally receiving her pension grant. I had never known uMakhulu wam as someone who had financial issues, but she had unfortunately found herself in a situation where money was increasingly becoming a concern. One afternoon, uMama (as I often referred to her) said she was going to her optometrist because there was a problem with the spectacles he had prescribed her. She said the spectacles 'weren't working'. When she came back from the optometrist, she locked herself in her room. Later, I found out that uMakhulu was growing blind and that there was nothing wrong with her prescription. She was booked for an appointment at Groote Schuur Hospital where doctors would try to 'save' her sight. Before she passed on in 2012, she told me of a dream she had had whilst in hospital where she dreamt of her Makhulu who told her that the operation will not help her. At first, uMakhulu found it difficult to adjust to her blindness and grew despondent about her future. Despite that, she still refused to answer her Sangoma calling. uMakhulu and I had a close relationship, sometimes she would call me to her room to sleep next to her as we lived together with my parents and siblings in Gugulethu. I now understand that as she may have been experiencing troubling dreams.

On our trips to the beach, she would insist on never going anywhere near the water; she would sit on the benches on the pavement in Sea Point and would become visibly irritated when the ocean water would splash at her feet- despite her being at a distance. I used to ask her about her apprehension towards the ocean and she always told me she would tell me "one day". During my time in pre-primary school, there would occasionally be 'granny's day' where we could invite our grandmothers to spend the morning playing with us. uMakhulu wam never missed an opportunity to dress up and look smart. I remember her as someone who was very stylish, warm (she gave the best hugs) and was loved in our community. You could never come to our house and leave without getting something to eat. This is one of the lessons she left me with: being generous and sharing with others and never being consumed by greed or personal gain.

A malignant tumour was discovered in uMakhulu's breast in 2007 and doctor's suggested immediate removal, uMakhulu refused. After experimental cancer treatment, both as an in and out-patient, uMakhulu was declared 'cancer' free. As mentioned before, the ocean and the water are not forgetful archives and in 2011, doctors found water around her brain and this is what ultimately caused her death on the 1st of February 2012 at the age of 66.

We all knew the underlying cause of her death, despite the biomedical cause of death report.

This paper is an ode to her, uMakhulu wam, a recognition of who she was/is- not only to me but to all the people who came to her for healing. uMakhulu was/is an incredible being who was strong in her convictions- even in the face of death. Despite her troubled life and being robbed of her childhood, she was/is someone in whom I continue to seek refuge, she remains a source of guidance both in and outside of me.

This dissertation has been inspired by several written assignments I have completed throughout the course of my academic career at the University of Cape Town. My work as a Sangoma and a Gobela has compelled me to challenge the largely uncontested Western-centric research methodologies and approaches to knowledge creation at UCT. The vanguard theories proliferated at UCT are attached to white faces and although there are claims of moving past white-centric positivist epistemological paradigms, that is not the case. As someone who has access to both academic institutions and the wealth of knowledge embedded within indigenous (particularly ancestral) knowledge systems, I cannot help but lament the dismissal of knowledge paradigms which may not coincide with Western-centric conceptualizations. My grandmother has played a critical role in my consciousness, acquisition of knowledge and the establishment of Afro-centric epistemological and paradigmatic frameworks of understanding social phenomena; both whilst she was in physical form and now as an ancestral spirit living within and around me. I cannot accept that the knowledge and insight that my grandmother possessed is less valuable just because she is not learned in the institutional sense or because she is not an old white man. Without the teachings from uMakhulu wam, I would not be able to trace my genealogical origins as she taught me izithakazelo (clan praises). Because of her, I now know that I am:

uZwane, uMangethe, uZikode, uMntungwa, uNsele, uLinda Mkhonto, uPhikela, uNtsosho- despite not having a relationship with my paternal grandfather (who passed in 2007).

As mentioned before, my grandmother was blind, but she could 'see' things. This has altered my relationship with 'sight' and has led to what feels like a lifelong obsession with the multi-layered nature and the complexities of 'vision' as one of the five senses. I am inspired to critically interrogate vanguard paradigmatic frameworks which operate from positivist and therefore

problematic conceptualizations of sight. I am compelled to trouble the imperial eye through a dissection of its concomitant fixation with the corporeal body in its research methodologies and research approaches. In summary, this work is not only an ode to my ancestors, but I see it as a blueprint for ways of transcending the imperial eye.

Abstract

In this study, I establish myself as both researcher and respondent and I use the literal and figurative interpretations of the word 'body' to discuss how canonical epistemological paradigms, through their construction of indigenous knowledge systems, construct African bodies and how this impacts knowledge and research methods. I discuss how the corporeal bodies of Sangomas have been constructed, particularly through problematic research approaches which focus on observations of the corporeal body. Critical here, is how the imperial gaze is unrelenting in its deconstruction and reconstruction of African bodies. By engaging with the cosmology of Sangomas and their interaction with ancestors, I discuss the ineptitude of western-centric hegemonic research approaches in providing substantial responses to the variety of social phenomena with which the Social Sciences grapple. I focus on Sangoma practices of inhlolo (divination), ukuphupha (dreams and dream analysis) and the valorization of umbilini (intuition) as useful tools for the reimagination of research methodologies which have the power to transcend the corporeal lens with which canonical research approaches have become synonymous. Critical to the cosmology of Sangomas is community and the communal production and sharing of knowledge which I propose is a useful framework for transcending the individualistic researcher-focused approach which dominates Social Science research. Through an engagement with the fallaciousness of bifurcated knowledge systems, I argue that it is untruthful to assume that indigenous knowledge systems and western knowledge systems do not interact with each other or have never interacted with each other in the past. I recommend an approach to research which invites an integration of various knowledge systems and diverse ways of knowing. Furthermore, I propose, through a discourse analysis on my reflexive practice as a Sangoma, the concept of Ubungoma (as praxis) with its related theoretical and methodical approaches to decolonising the knowledge archive through ukuphupha as a pathway to insights, inhlolo as a quest for knowledge and ukuphahla as a decolonial research methodology.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

1.1 “Ku ngenxa yakho ndisilwa iingozi” - Ancestral calling in a space of indigenous loss in Africa.

The year is 1996, I am 5 years old and enrolled at Barkley House Pre-Primary School in Harfield- a predominantly white residential area fraught with a history of land dispossession, violence and indigenous trauma. A few train-stops away is Steenberg, the area my own great-grandparents were forcibly removed from during the 1960s. The first democratic elections of 1994 meant that black bodies could now occupy areas which had been previously marked ‘Whites Only’ by the Apartheid government, but that did not erase the historic experiences of trauma and how those experiences could be spiritually transferred from generation to generation. I had been complaining to my parents and teachers about a splitting headache for weeks to which the response was to lay down or be given Panado painkillers. One afternoon, during a trip to the girls’ bathroom at school, I fell and had a seizure. Fortunately, a classmate’s parent was nearby and alerted the school principal who then put me in her car and rushed me to Vincent Pallotti Hospital located at the Dutch named ‘Oude Molen’, on the banks of the historic Liesbeeck River, the first imperial ‘frontier’. I remember slipping in and out of consciousness and feeling as though my insides were on fire. I also remember my mother, in a cashmere black sweater, distraught and beside herself in hysteria. At Vincent Pallotti, doctors diagnosed me with meningitis and proclaimed that I would never be able to walk again, and I would gradually lose the ability to do anything for myself. I remember being injected with a ridiculously long needle in my lower back and slipping into what felt like a deep sleep afterwards.

Fast forward to visits from my favourite teacher, Mrs Middlebrook who brought me colouring books to ‘keep my brain alive’. The colouring books she brought me were representative of the white-centric world I was being epistemologically initiated into. She was my favourite teacher because she is the only teacher who seemed interested in my future and what I wanted to become when I was older. I felt seen by her, despite being made invisible by the fact that my school was predominantly white. I am not particularly sure of the reasons for Mrs Middlebrook’s keen interest in me and our relationship seemed to go beyond the classroom. Ours was an unlikely ‘friendship’ as she was a white woman in her mid-to late 30s and I was a 5-year-old black girl. I remember instances, during break-time (an interval between classes where we would be allowed to play

outside) where she would insist that I come sit and read with her. She would also teach me how to colour in the pictures from the various colouring books she would give me. I recall her soft, yet stern voice, “Colour in neatly Cecilia” -I still went by my second name because my SeSotho one was ‘too difficult’ to pronounce for my teachers and classmates. My mother also felt that ‘Li’Tsoanelo’ would make me too ‘conspicuous’, since the focus post 1994 was on assimilation and being palatable enough for integration into white spaces. Everything I did with Mrs Middlebrook needed to be perfect; from reading properly to colouring in between the lines. We had a library corner at Barkley House, and she would also send me home with books to read. There was one incident where she defended me for slapping a classmate (a white boy) for calling me a kaffir. Despite that incident, the racism at Barkley House was quite covert even though there was only a handful of black children at the school.

During my hospital stay, I also received visits from uMakhulu wam (my grandmother), who in her understanding of spirituality and the role of ancestors, vowed to return with a remedy to ‘heal’ me. One evening, in the dimly lit ward I was in, I saw my grandmother’s silhouette walking towards me, she had slipped past security and snuck into the hospital (uMakhulu had always had a rebellious streak). She took out a bottle from her bag, held my mouth open and told me to drink the contents. I was discharged two weeks later and at home we had a ceremony to ‘appease’ the ancestors as it was concluded that they wanted to assert their dominance in my life.

‘Home’ was/is Gugulethu, a township in the Western Cape which was established in the 1960s during the forced removals implemented by the Apartheid government. Nothing about Gugulethu is ‘organic’ in that it is not a place that was established due to migration, but is an area developed specifically for the dislocation of black bodies. The dislocation happens on multiple levels; firstly, there is a physical dislocation of the corporeal body from home and all that is spatially familiar. Secondly, there is a spiritual dislocation as people were uprooted from the resting places of their ancestors and placed in areas where there was no generational history. Thirdly, there is an epistemological dislocation from indigenous bodies of knowledge synonymous with the lives of indigenous people in specific areas.

I was born at ‘home’ on a Sunday morning on the 24th of March 1991 and I am a caulbearer, or ‘ngazalwa ngombethe’ which means I was born completely covered by ‘the veil’ or amniotic sac. What I understand from this kind of birth is that it depicts a proximity with one’s ancestors and

God, having acute psychic, ‘supernatural’ and clairvoyant gifts. The line between the living and ‘the dead’ is greatly diminished and there is an inherent accessibility of the spiritual realms. Additionally, when one is born inside the veil, in Zulu culture, it is said that one is an actual ancestor who has reincarnated. My name, *Li’Tsoanelo*, (which means ‘best suited’ in SeSotho) was communicated to uMakhulu in a dream and the spelling is quite ancient as the L is pronounced as a D. I have come to understand that this name once belonged to a paternal ancestor of mine. Growing up as ngazalwa ngombethe, I have always felt ‘old’ and as if I have lived in this earth life before. There was (and still is) a constant experience of *deja-vu* in certain locations and encounters with people which I often dismissed as my mind playing tricks on me. As a child, I never related to people my age and was rather dismissive of their childishness and preoccupation with mundane things like playing in the sand or having a horde of toys. Most of my childhood memories are filled with encounters with *izinyanya* (isiXhosa name for ancestors) and with vivid dreams which not only served as forewarnings from ancestors but also as prophecies for things to come. All of these evolved from initially happening exclusively when I was asleep to also happening when I am awake. Gradually, I started receiving bursts of information randomly coming at me both in a visual and in an auditory form. I would hear voices and sometimes even engage them in conversation. As ngazalwa ngombethe, the division between dreams and waking life began to dissipate. I remember constantly asking my cousins if they could also ‘see’ or ‘hear’ things beyond this realm, and their consistent response was a resounding “no”, which led me to feel like an anomaly and an outsider since there was clearly something ‘wrong’ with me in my different sensory experiences with my surroundings and with people.

uMakhulu wam worked as a domestic worker for a white German couple who would often go home to Europe in the month of October each year. It was during their annual holidays that my grandmother would ask me to come house-sit with her in the posh white neighbourhood of Sea Point (once inhabited for hundreds of years by indigenous people, brutally pushed away from the sea and lush mountain areas onto the Cape Flats). My relationship with my grandmother was quite peculiar. On some level, she treated me as a child and was extremely doting, affectionate and loving. On another level, she treated me like an elder; there was a kind of reverence, deep respect and she always sought my opinion on things. One afternoon, when I was 11 years old, she sought my opinion while I was living with her in Sea Point and had come ‘home’ from school (Claremont Primary School). She asked me to go upstairs to the en-suite bathroom in the master bedroom and

to 'see' if I 'felt' anything- which seemed an odd request to me as I have never been asked to go up there before. Once there, I was overwhelmed by a spiritual presence - as if someone else was there with me. An old white man presented himself to me. He had an indifferent expression on his face and told me that it was his house but that he desired to leave it. Being accustomed to these types of 'supernatural' encounters, I went to inform my grandmother of my encounter with the old man. She arranged that spiritual workers come do a cleansing ritual in the white people's home and property to release the man's spirit from the house. She did this without the permission from the white 'owners' of the land and property, which was out of the ordinary.

My grandmother went on to play a huge role in all the important aspects of my life. People would tease her for being over-protective of me. I remember how she used to look at me. She wears the same expression when she visits me ancestrally. It has been a broad smile followed by a facial expression that shows deep worry and concern.

On Saturdays, she took me to her church, St John's Apostolic Faith Mission, where I encountered other people like me and later discovered - in fact, like her. My grandmother worked as a prophet and a healer at her church. She conducted inhlahlubo (divinations in the prophetic space) for people and prescribed treatment in the form of water which she prayed over.

When she passed on in 2012, I was catapulted into a state of spiritual turmoil. I now understand what was happening to me spiritually as an evocation of my spiritual leadership responsibility. uMakhulu's passing created a 'vacancy' in the spiritual leadership of my family and there needed to be someone else to fulfill that role. With my own spiritual work, I have come to understand that my role would not only mean being held accountable by my ancestors (maternal and paternal) for the spiritual well-being of my family (immediate and extended), but also that as a Gobela (an established Sangoma who initiates novices into the work of Ubungoma), I would be responsible for the mentorship and initiation of some people who fall under my clan. The people I have initiated so far, share a clan relation with me. For example, my paternal clan-name is Mangethe, and when I trace my genealogy based on my clan praises, I understand that Mangethe gave birth to Zikode, who gave birth to Mntungwa. Some of the Sangomas I have initiated are from the Mntungwa clan, so genealogically, they are borne from mine. This was a role I was dragged into kicking and screaming because never had I imagined I would be working as an indigenous healer. I have always wanted to be a 'healer' or 'helper' in some way though; from wanting to pursue a career in

Psychology to wanting to become a lawyer who defends the rights of the disenfranchised. I have always felt an unrelenting need to contribute my life to something bigger than myself.

I was 21 and in my second year of university study when uMakhulu passed on and following her death, I had a series of traumatic, vivid and debilitating water dreams. The dreams evolved from me being chased by water, frantically running for my life and ending up being consumed by gigantic waves, to me being completely submerged underwater and sitting on what looked like a throne. In one dream, particularly, unlike all the others, I looked regal underwater - breathing with my eyes open and fully adorned in a golden crown and Sangoma gear. Upon waking, I ploughed through Google and YouTube searching for a definition of 'Sangoma'. What I came across was shocking; articles about trauma, needing to abandon one's life goals in exchange for a life dedicated to herbs and beating drums. On YouTube, there were videos of people drenched in what looked like red clay who seemed to be in an altered state of consciousness. As a 'modern', urban girl schooled at historically white educational institutions in the leafy suburbs of Cape Town, this was not something in which I was even vaguely interested. Despite being from a township, my exposure to white institutions of learning had socialized me into a white-centric culture: English was the language I felt most comfortable speaking, I also aspired to one day live in Sea Point because I was taught that a proximity to white people meant that one was successful.

As a result of this existential conflict between my African ancestral calling and urban upbringing in a deeply colonised space, I cascaded into a state of denialism and completely denounced the possibility of me having a calling to be a Sangoma. Based on my own naivety and ridiculousness, I attributed my water dreams to being brought on by the fact that I lived in a coastal city. I dismissed the dreams as being a consequence of my proximity to two oceans since psychology and Western-centric dream analysis argue that dreams are manifestations of our conscious and subconscious fears and things with which we are regularly in contact. However, reasoning in this rational western way, as taught in school and university, did not remove the deep and persistent African ancestral understanding of what those dreams meant. My ancestral calling was resurfacing but I desperately wanted to whole-heartedly believe in the western-centric pathology of dreams to 'fit in' in the 'modern' world of Cape Town.

To escape, I packed my bags and fled to Johannesburg to study at Wits for a Master of Education degree. I believed I would be safe far away from Cape Town since there was no ocean to threaten my 'safety'. On my first night sleeping in Johannesburg, I dreamt I was walking to the window of

my apartment where I could see the urban jungle of buildings of this big city. In between the buildings, the ocean was passing through and gushing towards me. I remember waking up and crying hysterically, because I knew what that dream meant: no place was 'safe' for me. My calling to be a Sangoma and my role of spiritual leadership would persistently follow me anywhere I went. What followed was a series of 'bizarre' encounters and events in my life - from being visited by a male Dlozi who would laugh loudly at my deteriorating health to seeing people's relatives who had passed on (while I was out in public). These deceased relatives would pressure me to relay messages to their living descendants. There was an incident which happened in a Wits shuttle on my way to the Education campus. In the shuttle, it was only me and the driver. The driver's late father's spirit appeared and asked that I inform his son that he would like a ceremony to be done as he and the other ancestors were "thirsty". He also asked me to ask his son why he had not come to visit him at his grave in a long time. The driver burst into tears, and I could not wait to get out of the shuttle as soon as it stopped at the education campus. At times, I would be in an overactive dream space where I could not readily know whether I was dreaming or if something had 'actually' happened. At such times, I felt as though I was in some kind of trance. I felt dislocated and out of place in Joburg¹, but home (Cape Town) was also not safe. University became a blur and I felt isolated from my family and loved ones back home as nobody could relate to what I was going through. I isolated myself creating a resounding silence around me which contended with all the internal noise and the loudness of my own self-deprecating thoughts. I tried all kinds of treatments, even dabbled in alcoholism where drinking three bottles of white wine a night was the only way I could black out and 'not dream'. All of this was leading me to a certain kind of spiritual path; I enrolled at Wits University for an academic graduation, but the graduation which called me was of a spiritual nature.

Western-trained therapists and my friends labeled my ancestral experiences and 'odd' behaviour as a bout of 'major depression'. Like myself, my friends were black but had been socialized into a western-centric way of living through their presence at predominantly white institutions of learning. The depression diagnosis was understandable as I had become increasingly suicidal and harboured suicidal thoughts but deep down, I knew it was more than that. A biomedical diagnosis was only the tip of the iceberg.

¹ Slang name for Johannesburg.

I took the decision to visit a Sangoma in Tembisa, Mme Anna. She greeted me with “Thokoza Gobela!” when I first walked into her yard. She went on to explain that a Gobela is a Sangoma who has been given the additional responsibility of being a spiritual teacher and helping others in their spiritual journey. She also explained to me that, “iSangoma ngumuntu ozelwe neDlozi” which (roughly) translates in the English language to “someone who is born with ancestral spirits sharing their corporeal body with them”. I shuddered at the thought of there being spirits living inside of me and that my body was not fully mine. As any new-age feminist would declare, bodily autonomy is the cornerstone of women exercising their agency. She told me of a matriarchal figure who had been fighting tirelessly on my behalf wanting to delay the process of ukuthwasa (a formal initiation process one undergoes to become a Sangoma) so that I could at least accomplish my academic goals. I recalled a dream I once had of my grandmother who appeared in a blood-stained Sotho blanket. When I asked her why she was bleeding, she responded, “Ku ngenxa yakho ndisilwa iingozi” which in my context means “It is because of you that I have been embroiled in conflict”. uMakhulu, all this time, had been the one ‘fending off’ my ancestors and their haste in insisting that I become a Sangoma. I was made to understand by Mme Anna that she had now reached the point where she was no longer able to continue buying me more time. Mme Anna, through consultation with ancestors (both hers and mine), informed me that time had run out; my ancestors were not willing to grant me any more concessions and that the time for me to start my spiritual journey of ukuthwasa had come.

I went back to my apartment feeling defeated and my emotions oscillated from melancholy to anger. I was angry that amaDlozi had chosen me because their decision interrupted the plans I had for my own life. A phone call with my parents that day ended in them deciding that I needed to take the next flight ‘home’ as they were completely against me becoming a Sangoma - even though I was owazalwa embhethe (caulbearer). When I slept that night, sober but intoxicated with fear and despair, a male Dlozi appeared and gave me an ultimatum. He informed me that they (amaDlozi) would allow me to go back home to Cape Town but that I had a choice in deciding in what state I got there. He said either I get there in full Sangoma regalia after having completed my initiation process or I get there in a coffin on the day of my funeral. In summary, it was either thwasa or die. I was understandably taken aback by this harsh ultimatum, but I have now come to fully grasp my life’s purpose and my ancestors’ unwillingness to allow me to continue living if I was not aligning with the very reason for my presence here in this Earth life. Of course, I chose

the first option but told iDlozi about my parents' disapproval and threats to disown and excommunicate me if I went through with the process.

A few days later, my father called me and after narrating a dream he had had where uKhokho (great-grandmother) beat him with a sjambok for 'disobedience', he gave me his permission and blessing to go and thwasa. A few nights later, my male Dlozi (ancestor who has called you to become a Sangoma) appeared in a dream and informed me 'we' would be leaving the next morning. With only a duffel bag of clothes (I had initially arrived in Jo'burg with two suitcases) and a R120 in my pocket, I left Johannesburg and arrived in Itsoseng, North West province, where I completed my initiation into becoming a Sangoma. The 10th of December 2016 was the day I graduated, and the 28th of January 2017 was the day I went back home to Cape Town, in full Sangoma regalia.

1.2 Centering uMakhulu: iDlozi as iSthunywa²

Before I go any further, it must be understood here that uMakhulu as iDlozi within me functions as isthunywa - a messenger and prophetic Dlozi- and that there is a wide variety of other ancestral spirits with whom I share my corporeal body. Speaking specifically of my grandmother at this juncture is to demonstrate her evolution from being a physical sharer of knowledge/s to being an engaging spirit from whom I derive insight. What I understand in Ubungoma (the paradigmatic and practical frameworks for the work of Sangomas) is that living with Dlozi spirits can be cumulative; meaning, you may be born with a set number of ancestral spirits living with and within you, but that number can increase with time in your own evolution and with the passing of spiritually gifted family members. To break this down, when I was born, I had a specific number of ancestral spirits (both paternal and maternal), when my grandmother passed on, she then joined the 'cohort'. I have been 'introduced' to 'new' ancestral spirits; some of whom are of a different ethnicity, culture, race and from a different part of the world.

Circling back to my discussion on the importance of uMakhulu, Magoqwana (2018) centres the matriarch/grandmother (uMakhulu) as an archive of knowledge and suggests that the recognition of the grandmother as a knowledge archive and a producer of knowledge is critical for the destabilization of enduring colonial hegemonies of who the knower is. This happens in two parts:

² See Magoqwana (2018) who writes about uMakhulu as an archive of knowledge.

firstly, being elderly, the grandmother challenges ableist and ageist stereotypes as vanguard white-centric epistemologies denigrate older bodies because they are deemed ‘unproductive’ (Magoqwana, 2018). Additionally, this forces an abandonment of a corporeal lens and necessitates an engagement with the body of knowledge she possesses within her. Transcending corporeal body-focused paradigms uncovers uMakhulu’s initiation of children into African spiritual philosophy, *intsomi* (folktales) and *amabali* (stories) and how she performs spiritual labour which leads to the development of *isazela* (conscience) (See Magoqwana, 2018.p77).

Drawing from my relationship with uMakhulu, the wealth of knowledge she shared (and still shares) with me is invaluable. I also have a good sense of my genealogy and cultural background because she taught me *izithakazelo* (clan praises which depict the genealogy of a particular clan) and I can trace the historiographies of my people based on the information she had shared with me. Secondly, the proliferation of the grandmother as a creator of knowledge/s is the understanding that the familial matriarch is an ‘organic intellectual’ (Magoqwana, 2018) and my understanding of an organic intellectual is one who does not need to be learned in the academic and institutional sense in order to be a producer of knowledge (see Magoqwana, 2018). In Nama communities, matriarchal organic intellectuals or ‘Ousie’, as they are called, impart indigenous knowledge which is particularly of an environmental and herbal nature (Bam, Van Sitters, Ndhlovu, 2018). In my practice as a Sangoma and Traditional Healer, my grandmother has shared medicinal remedies with me (in dreams and visions) which have helped me treat particular ailments. Like many African elders, she never finished western primary school, and this should certainly not dismiss her as an intellectual or one who holds knowledge. I argue that a ‘subversion’ of the ‘knower’ leads to a ‘subversion’ of the researcher, and this creates pathways for marginalized and disenfranchised communities to be able to research themselves and produce their own discourse. This is to say, when we can reimagine the keeper of knowledge, we can subsequently reimagine the producer of knowledge. Additionally, it has implications for ‘vanguard’ paradigms and research methodologies since there is a derivative subversion of what counts as knowledge. As a Gobela, the information I share with my students is often of an oral nature; this is information which was shared with me during my own training into Ubungoma as well as through dreams where my ancestors share knowledge. Just because certain knowledges do not satisfy positivist tropes does not disqualify them as not having credibility or not being valid. As alluded to earlier in this section, dreams are a critical component of my material and spiritual

life. I cover dreams discourse in Chapter 4 because I am inspired to examine the role of dreams as pathways to knowledge and insights; and what implications that has for how research is conducted as well as how knowledge is 'validated'. Additionally, regarding divination sessions where I am conducting inhlolo (a holistic examination, in consultation with ancestors, to find the cause for an ailment and prescribe treatment for it), I often ask myself how I have come to know what I know. I cover divination discourse in the above-mentioned chapter as well; and this is not to dissect the practice of divination itself but rather to speak to its premises and the possibilities embedded within those for the reimagination of processes of knowing which has implications for research approaches. This has been brought on by my own frustration with western canonical paradigmatic and epistemological frameworks as I have found them inept in accounting for how I have arrived at particular information and knowledge. I find myself perpetually disillusioned with academia and its continual dismissal of knowledge systems which have profoundly shaped not only my life but the lives of the many people I encounter in my ongoing present work as a Sangoma. Concluding this chapter, I propose an 'open eye' in engaging what is to come in my thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this section, speaking in tandem with existing literature and drawing from my experiential knowledge journey into becoming a Sangoma, I unpack the corporeal focus of research approaches within the Social Sciences and critique the body of canonical knowledges which perpetuates “monocultural dominance” (Muwanga- Zake, 2009.p2). I argue that a corporeal focus within research leads to certain bodies being constructed in specific and deliberate ways. Furthermore, the denigration of specific corporeal bodies has led to the inevitable denigration of not only the knowledge production and knowledge sharing processes synonymous with those bodies, but the actual knowledges themselves.

A dislocation of canonical bodies of knowledge entails unpacking what western-centric knowledge paradigms have purported about Afro-centric and indigenous knowledge systems. Muwanga-Zake (2009) defines indigenous knowledge systems as “a body of local knowledge and skills unique to a culture, often outside of the formal education system, that enables communities to survive” (p.2). I understand indigenous knowledge as the various knowledges which are shared in both the micro and macro systems of a particular culture; that is, the knowledges which have been shared with me within my family (by my grandmother, for example) and the communal knowledges I have been exposed to in my community throughout my life.

Having access to both canonical knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems has revealed that the former inadvertently creates multiple binaries: what counts as knowledge and what does not as well as what counts as theory and what counts as praxis. This is not at all contextual to many African communities and societies as there is a mutual inclusivity between theory and praxis in Afro-centric epistemologies since theory is embedded within the “practices, relationships and rituals” (Muwanga- Zake, 2009.p2). An epistemology can be defined as how one conceptualizes one’s reality, that is, what one makes of how one sees the world (Wilson, 2001).

Within this context described above, I have therefore divided this Literature Review chapter into sections to streamline my thought processes in each subheading. I start with a discussion on the dichotomy of indigenous knowledge systems and canonical knowledge systems, specifically how the latter has constructed the former. Next, I move to discuss how the body of indigenous knowledges and the bodies of practitioners of indigenous knowledge systems are constructed.

2.2 Indigenous Knowledge Systems versus Western Knowledge Systems: Speaking in between the binary

Wilson (2001) argues that a research paradigm is constituted by four components. The first is ontology defined as how one perceives or sees the world which is attached to what one believes “is real in the world” (Wilson, 2001.p175). The second component is epistemology which are conceptualizations of the world or how one “thinks about that reality” (op cit). Third, is methodology which is an application of epistemologies in acquiring new knowledge or how one uses one’s “ways of thinking to gain more knowledge about one’s reality” (op cit). Last, is axiology which is “a set of morals or a set of ethics” (op cit). In western-centric research, paradigms are populated by positivist and post-positivist paradigms which are essentially the same thing as they “are based on the similar ontological foundation that there is only one reality” (op cit). In contrast, indigenous knowledge’s ontology is pluralistic since it is based on the possibility of multiple realities (See *ibid*). Added to that, what separates indigenous knowledge paradigms from canonical knowledge paradigms is that the latter is premised on the idea that “knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge” (Wilson, 2001.p176). Because canonical knowledge paradigms establish knowledge as an individual enterprise, they also establish the individual as the sole owner of a particular knowledge (*ibid.*). Indigenous knowledge paradigms, on the other hand, are premised on the idea that “knowledge is relational” and therefore “knowledge is shared with all creation” (Wilson, 2001.p176). Furthermore, an indigenous research methodology is based on accountability to all relations and participants of the research, which includes nature (*ibid.*). This is about transcending preoccupations with “validity” or “reliability”, but rather turning the focus to how one is fulfilling their role in the relationship (Wilson, 2001.p177). I understand this point as raising pertinent questions on research purpose, particularly how the knowledge ‘gained’ is going to be impactful for the participants as well as what implications the research has for all parties involved. Being accountable to all relations means that the axiology “needs to be an integral part of the methodology” (op cit). Indigenous research methodologies are predicated on the building of a relationship between the researcher and the participants (*ibid*).

In addition to being highly individualised knowledge paradigms (an imperial D), western-centric knowledge systems have also constructed indigenous knowledge systems based on the belief that a western epistemology is the only valid epistemology. The west’s construction of indigenous

knowledge paradigms has happened through what Said (1978) calls “orientalism” which is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the orient’ and ‘the occident’” (Said, 1978.p2). The orient is the object of the study and therefore undergoes a deliberate pathologization by the occident which establishes itself as the all-knowing researcher (ibid.). In my experiential knowledge writing and drawing on Said’s work, in my course work essay *Engaging the Spirit: Towards Epistemological Transformation*³ I argue that there is an inherent politicism embedded within canonical knowledge systems and their concomitant research methodologies. In his discussion on British Anthropology, Asad (1973, p.11) argues that it is an academic discipline premised on the perpetual study of “primitive societies”. Furthermore, many academic disciplines within the social sciences are defined by an inherently orientalist disposition (ibid.). Engaging on the relevance of Said’s and Asad’s anti-imperialist work in the 1970s, I argue that what must be understood here is that the orient is not inherently oriental but is rather **constructed** to be oriental and therefore by implication ‘primitive’. Some academics may counter and argue that the Social Sciences are an academic discipline which exists autonomously and gives unbiased commentary of the world. Asad (1973) and Lughod (1991) assure us that this is a false narrative since the Social Sciences are an accomplice in the colonial encounter. There was (is) an intimate relationship between the Social Sciences (Anthropology specifically) and colonization as the latter afforded the former consistent research subjects “as it made the object of anthropological study accessible... (through) sustained physical proximity between the observing European and the living non-European” (Asad, 1973.p11). Post-colonially, academics within the social sciences, despite their overzealous claims of ‘decolonization’, continue to rationalize and legitimize western-centric ontologies and epistemologies through their assignment of plausibility to canonical research methods. Social scientists typically use qualitative and/or ethnographic study as a research tool; and this is often done without an honest engagement with how these research tools can re-create troublesome relational (and knowledge) power dynamics. In canonical qualitative research, social scientists tend to overlook unequal power dynamics and how these can influence not only the research process but the kind of information to which they are made privy (Asad, 1973; Collins, 1990; Millen, 1997). Additionally, canonical qualitative research typically has a positivist ontology which can often deflate and contend with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. Qualitative research has developed a reputation for being dismissive

³ See Zwane (2019) *Engaging the Spirit: Towards Epistemological Transformation*.

of narratives which do not satisfy positivist prerequisites of “rationality” and “logic” because it operates from a ‘scientific’ methodological framework which has embedded “knowledge validation processes” (Collins, 1990.pp58-60). These “knowledge validation processes” (op cit) work to confine ‘irrational’ and ‘illogical’ knowledges to what De Sousa Santos (2014, chapter 4) calls an “epistemological abyss”. This, he argues, is caused by “abyssal thinking” (op cit) which he defines as a “system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundations of the visible ones” (op cit). Abyssal thinking is a bifurcating paradigm which organizes hegemonic and indigenous knowledge systems by placing the former “on this side of the line” and the latter “on the other side of the line” (op cit). The “abyssal line” constructs “everything on the other side of the line” to be “non-existent” (op cit) which is accomplished in five ways⁴:

- The valorization of science as the only credible form of knowledge and the purporting of scientific method as being the only legitimate methodological approach to knowing (See De Sousa Santos, 2014).
- The application of linear constructs of time to universalize and organize social phenomena (ibid).

Furthermore, Tisani (2018) attributes this to canonical knowledge’s obsession with time and the compounding of all historiographies into periods which centre the colonial encounter; for example, organizing African historiography according to the binary ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’.

- The creation of permanent hierarchies where the perpetual perspective on indigenous knowledge systems is that they will always be ‘primitive’ and ‘unevolving’ whilst canonical knowledge systems remain contextual and therefore applicable universally.
- The ontology that canonical knowledges have an epistemological universality and are therefore applicable in any demographic and geographic contexts. Rearguard theories such as indigenous knowledge systems, in contrast, are assumed to only be local knowledges and therefore only able to account for social phenomena on a localized, micro level (ibid).

⁴ See De Sousa Santos (2014).

Muwanga-Zake (2009) states that even Bantu (African) institutions of education are fraught with overt and covert frameworks of canonical knowledge systems where aspiring academics must prove how their research is a worthy addition to canonical paradigms and schools of thought.

- Finally, only labour which has positive implications for capitalism can be qualified as productive labour (De Sousa Santos, 2014).

I now briefly circle back to Magoqwana's (2018) point about the ageist and ableist ontological perspective of western-centric knowledge paradigms; and how they dismiss the grandmother's spiritual and intellectual labour because capitalistic economic systems cannot derive profit from it. Additionally, the dismissal of the grandmother, as a credible knowledge source, is due to perceptions of her corporeal body not being "productive" (Magoqwana, 2018.p77). Oyewumi (2005) explains that the West's preoccupation with the corporeal body is based on the belief that biology is a determiner of destiny and that this is a prevailing Western-centric ontology and epistemology. Even researchers within the Social Sciences who claim to have 'transcended' positivist fixations on the human corporeal body still operate from the viewpoint that biological differences are the paramount determining factor of how human society is organized (Oyewumi, 2005). This viewpoint works to vindicate those in power as they view their position of power as that which is concomitant to their biology; attached to this is the idea that those who are in social positions of subordination find themselves there due to their 'genetic inferiority' (Oyewumi, 2005). The biological or corporeal body is a tool for differentiation and marks where one falls on the abyssal line⁵.

Within the binary research method in the Social Sciences, ethnographic studies have been a major proponent of how certain bodies are constructed. This leads me to my next discussion.

2.3 The imperial gaze in its construction of the composite indigenous body

In this section, I discuss how the body of knowledge which Sangomas and Traditional Healers possess has been constructed as well as how they, in their corporeal bodies, have been constructed by colonialism.

⁵ See Oyewumi (2005) and De Sousa Santos (2014).

Self-representation of Traditional Healers and Sangomas

According to Edwards (2011) Traditional Healers in the South African context go by distinct names and use distinct methodologies in their healing practices. A Sangoma is one who is born with an ancestral calling and is required (by their ancestors) to undergo a process of ukuthwasa (a rigorous ‘internship’ guided by a Gobela or established Sangoma) (See Edwards, 2011; Washington, 2010; Peek, 1991; Thornton, 2014; Mlisa, 2009). Those who have been called to work as Sangomas are usually not given a choice by their ancestors and refusal is often met with violence, mental anguish, or perpetual misfortune (Edwards, 2011; Thornton, 2009; Washington, 2010). Furthermore, being a Sangoma is a role that is imposed on you by your ancestors and is communicated through dreams, illness or through a divination session with an established Sangoma (See Thornton, 2009; Edwards, 2011). The primary work of Sangomas is divination; connecting with ancestral spirits through the burning of impepho (which is a plant burned to summon ancestral spirits) and the throwing of ‘bones’ whose position on ikhukho (reed mat) when they are expelled from ingxowa yamathambo (bag of bones) provides insights on a patient’s affliction/s (Van Binsbergen, 2008). Sangomas are quite a complex group to understand because ancestors are simultaneously outside and inside of them; ancestral spirits share a Sangoma’s corporeal body with them and this is how the process of ukuvuka kweDlozi (rising of the ancestral spirit) happens. Ancestral spirits live within the Sangoma’s body in a ‘passive’ or unconscious state; this means that they are present but do not infringe on the autonomous everyday functioning of the Sangoma in her everyday life. Specific rituals and objects can trigger the ancestral spirits which then move from a ‘passive’, unconscious state to an active one. The ancestral spirits then assume joint autonomy of the corporeal body, along with the Sangoma, and they speak through her and deliver messages. The movement of ancestral spirits from a passive state to an active is often misnamed as ‘possession’, which is what Van Binsbergen (2008) does in his paper discussing the various typologies of African divination systems. Ngoma (2006) in Mpono (2007) argues that it is incorrect to call it ‘possession’ as the “ancestors are not entities existing in another dimension but are part of the diviner and there are various means to awaken such spirit in certain people” (p40). Additionally, ‘possession’ implies a foreign entity forcefully entering the corporeal body of the diviner, which in this instance, is not the case (ibid).

A Traditional Healer is one who is skilled in the administration of herbal remedies to treat ailments (Sodi et al, 2011). Common belief is that Traditional Healers do not go through an experience of

ukuthwasa, not the way Sangomas do anyway; but that they also have a particular process of ‘apprenticeship’ where they obtain herbal knowledge from an established herbalist who is usually a family member (Thornton, 2009; Edwards, 2011). Traditional Healers go by many names in various South African cultures. In isiXhosa they are called Ixhwele, in isiZulu they are called Inyanga, in SeSotho they are called Ngaka. Knowledge of herbs and plants is not restricted to Traditional Healers. Sangomas may also acquire plant knowledge and thus they have overlapping roles.

A Faith Healer or Umthandazeli (one who prays) emerged as a result of the integration of Christianity into indigenous health-care approaches (Mpono, 2007). Abathandazeli (plural of Umthandazeli) are those who are believed to be called by God and the Holy Spirit to divine and channel divine messages (Sodi et al, 2011). Abathandazeli can prophesize (and this has earned them the other name of Abaprofethi) and divine (as well as heal) through using “prayer, holy water, baths, enemas and steaming” (Washington, 2010.p10). Mlisa (2009) adds that Abathandazeli are also believed to have ancestral callings to become Sangomas but because of the strong affinity to Christianity, opt to go the Umthandazeli route. Contrary to popular opinion, Abathandazeli also go through a particular initiation process which involves ukuphakamisa isthunywa (growing the prophetic gift), rigorous prayer and abstinence from anything which is thought to ‘dirty’ oneself (alcohol, pork, sexual intercourse)⁶. In this section, I will be using ‘Traditional Spiritual Workers’ to refer to all modes of traditional healing.

⁶ See Mlisa (2009) who writes extensively on the work of Abathandazeli.

Colonial and Apartheid representations of Sangomas and Traditional Healers

The Apartheid government passed the Witchcraft Suppression Act No 3 in 1957 as well as the Criminal Procedure Act No 5 of 1977 to outlaw the practice of traditional healing (Mpono, 2007). Apartheid as a racial ideology and legislative policy owes its origins to the Dutch Reformed Church in the nineteenth century (Dubow, 1991). The period of the 1930s saw the Dutch Reformed Church become increasingly overt in its stance on race and its epistemologies gradually evolved into Apartheid policy (ibid.). Racial ideologies within the Dutch Reformed Church were justified through subjective interpretations of the bible and the prevailing belief was that God had ordained the Afrikaner people with the authority to legislate separatism (ibid.). The dominance of Christian nationalism led to the widespread dissemination and imposition of Christian Nationalist Education (ibid; Van Eden and Vermeulen, 2005). The purpose of Christian Nationalist Education was to induct individuals into a Christian way of life, and it was an education ideology which survived well into the end of Apartheid (ibid). Resistance to Christian missionary education and influence (against land dispossession that went hand in hand with the introduction of the Bible) has a long tradition in African intellectual work, such as the work of Majeke titled *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952)⁷. Colonial and Apartheid policies brutally imposed western belief systems on African people through imperialist propaganda which demonised their indigenous knowledge and created binaries in knowledge, as discussed extensively earlier. As a result, Sangomas and Traditional Healers often deal with severe ostracism and automatic associations with witchcraft or ‘black magic’ in colonised African communities. Despite both Sangomas and Traditional Healers forming a critical component of the cosmology of many Southern African cultures (See Washington, 2010; Nsameng 1992 in Edwards 2011; Muwanga- Zake 2009; Peek, 1991 and Richter, 2003). Interpretations of biblical scripture were instrumental in constructing the dominant perceptions of Sangomas and Traditional Healers. Semenya and Letsosa (2012.p2) note that the book of Exodus chapter 22 verse 18 states, “Do not suffer a witch to live”, which implies that those who practice witchcraft are to be ostracized from society as their practices are tantamount to colluding with the devil (The Interpreter Bible 1995; The Life Application Bible, 1999 in Semenya and Letsosa, 2012).

⁷ See Majeke, N. (1952). *The role of the missionaries in conquest*. Society of Young Africa.

Semenya and Letsosa (2012) note that witchcraft is defined as a “mysterious interaction with another world” and that witches are qualified individuals who, through their expertise in mystic power, use it for malicious purposes against other people (p1). Furthermore, it is noted in Semenya and Letsosa (ibid) that divination systems which establish communication with “the dead” are diabolical (op cit). This is interesting to observe as divination and communication with the ancestors is a critical component of the work of Sangomas. Scholars (Mlisa, 2009; Mokgethi, 2018; Edwards, 2011; Thornton, 2009) state that Sangomas receive divinatory insights from God and/or ancestors; but Semenya and Letsosa (2012) note that the perceived source of divinatory information is the devil and “his demons” (p3). These kinds of perceptions of Sangomas and Traditional Healers can be attributed to the homogenization of Christianity as an omniscient and universally relevant religion, and the fact that Apartheid’s Christian National Education policy became a vehicle for the imposition of religious dogma (See Waldron, 2010). Mudimbe (1988, p.3) states that Christian missionaries played three roles in the colonial encounter on southern African soil. They functioned as “agents of a political empire”, representatives of a civilization and an envoy of God” (op cit). Dominant Christian ideology was premised on the belief of it being the duty of missionaries and colonialists to rescue the ‘black nation’ from ‘perishing’ by introducing them to the ‘Word of God’ (See Dubow, 1991 and Mudimbe, 1988).

A post-Apartheid South Africa anomaly: The Traditional Health Practitioners Act No.35 (2004)

Responses to the Apartheid government’s policies were not acquiescent (Van Eden and Vermeulen, 2005). This we know ourselves from our own African anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti-Apartheid existential and ancestral experiences of resistance over close to 400 years in southern Africa. An established body of decolonial African intellectual literature exists on this though it was not considered worthy to include in the western canon until fairly recently. As a result of this long struggle for indigenous rights in education and their recognition in a democratic South Africa founded on a new Constitution in 1996 and a Bill of Rights (which foregrounded African heritage and cultural rights), was the founding of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act No.35 (2004) which defines traditional health practices 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 functions within the family or community or*
- d) The physical or mental preparation of an individual for puberty, adulthood, pregnancy, childbirth, and death.*

(South African Government, 2004. *Traditional Health Practitioners 2004*. (No.35 of 2004). Pretoria: Government Printers. Proclaimed 11 February 2005, South Africa Government Gazette, Vol 476).

Thornton (2009) makes an interesting point about this Act by stating that it excludes biomedical health practitioners such as nurses, medical doctors, dentists as those are represented in the Apartheid regime's Nursing Act of 1974, the Health Professions Act of 1974, the Allied Health Professions Act of 1982 and the Dental Technician Act of 1979, respectively. However, it seems that the new African government is intentional in its creation of distinctions or abyssal lines between biomedical health practitioners and health practices which are based on a "traditional philosophy" (see Thornton, 2009.p21; South African Government Health Practitioners Act No.35, 2004. Chapter1.1). This ironically covertly and overtly implies that traditional healers are not recognized as credible health practitioners (see Thornton, 2009. He also notes that the Act's exclusion of divination systems and divination practices (which are critical to the work of Traditional Healers and Sangomas) constructs them as subordinate health-care practitioners. Additionally, the Act defines 'traditional' as that which is a 'family heirloom' and does not take 'science' into consideration which immediately constructs traditional healing as a pre-colonial artefact which has no propensity for evolution and possesses no "dynamic knowledges" (Thornton, 2009. p23; South African Government Health Practitioners Act No.35, 2004. Chapter 1.1).

Ongoing negative representation of African indigenous knowledge and practices

As Traditional Spiritual Workers, we are still unable to shake the colonially constructed negative perceptions of our work. The media does a great job in perpetuating the stigma. Richter (2003) labels South African media outlets as ‘sensationalist’ in their reporting of “horror stories” including traditional healers and practitioners of traditional medicine (p4). These negative perceptions and representations of African people and the marginalisation of their indigenous philosophies and ancestral knowledges is blatantly persistent. This is evident, for instance, in how there is scholarship which misnames Traditional Spiritual Workers “witchdoctors”, from the colonial and Apartheid days right through to the present. (See discussions in, for instance, Elliot, 1970; Soul, 1974; Soga, 1931 in Mlisa, 2009). Here, I am reminded also of the work of Parle and Scorgie (2012) and Cook (2009) who write with a level of nauseating ignorance. In the article *Bewitching Zulu Women: Umhayizo, Gender and Witchcraft in Natal* (2012), the ‘scholars’ discuss the use of ‘love magic’ and ‘love concoctions’ which are used by young men to force young women into romantic relationships with them. With the progressive growth of Traditional Spiritual Workers and our infiltration of all levels of society, I cannot accept that Parle and Scorgie (2012), writing with arrogance so recently, could not find a practitioner with whom to co-author or at the very least, provide credible information. Cook’s (2009) article *Sangomas: Problem or Solution to South Africa’s Health-care System* does an extremely damaging thing of assigning blame to Traditional Spiritual Workers for the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS related deaths in South Africa. The ‘scholar’ also shames people for consulting with Traditional Spiritual Workers and reduces the work we do to aggravated witch hunts where ‘poor black women’ are labeled witches by other “poor black women” and therefore identified as the cause of the turmoil a consulting patient’s life is in (p264). This inadvertently dislocates and erodes Magoqwana’s (2018) conceptualization of the black matriarchal figure as a source of knowledge and the instilling of “isazela” (conscience)(p77). Cook (2009) goes on to admonish traditional spiritual work as demonstrative of a “lack of knowledge of science and logic and the role they play in explaining” various life situations (Cook, 2009.p264). It is no surprise then that when someone has an ancestral calling and is symptomatic, they are perceived as having a “neurotic syndrome” (See Mqotsi, 1957; Lamla, 1975 in Mlisa, 2009). In Cook’s (ibid) article, there is no discussion or exploration of other factors which may be contributing to high HIV/AIDS mortality, despite the article including a study which

confirmed that out of 233 traditional healers who were interviewed, only 6% claimed to be able to treat/cure HIV/AIDS. Contrary to popular belief, which limits the scope of the work of Traditional Spiritual Workers to ‘supernatural’ phenomena such as witchcraft and mediating ancestral anger, Traditional Spiritual Workers are also invested in the pathology and phenomenology of the corporeal human body (See Waldron, 2010).

There is evidence of a deep misconception amongst health practitioners who work within Western paradigms of healthcare that illness is experienced and manifests in unilateral ways globally (See Waldron, 2010). What drives this misconception are broader frameworks of whiteness⁸; which are systemic and social structures which drive the proliferation of white-centric and canonical paradigms and establish them as universally applicable (See Kendall, 2002). Whiteness, as a race and as a structure of power, is culpable in the creation and perpetuation of the homogenization of “Euro-Western thought” (Waldron, 2010. p53). Additionally, the cultural normativity of whiteness has infiltrated all aspects of health-care systems (ibid). Whiteness’ cultural normativity enables the dominance of Euro-Western knowledge paradigms and health-care systems and creates what Waldron (2010) calls a “cultural embeddedness” which results in canonical paradigms remaining “unconscious, standard, normal, common-sense and the practices of non-European (and non-Western) groups are judged against that standard” (ibid, p53). Kendall (2002) argues that this is the power of whiteness, as it imposes its own culture and paradigm as the socially acceptable norm against which all other paradigms need to measure themselves. Paradigms which are not palatable to canonical tools of measurement are discarded into a perpetual abyss of non-existence (De Sousa Santos, 2014); and those which cannot be ‘tested’ and ‘proven’ to be ‘valid’ are then denigrated into a qualification of ‘primitiveness’. Cook (2009) is quite arrogant in her assertion that African cosmologies and healing practices have not been ‘tested’ and therefore cannot be proven to be legitimate as if ‘legitimacy’ is not a relative concept subject to ontology and epistemology (See Wilson, 2001). Also, it is quite a presumptuous statement (which is steeped in white privilege) since it assumes that canonical tools of measurement are applicable to all knowledge systems and paradigms.

⁸ See Allen, T.W (1975) *Class struggle and the origin of racial slavery: the invention of the white race*. New England Free Press.

Mlisa (2009) attributes the tensions between biomedical health practitioners and Traditional Spiritual Workers to there being regulatory bodies to which the former is accountable, with the latter being purported to only be accountable to the ancestors and therefore not compelled to work within a universal axiology. Dei (1999) in Waldron (2010) points out the irony of this in how western knowledge paradigms are infamous for stealing indigenous knowledges and “reframing them in ways that obscure any connection between the two” (p54). Here, I am reminded of the absurdity of practitioners of homeopathy who appropriate the plant *impepho* and rebrand it under a different name to incorporate into their work. At a previous workplace, white American colleagues were obsessed with herbal teas and kombucha and spoke highly of their healing properties whilst simultaneously subscribing to problematic conceptualizations of traditional healing practices in Southern Africa. Dei (1999) in Waldron (2010) argues that this is part of a global endeavour to appropriate indigenous health practices and rename them “herbal remedies” to make them more “civilized” and therefore palatable (p65).

Sometimes Sangomas and Traditional Healers are painted in grossly hyperbolic terms. An example of this is Saffer (2010, p.21) who labels the elderly Sangoma who is part of her study as an “indigenous sorceress who worked with magic, the witch of the fairy-tales we grew up with”. Although some may be misguided and applaud Saffer (2010) for her ‘endearing’ description of the Sangoma, she inadvertently contributes to the problematic stigma which circulates us and our work. One of the deepest issues I have had within my work is the automatic dehumanization which comes with it and how people view the presence of spiritual gifts as a negation of human emotion and human experience. The prevailing pathologies of Sangomas and Traditional Healers as those who can send lightning to unsuspecting enemies and fly on broomsticks at midnight are ones which do not quell how we have been mystified and inevitably exocitized.

Drawing this chapter to a close, a salient point I have tried to make is that the discarding of indigenous knowledge paradigms is a premature one since academics and scholars have a sparse engagement with Traditional Spiritual Work - particularly African divination systems (See Peek, 1991). The general attitude, as explicated by much of the existing literature which I have surveyed, both in preparation for this dissertation and preceding my own *ukuthwasa* journey, has largely been that indigenous knowledge systems and paradigms are ‘useless’. This has been a contributing

factor to how Traditional Healers and Sangomas have been constructed as “primitive” and “naïve” (Waldron, 2010.p53). This suggests that the knowledge which we possess is outdated and incapable of evolving with the growing demands of an ever-changing modern world. This kind of attitude and approach does little to change the fact that there are people who have Traditional Spiritual Workers as their primary health-care providers which illustrates this work is not as obsolete as popular discourse and scholarship assume (see Washington, 2010).

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework of Research Methodology

3.1. Conceptual Framework

3.1.1. Critique of western research methods

The problem with the western-centric Social Sciences

In the book *Turning Points in Qualitative Research* (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003), the social scientists present the most salient discourses within qualitative research. To begin, the authors offer that the period of the 1980s was one fraught with the “triple crises” which involved authority, representation and praxis (p12). The Western-centric and highly patriarchal nature of Social Science (as an academic discipline and field of study) was inevitably problematized by subaltern, indigenous, feminist and marginalized schools of thought (ibid.). This period also saw the emergence of the contentions around “the self as researcher” as well as “the researcher as self” which culminated in the establishment of autoethnographic research as a method of documenting and “representing lived experience” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003.p12). Ellis and Bochner (2000) in Rooney (2005) state that the value in personal narratives as research methodology is that the researcher can assume a dual role of being an academic and personal self in the narrating of an aspect of their life (pp12-13). Nyamnjoh (2012), however, maintains that there is still a persistence amongst social scientists who approach ethnographic studies in ways which demean the contributions of participants and rather detail their own perceptions of participants.

Pushing Back against Western Research Methods

The ‘revolution’ of qualitative research had several turning points which I will briefly discuss (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003). The first turning point was the reintroduction and reintegration of qualitative research into Sociology and Education and its inaugural introduction into the fields of Nursing and Clinical Research. An example of this is the work of Kubeka (2016) who uses a qualitative research methodology in her study which is a psychological perspective on the phenomenology of Zulu ancestral callings. As one would expect, this was a direct push-back against the often faceless statistical and quantitative research ontologies and epistemologies

(Lincoln and Denzin, 2003). The second turning point in qualitative research was the opportunity it provided “for social scientists to explore questions that were ill-explored, neglected, or simply not amenable to being answered with experimental and other quantitative (research) methods” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003.p13). Saffer (2010) demonstrates this in her use of biographical life writing as a research methodology in her study capturing the life of a Sangoma. The third turning point in qualitative research was its move away from technical jargon which improved its accessibility to respondents and thus narrowed the divide between ‘scientific’ information and lived/narrated experience (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003). Collins (1990) adds to this point by arguing that sharp demarcations which polarize ‘scientific’ information and personal narratives only serve to perpetuate white-centric research paradigms which proliferate ‘objectivity’ as a marker of validity. Added to these critical turning points, Lincoln and Denzin (2003) point to other ‘revolutions’ which trouble the foundational premises of qualitative research and steer its future as a research methodology. These are:

i) A revolution in the ethical considerations within Social Sciences research

A critique of qualitative research and even ‘conventional’ research methodologies within the social sciences is that the issue of ethics is often not seen to be part of the actual process of inquiry and the presentation of knowledge/data (ibid). Wilson (2001) argues that a research paradigm needs to have an embedded axiology; that is, the ethical considerations need to be part of their entire research process. Asad (1973) identifies Anthropology as an academic discipline that has no universal and standardized ethical considerations despite being intimate with human research respondents.

ii) A revolution in the purpose of social science research

The interrogation of the purpose and function of the social sciences also raises subsidiary questions for its employed methodological approaches. Key critiques of the academic discipline insinuate that it is a gatekeeper of knowledge which preserves the privilege of “knowledge elites” who trade “knowledge as a commodity, principally amongst themselves” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003.p13). This academic elitism means that the dominant perception of respondents is that they are merely a means to an end which is compounded by the absence of channels for respondents to hold researchers accountable. Wilson (2001) argues the importance of accountability as a measure to ensure the undertaking of research which is meaningful for all who are involved in the research process.

3.1.2. Millen's (1997) critique of white Feminist Research Methodology

The (1997) work of Millen (who is a feminist scientist) is critical for unpacking the challenges which are concomitant with doing feminist research (done by white feminist women) with indigenous women who do not identify as feminists. The imposition of unfamiliar ontologies and epistemologies is one of the salient focuses of this work, hence Millen's (1997) inclusion here. Feminist research entails a focus on the 'empowering' aspect of research but what is not understood is that conceptualizations of 'empowerment' are often aligned with what the researcher construes as 'empowerment' (ibid.). What mainstream feminist research fails to understand is that 'empowerment' looks different across geographies (locational and socio-cultural geographies). The white woman-feminist-researcher's understanding of 'empowerment' is not universally enticing. Mainstream or white-centric feminist research purports to 'give' black women and women of colour a voice without truthfully grappling with what has caused these marginalized women to be perpetually ignored. Also, we have always had a voice, nobody needs to give us one, we just need to be heard. Often, white feminist researchers do a great job of performative 'social-awareness', or as my generation calls it "pretending to be woke", which ultimately is an attempt to distance themselves as perpetrators of racial violence. Due to structural privilege in colonial contexts, white women are also often liable for the emotional, physical, spiritual, psychological and epistemic violence inflicted on marginalized black and indigenous women. In addition to the 'empowerment' of marginalized women through 'giving us a voice', the assignment of tools to marginalized women so that they can analyze their gendered life experience may actually be disempowering (see ibid.). This is because marginalized women have developed their own coping mechanisms which may not necessarily lead to long-term structural change; therefore, feminist researchers can judge these coping mechanisms "as being based on sexist or non-feminist beliefs or actions" (Millen, 1997.p1).

Feminist research paradigms can have a monolithic conceptualization of power which often does not coincide with some of the contexts in which marginalized women find themselves (ibid.). African societies are quite complex, and power is negotiated in complex ways; therefore, the homogenous perception of all marginalized women being 'disempowered' and in need of a feminist intervention is a false one (ibid.). Additionally, "power is multi-layered and dynamic" which makes 'empowerment' "situational and fractured" (Millen, 1997.p2). This is to say, there

are contexts where women can have social power because of their economic status or sexuality, for example, and situations where power is rescinded (ibid)

Feminist researchers are often in a hurry to deal with the external manifestations and representations of ‘disempowerment’ and not how ‘disempowerment’ is perpetuated within their own research community and the academy in its entirety (ibid.). Despite the problematization of the hetero-patriarchal lens which has dominated canonical knowledge paradigms within the social sciences, there is significantly less acknowledgement of the plight of black women and women of colour within research communities and academia (ibid.). This leads us back to the discussion on the actual purpose and function of Social Science research since it does not compel itself to challenge **all** manifestations of social phenomena it claims to want to address. Of course, feminist researchers are not the only proponents of the incongruence within the research community. Academic research is fraught with instances where there are problematizations of social phenomena, like inequality for example, and simultaneous perpetuations of it. This is evident in research papers claiming an ‘empowering’ and ‘feminist’ ethos in the articulation of their methodological approaches, but engaging in exploitative practices where data capturers, fieldworkers etc. are over-worked and under-paid (Millen, 1997.p2). Mainstream feminist research paradigms claim to be anti-positivism or post-positivism, but still subscribe to positivist research practices such as the binary of the researcher as subject and the researched as object (ibid.). Some feminist researchers believe that they can forego this orientalist research dynamic by establishing “an equal relationship with the participant” which “can lead to the acquisition of ‘more significant and meaningful data’” (Millen, 1997.p3). I agree with Millen (ibid.) when she argues that it is false to believe that the relationship between the researcher and the respondent can ever be ‘equal’. White feminist researchers carry significant socio-cultural-racial and economic privileges from which they can never disassociate themselves (ibid.).

Black Feminism Pushing Back

In colonial and capitalist contexts, the overwhelming majority of white women experience life differently, move in the world differently - the world engages with them differently. Even if there may be experiences of gender and class oppression which both white women and black women can relate to, there are gendered experiences which happen specifically to **black** women **because** we are **black** women.

White feminist researchers have a monolithic conceptualization of rape and inadequately define it as a “manifestation of male power over female sexuality” (Crenshaw, 1989,p158) which ignores how sexual violence has been weaponized as a tool for committing “racial terror” against black women (op cit.) Rape has a long and ugly history of being a colonial tool where it was used to not only control but also dehumanize black women and women of colour (Baderoon, 2014). White woman feminist researchers are quite bold in assuming synonymity with the gendered experiences of black women, which completely ignores how black womanhood and black bodies, in general, have been constructed in society. Understanding the particularity of the gendered experiences of black women and women of colour requires an understanding of how society has orientalized the black female body. The black female body has perpetually been hypersexualized and its hypersexualization has been driven by racist and orientalist obsessions with its genitalia (Abrahams, 1997). The orientalization of black women’s bodies means that our bodies are constantly on display; being viewed and in view (Oyeronke,2005) - like the body of Sara Baartman⁹. Our bodies experience a particular kind of perplexity where we are simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible: hyper-visible in how we always have eyes on us and invisible in how those eyes refuse to **see** us- in our complexity (our composite bodies), in our humanity.

The imperial gaze is relentless, and we see its colonizing eyes even within academic research approaches which feign ‘decoloniality’ and ‘post-coloniality’. Research approaches still have ethnographies as methodological approaches and the problem with ethnographies is that there is an imposing over-emphasis on the corporeal body or what is perceivable through the naked eye. As an aspiring scholar working within the discipline of the Social Sciences, I have come to accept the largely problematic nature of Ethnography as a research methodology. I am not saying that it is the only problematic method of doing research, but for the purposes of this dissertation I will be focusing on it. My understanding of ethnographic study is that it is when a researcher descends upon a community or social group (usually uninvited and unsolicited) in order to conduct research on that particular social group or community by immersing himself (read imposing himself) in the ‘culture’ and daily life within that community. Research is often conducted from the **viewpoint** of the researcher; the researcher makes notes of what he has observed and from that, makes deductions about that social group (Clifford, 1986). It is no surprise then that Clifford (1986)

⁹ Sara Baartman was a Khoi woman who was taken to Europe and whose body was paraded there in the early 1800s as an anomaly because of her large buttocks.

defines ethnographic studies as ‘incomplete truths’; unable to detect social-cultural cues and one-dimensional in ontology.¹⁰ Because there is little discursive engagement with respondents, it is only the researcher’s loaded gaze -which comes with its own socializations into a specific ontology and epistemology- that simultaneously creates and unravels respondents. Canonical feminist researchers can claim to be ‘progressive’, but the body has always been on display even within feminist research. This is evident through the fact that even gender identities are based on what can be seen by the corporeal eye. These perceivable behaviours are synonymous with a particular gender construct and are then seen to be indicative of one’s gender identity (See Lorber, 1994). Because white privilege is institutional, it can never be denounced on an individual level (Kendall, 2002). Circling back to my point about the inherent binaries embedded within feminist research approaches and research practices, it is futile for feminist researchers to claim to be non-binary for multiple reasons: firstly, if feminist researchers were truly non-binary in their research approaches and practices, they would not be perpetually identifying the same demographic (marginalized women) as research respondents. Marginalized women consistently being the research focus is inherently orientalist since the foundational premises of mainstream feminist research is establishing ‘the self’ (researcher) and ‘the other’ (respondent) (See Millen, 1997). Secondly, the reinterpretation of the lived experiences of marginalized women in ways which are palatable and acceptable to the research community is dismissive and establishes another binary of ‘the learned’ (the researcher) and the ‘unlearned’ (the respondent). Finally, attached to ‘the learned’ and ‘the unlearned’ binary is ‘the scientific’ and ‘non-scientific’, ‘objective knowledge and ‘subjective knowledge’ and ‘fact’ and fiction’ binaries. These binaries are products of what De Sousa Santos (2014) calls the “abyssal line” (Chapter 2) which (in this case) creates divisionary lines which organize knowledges based on a polarity. Everything which falls on “this side of the line” is assigned credence whilst everything which falls on “that other side of the line” is dismissed into a perpetual abyss of oblivion and is therefore assigned non-existence (op cit). Overcoming these restrictive binaries and regressive research paradigms requires social scientists to concede several things: firstly, how canonical epistemologies and research paradigms conceptualize the world is not the only conceptualization of the world that should matter. Marginalized communities have developed their own knowledge systems and possess a wealth of knowledge which shapes their own understanding of the world. Secondly, within marginalized communities there is no

¹⁰ See also earlier discussion of Nyamnjoh (2012).

distinction between theory and practice; those two entities have always been inextricably linked- the theory is embedded within the practice and vice versa. Western-centric modes of theorizing and praxis may be the ones which are assigned cultural capital, but they are not the only ones which exist (De Sousa Santos, 2014). This is to say that marginalized communities do not require western researchers to theorize on their behalf and then impose incongruent theories to dissect the practices of marginalized communities (See *ibid*). In addition, theory and practice must never be decontextualized and should be understood in tandem to the social phenomena which compel them. Thirdly, observing the corporeal body cannot possibly articulate the totality of the experiences of marginalized communities. In many African societies, sight, as a sense, exists within a plethora of senses which are also valorized (Oyewumi, 2005). There is credence assigned to intuition, dreams, visions and the spirit as credible sources of knowledge (*ibid*). This means that canonical research paradigms need to concede that they are incomplete epistemological structures and therefore, need to call on collaboration with other knowledge paradigms if they are to provide “strong answers” to the “strong questions” facing us in society (De Sousa Santos, 2014. Introduction). Agrawal (1995) argues that knowledge systems have consistently been in contact with each other and any separation between cultures and knowledge systems is fallacious.

3.2. Decolonising research methods

The inadequacy of canonical research paradigms

A critical question raised by empowering approaches to research is an interrogation of the purpose of the research. Once we are honest about whom Social Sciences research serves, then we can critically dissect all the ways in which it alienates marginalized and disenfranchised groups. Secondly, an engagement with the purpose of Social Sciences research will also expose its limitations as a catalyst for epistemological change as it gate-keeps knowledge, promoting academic elitism where knowledges which are not aligned with the positivist research approaches within the social sciences are rendered illegitimate. Changing the face of the researcher and valorizing lived experience moves marginalized communities from perpetual research subjects (Said's notion of 'orients') to knowledge creators as it gives them the channels to tell their own stories. In short, as illustrated above, canonical research paradigms are inadequate in understanding the particularity of the experiences of marginalized communities. In order to broaden the horizon of possibilities for the curtailment of various phenomena, the horizon of ways of knowing, knowledge production and research paradigms also needs to be broadened. This is preceded by an inherent understanding that the way canonical research paradigms conceptualize the world, is not universal. This recognition should be the first step in decolonising research methods.

The Freirean empowering approach to research

Forming the overarching framework of this dissertation is the Freirean¹¹ empowering approach to research within an African context. The premise of this research approach is to delineate the relational dynamic between the researcher and the respondent thus creating channels for the latter to become a co-researcher and co-author who is involved during all stages of the research process. Additionally, a Freirean empowering research approach is quite politicized as it entails "a promotion of liberation and growth within a society assumed to be class divided and, hence inequitable" (Lather, 1986.p208). Supporting this point, Johnson and Madge (2016) state that an empowering research approach is political since it is a tool for "undoing (and unlearning) internalized oppression" (ibid. p1) This is to say that both the research itself and its methodological

¹¹ Paulo Freire was a Brazilian philosopher and educator whose ideas on emancipatory education pioneered established and pioneered critical pedagogy.

processes and approaches need to be troubling to not only socio-cultural inequality but also epistemic injustices which drive canonical knowledges and paradigms (Lather, 1986; Johnson and Madge, 2016). The Freirean empowering research approach type is qualified by four critical concepts: the first being democratizing “knowledge and power through the research process” (Lather, 1986.p208) which subverts constructs of who is perpetually the ‘expert’ and the ‘knower’ in research processes. The second component of an empowering approach to research is that it aims to interrogate “ways of knowing” (Johnson and Madge, 2016.p5) through an interrogation of ‘objectivity’ and its elusiveness since we are all formed and informed by our socializations - either consciously or unconsciously. A critique of the ways of knowing subsequently validates lived experience as a plausible and legitimate source of knowing; in addition to recognizing the situatedness and the particularity of knowledge production (ibid.). This pushes back against the assumed universality of canonical knowledge and the assumed homogeneity of its perspectives. An extension of what counts as knowledge necessitates an expansion of ways of doing research (ibid.). The third component of empowering research is that it causes “an arousal effect” (Lather, 1986.p209); that is, it causes significant ontological and epistemological shifts which in turn trouble problematic and oppressive dogmatic thinking. Finally, empowering research approaches catapult the involvement of disenfranchised and deliberately silenced voices to be active participants throughout the research process. Ultimately, an empowering research approach means that both the research product and the research process are life-changing and positively influence the lives of the respondents (Johnson and Madge, 2016).

Black Feminist Thought of Collins¹² (1990)

In addition to empowering approaches to research, I also draw from black feminist thought in conceptualizing the theoretical premises of this dissertation. The work of Collins (1990) has pioneered not only the theoretical components of black feminist thought as a conceptual framework for doing research with black women, but she has also provided the frameworks for research praxis which are relevant for this work. Collins (1990, p57) defines black feminist thought as a “specialized thought” and “subjugated knowledge” which “reflects the thematic content” of black women. Additionally, what is meant to be understood by black feminist thought are the

¹² Collins is a black feminist scholar whose work on race, gender and sexuality has made significant contributions to black feminist scholarship.

knowledge contributions of black women which have not been ‘positively appraised’ by white hetero-patriarchal structures of knowledge validation. According to Collins (ibid.) two factors determine whether knowledge is positively appraised. Firstly, because the Social Sciences is an academic discipline and field of study which is controlled by “elite white men” (Collins, 1990.p58), it inevitably represents and reflects a white male ontology and epistemology as “knowledge claims are evaluated by a community of experts whose members represent the standpoints of the groups from which they originate” (op cit.). White men have been inexorable in the ‘creation’, representation and construction of knowledges. The second factor which determines whether knowledge is positively appraised or not are the politics of ‘credibility’ (ibid.). All knowledges need to conform to existing epistemological paradigms; “scholarly communities that challenge basic beliefs held in the culture at large will be deemed less credible than those which support popular perspectives” (op cit.). All of this culminates into the suppression of black feminist thought as well as Afrocentric epistemic paradigms (ibid.). Furthermore, there is a relationship between the epistemic paradigms which propagate black (and especially black women’s) inferiority and the suppression of black woman scholarship: how the world sees and unsees black women is also how it sees and unsees the scholarship we produce (See Oyewumi, 2005 and Baderon, 2014).

In talking about her own experiences with ‘the academy’, Collins (1990) states that black women who strive to assert their ontological and epistemic perspective (particularly in scholastic accounts which depict our own specific experiences) do so at the risk of our knowledge claims being met with rejection “on epistemological grounds” (Collins, 1990.p60; See also Crenshaw, 1989). Additionally, because of the often unique and complex nature of our lives, our experiences may not be ‘provable’ using white-centric tools of knowing and research (Collins, 1990; See also Crenshaw, 1989). It is quite an arduous task to divorce white-centric heteropatriarchal tools of research from positivist paradigms and approaches to meaning-making (Collins,1990; See also Oyewumi, 2005). This is evident in the highly formulaic and rigid nature of mainstream and vanguard research methodologies. A consequence of this is the false notion that an absence of emotion makes the research irrefutable and legitimate (See Collins, 1990; Rooney, 2005). The valorization of an absence of emotion has various consequences: firstly, canonical researchers are often oblivious to the relational power dynamics between themselves and the groups that they are studying (See Asad 1973; Collins, 1990; Said, 1978). Secondly, because of their inability (and

perhaps even unwillingness) to confront who they are in specific spaces and what implications that has on the groups being studied, they do not acknowledge how that affects the kinds of information they are able to get from the groups (See Collins, 1990). This leads to what Collins (1990.p60) calls “decontextualization” where the researcher removes themselves from their “class, race, sex or unique situation”, which is linked to how researchers also decontextualize the respondents from their contexts which results in the “separation of information from meaning” (op cit.). This is to say that the responses given by respondents are removed from their contexts and are not considered in tandem to the various socio-cultural-political-economic contexts from which the respondents come (ibid.).

Collins (1990) argues that all conceptualizations of research approaches which claim to affirm the lived experiences of marginalized groups cannot lack the “ethic of caring” and divides “the ethic of caring” into three components: the first component is the valorization of “individual uniqueness” (p71) which owes its foundations to African humanism where each person is surmised to be a “unique expression of a common spirit, power or energy inherent in all life” (op cit.; See also Washington, 2010; Muwanga- Zake, 2009). The second component of “the ethic of caring” revolves around the validity of emotions, particularly during the inquiry stages of the research process (Collins, 1990.p71). This challenges the pervasive perception that emotions and intelligence are separate and conflicting entities (ibid.). Finally, an ethic of caring creates the space for the development of empathy as there needs to be a safe space created by the researcher to make it possible for respondents to feel comfortable and therefore willing to disclose information (ibid; Muwanga- Zake, 2009).

An ethic of caring also compels academic disciplines to understand that disenfranchised and oppressed groups have a right to have emotional responses to questions around social phenomena and to distance ourselves from our emotions falsifies our narratives. It is easy for white male academics to promote an absence of emotion as they have never been affected by socio-cultural oppression; and even if they have faced some kind of ‘oppression’, it is not because they are white males.

3.3 Towards a decolonial Reflexive Methodology¹³ within an African context

There is an inherent absurdity in conducting research in Africa using Western research methodologies (Mkabela, 2005 in Muwanga-Zake, 2009). Additionally, there is an inherent “social disharmony” (Muwanga-Zake, 2009.p2) and epistemic violence which occurs as a result of using non-contextual research paradigms which work to maintain a specific view of African societies which the West has perpetually universalised and imposed (ibid.). As Africans, we also suffer internalized paradigmatic and epistemic colonization which is manifested through “an addiction to Western paradigms that present to Africans ready-made approaches, theoretical assumptions, ontologies and epistemologies” which “are assumed to be ideologically and politically correct” (op cit.). In identifying the factors which give canonical knowledge paradigms traction, Muwanga-Zake (2009) suggests that socio-capital gains which are associated with palatability to Western paradigms: scholars are awarded with employment and certificates.

In this thesis I argue as a reflexive practitioner, drawing on Freirean approaches, how the tenets and premises of indigenous knowledge systems have shaped my epistemological approach to research particularly around personal narratives, storytelling, co-authorship and co-ownership of knowledge. Scholars who replicate the western knowledge systems are subsequently absorbed by those systems (ibid.). Scholars who make use of Afro-centric epistemological paradigms often face punitive repercussions (ibid).

I will not be deterred.

¹³ See Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago press.

3.3.1. Research Objectives

In this research paper on *Dislocating the Body and Transcending the Imperial Eye (I): The role of Abaphantsi, through iiZangoma, as pioneers for transformative research methodologies and organic intellectualism*, I hope to obtain three objectives through a self-reflexive study.

The three objectives of my research are to: one, through a self-reflective journey of my intellectual and theoretical work as a Sangoma, make a contribution to rethinking research methodology; two, to make a contribution to the decolonial concepts to be considered for the African indigenous knowledge archive; three, to demystify the understanding of ‘ancestors’ and the work of traditional healers, who are constantly exoticized and to thereby challenge ideas of indigenous knowledge systems being ‘primitive’ and to thereby add to the library of body of works which enunciate indigenous knowledge systems’ propensity for helping reimagine new possibilities for doing research.

3.3.2. Research Question

What is the role of Abaphantsi, through iiZangoma, as pioneers for transformative research methodologies and organic intellectualism?

Sub-questions

How do canonical epistemological paradigms, through their construction of indigenous knowledge systems, construct African bodies?

How do these constructions impact on knowledge and research methods?

What are the possibilities for decolonial research methodologies through exploring reflexive praxis as Sangoma?

3.3.3. Referencing AmaDlozi: a case for collective authorship

Ancestors go by many names in southern African cultures. In the Zulu culture they are called amadlozi, in the Xhosa culture they are called izinyanya, and in the Sotho culture they are called badimo. As someone who considers herself culturally hybrid or as a friend calls 'tri-cultural', these are all names which have become synonymous with my upbringing. In defining who the ancestors are, Bogopa (2010) states that ancestors are family members who have passed. In the southern African context, ancestors are ordained with "mystical powers", authority and "retain an important role in the world of the living" (Bogopa, 2010.p1). The belief in ancestors is one which can withstand even migration to city life (ibid.). In addition to home being a place where there was a practice of ritualistic acknowledgement of ancestors or badimo, home is a place which has helped me cultivate a deep relationship with God. Many born-again Christians are perplexed by this, as this kind of spiritual fluidity is taboo since the perception is that one can only worship one God. Helping me unpack this misconception is the work of Washington (2010) who argues that in many African cultures, cosmologies and healing systems centre God (uMvelinqangi) as the Supreme Being- Creator of all things, amadlozi, nature and the traditional healer as one who has an intimate connection with "spiritual forces" (Washington, 2010.p26). The term 'Traditional Healer' is conflated with the role of a Sangoma despite their roles being different. A Sangoma is a diviner, a medium to and through which God and the ancestors communicate information; Richter (2003.p8) provides a more sophisticated qualification by calling us "diagnosticians". A Traditional Healer is a herbalist who can prescribe treatment and remedies in the form of herbal mixtures to combat psychological and physiological ailments (ibid). A type of Traditional Healer which is often left out of the discourse is Umthandazi, who is a healer who has the "ability to prophesize, heal and divine using prayer, holy water, baths, enemas and steaming baths" (Washington, 2010.p28). As is the case for me, sometimes those roles overlap and a Sangoma also works as a Traditional Healer and as Umthandazi. Washington (2010) states that indigenous systems of healing refer to illnesses such as "ukufa kwabantu" (p28) or "metaphysical disorders that exist amongst Afrikan/Black people" (op cit.). This implies that there are some illnesses which are only synonymous with a particular cultural and/or spiritual genealogy (ibid.). Furthermore, some of the illnesses reflected in the ukufa kwabantu category require treatment of a communal kind; this is where the performance of rituals, traditional ceremonies and processes become critical to alleviating one's state of unwellness (ibid). In African contexts, ceremonies are never performed as a solo

endeavour, instead, the emphasis is always on family coming together for the successful completion of the ritual/ceremony (ibid).

According to Edwards (2011), there is an intimate relationship between African variations of indigenous healing practices and indigenous knowledge systems (Nsameng, 1992 in Edwards, 2011). Indigenous healing practices are founded on an acknowledgement of a “universal life-force” (Washington, 2010.p32) which denotes the interconnectedness of human life- aptly referred to as Ubuntu (ibid.). The term refers to a shared existence amongst people, “a communal way of life” (Muwanga-Zake, 2009.p5) and “one person’s personhood and identity is fulfilled and complemented by other person’s personhood” (op cit.). In simpler terms, Ubuntu denotes that we cannot function by ourselves and all aspects of human life rely on integration with others. My earliest memories of this are from where I grew up, in a township called Gugulethu¹⁴ where it was common practice to go next door to neighbours and ask for a cup of sugar or a little bit of cooking oil during tough financial times. In my community, everyone knew everyone and there was a ‘shared text of existence’ (see Robinson, 1983) which are collective experiences which weave together an integrated personhood. Ubuntu is a cornerstone of indigenous knowledge systems and as a critical component of indigenous knowledge paradigms provides conceptual and pragmatic frameworks for not only research with indigenous groups but transforming research methodologies on a macro-scale (Muwanga- Zake, 2009).

Ubuntu as a Research Paradigm¹⁵

Ubuntu as a research paradigm is about “amicable personal relationships, it accentuates the importance of agreement, and has a capacity for the pursuit of consensus and reconciliation” (Muwanga- Zake, 2009.p5). Of course, this is a direct contrast to western-centric paradigms which are premised on a hierarchical power dynamic. Ubuntu valorizes emotional intimacy and vulnerability where each person feels safe and valued enough to “expose him/herself to others” (op cit.). This research methodology takes on a discursive approach to the inquiry process which uses “story-telling and personal narratives” because when you are telling your story, “you are getting into a relationship with someone” (op cit; See also Wilson, 2001.p177). Conversations are also an important component of many indigenous research methodologies (Bessarab and Ng’andu,

¹⁴ See Chapter 1 where I provide the historical context of Gugulethu.

¹⁵ I draw this concept from the work of Muwanga-Zake (2009) *Building Bridges Across Knowledge Systems: Ubuntu and Participate Research Paradigm in Bantu Communities*.

2010). An example of how conversation can be incorporated into research methodologies is the practice and concept of ‘yarning’, which Bessarab and Ngandu (2010. p38) define as an “informal and relaxed discussion through which both the researcher and the participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study”. The term ‘yarning’ comes from when indigenous people in Western Australia request a conversation with someone and say, “let’s have a yarn” (op cit.). Ultimately, indigenous research paradigms are concerned with “does this method help to build a relationship between myself as a researcher and my research topic?” (Wilson, 2001.p178). Furthermore, there is also a level of accountability to the area of study, within which one is working (ibid.).

The self as researcher, the self as respondent

I now turn to narrative feminist research as a research methodology and research approach which gives respondents the platform to tell their own stories and the recognition of their personal accounts as credible information or ‘data’ (Fraser and MacDougall, 2016). Narrative feminist research has the power to challenge male-centred perspectives by encouraging participants to be “active agents exploring subjective meaning and experiences that have been ignored or silenced in previous research” (Fraser and MacDougall, 2016.p4). Narrative feminist research recognizes the particularities in the stories told by (research) participants and does not place a burden of similarity where one person’s account needs to coincide with another’s as a verification requirement to prove ‘legitimacy’ (ibid.). In the writing of this dissertation, through the lens of my own work and experiences, I am not attempting to discredit other narratives: I am simply establishing my own. Research methodologies which have a personal narrative focus are often met with contention and the basis for that contention is always issues around ‘validity’ and ‘objectivity’. Borrowing from the words of one of my favourite poets, Rudy Francisco, ‘objectivity’ is a “wet fish we are all trying to hold on to”¹⁶. According to Rooney (2005) ‘validity’ in research is an elusive concept since what makes knowledge valid is subjectively based on ontology and epistemology. Western-centric research paradigms claim “objectivity” despite their ontologies which define ‘reality’ as “an external objective phenomenon existing independently of human consciousness” (Rooney, 2005.p4). Furthermore, ontologies and their concomitant epistemologies which proliferate ‘objectivism’ are manifestations of the positivist research approaches which continue to dominate

¹⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/rudyfrancisco/>

research within the social sciences (ibid.). Positivist research approaches argue that only ‘science’ can be an ‘objective’ producer, and this is because of the viewpoint that for research to be ‘credible’ the researcher must be an outsider (ibid.).

In this dissertation, I position myself as an ‘insider’ since I am both researcher and respondent. Rooney (2005.p6) defines “insider” research as research projects “where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting”. A researcher can be considered an ‘insider’ when they are a professional conducting research in their work context which can also be referred to as “practitioner research” (op cit). The merits of ‘insider’ research is that it provides a unique perspective to an area of study where an insider researcher is privy to information an outsider may not be (ibid). This inadvertently contributes to the “richness” and “authenticity” of the knowledge being shared (op cit.). Critical to insider research are methodologies such as autoethnographies and personal narratives which “provide a platform for an academic to function as both researcher and personal self in order to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect or experience of their life” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 in Rooney, 2005.pp 12- 13).

I am also influenced by the work of Rigoberta Menchu as discussed in Lincoln and Denzin (2003) who in *Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian woman in Guatemala* (uses a testimonio to narrate the torture and murder of her younger brother. Lincoln and Denzin (2003) define a testimonio as when the “author/narrator gives his or her personal testimony, directly addressing a specific interlocutor” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003.p27). This positions testimonios as mechanisms for the hearing of marginalized and ignored voices and for the subaltern to exercise their agency in assuming control of his or her own historiography. What I find particularly relevant about testimonios as a research methodology is their ability to capture the lived experiences of marginalized and indigenous groups and alluding to a point made earlier, that through testimonios and personal narratives there is a mitigation of ‘falsification’¹⁷ or a coercion to make our accounts palatable to a researcher who approaches the research already with a particular outcome in mind.

I also draw from Lincoln and Denzin (2003, p28) on “letting the subaltern speak” which is an argument on the validity of auto-ethnographic research methodologies as a tool for disenfranchised and marginalized communities to tell their stories in their own voices and in ways which they find

¹⁷ See Zwane (2019) *Why don't you show up becky?* where I discuss the power dynamics between white women and black women within feminist spaces.

are truthful to their experiences. This, of course, is a contrast to ethnographic research, where there is the danger of the imperial eye which is not devoid of its orientalist and orientaling lens. A derivative argument being made here is that if we are to reimagine empowering and transformative approaches to research then there needs to be paradigmatic shifts- particularly around who the researcher can be. This inevitably calls us to interrogate the perpetual face of the researcher. Salient here is the positioning of personal narratives and narration, autobiographies and auto-ethnographies as transformative and empowering methodologies- particularly for indigenous and marginalized communities.

Additionally, the methodology for this work is also influenced by the tenets of Ubungoma. These are the paradigmatic frameworks used by Sangomas which have a cyclical relationship with praxis as they both affirm and inform each other. In Ubungoma, the grounding belief is that iDlozi (passed on ancestral spirits) live/s within us. Van Binsbergen (2008) incorrectly calls this ‘possession’ or being ‘possessed’ by an ancestral spirit which also serves to highlight the danger of when research is done by individuals who are not part of the community which is the research focus. I argue that this ‘shared bodily existence’ is a channel for genealogical spiritual consciousness and conscientization. Magoqwana (2018) asserts that through the presence of an ancestral spirit within the corporeal body of a Sangoma, there is knowledge and wisdom which can be genealogically shared. Drawing from my own experience as a Sangoma and as someone who shares her body with multiple ancestral spirits, there are knowings which happen in ways which are inexplicable using vanguard and dogmatic paradigms. Often, these knowings have no positivist traces; for example, I would just know which herbs to mix to treat an ailment even when I have never encountered that particular ailment before. This means that someone in my lineage had encountered that illness in their lifetime and thus that knowledge is genealogically transferred to me through being in close living-proximity with iDlozi. Returning to Van Binsbergen’s (2008) ‘possession’ tropes, even when the ancestral spirits move from a ‘passive’ state to one where we call ‘ukuvuka kweDlozi’ (which means the rising of the ancestral spirits to an extent where they start speaking through the Sangoma, sometimes even in different languages), it still cannot be called ‘possession’. The word ‘possession’ implies that there is a non-consensual entry of a foreign entity into one’s body which negatively alters one’s bodily symbiosis. As I have stated before, the ancestral spirits live within us, creating a harmonious, symbiotic, balanced community of being this directly contrasts with the violent, non-consensual and disallowed entry of a foreign entity as

depicted by the term ‘possession’. Additionally, ‘possession’ denotes an unequal power dynamic, where one person has unbridled power over the other which is not what an Ubungoma methodological approach is. An Ubungoma methodological approach is rooted in an equal sharing of power, knowledge co-creation and collaboration. It transcends the imperial ‘I’ by recognizing the vastness of genealogical consciousness and how our consciousness is an invaluable knowledge archive since it is a library which represents pluralities (constituted by the many ancestral spirits with whom we have a shared bodily existence).

Based on all the above arguments, I recognize the community of my ancestors, as organic intellectuals, collaborators and co-authors of this work. Through the telling of my own story and the presence of my ancestors in my corporeal body I have access to a wealth of knowledge and epistemological frameworks which can help reimagine research processes. Additionally (without exoticizing and mystifying myself), as I have alluded to before, the veil between the spiritual world and what I understand to be the ‘material world’ is quite thin. This has enabled the possibility of dialogues and conversations with my ancestors; conversations of a discursive nature which serve as exchanges of information and the telling of stories. It is these conversations and dialogues that provide invaluable insight; with my focus not necessarily being the contents of the conversations but rather the tools through which these dialogues take place. The ritual of ukuphahla is an overarching tool I have identified as a part of my ‘data collection’ process and it is the burning of impepho, lighting candles and inviting ancestors into a conversation -an extension of “let’s have a yarn” (see Bessarab and Ng’andu, 2010.p38).

In Chapter 4, I will be delving deeper into the ritual of and how its premises can inform transformative research approaches.

3.4 Ethics and Limitations of this Study

I have consulted the UCT Faculty of Humanity’s guidelines on ethical considerations and at my departmental research proposal presentation (November 2019), I was granted ethical clearance. The limitations of this study are: one, the secrecy within the field of Traditional Spiritual Work (South African context). There are things which I am not permitted to share based on a socially agreed upon ethic of practice; secondly, this study is the product of my own experiences as a Traditional Spiritual Worker and does not necessarily reflect the positions of other Traditional Spiritual Workers. Although this work can be classified as an auto-ethnography, where possible, I

have engaged with existing scholarship to mitigate knowledge access limitations; and my engagement with existing scholarship has been conducted in a desk-top manner. I have only included pictures of myself and uMakhulu in the addendum which negates the necessity for additional permission. I cannot include pictures of my tools for inhlolo, my ndumbha (space of where I work), or myself in an ‘altered state of consciousness’ as that goes against my personal ethics regarding the sacredness of my work. The involvement, inclusion and acknowledgement of my ancestors as co-authors and collaborators in this work has necessitated their consent. Their consent has been sought through various consultative processes (ukuphahla), during which, they have expressed the degree to which information should be shared. Additionally, their consent is not unconditional as they have expressed the parameters of our collective engagement (in the writing of this dissertation); and these parameters include that no pictures of the space in which we collectively work are to be included and no pictures of the process, during which, they move from a passive to an active state in my corporeal body.

Chapter 4: Reflexive Discourse Analysis in my praxis as Sangoma

4.1 Introduction

Critical to this section is my positioning of the most fundamental aspects of *Ubungoma* and my work as a Sangoma and how these provide useful epistemological frameworks for contextual, Afro-centric, post-abysal research methodologies. This dissertation is a consequence of conversations I have had with **myself** and I position it not only with the intention to interrogate Western-centric research paradigms but to also suggest adaptable and adoptable epistemological frameworks which are embedded within Ubungoma as alternative ways of thinking about alternative approaches to human-centred research. From a decolonial perspective, the purpose of research in Africa and in indigenous contexts should always be to evolve and find ways of rethinking what we assume we know and to find new relevant research methodologies and frameworks of knowing. This dissertation is a contribution to that decolonial purpose. I commence my discussion with a process of unpacking alternative ways of knowing. Following this, I discuss the lessons alternative ways of knowing have for research and how applications of the foundational premises of alternative ways of knowing can help reconfigure research approaches. To conclude this section, I present a synopsis for how integrated and mutually inclusive approaches to knowledge and processes of knowing can help achieve an epistemological insurgent cosmopolitanism which transcends limiting binaries and abyssal thinking. I divide my discussion into three parts. In part 1, I explain how indigenous knowledge systems conceptualize dreams (as a way of knowing) and the divination typologies most relevant to my own work as a Traditional Spiritual Worker. In part 2, I discuss how these ways of knowing provide conceptual frameworks for decolonial research methodologies. In part 3, I suggest a discarding of the bifurcation between western and indigenous knowledge systems.

Part 1: Unpacking Alternative Ways of Knowing

Muwanga- Zake (2009) asserts that there is often an incongruence between research paradigms and the cultural values of the contexts in which research is done. I am not implying that there must be specific demarcations of which research paradigms and methodologies belong where, but rather that there is value in considering the premises and frameworks for how knowledge is obtained within indigenous paradigms. Before I delve deeper into this argument and demonstrate how indigenous paradigms can influence research paradigms, in Social Sciences research specifically, I will unpack the various ways of knowing which I have grappled with in my work as a Traditional Spiritual Worker.

Dreams as pathways to insights

Pervasive epistemologies on dreams perpetuate a Western-centric post-Freudian perspective which not only pathologises individuals based on the kinds of dreams they have, but also restrict dreams to being “artifacts of the psyche’s workings” (McGee, 2012.p2). This immediately limits dreams to only being subjects of psychological study and studies conducted within the discipline of neurology dismiss dreams as having no “meaningful content” (McGee, 2012.p3). There are scholars who have a completely different view and in Erasmus (2010) *Dreams and Visions in Koranna and Griqua Revival in Colonial and Post-Apartheid South Africa*, the author discusses the valorization of dreams as messages from God and the ancestors. He argues that dreams exist as bridges which diminish the gap between humans and ‘the sacred’. The Griqua and the Koranna people believe that dreams and visions are direct dialogues from the divine (God and ancestors) and can be prophetic as well as oriented towards uncovering solutions to perplexing socio-political realities (ibid). McGee (2012) supports this and states that dreams can act as catalysts for innovation and/or provide the phenomenology for the state of things - either on an individual level or a social and community one. This inevitably speaks to the socially transformative power that dreams and visions possess to “mobilize ethno-political support” (Erasmus, 2010.p14). That is, people who have a common ethnicity and a shared experience of oppression and subjugation can rely on the ‘reviving’ nature of dreams and visions as they are catalysts for social change (ibid.). A pertinent question arises: what if when Martin Luther King Jr said, “I have a dream” (King Jr, 1964, acceptance address for the Nobel Peace Prize) he was referring to an actual, literal dream he had had and not the figurative one as how his speech has been annotated? Erasmus (op cit.) argues

that this is the power of dreams and visions: they act as tools and foundations of “ethno-political activism and revival”. Critical for understanding this is recognizing that dreams and visions have a paradoxical, simultaneous universality and particularity (ibid.). They are particular because their significance is contingent on whether the individual and the ethnic group, of which they are a member, assigns significance. They are universal because the act of dreaming is not limited to specific ethnicities. Furthermore, Erasmus (ibid.) warns us against exoticizing dreams and visions or implying that they are part of “savage” or ‘primitive cultures. In Haitian Voudou spirituality, dreams are understood to be a location of the interaction between dreamers and “disembodied entities” as well as an interaction between the physical world and the spiritual one (McGee, 2012.p3). Additionally, in Haitian Voudou, dreams are not regarded as a separate entity removed from ‘normal life’ but rather an extension of it (ibid.). When one narrates dreams, one does so in the “present progressive tense”: that is, dreaming and waking life are not ontologically bifurcated (ibid. p4). Jung (1974) in Mokgethi (2018.p4) states that dreams, and by extension the act of dreaming, are critical components of inner development processes. There is an inherent self-actualization that occurs through dreams as they make it possible for the conscious and unconscious self to “connect” and “correlate with each other” (op cit). In the South African Traditional Spiritual Work context, dreams also serve as communication from the ancestors, and they direct one’s journey from pre-ukuthwasa until beyond (see Edwards et al, 2009; Mlisa, 2009; Mokgethi, 2018). They give valuable information in terms of where one needs to go for their initiation or ukuthwasa journey, what rituals must be performed for spiritual growth and they also contain warnings of any ‘foul play’ with regards to where one completes their training into Traditional Spiritual Work. The Traditional Spiritual Workers included in both Mlisa’s (2009) and Mokgethi’s (2018) all note the importance of their dreams in alerting them of their spiritual gifts and the need for them to answer their respective callings. Dreams are a tool which ancestors use for communicating information about healing herbs and where those herbs can be found (see Mokgethi, 2018; Mlisa, 2009). In my own experience, as alluded to in the Introduction and Background chapter, dreams were a critical tool of knowing; not just about my calling but also about the kind of work I would be doing. With respect to how dreams function as tools for building communities of existence, I am drawn to Jung’s (2014) point in Mokgethi (2018) about what I like to call ‘genealogical emotional intimacy’ where dreams allow us to build relationships with our ancestors separate from ego, and in a state where we are at our most vulnerable. Even though I

have never ‘physically’ met many of my ancestors, as most of them evolved from this world long before I was born, I have been able to develop a deep emotional connection with them; and this has largely been facilitated by dreams. As a ‘sub-category’ of dreams but not less important, visions or ukuboniswa (being shown) also have deeply embedded value as a tool for knowing. Saffer (2010) in her study with an elderly Sangoma notes that there is often a thin line between dreams and visions. Mlisa (2009) emphasizes the importance of umbilini (intuition) in her work as (diviner and traditional healer in the Xhosa culture). AmaGqirha (plural of iGqirha) do not use divinatory tools and rely on ukuboniswa (being shown) through an engagement with umbilini: and being shown can take on many forms such as clairaudient (hearing) messages or visions which can help them diagnose illness and know which herbs to administer for healing. It is interesting to note that even though the term is ‘being shown’, ‘seeing’ does not only come in a corporeal visual form, but it is a kind of seeing which incorporates all of one’s sense and involves seeing without the corporeal eyes. In my own work, when I was shown my sambhatho somoya (prophetic garment or garment I am meant to wear when working with isthunywa/prophetic ancestor) I ‘saw’ it whilst in a deeply meditative state- meditation with my corporeal eyes closed. Additionally, as Mokgethi (2018) notes in her study, one of the participants in her research narrated an incident where her ancestors forced her into a state of unconsciousness where they appeared to her and relayed a message. The participant is intentional in emphasizing that she was not asleep but was in a kind of unconscious state where one is closed off to the external environment. I will delve deeper into ‘seeing without seeing’ in later sections.

Inhlolo (Divination) as a quest for knowledge

Without question, divination is an integral component of African societies but is not isolated to African communities (See Van Binsbergen, 2008; Murdock, 1945 in Peek, 1991). Van Binsbergen (2008) and Peek (1991) share conflicting views regarding the popularity of studies into divination with the former stating that divination has been widely studied whilst the latter argues that divination is an area which has been scarcely studied. Peek’s (1991) claims could be explained by the fact that substantial information on divination has been lost due to the denigration of African systems of divination (ibid.). Divination systems can best be defined as “standardized processes deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge” (Peek, 1991.p12). In simpler terms, a divination system is a structured process, through which knowledge and

information can be acquired. Divination, as a process, however, is not monolithic and consists of various typologies. Van Binsbergen (2008) outlines various divination typologies, but I will only be focusing on the ones relevant to my own work; and these are material, mental and psychomotoric divination. Van Binsbergen (2008.p3) defines material divination as a process of “verbal divinatory pronouncements triggered by the outcome of the manipulation of an object serving as a random generator”. Furthermore, there are multiple variations of material divination and I will now discuss these below.

- “Cleromantic or lot divination” (Van Binsbergen, 2008.p5) which is a process during which specific meanings can be derived and extracted from how identical objects fall when they have been thrown by the diviner. What is critical here is the “spatial layout” (op cit.) of the objects and how they function in ‘pathologizing’, explaining and diagnosing a “real-life situation” (op cit.). In a Southern African context, this can be a Sangoma throwing ‘bones’ which are objects like seashells, totems, charms, various ornaments depicting the most significant aspects of a person’s life (in a Southern African context); and then extracting meaning based on how these objects have fallen (See Thornton, 2009).
- Material divination, within the scope of prophetic work, includes the praying over a bible, randomly opening a verse which then serves as a diagnosis/or prophesy (Mlisa, 2009). In 2019, I was shown playing cards and tarot cards as divinatory tools- which I now also use. Card divination involves a brief meditation period, prayer, shuffling the cards and randomly laying them out on my reed mat and then interpreting the various symbols depicted by each card. Peek (1991) is correct when she states that divination systems require one to have a learned knowledge of not only the divination system and its processes, but also the divinatory tool/s itself/themselves. For example, ‘bones’ (what Sangomas use) seemingly have no meaning to someone who has not acquired the knowledge of what each object means, particularly when in proximity with other objects.
- Trance divination (particularly Sangoma trance divination) which is a process where repetitive music is used as a means of creating “an altered state of consciousness” which functions to diagnose illness (Van Binsbergen, 2008.p11). There is usually a beating of the drums, accompanied by specific songs which work together to evoke the ancestral spirits living within the Sangoma and therefore move them from a ‘passive’ state to an ‘active state’ thus creating the Sangoma’s altered state of consciousness (ibid.). Because the

ancestral spirits have 'risen' (we call this ukuvuka kweDlozi), they assume agency over the Sangoma's corporeal body and its functions. In this state, an ancestor can speak directly to people, through the Sangoma's body, and relay messages or share knowledge.

Critical to understanding trance divination, particularly in a Sangoma context, is that it is not 'possession'. Pointing to this is the fact that our language is ndineDlozi (I have ancestral spirits) which is an indication that we have ancestral spirits and that they do not have us (See Thornton, 2009). 'Possession' also implies the absence of consent; getting into a trance requires one's spiritual consent as a trance state cannot be induced if one is unwilling (at least when one has gone through the process of ukuthwasa). Additionally, ancestral spirits are not evoked anywhere and everywhere as 'possession' implies a Sangoma's lack of power in controlling 'ancestral uprisings. If Sangomas were not able to exercise some form of control over the ancestral spirits with whom they share their corporeal body, one could get ukuvuka kweDlozi whilst doing the most mundane things like at a mall or walking in the street or in a lecture theatre. Within trance divination, the trance is not the only focus, but also the songs which are used to induce and sustain the trance. Additionally, ancestors, through the corporeal body of an en-tranced Sangoma, can sing songs; and these songs often depict their historiography, they can carry information about genealogy and fore-tell future events. Mokgethi (2018, p80) captures this beautifully:

At first sight, one might assume that these are just songs, but upon listening to the words, one hears that these songs are actually messages from the ancestors...These songs tell a story of signs and symbols and the symbolism of the ihiya and beads worn by the initiates. These songs further tell a story of the ancestors and their lives here on Earth and how they divined and healed.

My ancestral/Sangoma name is Bamhlabile, and that name was given to me by iDlozi (my dominant male ancestor who, together with other ancestors, called me to become a Sangoma) and I was informed by my schoolmates (people with whom I went to the same initiation school) that the song my Dlozi sings when he is evoked through my corporeal body tells a story of how he died. Through the song, he tells them (my schoolmates) that he was stabbed to death with a spear in battle, hence the name he gave me Bamhlabile, which means 'one who was stabbed'.

- I like to think of mental divination as an intuitive state of knowing; to know without **knowing**, to see without **seeing**. In mental divination, there are usually no tools which can be used or “manipulated” (Van Binsbergen, 2008.p5) or thrown out of a bag where one can interpret and share insights, but the process of knowing all happens within the diviner. Circling back to Mlisa’s (2009) argument about how amaGqirha use umbilini, mental divination is a process of knowing where the ‘tool’ for knowing is purely intuition. Even though it is called ‘mental divination’, it is based on gutfeel. My grandmother was not born blind but gradually became blind due to ancestors growing frustrated with her refusal to undergo an initiation process into Ubungoma. When she could no longer use the bible in her prophetic divinations at her church, she then shifted her divination system to being one purely based on intuition; that is, seeing without seeing. According to Mlisa (2009), amaGqirha are not ‘hindered’ from divination because of an absence of material tools, but they are able to come to a state of knowing through an engagement with their intuition. In my work, I also use freewriting¹⁸ as a divination tool. This is a process where I meditate and write insights that are revealed to me in a non-discriminatory manner. One could argue that the pen and paper with which I write are the divinatory tools, but that would be an incorrect assessment as the messages are not embedded within the pen and paper themselves.

Drawing this section to a close, it is quite evident that a myriad of divination tools exists within African systems of divination, some commonly shared with acknowledged practices globally. The appeal of divination as a system which has value for reconfiguring knowledge acquisition processes, even in research, is the fact that it allows for a mixed-method approach; one which “expands the horizon of possibilities” (De Sousa Santos, 2014. Introduction) and therefore makes it possible to get to the crevices of the phenomenology of social phenomena which are otherwise missed by hegemonic ways of doing research.

¹⁸ Tarot cards and freewriting are divination tools used globally and are not only found in Southern Africa.

Part 2: Transcending the Imperial Eye (I): Abaphantsi as Organic Intellectuals

In this section, I turn my focus towards the premises of the ‘alternative ways of knowing’ which I have already discussed at length and more on the lessons they can impart in the reconfiguration of research paradigms processes.

Divination as a research methodology

According to Silva (2016), divination is a valuable tool for uncovering the answers to complex empirical questions which may be beyond the scope of human consciousness. Knowledge obtained through divinatory means can be classified as ‘objective knowledge’ as it does not find itself enslaved by subjective biases and opinions (ibid). Based on this, it can then be conceded that the “relation between knowledge and materiality” within divination, should be reconceptualized as a “relation between objectivity and objects” (Silva, 2016.p507). An example of this would be how, in divination sessions, the diviner does not solicit leading information from the ‘patient’ or obtain prior details about a patient’s life situation and therefore delivers insight removed from personal biases or opinion. What is also interesting to note is that the diviner straddles a paradox: being in the space but simultaneously not being in the space where they are part of the divination process but do not inform the information the divinatory process yields. How this approach could work in research is that the researcher would be committed to not allowing prior knowledge about a particular social group influence how he/she approaches not only the inquiry process but the research process in its entirety. Critical to divination sessions is the embedded axiology of confidentiality and ethical considerations which are embedded within the entire process. In research, this implies that the ethical considerations should not only be made prominent during the inquiry process, but there should be an overarching axiology which informs the entire study. In divination processes, the diviner and the patient share joint accountability; the patient is accountable to the diviner, the divination tool/s, the ancestors who have been invited into the space, to indumbha (the room or space in which a Sangoma conducts their work), to the impepho (plant that is burned to summon ancestors) and to uNkulunkulu (God in Zulu cosmology). Likewise, the diviner is accountable to the patient, the divination tool/s, the ancestors who have been invited into the space, to indumbha, to impepho and to uNkulunkulu. When accountability is this extensive, it disallows abuses of power by delineating authority and establishes a space of mutual respect. In

research, this means that the research operates from the pertinent question of, “What implications does this research have for all parties involved?” (Wilson, 2001.p177), which in turn holds the researcher accountable to all parties (and objects) involved in the research process. In this way, knowledge shifts from being an individual enterprise, but becomes relational which endows it with the propensity to be shared (ibid.). Because divination is a process which engages different communities of ancestors (the diviner’s and the patient’s, respectively), it leaves room for multiple engagements founded on multiple and varying realities. For example, as a diviner, my ancestors may have a particular way of communicating something which uses a particular symbol, this does not mean, however, that a patient’s ancestors may assign the same meaning to that specific symbol. This then compels me, as a diviner, to be open-minded and fluid in my interpretation of various symbols. In research, this implies that researchers rid themselves of a monolithic ontology that has the potential to decontextualise meaning and engage with information in its specific context. A critical component of divination is emotional vulnerability; patients sometimes arrive not necessarily seeking divination, but rather a form of counselling which engages with them on an emotional and spiritual level. In order to be able to fulfill this function, diviners need to have depth in emotional availability and be able to empathize and listen to a patient’s discomforts without judgement. In my work, I sometimes deal with married couples (even though I am not married) who seek counselling. In these instances, I am compelled to move from my own discomfort and meet them at the site of theirs which does not judge or pathologize their situation. This is a powerful tool for conducting qualitative research, particularly with marginalized and disenfranchised groups, as (when used authentically and honestly) it has the potential to build a relationship between the researcher and the participants. An example of the building of a relationship would be the fact that some of my patients are people who have been consulting with me from the time I returned from iphehlo up until now. This is indicative of a relationship having been built and a bond having been created. Granted, this level of engagement is unbelievably taxing, but its value is also in how diviners then share coping tools with patients which enables them to continue their own healing without the diviner. An example of a coping tool would be ukuphahla (which I will discuss in the next section) which I suggested to a patient who felt ‘lost’ and disconnected from her ancestors. When she started using ukuphahla, she was able to renew her connection with her ancestors who now regularly communicate with her through dreams. In research, this would be called an ‘ethical exit strategy’ where participants are able to enjoy the

benefits of a study long after the study has been concluded and long after the researcher has left the community. In this way, researchers can understand that participants are living, breathing human beings and not just sources of knowledge which can be abruptly disengaged with once a study has been concluded. This method allows the benefits of a research study to be sustainable and not contingent on the researcher which creates dependency and an inherently problematic power dynamic. Divination systems are dislocated because they can transcend the here and the now; a diviner is able to visit the past and straddle both the present and the future (Van Binsbergen, 2008). Divinatory information can share insights on current and past situations whilst simultaneously prophesying about the future. This recognizes that the human experience is vast, transcends both space and time which is what makes divination systems “translocal”, “transcultural” and “transtemporal” (Van Binsbergen, 2008.p18). The potential this has for research is immeasurable; it can inspire researchers to transcend their fixation on temporal epistemologies and paradigms which organize Africa’s history according to ‘medieval’, ‘pre-colonial’, ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’ (See De Sousa Santos, 2014 and Tisani, 2018). The fluidity depicted by African divination systems also allows researchers within the social sciences to transcend the harsh demarcations such as ‘structuralism’ ‘post-structuralism’. Finally, divination as an epistemological framework possesses what Van Binsbergen (2008.p18) calls a “superabundance of understanding”. A divination session has a definite knowledge-output, but the definitive nature of the knowledge output does not denote specificity or a specific outcome each time; but rather that there will be an output. Furthermore, there is an inherent possibility of there being multiple knowledge outputs. Hegemonic approaches to research tend to have a specific outcome in mind when approaching research; this is explicated in the use of rigid structured interviews whose questions limit the scope of possible answers. Using a divination framework expands the scope of possible answers. I now turn my discussion to dreams as a research methodology.

Dreams and ukuboniswa as a research methodology

A dismissal of dreams as credible sources of information can never not be racist and classist (McGee, 2012). This is because dreams have been critical to many African cosmologies and how African people (including diasporic Africans) have shaped their world and an understanding of themselves (Washington, 2010). African people have relied on dreams as communication from their ancestors and their Creator (by the many names 'Creator' may go by) and to call dreams 'folly' erodes the deep history of dreams and how they have also served as catalysts for political action (Erasmus, 2010). Displaced people can trace their genealogy through dreams and the kind of people who appear to them as ancestors. In my case, I have come to know that some of my ancestors are white (Dutch to be exact). I would not have known that had it not been shared with me in a dream. Based on this, dream analysis provides an invaluable opportunity for Social Scientists to trace historiographies and get to know world events separated from the colonial lens and its perpetuation of half-truths. Because dreams act as bridges which connect the present and the past, history can be told by those who experienced it, thus positively impacting and contributing to indigenous knowledge archives. I have divided this section into discussion points which I will now engage with.

- Dreams as a pedagogical tool: Through dreams new knowledge can emerge and there can be a consolidation of existing knowledges. For research, this presents the possibility of new ontologies, which can be causal to the reconfiguration of existing epistemologies. An example of this would be when my ancestors showed me playing cards and tarot cards as a divination tool; in that dream, they also explained the various meanings and symbolism of each card. I was then able to incorporate that new divination tool into my existing tools which means for a broader framework of understanding.
- Dreams as a diagnostic tool: Through dreams, the pathology of not only corporeal illness but social phenomena can be revealed. Without dreams, our way of knowing is limited because dreams go beyond the scope of our positivist and corporeal understanding. Additionally, dreams can and provide insights on social phenomena but also suggest possible solution-seeking approaches. Through the revelation of past injustices (particularly those which affect marginalized and disenfranchised social groups), dreams suggest ways for collective healing; when we can see where we hurt (individually and collectively) we are then able to move towards symbiosis through collective healing action.

Here, I am reminded of my own dreams which communicated the need for me to undergo initiation. In my dreams, I was constantly chased by water or completely submerged in it. As time passed and my own resistance to ukuthwasa increased, my dreams became even more frightening. My ancestors used them to communicate their collective need for healing and how my delaying of ukuthwasa was also delaying their journey towards healing.

- Dreams as a linguistic exercise: Through dreams we can learn the symbols and languages of a particular social group. There are many languages which have been lost due to colonization, epistemicide and migration (see De Sousa Santos, 2014). Dreams afford the opportunity to learn those languages and symbols since they (dreams) compound the past and make it available to us which then enables us to gain new information.

Moving to ukuboniswa (being shown) which I have already argued is an engagement of all of one's senses, the emphasis is transcending epistemologies which privilege positivism. The human imagination and intuition are integral tools for discovering solutions to perplexing social phenomena (See Pereira, 2002). Furthermore, ukuboniswa as an intuitive tool transcends the imperial eye since the focus shifts from being on what the corporeal eye can see to a holistic way of seeing which expands the lens for what can be seen. An engagement of our senses enables Social Science research to move from a place of stagnancy to one where there are multiple avenues for research and activism (ibid.). De Sousa Santos (2014) makes a compelling argument regarding the power of intuition as a catalyst for paradigmatic innovation. Drawing from his argument, I elaborate that when we tune in to ourselves, we can realize our intellectual power for discovery. Because intuition is an emotion, it is indeed a feeling as Mlisa (2009) emphasises and when we create a distance between ourselves and the things we feel, we inevitably create an intellectual barrier which limits not only our scope of perception but our ability to think in a way that is non-discriminatory.

Ukuphahla as a research methodology

Ukuphahla is the burning of impepho, lighting of candles and consulting the ancestors (Mokgethi, 2018). Conceptualizations of ukuphahla as 'prayer' are false because ancestors are not prayed to which is contrary to what Bogopa (2010) suggests. Ancestors are not 'worshipped', which is why Ubungoma is not a religion. As argued earlier, many African cultures have cosmologies which acknowledge the presence of a Supreme Being (God) who goes by many names. Even the lexicon

which is attached to ancestors and God is different and denotes demarcations in seniority; for example, in SeSotho, ancestors are referred to as badimo and God is referred to as Modimo. The ‘ba’ in badimo denotes spirits in plural form, whilst the ‘Mo’ in Modimo denotes one singular supreme being. Because ukuphahla takes the form of a consultation with ancestors, I understand it as a conversation with amaDlozi/Abaphantsi. Furthermore, because it is a conversation, it has a discursive nature which expands the available solutions to a particular social phenomenon. It is not a structured interview with a pre-determined scope and specific line of questioning, but is, instead, qualified by a myriad of basic tenets which I will now discuss. Before I delve into the more conceptual dimensions of ukuphahla, I would like to first start engaging the physical symbolism embedded within the process/ritual. It is deemed disgraceful to consult with the ancestors whilst one is standing; when you engage the ancestors, you must kneel. The significance of kneeling is that it is a physical representation of our humbling of ourselves, which is symbolic for us not approaching ancestors as though we have all the answers. By kneeling, we surrender ourselves and place ourselves in a position of vulnerability. I have already discussed (in the Conceptual Framework and Methodology chapter) the importance of an ethic of vulnerability, particularly when conducting qualitative research and how critical it is for building substantial rapport and creating a safe space in which the research process takes place. I am not suggesting a literal adoption of the physical symbolism of ukuphahla, but I am suggesting that researchers approach the inquiry process with openness, genuineness and truthfulness. Part of being vulnerable is being cognisant of one’s limitations, and not assuming that just because one is a ‘learned expert’ in one’s field of study, then that makes one the custodian of all knowledges. When there is an **active** acknowledgment of limitations, it presents learning opportunities, where the researcher can also learn from the ‘participants’ which creates a multilateral and fluid exchange in roles of teaching and learning. What I mean by **active** acknowledgement is that the researcher is open to learning at all stages of the research process and not only the ones which benefit the inquiry stage. Researchers need to be open to how communities define various concepts for themselves. For example, ‘empowerment’ is not conceptualized in a monolithic way; communities have their own ideas of what ‘empowerment’ looks like for them (See Millen, 1997). I will now be stream-lining my thoughts on ukuphahla as follows:

- Ukuphahla is not a survey or an interview with a rigid, structured scope. Rather, it is a discursive engagement with the ancestors which is open to dialogue and back-and-forth.

What this means for research is that it challenges researchers to go beyond the hegemony of a predetermined line of questioning and approach the ‘inquiry’ process with open-mindedness which will enable rich and textured responses – and beyond the hegemonic language of English.

- Because ukuphahla is a conversation with ancestors, it brings different planes of existence together and involves them in a dialogue. Adopting this premise of space and time within research results in researchers doing away with rigid categories which organize world history into particular periods. It also compels researchers to look beyond specific concepts in their quest for answers; for example, feminist researchers looking beyond feminist theory for epistemological frameworks.
- As stated before, ukuphahla is a conversation centred on collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge. In practice, ukuphahla allows for responses from the ancestors to be available. It is not a simple exercise of one asking questions and another simply providing answers. For research methodologies to truly be transformed, researchers need to transcend the debilitating obsession with having the inquirer/responder dichotomy. For research this has the potential to collapse ‘the self’ and ‘the subject’ dichotomy by establishing knowledge production as a collective exercise where each role is valuable.
- Ukuphahla has an embedded axiology which is not separated from the process. Embedded within ukuphahla are the ethics of active listening and vulnerability. In research, this can weave the ethical considerations into all stages of the research process.

Additionally, ukuphahla is not a process/ritual only reserved for Traditional Spiritual Workers, but it is a process which is open to anyone to perform. It is not a process that is owned by a specific type of African cosmology. Departing from these two points, adopting the above-mentioned premises means that there is an erosion of ‘scholarly elitism’ where only certain people can conduct research studies. Furthermore, the fact that ukuphahla can be performed by anyone removes epistemological universalities; that is, the contextual particularities of knowledges are valorized. Because nobody can claim to own the process of ukuphahla, it should inspire researchers to develop a culture where there is no individual ownership of knowledge.

Part 3: Dislocating the Body and Doing Away with the Bifurcation

Because of the restrictive nature of paradigmatic and epistemological binaries, canonical social sciences' research will never actually provide credible solutions to the various social phenomena which prevail in our lifetime (De Sousa Santos, 2014). Binary thinking holds Social Sciences' research hostage in a cage of what De Sousa Santos (ibid.) calls "metonymic reasoning" and "proleptic reasoning" (De Sousa Santos, 2014.Chapter 6). The former is defined as a kind of reasoning which "claims to be the only form of rationality and therefore does not exert itself to discover other kinds of rationality or if it does, does so to turn them into raw material" (op cit.) with the latter being "a kind of reason that does not exert itself in thinking of the future because it believes it knows all about the future and conceives of it as linear, automatic and infinite overcoming of the present" (op cit.). Based on this, one can argue that the danger of bifurcated knowledge systems is that they are unable to self-correct; that is, they are unaware of their own limitations since they have not considered other knowledge systems. The key here is to not simply add indigenous knowledges to existing bodies of hegemonic knowledges, but to rather move towards what De Sousa Santos (2014) calls "sfumato" (Chapter 1) which is when knowledge paradigms become so enmeshed in each other that it is difficult to establish where one starts and the other ends. Preceding this needs to be the understanding that all knowledge systems are inherently incomplete and are therefore not able to grapple with the complexity of social phenomena on their own. De Sousa Santos (ibid) calls this "diatopic hermeneutics" which is an understanding that knowledge systems do not exist within demarcated silos. (Chapter 8). This can be explained by the fact that "all cultures are incomplete and that the topoi of a given culture, however strong, are as incomplete as the culture to which they belong" (De Sousa Santos, 2014 Chapter 8). Furthermore, "the incompleteness of a given culture can only be assessed on the basis of the topoi of another culture" (op cit). Agrawal (1995) argues that the categorization of knowledges into either 'indigenous' or 'western' is a fallacious one since historical evidence illustrates that there has been significant contact between the two. Additionally, it is grossly epistemologically dishonest to maintain that the two knowledge systems are "untouched by each other" (Agrawal, 1995.p14). Waldron (2010) supports this and states that there has been a failure in acknowledging the diatopic nature of African indigenous knowledge systems and Euro-Western knowledge systems. This failure to acknowledge has led to a "superficial dichotomy between the two ideologies that is more of a social construction than any real or authentic separation or

discontinuity between the two modes of knowledge” (Waldron, 2010.p61). Furthermore, to deny the relationships knowledges systems have had with each other implies that they are static and not evolving, despite the society in which they exist constantly evolving (Agrawal, 1995). Traditional Spiritual Work provides invaluable frameworks and examples of the effectiveness of epistemological fluidity. As previously stated, the work which Traditional Spiritual Workers do, particularly within the South African context is not monolithic. Thornton (2009; Mlisa, 2009; Richter, 2003; Mpono, 2007 and Washington, 2010) all attest to the variation within South African Traditional Spiritual Work and how there is sometimes overlap in the variations. In my work, I operate from what I call a ‘spiritual dexterity’ where I draw from various constructs of both western-centric and indigenous epistemological frameworks in not only my divination systems (tarot and free writing, for example) but also in my healing practices. Grounding this approach is the understanding that contact between various knowledge cultures and divinatory systems is inevitable. For research, this means that sharp demarcations between research methodologies and conceptual frameworks only serve to replicate existing frameworks of understandings- which are inevitably ineffective addressing the complex nature of social nature. Sfumato in research means interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary approaches to conducting research which can lead to pragmatic solutions rather than a perpetual pathologizing of social phenomena. When epistemologies can move freely and not be bound to the academic disciplines to which they are associated, it can lead to epistemic innovation. Additionally, a dislocation of the body knowledge paradigms from their respective academic disciplines problematizes departmental ownership of knowledge and instead, establishes knowledge as something which can be collectively shared. It is not enough for knowledges in academic institutions to be cosmopolitan, as with cosmopolitanism there is no compulsion for knowledges to be integrated. It is for this reason that I suggest insurgent cosmopolitanism¹⁹ which not only evaporates the demarcations between academic disciplines and research epistemologies, but also promotes a culture of the perpetual integration of knowledges. This inadvertently makes insurgent cosmopolitanism, as a counterhegemonic approach to knowledge, oppositional to “metonymic” and “proleptic” reason (De Sousa Santos, 2014. Chapter 6) since it considers the possibilities of all knowledges. Drawing this chapter to a close, it is important for Social Sciences research to continually be self-reflective and self-reflection cannot happen within academic and paradigmatic silos. There needs

¹⁹ See De Sousa Santos (2014) Chapter 4 where he discusses subaltern and insurgent cosmopolitanism.

to be an integration and cross-pollination of knowledges if Social Science is to fulfill the purpose it claims to have- catalysing social transformation on a macro scale. In conclusion, I have argued that my reflexive journey on my praxis as Sangoma can offer the following theoretical and methodical approaches to decolonising the knowledge archive. These are dreams and ukuboniswa as a pathway to insights, inhlolo as a quest for knowledge and ukuphahla as a research methodology.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research paper has sought to demonstrate how Euro-Western paradigms, through the bifurcation of knowledge systems, have led to prevailing constructions of indigenous knowledge systems as being invalid and therefore of no use to research epistemologies. Through an exploration of the subjective premises of the differentiation between canonical knowledge systems and indigenous systems, through my own reflexive journey as a Sangoma, this research paper has established that hierarchical distinctions between the two knowledge systems have racial and colonial origins.

Furthermore, I propose four recommendations for how to decolonise a colonially inherited paradigm in knowledge. These are:

- Valorizing dreams as credible sources of information and insight. As discussed in the paper, dreams have perpetually served as catalysts for the mobilization of oppressed indigenous people. Through dreams, indigenous and displaced people can trace their historiographies since the past is available.
- Ukuboniswa (intuition) serves as a way of seeing which transcends the corporeal focus of sight. When we can ‘see’ with all our senses, we are then able to come to various ways of knowing which challenge the limited horizon of answers within social science research.
- Ukuphahla as a tool for collective authorship through discursive conversation calls for collaboration in research. Individual ownership of the research process and the knowledge produced is problematized by the community and collective-focused approach to research enunciated by ukuphahla. Ukuphahla’s embedded axiology which is founded on ubuntu compels researchers to be accountable and interrogate the purpose of their research which will result in research which aims to affect social change rather than reproduce existing academic discourses.
- Sfumato - eliminating the bifurcation between western knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems. Claiming that the two knowledges have never interacted with one another is epistemological dishonesty, as the dividing line between the two knowledge systems does not actually exist and has been constructed. The bifurcation between the knowledge systems can be eliminated through interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary scholarship, mixed method approaches to research and the intermixing of indigenous knowledge systems and western knowledge systems.

The colonial, imperial project and the Apartheid system, through Christian Nationalism, have been instrumental in the denigration and criminalization of African cosmologies in South Africa; and subsequently, the construction of Traditional Spiritual Workers as diabolical. Unfortunately, colonialism has had lasting residual effects which persist despite the establishment of legislation which no longer criminalizes Traditional Spiritual Work. The prevailing conceptualizations of Traditional Spiritual Work perpetuate it as 'black magic' 'irrational' and 'illogical' which has led to the dismissal of the paradigmatic and epistemological frameworks within which Traditional Spiritual Workers practice. What has gone overlooked is the richness of the foundational premises of Traditional Spiritual Work and the potential they have for the reconfiguration of research approaches. Examining how Traditional Spiritual Workers engage with ancestors and the various insight-seeking processes provide valuable lessons for epistemic transformation. The inherent fluidity within the cosmology of Traditional Spiritual Workers provides conceptual frameworks which can be integrated into research approaches. The work of Traditional Spiritual Workers provides the frameworks for the dislocation of the corporeal body from the imperial gaze which disallows the recognition of the spiritual aspects of human experience. Additionally, the dislocation of the body of knowledges from the epistemic and disciplinary demarcations can lead to the integration of knowledge paradigms; and this can subsequently lead to an academic culture and academic scholarship that is able to fully grapple with complex social issues. What must be understood is that I am not purporting that indigenous knowledge systems have all the answers, but rather that discarding the bifurcation which keeps knowledges separate is constructed and is therefore fallacious. To achieve the process of the eradication of the bifurcation are counter-hegemonic frameworks such as insurgent cosmopolitanism and sfumato which are based on the idea that knowledges should not exist in epistemic silos but that there should be a culture where knowledge systems are consistently considering other knowledge systems. The premises of dislocating the body and transcending the imperial eye (I) are based on an understanding that the corporeal body is insufficient in accounting for the totality of the human experience. Fixations on the corporeal body reproduce the colonialist and imperialist lens which has perpetually constructed certain bodies as non-human and therefore incapable of intellectual discourse. Centering ancestors and the frameworks with which Sangomas engage with them is critical to a transcendence of both the imperial eye and individualistic approaches to knowledge production. Systems of inhlolo, ukuphupha and umbilini provide the paradigmatic approach which assists in removing the

corporeal body from display and calling in all the various senses for a multi-layered diagnosis of social phenomena. Ukuphahla compels research to move away from problematic researcher/respondent binaries and individual ownership of knowledge by calling our focus towards collective authorship and collaboration. A close examination of the practices of Sangomas allows for an understanding of how Ubungoma (as praxis) provides epistemological frameworks for the configuration of transformative and decolonial research methodologies. Related to Ubongoma are the theoretical and methodical approaches to decolonising the knowledge archive through ukuphupha as a pathway to insights, inhlolo as a quest for knowledge and ukuphahla as a research methodology.

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Addendum A



A picture of me dressed in isambhatho somoya after a ritual of ukuphakamisa isthunywa for one of my initiates.

Addendum B



A picture of uMakhulu wam in her sambatho somoya at St John's Apostolic Faith Mission.

Addendum C



A picture of me on my first night ephehlweni (Itsoseng, North West Province), wearing the uniform trainee Sangomas wear. Some of the intsimbhi (beads) I am wearing are not part of the uniform of my initiation school, but were shown to me in dreams by my abaphantsi.

Addendum D



This picture was taken on the 10th of December 2016, the day I graduated as a Sangoma.