

**PSYCHIATRIC, TRADITIONAL AND OTHER
INTERPRETATIONS OF *UKUTHWETYULWA*:
A WITCHCRAFT PHENOMENON IN THE
WESTERN CAPE**

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the memory of Ayanda, a victim of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

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The opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are my own and do not reflect the views of any other person or organisation.

GLOSSARY

thwe^{BU}tyula: take away

ukuthwetyulwa: to be taken away

gqadana: forest

isithunzela: zombie

izithunzela: zombies

zombie: "weird people with no tongues that can't talk" (quoted from respondent t1)

phambana: mad

sangoma: traditional healer

impundulu: "a bad trick...one of the sorcerer things that they (the witches) do" (quoted from respondent t2)

intlanga: medicinal protection against "bad things" (respondent t2) which is given by a traditional healer

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INTRODUCTION

I. OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

When a person is *taken away* from his/her home through the use of witchcraft, usually to a forest or another place, this is referred to as *ukuthwetyulwa*. "Some of these people never return to normal life but are known to be alive somewhere. Others...escape and return to their families but can never function properly. They are seen as 'mad' and their behaviour changes to either being aggressive or to being very quiet. They have nightmares and at times they have hallucinations" (Richardson, 1995, p.1). *Ukuthwetyulwa* is an acknowledged phenomenon amongst many Xhosa-speaking people in the Western Cape, but very little is known about it in a western psychiatric¹ context, despite Richardson's observation that it may share features of mental illness (for example, hallucinations). *Ukuthwetyulwa* seemed to emerge for the first time in a psychiatric setting when an epidemiological study was conducted on children and adolescents in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape, by Ensink and Robertson (1995). In the study it was found that two out of five hundred children presented with *ukuthwetyulwa*.

Owing to the dearth of literature and research conducted on *ukuthwetyulwa*, it is difficult to give a preliminary account of the phenomenon. However, the two cases which were diagnosed in the aforementioned epidemiological study, has fostered increasing interest amongst members of the psychiatric community. Richardson (1995) has described these two cases in more detail, and the following information serves as an initial basis for our understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

¹ 'Western psychiatry' is a construct which will be used rather extensively in this research. It assumes the existence of an underlying disease process, and rests on a biomedical framework. The focus is on the empirical process of diagnosis of reified entities which exist within the individual.

Case 1 described the story of a teenage boy who had been suffering from severe headaches and scholastic difficulties. He ran off one day whilst playing with his friends, as he had heard voices calling his name. He was found three days later with sand in his mouth, naked and moving without purpose. He was taken to a traditional healer who 'diagnosed' *ukuthwetyulwa*. He was later seen by various western psychiatric practitioners, who diagnosed brief reactive psychosis (he had been exposed to a severe stressor which involved having to hide under a dead body in order to avoid being killed by armed intruders). He was also mildly mentally handicapped. For about two years he was seen at different times by traditional healers and western psychiatric practitioners. He died in 1995, apparently having been hit by a train. His family and members of the community in which he lived suspected murder related to muti and to his illness, as his face and body had been disfigured.

Case 2 involved a teenage boy who described a similar experience to that of the previous case. He was also diagnosed as psychotic following a traumatic incident. Less is known about this case, because his family chose not to have western psychiatric intervention (Richardson, 1995).

The apparent rarity of *ukuthwetyulwa* may raise questions about the rationale for the present study. However, it is likely that *ukuthwetyulwa*, like most African indigenous categories, would be under-represented in any sample based on western research principles, especially epidemiological research. This view is supported by Ensink and Robertson (1994a). More importantly however, *ukuthwetyulwa* seems to be in the process of transition from a rather isolated belief structure specifically located in its traditional²

² The word 'traditional' in this paper refers to that which is reflected in belief systems and practices of the Nguni people of Southern Africa (specifically within the Xhosa community of the Cape). The terminology used is problematic because of the associations and stereotypes which have come to accompany words such as 'traditional' and the way in which words such as this are used for political and other purposes. For a detailed discussion of the complexities of the word 'traditional', see Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988). The

African context, to something which has been noted by and is relevant to western psychiatric practice (due to the psychotic-like symptomatology, for example, hallucinations). This paper attempts to address the way in which a phenomenon that has been constructed within a traditional African framework, is confronted by and reinterpreted within a western psychiatric framework. This in turn may shed light on the way in which psychiatric and traditional discourses may be used in the process of the formation of a collectively accepted understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*. The study provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between psychiatric and traditional discourses surrounding *ukuthwetyulwa*, at a moment in history when the issue of traditional healing practice and its relationship to psychiatry is increasingly on the agenda of mental health policy makers in South Africa.

II. TRANSCULTURAL PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

While *ukuthwetyulwa* has appeared minimally in the academic psychiatric or anthropological literature, other African indigenous categories³ of distress such as *intwaso* and *amafufunyane* have been explored and described from different perspectives in the literature over the past few decades (for example, O'Connell, 1981, 1982; Schweitzer and Buhrmann, 1978). In this section there will be a brief outline of selected South African transcultural psychiatric research, focussing particularly on the

researcher has not been successful in the search for a word which could be substituted for 'traditional' in this paper. Thus, despite the difficulties, the terminology will not be eliminated, as this would run the risk of leaving significant issues unspoken. No matter how unsatisfactory the terminology, it is difficult to find a language which offers a replacement without losing meaning. In this paper, terminology such as 'traditional' is understood as being socially and discursively constructed, and not a representation of truth. This does not suggest that the words have no meaning.

³ Authors have used different labels when talking about African experiences of mental illness such as *amafufunyane*. While Ensink and Robertson (1994a) often refer to 'explanatory categories', Robertson and Kottler (1993) refer to 'African indigenous expressions of psychological distress and dysfunction'.

methodological approach used by various authors who have explored African indigenous categories. (For a comprehensive review of South African transcultural psychiatric literature, see Swartz, 1989).

Hammond-Tooke (1975) provided early insight into cultural factors and the meanings associated with some African indigenous categories, drawing on anthropological research, in which reference was made to an African "world-view". Hammond-Tooke's work seems to highlight the importance of distinguishing between collective belief systems and psychiatric illness. A similar stance has been taken by Ngubane (1977), in her descriptions of African indigenous categories in the context of traditional beliefs and practices. This orientation has been valuable in that it illustrates something of the way in which African indigenous categories seem to form part of a broader cultural picture. More recently there seems to have been an increased focus on descriptions of symptomatology in research on African indigenous categories. Edwards, Cheetham, Mahozi and Lasich (1982) have outlined a basic description of what they have referred to as "Zulu culture-bound psychiatric syndromes", for example, *izizwe* and *idliso*. Although Edwards et al may have provided the reader with an understanding of some of the features of these phenomena, the question could be raised as to how they have come to be talked about as "psychiatric syndromes".

Robertson and Kottler (1993) did a study exploring indigenous expressions of psychological distress in children and adolescents in Gugulethu, Cape Town. The authors outlined a description of symptomatology and proposed aetiology of various culture-specific syndromes, on the basis of interviews with traditional healers. Some comparisons with western psychiatric constructs were suggested (for example, *ukuphaphazela* and *panic disorder*). Similarly, Ensink and Robertson (1994a) provided descriptions given by traditional healers of the symptomatology of five African

indigenous categories. These were compared with descriptions of the same entities in the literature. There has been much research based on descriptive details of *amafufunyane* as well as comparative research between *amafufunyane* and western psychiatric disorders (for example, Ngubane, 1977). Comparative research may be useful in that it facilitates an understanding of the phenomenon through associating it with familiar western psychiatric disorders. However, it rests on the assumption of the universality of a western psychiatric classificatory system (Kleinman, 1988). Additionally, while the description of symptoms approach may illustrate something of the appearance of the phenomenon, it rests on another assumption: the existence of a reified and static entity with a consistent constellation of symptoms.

Lund (1994) has noted a shift in the focus of the literature, particularly in relation to *amafufunyane*: The emphasis on presentation and symptomatology seems to have shifted towards an exploration of the explanatory models of patients with *amafufunyane*, used in different ways at different times to make sense of their experience. Similarly, various authors such as Ensink and Robertson (1994b) and Spiro (1991) have found evidence for multiple, complex and contradictory understandings of mental illness held by patients. In fact, Ensink and Robertson (1994b) have found that patients and their families often use a combination of psychosocial and indigenous explanations for their experience, in relation to *amafufunyane*, *ukuphambana* and *nerves*. They have noted how certain explanations drawing on indigenous and other sources of knowledge are combined to construct meanings, and these do not fall neatly within the different categories of illness, either indigenous or psychiatric. This raises the question as to whether *ukuthwetyulwa* is represented by a static constellation of symptoms, or whether it is better understood as a category which is used to construct meaning.

A significant factor which seems to have emerged in this discussion is the relationship between traditional African belief systems and psychiatry. In the following section there will be an attempt to address this issue, with a particular focus on psychiatric services in South Africa and African experiences of mental illness.

III. TRADITIONAL AND PSYCHIATRIC PARADIGMS IN THE CONTEXT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Kleinman (1988) has noted that mental health care systems are culturally ordered systems in which patients' illness experiences are managed. It was only around the 1990's that the process of racial desegregation began to gain momentum in South Africa (Swartz, 1996). Despite the recent changes however, mental health service delivery still rests predominantly in the field of western psychiatry (Swartz, 1987; Ensink and Robertson, 1994b). Psychiatric institutions are informed by theories and principles of psychiatric knowledge based, for example, on diagnosis and psychotropic medication (Swartz, 1991). The dominant culture is thus reflected in the mental health care system, which is also a reflection of cultural disparity and power imbalances in the country on a broader level. Hence Swartz (1991) has commented on the reproduction of racism in mental health care in South Africa. Linguistic and cultural disparities (Swartz, 1996) between people who are trained and employed by psychiatric services, contribute to the lack of understanding of patients who may have African indigenous explanations for what are interpreted as psychiatric symptoms. Certain researchers and practitioners (for example, Holdstock, 1979) have been advocating the integration of traditional healing into the mental health care system over the past few decades. Swartz (1996) has commented on the overwhelming majority of literature which is in support of traditional healing, and the largely undisputed need for redistribution of services. Despite this however, mental health service delivery continues to be grounded in western psychiatric knowledge.

In a study done by Farrand (1984), 54% of African psychiatric patients indicated that they would like to consult a traditional healer in addition to receiving western psychiatric treatment. Ensink and Robertson (1994b) explored the experiences of African patients and their families of psychiatric services and traditional healers. In accordance with Farrand (1984), they found that within the sample taken from psychiatric institutions in the Western Cape, the majority of patients consulted a range of services, and 67% had sought help from traditional healers.

Lund (1994) has noted that while African patients seemed to understand their mental illness in terms of mystical or spiritual influences, they tended to seek out western psychiatric treatment, and found this more effective than consultation with traditional healers alone. He has shown how discourses around traditional African belief systems and western psychiatry are used simultaneously by black psychiatric patients. For example, explanatory models which support witchcraft as the basis of their illness experience, may be used by the patients in an attempt to remove stigma and redirect blame for their condition. He states that patients use whatever explanatory models are available (eg *amafufunyane*) and whichever treatment alleviates suffering (eg, psychotropic medication, which removes hallucinations and promotes sleep). He has thus noted how African psychiatric patients make use of (traditional) explanatory models and (western psychiatric) treatment interventions for various purposes, for example, to create meaning and access the most effective treatment. Lund's findings may suggest that people seem to move between seemingly divergent paradigms flexibly and fluidly, depending on the function that the discourses hold for them at any given time (Lund, 1994). This raises the question of the way in which discourses around *ukuthwetyulwa* may shift between western psychiatric and traditional African paradigms, in various ways for perhaps similar purposes.

A review of some of the psychiatric literature across different cultures seems to reveal varying conflicts in research of this nature. The issue which will be focussed on in the following section is the relationship between transcultural psychiatric research and western models, particularly western psychiatry (Littlewood, 1992). This discussion is not exhaustive, but it serves to highlight some of the difficulties around the application of western psychiatric models in transcultural research.

IV. TRANSCULTURAL PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH AND THE DILEMMA OF WESTERN INFLUENCE

Spirit-possession states have often been studied using western psychiatric constructs as a basis of explanation. Perhaps this tendency is a result of our academic familiarity with psychiatric constructs, as it helps us to understand the possession phenomenon in a way that is congruent with our own system of meaning. To give an example of this, Castillo (1994) has discussed how possession states have been explained through psychoanalytic theory, in the form of culturally shaped hysteria, due to repressed Oedipal desires, for example, Obeyesekere (1977). Other research has attempted to explain spirit possession as a culturally shaped dissociative state. Using the case material of studies done by Obeyesekere (1977) and others, which had been interpreted psychoanalytically, Castillo (1994) reinterpreted the material convincingly, using dissociative theory, and exploration and description of the cultural context. The work done by Castillo (1994) is compelling, and certainly succeeds in an interpretation of possession states in a way that is digestible to us (westerners) in its application of familiar theory.

The examples cited above (Castillo, 1994; Obeyesekere, 1970) seem to provide illustrations of the way in which authors have attempted to explain culture-bound phenomena by aligning them to different western psychiatric models, that is,

psychoanalysis and DSM classification (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Edition). Littlewood (1992) has written that in a multicultural society, disparate ideologies often bring about different models of explanation for the same entities. Western psychiatric models are generally viewed by those with power and authority as superior to non-western models (for example, possession or trance states). According to Littlewood (1992), we could adopt the 'liberal' approach and apply our western psychiatric models to all patients, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, and the cultural or social aspect of the illness, as has been done in the examples mentioned above. Littlewood (1992) suggests that on account of our assumption that western models are more effective than any other form of psychological healing that we know, application of western models to culture-bound possession states would perhaps be the most ethical and justifiable solution, especially with regard to 'treatment'. The danger though, according to Eguchi (1991), is that we are likely to cut ourselves off from our understanding of the patient when we use the language of psychiatry. Linked to this, according to Mercer (1986), is the risk of misdiagnosis in attempt to apply western psychiatric models transculturally. The example cited by Mercer (1986) is that of overdiagnosis of schizophrenia which was documented by Lipsedge and Littlewood in African and Afro-Caribbean populations in Britain. As opposed to the 'liberal' view, the 'radical' view contends that applying western models across different cultures succeeds in "*denying to others even the authenticity of their own expression of distress*" (Littlewood, 1992, p. 41).

The question of the universality of psychopathology (Littlewood, 1992) has been a fairly widely debated issue. Kleinman (1988) has noted that much of the cross-cultural research done in this area has been biased towards discovering cross-cultural similarities and universalities rather than differences, perhaps producing some justification for the application of western psychiatric ideas about diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.

But perhaps western psychopathology, as represented under DSM classification, represents a cultural institution of western society; and is thus irrelevant in terms of its application outside western society. Littlewood (1986) has noted that in western psychiatry (specifically the biomedical model), an assumption is made of the external reality of disease entities, thus legitimating universal application of mental illness categories, due to the erroneous assumption of neutrality of scientific theory and methodology.

Undoubtedly, universalist attempts to fit culture-bound syndromes into a universal diagnostic framework and to demonstrate a single comprehensive psychiatric nosology, form the basis of ethnocentrism (Eguchi, 1991). This in particular is what this study endeavours to avoid, by focussing on the constructive function of language; and observing social and cultural context with regard to *ukuthwetyulwa*. Kleinman (1977) is critical of comparative psychiatry, and he suggests that research should begin from local conceptualisations of illness before attempting to generalise comparisons.

Some transcultural psychiatric research has been based methodologically on western scientific principles. Biesheuvel (1987) has commented on the problems of cross-cultural research when constructs are used which do not fit the characteristics of the culture under observation. Uys (1986) reflectively acknowledges her difficulties in this regard, in her study exploring perceptions of health and illness among the urban 'Black' population of Manguang. According to Torrey (1972, p. 136), it is culture that "*psychology in its attempt to be scientific has ignored*". The issue of culture⁴ and cultural meaning in transcultural psychiatry will be explored in more detail in the following section.

⁴ The notion of 'culture', like 'tradition' is problematic because of different assumptions and effects associated with the use of the word. See Thornton (1988) for a discussion of 'culture' and 'what culture does'.

V. CULTURAL MEANING IN TRANSCULTURAL PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH

Various authors have attempted to shed light on the cultural and social meaning of certain African indigenous categories. For example, O'Connell (1980; 1982), in his studies of the aetiology of *thwasa*, suggested that *thwasa* may serve as an adaptive means through which African women are able to adjust their negative status in society, and rebel against social structure in a legitimate and an effective manner. In this way he observes the unconscious component behind the manifestation of *thwasa* symptoms in the context of political, family and economic factors which have placed great stress on the lives of married Xesibe women. (This, however, rests on the assumption of the existence of an *unconscious*, which may be considered a western construct).

In a similar way, Schweitzer and Burhmann (1978), in their research on the existential-phenomenological interpretation of *thwasa* amongst the Xhosa, revealed a rich and relevant dimension of the *thwasa* phenomenon, as a result of their attempt to embed *thwasa* into its cultural context, including aspects of Xhosa cosmology and the interconnectedness with the ancestral world. The authors have provided a meaningful phenomenological interpretation of *thwasa*, where the experience is directed towards determining the individual's new role in society, that is, the role of becoming a diviner. Castillo (1994) has highlighted the usefulness of context in his discussion of the subordinate position of women in the social hierarchy; so possession states amongst women, in addition to culturally tolerable methods of expressing distress, have an adaptation and survival component. Thus social and cultural meaning (and perhaps even functions of adaptation and survival) may be observed in various ways when the context surrounding the particular illness experience is explored.

Edwards et al (1983) did a study exploring traditional Zulu theories of illness in patients who were diagnosed with western psychiatric illness in terms of ICD-9 classification. The patients' theories of causality for their illness experience seemed to correspond to traditional African beliefs. On the basis of these findings, the authors suggested that a culturally informed approach would be likely to improve therapist-patient rapport and effectiveness of treatment.

Mercer (1986) discusses how psychiatric practitioners' lack of knowledge of cultural factors of their 'black' patients may lead to a misperception of their mental state and consequently, misdiagnosis. To illustrate this, he has presented the research of Littlewood and Lipsedge, who described how 'black' patients were admitted to a mental hospital in London and diagnosed with schizophrenia. It was hypothesised that culturally mediated expressions of distress (for example, delusions and hallucinations related to witchcraft and magic) were misinterpreted as signs of a psychotic illness. However, these symptoms usually occurred in response to external stressors, and remitted spontaneously. While it is easy to see the resemblance of this picture to a psychiatric understanding of a psychosis, it may not be appropriate, as there was no evidence for schizophrenia or a brief reactive psychosis. Thus Mercer (1986) advocates some knowledge about culture on the part of psychiatric practitioners. Perhaps in addition to this, there may be benefit in an increased reflectiveness on the part of practitioners about the limitations of a western psychiatric understanding and classification of experience, in relation to transcultural research and practice.

Researchers such as Spiro (1991) have suggested that in order to understand the experience of illness in a meaningful way, it is imperative that the patient's suffering is viewed in his/her cultural context. However, much of the research which has drawn on cultural context, has assumed that cultural influence is uni-directional, ie, the influence

of traditionality, for example, Edwards et al (1983). It might be more appropriate to suggest that South African Xhosa-speaking people live in a dual society, with the influence of traditional beliefs (for example, witchcraft) often occurring simultaneously with belief in western psychiatry.⁵ Thus one cannot make the assumption that traditional African beliefs serve as the basis of the cultural context amongst a sample of Xhosa-speaking South Africans. As noted by various other authors (for example, Spiro, 1991), culture and mental illness seem to have an interdependent relationship to each other and both form part of a socially constructed world. Thus this research does not rest on the notion that the cultural context is limited to traditional African belief systems and practices. It has been broadened to include not only the impact of western psychiatric influences, but also, more importantly, the interaction between both western and traditional paradigms.

A consideration of the issues which have been mentioned above, specifically the impact of western models and the role of culture on transcultural research, played an integral role in determining the theoretical and methodological framework used in the research on *ukuthwetyulwa*.

⁵ The author is aware of the danger of setting up a dualism between traditional African beliefs and western psychiatry. Hopefully the usefulness of the exercise will outweigh the inherent problems in the repeated use of these constructs.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The way in which mental health workers talk about and construct an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa* is to be the focus of this study, so as to provide a basis from which we can begin to develop an understanding of the phenomenon. According to Parker (1990, p. 191), a discourse could be defined as "*a system of statements which constructs an object*". It makes sense then for research of this nature to begin with an open, unstructured and exploratory observation of discourses about *ukuthwetyulwa*. The way in which an entity is perceived, labelled, understood and talked about (especially an entity in its infancy in terms of being new to academic literature), may to some extent form the foundation of a more or less collectively accepted and established entity in its more developed stages.

As mentioned earlier, Ensink and Robertson (1994a) have suggested that indigenous categories are not characterised by a consistent set of symptoms, and therefore a research methodology based on etic principles would be problematic. *Ukuthwetyulwa* may not constitute a coherent, well-defined entity which can be classified according to lists of symptoms. Thus the methodology employed in this research will not involve the quantification of clusters of symptoms, measured and analysed using standardised statistical techniques. This approach would have been based on the 'old' psychological research paradigm (Swartz, 1989), that is, scientific or positivistic methodology. This kind of methodology may have involved neatly organised response-set questionnaires (for example such as those used by Uys, 1986, in her study done on urban Black perceptions of health and illness in Mangaung).

Part of the danger of the kind of research approach mentioned above would be that data would become restricted and variability of respondents' answers might be suppressed in the researcher's quest for consistency in the data (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Variability in accounts of respondents often motivates the more quantitatively oriented researcher to reify one version as truth and view others as problematic in some way, in an attempt to render the individual or the account consistent (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989). This type of research methodology claims objectivity on account of its scientific basis. However, the methodology in itself is theory-laden (based on scientific principles) which is often by its nature seen to represent 'truth' (Danziger, 1985). Thus the observations made and conclusions drawn are restricted to the theoretically presupposed methodology used. According to Holdstock (1981), cross-cultural research has most often been approached from a western perspective, in terms of research content, objectives and methodology. Thus from this perspective a cultural bias may already have occurred. Antaki (1988) advocates a methodology for social explanation based on discourse analysis and ethnomethodology, rather than using more controlled methods based, for example, on rating scales, so as not to impose a predetermined structure reflecting the researcher's (scientific) theoretical position even before analysis of data begins.

Ensink and Robertson (1994a) have suggested that multiple, complex and contradictory explanations of mental illness are constructed, which do not fall into neatly defined illness categories, but serve primarily as explanatory models. In fact, Kleinman (1988) has described illness as the practitioner's construction of the specific problems which are seen to represent that illness. From this perspective then, the models of explanations held by mental health practitioners and traditional healers about an entity may provide an understanding and a formulation of that entity which may then go on to be accepted later as truth. When observations are interpreted as direct representations of reality, the danger is that disease is not regarded as an explanatory model, but rather as the fundamental

biological disturbance that exists to the exclusion of other realities (Spiro, 1991). This research aims to highlight the explanatory models themselves, on the theoretical understanding that the models constitute the phenomenon. Kleinman (1988) explains how explanatory models are constructed and reconstructed as part of an ongoing process in response to distress. They are diffuse in nature; they provide a way of understanding suffering and they create meaning. Thus this research draws from the work of Kleinman, in its focus on explanatory models.

This study is positioned within the 'new' paradigm (Swartz, 1989) in psychology, in which the researcher attempts not to impose his or her own framework onto the data, but rather, "*the structure has presented itself from within the data*" (Swartz, 1989, p. 190). So the idea of an underlying truth or reality which one attempts to uncover is abandoned (Swartz, 1989); and meaning is explored through the explanations of mental health workers. Marshall and Wetherell (1989) have noted how some constructions of the world have become so powerful that their constructive dimension becomes concealed, and they are seen to reflect truth or reality. Perhaps western psychiatry provides an example of a construct such as this, so western psychiatric models are not seen as a basis from which to compare *ukuthwetyulwa*. Rather, the research has borrowed from discourse analysis, particularly from the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987), which emphasises the constructive function of language. From a discourse analytical perspective (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Marshall and Wetherell, 1989), language is not a transparent medium which reflects reality but the tool which people actively use to construct phenomena, and different versions of reality on an ongoing basis. Parker (1990, p. 196) contends that "*discourse constructs 'representations' of the world which have a reality almost as coercive as gravity*". It would follow then that in order to develop some understanding of a concept, one could begin with an observation of people's discursive constructions of the concept. This research aims to highlight the ways in which *ukuthwetyulwa* has become

constructed by mental health workers and traditional healers, drawing on principles of discourse analysis and the constructive function of language (Potter et al, 1990; Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

Still within the realm of discourse analysis, this research has borrowed from the work of Parker (1990), with particular emphasis on the way in which discourses support institutions and reproduce power relations. Parker (1990) has commented on the interrelationship between different discourses which are at work at the same time, often generating inconsistency and contradictions within language. In the exploration of constructions of *ukuthwetyulwa*, the interaction of traditional and psychiatric discourses may suggest something about the negotiation of power.

Mental health or ill-health is understood by Littlewood (1988) as being influenced by historical and political determinants. This may be related in different ways to the attempt to establish oneself in a position of power. For example, Douglas (1970) writes that in the context of African colonial rule, oppressed communities adapted by producing control mechanisms within their traditional institutions. This is likely to have assisted oppressed communities in retaining some kind of power. She has noted that witchcraft preoccupation amongst the Bakweri declined when the community was no longer threatened by competition, as a result of a vastly improved economic situation. Brown (1970) discusses how between 200 and 600 AD, during the time of the rise of Christianity, two systems of power which clashed in one society provided a context which fostered discourse around sorcery. Brown has suggested that sorcery discourse appears when there is a clash between "*articulate power*" (Brown, 1970, p. 21) (recognised by all and given authority) and "*inarticulate power*". He suggests that the destruction of many traditional explanations of misfortune through the rise of Christianity

in Africa, may be linked to the increase in accusations of sorcery in some African tribes around that time (Brown, 1970).

This highlights the value of an ethnopsychiatric approach (Littlewood, 1986), rather than the model of comparative psychiatry using western psychiatric models of explanation. Ethnopsychiatrically informed research draws on anthropologically informed methodology (Good, 1992). Many studies of possession states that have been based on an ethnopsychiatric perspective have used an anthropological approach based on descriptions of case studies, for example, Eguchi (1991), Castillo (1994) and O'Connell (1980). The methodological approach of this research does not involve the analysis of case-study material per se, but case material filters through into respondents' discussion about *ukuthwetyulwa*, and this in itself may form an important component of discourses about *ukuthwetyulwa*.

This study will thus rest broadly on the framework of social constructionism. It will draw from different areas, including Kleinman's (1988) emphasis on explanatory models and anthropologically inclined methodology; discourse analysis, particularly from the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) with their focus on the constructive and functional uses of language; and Ian Parker's (1990) formulation of power relations. Additionally, this work also draws from the work of Littlewood (1988), in that it assumes an ethnopsychiatric perspective, with emphasis on the importance of social, political and historical influences in the construction of mental illness.

I. METHOD

Interviews were conducted with eight respondents, both mental health workers and traditional healers. Questions were loosely structured around *ukuthwetyulwa*, in an

attempt to facilitate talk around the subject. Respondents' explanatory models of *ukuthwetyulwa* have served as a basis of the research material. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using a discourse analytical approach, in order to explore the way in which *ukuthwetyulwa* is constructed.

II. PARTICIPANTS

To some extent, health workers themselves play a part in the definition of illness (Eisenberg, 1988; Kleinman, 1988). Eisenberg (1988, p. 1) puts forward the question: "*To what extent are mental disorders 'entities determined by their intrinsic nature' and to what extent are they shaped by the very concepts physicians employ to define and classify them?*". Perhaps when one is dealing with health-related entities, the construction of an entity represents the way in which healers and health workers have made sense of the constellations of symptoms of that entity. Thus mental health workers and traditional healers have been selected as subjects in this research, because of their role in society as arbiters of knowledge of this kind.

All eight respondents are female, African, Xhosa speaking, and live and work in the Western Cape. They include three community psychiatric nurses who work in the Cape Town area; three mental health workers who have undergone a six-month training course in psychiatry and counselling and are currently working for a mental health community project in Khayelitsha; and two traditional healers. In order to maintain confidentiality, when respondents were quoted in the text, the community psychiatric workers were coded as *c1*, *c2* and *c3*; the psychiatric nurses as *n1*, *n2* and *n3*; and traditional healers as *t1* and *t2*. The interviewer was coded as *int*.

One of the traditional healers is additionally trained as a nurse, and the other has some knowledge of western psychiatry (she is occasionally called upon by western psychiatric practitioners for her advice about indigenous illnesses and experiences). All respondents were known to have some association with both western psychiatry and traditional African beliefs and practices. This seemed important in the context of attempting to understand *ukuthwetyulwa*. Traditional healers were included in the sample, largely because of their role in society of "*production and reproduction of traditional discourses around illness and distress*" (Ensink and Robertson, 1994a, p. 31), and because of the way in which African psychiatric patients often use a network of treatments including traditional healers and psychiatric services (Ensink and Robertson, 1994b).

When the sample was selected, it was thought that the mental health workers and traditional healers were likely to be able to yield information that was relevant to the research at this point. It would probably not have been suitable, at this early stage of research on *ukuthwetyulwa*, to explore models of explanations held by the patients themselves (as was done by Lund, 1994). One reason is that access to these patients would have been difficult and the other was the apparent fear around *ukuthwetyulwa* and witchcraft, with the reality of witchcraft related deaths, an example of which is the mysterious death of the teenage boy in the case study mentioned earlier. We have little knowledge about the phenomenon at this stage; and there may have been serious practical and perhaps even ethical problems involved with interviewing people who have suffered from *ukuthwetyulwa*.

III. DATA COLLECTION AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Semi-structured interviews of about an hour in length were conducted with each respondent. In all except one case (where circumstances did not allow), respondents were

interviewed in a setting which was familiar to them. These interviews were audio-taped, and the recordings were then fully transcribed. The interview schedule constructed (see appendix 1) was designed to elicit the following information: demographic details; a description about the respondents' contact with *ukuthwetyulwa* on an occupational or professional basis; general knowledge or information about *ukuthwetyulwa*; personal knowledge about *ukuthwetyulwa* and finally, information about illness and mental illness in relation to *ukuthwetyulwa*. In keeping with the theoretical framework, there was an attempt to phrase the questions in a manner that would aim towards avoiding the imposition of any kind of structure. In this way the respondents would be able hopefully to create their own structure in their responses. The questions were designed broadly to shed light on the development of the respondents' understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

Interviews were conducted in English. Although Xhosa is the first language of all the respondents, they are all proficient in the English language. They all stated that they were willing to speak in English (the language of the interviewer) and did not require an interpreter. This raises the question about the impact of language within the respondent-interviewer dyad: Conducting the interviews in Xhosa with an interpreter may well have enhanced the researcher's understanding of certain subtleties concerning language. However, the process of interpretation and translation itself may have introduced problems of a different nature. The only way around the problem would have been if the researcher had been able to conduct the interviews in Xhosa.

The interviews were transcribed fully and scrutinised using principles and guidelines which have been highlighted by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Parker (1990). In the analysis of the data, the aim was to examine consistency and variability in the form and content of the discourse; and to formulate hypotheses about the functions and effects of the discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and power relations (Parker, 1990). Three

pilot interviews were conducted which served primarily to highlight problems in the construction of the interview schedule. In addition these pilot interviews assisted by providing some preliminary analytical material on which to deliberate. Discourses which seemed to show features of western psychiatry and traditionality emerged from the interview material. Thus the analysis involved a discussion of the features of and interaction between these discourses. An anthropological stance was taken and the data was analysed in a South African context, taking into account political, social and historical factors (Good, 1992).

IV. SOME LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The issue of validity in qualitative research such as this raises various questions. Firstly, the notion of 'truth' or 'reality' is replaced by the argument that versions of reality or truth are constructed (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Thus checking to see whether the measurements are a more or less true reflection of reality is a problematic notion (Reason, 1981). In research of this nature there are always emerging possibilities which have not as yet been included. Reason (1981) has referred to this as catalytic validity. There is also the question of the validity of the researcher's interpretation or explanation of the data. That is, the interpretation does not necessarily constitute the phenomenon. Burman and Parker (1993) have expressed concern about the power held by the researcher to impose meaning onto the respondents' words. Reason (1981), notes that within new paradigm research validity is more personal and interpersonal rather than methodological. For example, the projections⁶ of the researcher may impact on the methodological process and the analysis of the material. In this research there were no co-workers assisting in the methodological process. Thus the biases of the author may

⁶ Reason (1981) uses a psychoanalytic term 'projection', which may not be appropriate in this context, given that this research rests on the framework of social constructionism.

have impacted to some extent on the analysis of the data in the absence of others to challenge and confront these potentially problematic issues. However, the author did enter into discussion with colleagues at different stages of the research.

In qualitative research such as this, the data is not seen as completely objective. That is, the impact of the researcher on the respondents and on the data itself is vital to the analysis. Thus reflexivity on the part of the researcher is essential. According to Parker "*What 'role' are we having to adopt to hear this message?*" (Parker, 1990, p. 197). Because we live in a country with a history of racial segregation and persecution, the respondents were likely to have had reservations about revealing to a white researcher their beliefs and this may have had a considerable effect on the material. According to Burman and Parker (1993) the data cannot be observed without taking into account the interviewing context, that is, the respondents were not talking in a vacuum. One would need to keep these factors in mind when attempting to analyse the data.

The sample selection, although it yielded information which was rich and abundant, may have been too limited. There are also obvious concerns as to the generalisability or representativeness of the sample. It could have been broadened to include social workers and psychologists, and a greater variety of traditional healers, as they constitute a heterogeneous group of people who often work in different ways and are informed by many different frameworks. The choice of nurses, rather than people who hold more power in the mental health field (for example psychiatrists), was made largely because of the practical issue of availability as there are few Xhosa-speaking psychiatrists in the Western Cape. The respondents' contact with psychiatry was understood as being significant though, in terms of what they have taken and interpreted from psychiatry. As noted by Kleinman (1988) health workers are often the instruments rather than the source of power.

Owing to the limited scope of this research, there was not a rigorous re-working process of interviewing, theorising, and feeding back to respondents. Although Reason (1981) suggests that this is a necessary part of the research process, this research constitutes only an initial exploration of *ukuthwetyulwa*, and it will hopefully form a basis from which future research will follow. Perhaps this more thorough re-working process which is advocated by Reason (1981) would be implemented in future research exploring *ukuthwetyulwa*.

Lastly, despite arguments that this research attempts to avoid the imposition of western (psychiatric and research) constructs onto the data, it needs to be acknowledged that social constructionism itself is informed by theoretical and methodological constructs, and it does not provide a neutral or objective means of conveying information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will begin with a basic description of *ukuthwetyulwa*, using parts of the respondents' text as illustration. This is in attempt to provide a sense of the nature of the phenomenon, so that there is some descriptive clarity, before embarking on a more detailed analysis. There will then be some discussion of the proposed features of what has been talked about in this study as traditional discourse and psychiatric discourse in relation to *ukuthwetyulwa*. These discourses will be examined in isolation as a necessary preface to the following section: a discussion of the way in which traditional and western psychiatric discourses seem to interact at various different levels for different purposes. Lastly, there will be some discussion of the influence of political and historical factors on *ukuthwetyulwa*, in a South African context.

I. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF UKUTHWETYULWA

An in-depth analysis of the material is not possible without first providing a basic description of what respondents have talked about as '*ukuthwetyulwa*'. This is based on the social constructionist principle that a phenomenon is constructed through explanations and descriptions of that phenomenon. The constructive function of language is used at its most basic and elementary level here. Paraphrasing and simplification of the descriptions will be kept to a minimum, as this might take away the essence of what *ukuthwetyulwa* means to respondents. Extracts have been selected which are particularly clear and explicit to help eliminate too much confusion for the reader. However there is a danger of oversimplifying information in the process of omitting large chunks of discourse. In the text, despite the large amount of variability within and between respondents' accounts, there seemed to emerge some commonality and consistency, out of which a few common themes could be highlighted. In this section, the researcher has

selected extracts in an attempt to convey something of the generally shared understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

The general consensus from all respondents about the meaning of the word *ukuthwetyulwa* is phrased succinctly by respondent n3 who says

(ukuthwetyulwa means) to be taken away by witches using evil spirits

In respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* there is an almost universal understanding of death or disappearance. The individual has died or gone away somewhere, but a reflection or image remains which is a source of confusion for those who are left behind: Thus the individual undergoes some kind of change or transformation.

c2: according to what we are hearing is that a person is just normal and that it is something that is happening which we really can't explain...and then we think, the family think that somebody is dead, which is that somebody is not dead. So when they try to bury them, they will see somebody else.

t2:...what we know is that they are being transformed...the moment he dies, it is not he who is dying...so the relatives who are burying that person are not burying the person as such, they (the witches) have already taken that person so they leave an image...so they will bury that (image)...

n2: to my understanding it's when a person has disappeared from the community, and people can't find the person's whereabouts, they will say that person has been twethyulwa'd...that person is not expected to be seen

alive again. And there's a belief that he could be taken by sorcerers or evil spirits.

Through witchcraft, the individual is removed or taken away from society, and becomes something which is likened to a "zombie". The individual is then made to work as a slave for the witches:

n3: it is pure witchcraft...they say ...it means someone who knows you is bewitching you, they take you...sometimes this person would hear somebody calling her...to this forest called qgadana...that's where they do all the dirty work, the evil spirits...they say after taking you to qgadana, it will be as if you are dead, and you are not dead...it means you are still alive but not mentally okay, you can't do anything...they call it you become izithunzela...like a zombie...somebody who doesn't know anything, just roaming around, not washing, not eating...

t1: they get lost, or they have a sudden death, and all the time it's not them they are burying there. You see, that person is a zombie. That person's going to work there all his life...for the witches

t2: ...they (the witches) would have taken her...take her to the forest...she would stay there as a slave...

The individual's mental state is affected in some way. This often involves fear, running away, and hearing and seeing strange things:

t1:...I never treat a person who was 'thwetyulwa'd, but I know of a person that they caught. The people all ran after him, he was running away from the people because he was already making weird that he must be frightened for the people...he was taken to another doctor...that doctor make him right but he still a little bit weird, he could never be in his real senses like before

n2:...if you have been 'thwetyulwa'd, mentally you can never be all right until you are treated by a witchdoctor...some of them they become mentally ill for the rest of their lives...I can be 'thwetyulwa'd when I'm not mentally ill, but when I come back I will be mentally ill until I'm treated by a sangoma

t2: in their early stages...they fear, they will have a fright at night, they will hear voices...or even see visions...see somebody calling her...and she will run away...people will say she is mentally ill, whereas...to him he is not mentally ill, he is frightened of these people so he's running away, that's why he's like that...he's not mad as such, he really sees those people and he's trying to run away

The general theme which seems apparent from the extracts, around which there is some consistency seems to be that there is something strange and confusing happening in which somebody dies or disappears. There is some kind of bodily transformation, as an image replaces the person. This occurs through the maleficent use of witchcraft, and the witches take the person to a place where he/she is forced to work for them as a slave. The person assumes characteristics of a zombie, and there seems to be some association to

mental dysfunction. Despite this apparent central theme, there was much uncertainty, vagueness and lack of clarity about *ukuthwetyulwa*.

The preceding selection of quotes may represent something about the way in which Xhosa-speaking mental health workers and traditional healers construct an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*. To some extent what we are hearing about is indeed "pure witchcraft". That is, the explanations seem to represent some kind of supernatural event which takes place, which is apparently located externally, not within the individual. Based on this, it would seem that respondents' descriptions of *ukuthwetyulwa* may be said to arise out of traditional ideas about witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirit possession, all of which are not generally accepted as part of western psychiatry. It appears, however, that there are times when western psychiatric discourses are drawn on in respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, for example, in reference to "mental illness".

It seems appropriate at this point to examine more carefully the concept of traditional and psychiatric discourses. Until now, these terms have been used loosely in this paper without any evidence of their existence, or the form that they may take. In this way, traditional discourse in particular, is analogous to a black box which hides the mysterious, unspoken facts which, although they are assumed to exist, have not been disclosed or laid bare for scrutiny. Thus in the following section the research has attempted, through examples from the text, to provide illustration of some of the features that may be considered to constitute traditional discourse. Similarly, psychiatric discourse will be discussed in much the same way. These two discourses will be examined in the context of the process of construction and formation of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

II. THE FORM OF TRADITIONAL DISCOURSE

In this research, there has been an unsupported assumption that there is such a thing as a 'traditional discourse'. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the word 'tradition' in itself presents us with some difficulty. Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988, p. 40) have described tradition as "*the repeated handing down of ideas, conventions and practices which humans need in social interaction*". But they have commented on the vagueness associated with the meaning of the word. They have noted that it is precisely this vagueness which allows the term to be manipulated and used in different ways, often to promote or justify political ends. The extracts mentioned in the previous section seem to suggest that *ukuthwetyulwa* is understood partly as something which is based on ideas about witchcraft and supernatural events. Perhaps 'traditional discourse' could be understood as being based on beliefs and practices which incorporate these issues. In spite of the difficulties, ideas such as witchcraft have been understood in this research as constituting traditional discourse in a rather common-sense kind of a way.

In the following section there has been an attempt to highlight some of the features which seemed to arise out of talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. These features could, in a commonsense way (perhaps with questionable reliability), be interpreted as 'traditional' as opposed to 'psychiatric' discourse. The features may be arranged broadly under the following headings: The construction of *ukuthwetyulwa*; the history of *ukuthwetyulwa*; reluctance to talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*; and aetiological explanations.

i) HOW IS UKUTHWETYULWA CONSTRUCTED?

This section focusses on how people have come to know about *ukuthwetyulwa*, that is, how it has come to be talked about as an entity and how respondents have developed an

understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*. The researcher, in search for consistency in the text (programmed through a background of western-orientated training), was disconcerted at the apparent lack of consistency in accounts and descriptions of *ukuthwetyulwa*. But a degree of variability between respondents' explanations and descriptions about *ukuthwetyulwa* is expected, on the basic social constructionist understanding that a concept only exists insofar as it is talked about as being existent. The variability in accounts given about *ukuthwetyulwa* is probably associated with various factors, and it may reveal something about the way in which respondents develop an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*.

In their talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, respondents seemed to draw on personal experience or give examples about people they had known or heard about who had been 'thwetyulwa'd (*taken away*). In order to illustrate this, a few 'case histories' discussed by the respondents will be presented:

CASE 1

c1: ...the day of ukuthwetyulwa when it happened, they believed that the child was on his way home with two friends. Then he heard some voices calling his name, of which the voices were not heard by other people. Then he ran towards the direction of the voices...he disappeared into the bushes...after eight days he came back to tell the story: He was in the middle of the bushes, and there were many people dressed in black with their faces closed....Then they put him in the middle of the circle, and on his left and his right side there were two young men. They were having something like a ball and they were passing this ball from one another...then this boy he got very much dizzy, not being awake. Fortunately enough, one of these men whispered in his ear that these

people...they're not actually going to kill you, but they're going to torture you. You will be kept here, but your picture will appear at your home, seemingly that you are still alive but you are not...they will bury him at home of-course, but won't find that he's not dead...then this man said, 'maybe if you can run, that will help you'. Then he ran, then he came home...

It became apparent to the researcher that the three community workers who know one another, had discussed the particular case study in the preceding extract, and had put forward an explanation which included meeting with people dressed in black and passing a ball around. When this was described during the interviews with these respondents (the first interviews conducted in this research), the researcher assumed that this was a general feature of *ukuthwetyulwa*, and expected it to appear in the accounts of other respondents. However, the description never arose again in any other of the interviews. It may be that this element (the people dressed in black, the circle and the ball) is taken by these respondents to be a characteristic of *ukuthwetyulwa*, and is thus integrated into their understanding and formulation of the phenomenon. Other stories seem to focus on different features.

CASE 2

C1:...what happened last year in our village too, the other child was at a party with friends...and he was dead...when they went there to fetch his body of-course the policeman he was found that it's a man...the day of the funeral they found that...it's an old old man, not our child...then they stabbed him...when he was stabbed, flies came out the coffin...lot of flies...no body was there...and he was still going on and knocking at home that 'I'm not dead, I want to go to school'...everyday knocking at

home...saying 'I'm not dead, I'm just somewhere and I can't be here...I'm hungry' and 'I don't get food'...

This extract seems to illustrate a strange and inexplicable episode, implicating mystery, confusion and supernatural events, for example, flies which replace a body in a coffin, and a talking ghost-child. These strange events seem to be interpreted by respondents as *ukuthwetyulwa*.

CASE 3

n3: ...I was doing night duty, and this man came, his testicles were cut half way, not completely, and he was half naked...they say he was taken by the witches...he was not confused, he was not disorientated, he could tell exactly what happened...he say these people took him from his house, and then they put him in a balloon which is used by the witches, and then they took him to a place like a forest, and then they managed to cut him, but he managed to fight through and then managed to run to get home

The mutilated testicles seems specific to this case, and was not present in any of the other accounts, although there were other accounts of bodily mutilations of different kinds. In the preceding extract was the only mention of a "balloon". When asked about it, the respondent explained that a balloon is the witches' form of transport which flies in the air. Once the idea of the balloon is introduced in the story which she tells, it may have produced another element of the broader illustration of *ukuthwetyulwa* in this respondent's view. It could perhaps in turn be transmitted by her to others, who may also then come to understand *ukuthwetyulwa* in association with a balloon which transports the witches to qgadana.

The core belief about being taken away by witches using evil spirits seems to be surrounded by many different interpretations and associations, depending on what people have heard and seen, and interpreted as *ukuthwetyulwa*. These additional associations may come to be seen as part of the picture of *ukuthwetyulwa*, and may sometimes become integrated into a more generally accepted understanding of the phenomenon. In the process of interviewing respondents, the researcher was developing an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa* through the stories which were being told. Each time a story was presented, she thought 'Oh, so this is what it is'. But each time the story varied. It was through this process that the hypothesis was made that the emergence and development of an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa* might have been brought about to some extent through stories.

int: When did you first hear about it?

c3: Shoo, long time, forget now

int: And how did you hear about it?

c3: It was just stories

int:...When did you first hear about it, when you were young?

c1: Ja, but I didn't know what was it...but now I link it, when I link it with the thing of this child...its the same thing

It appears that these respondents, in their development of an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*, may have drawn on the stories that they have heard over the years and while growing up. It seems also that these stories are not written but spoken. Being told and retold they may vary each time. Perhaps this is why they appear not to have taken on a static or rigid form, but seem to be fluid and changing. Thus *ukuthwetyulwa* may be constructed as a concept partly through stories about people who have had particular

experiences which are talked about and interpreted by others as representations of *ukuthwetyulwa*. The researcher is not suggesting that this is the only way in which respondents construct an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa*, but that it may constitute an important part of this process.

These findings may suggest that when one sets about the task of exploring a phenomenon that may be understood as a kind of mental illness, one cannot make the assumption of a basic presentation or consistent set of symptoms. As noted earlier, Ensink and Robertson (1994a) and Lund (1994) documented a similar finding about the absence of a static and reified entity, in terms of African indigenous categories. Thus, the preceding extracts may suggest that *ukuthwetyulwa* does not comprise a specific entity with a consistent representative schema, but rather it may be constructed variably from stories that one hears over the years.

ii) THE HISTORY OF UKUTHWETYULWA

There seemed to be a somewhat vague idea in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, concerning the duration of its existence. Although most respondents were unsure about its history, there was no indication that *ukuthwetyulwa* was a new concept. Some of the extracts suggested that *ukuthwetyulwa* had been around for a long, long time.

c2 ...I don't know because since we are babies we know that people are ukuthwetyulwa'd, so I don't know where's it coming from, it's a long process...

int: How long have people been thwetyulwa'd for?

t1: Oh, for centuries, ooh, this witchcraft for a long time...

Thus, despite the lack of clarity about its history, *ukuthwetyulwa* is not talked about as a new phenomenon, but one that has been around for many years. This may be so. It is presumably new to psychiatric discourse only in that it has not been observed, researched or written about from this perspective before.

Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) have noted that popular associations with the word 'traditional' include that of being age-old, unchanging, handed down from generation to generation. "*There is an infinite timelessness stretching beyond recorded history*" (Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988, p. 40). The authors have suggested that associating 'tradition' to something which is very old can be used in different ways. It can create an "*unquestioned legitimacy*" (Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988, p. 40), but it can also be used to judge others as backward. In this way, the authors have attempted to show how talk about 'tradition' may be used to challenge or maintain existing power relations.

Spiegel and Boonzaier's argument raises the question about the usefulness of talking about *ukuthwetyulwa* as very old. Perhaps the way in which *ukuthwetyulwa* is talked about as something which has a long history serves an important function which may be related to power. A concept that is age-old probably exerts more influence than something which is a recent development. With age it may acquire more validity and solidity; and be less open to challenge. The antiquated aspect of *ukuthwetyulwa* makes it all the more powerful and compelling as a discourse. So it may be that the construction of *ukuthwetyulwa* as something which has been around for a very long time may serve the purpose of increasing its power and status in society.

iii) RELUCTANCE TO TALK ABOUT UKUTHWETYULWA

The following extract has been used before while exploring the construction of *ukuthwetyulwa*. In addition to the meaning interpreted from the earlier extract, it seems to reflect an evasiveness and a reluctance to talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*:

int: when did you first hear about it?

c3: shoo, long time, forget now

int: and how did you hear about it?

c3: it was just stories

Talking to a white interviewer about this subject may have evoked different feelings in the respondents; and this may well have contributed to a reluctance to reveal private beliefs and experiences in a society where racial prejudice and white domination has prevailed. Much of the respondents' conversation may have been tainted by this relationship between interviewer and interviewee. However, in addition to this, a secretive and evasive element may function to enhance power, in that where there is an absence of knowledge about something there is no space for challenge. In a different context this is consistent with the hypothesis of Swartz (1996) who suggested that the lack of rigour and comprehensiveness in South African traditional healing research, resulting in a lack of knowledge about traditional healing, may function partly as an assertion of power. However, as is clear from the following extract, there may also be other realistic interpretations of this secrecy, like the threat of the witch-hunt or fear of witchcraft in general.

t2: ...you find the people in Khayelitsha, they know about it, but things like that are not shouted, they are talked with soft voices, even somebody who knows about it will say she doesn't know about it

int: Why?

t2: I think the fact that it's scary firstly, and the fact that the people don't want, they think that maybe if you know about it you will be labelled as one of the witches, because there's been that thing of witch-hunting

c3: ...I'm scared to talk with these things

int: Yes, scared to talk about it

c3: Yes, because maybe the witchcraft the witchpeople can hear us that we are talking this in front of you (laughs)

int: Ya, no, I can imagine

c3: I'm scared I can be the one (laughs)

Confusion and fear around *ukuthwetyulwa* seemed apparent during the initial research endeavours. It was understood by the researcher as a reluctance to talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* by those who have knowledge of the phenomenon, because of a belief that discussing it may lead to being afflicted by *ukuthwetyulwa*. Respondent c3 seems to fear that she may be attracting *ukuthwetyulwa* to herself: "I'm scared I can be the one". This seems to confirm the findings of Richardson (1995) that the reluctance to talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* and consequent lack of knowledge about it amongst westerners seems to be linked to a fear of witchcraft. Talking about it to an outsider might lead to being afflicted by witchcraft. Thus *ukuthwetyulwa* seems to be associated with extreme fear, and hence reluctance to talk about it. However, linked to the covenant of secrecy around *ukuthwetyulwa*, is the probability that it is then not open to opposition or confrontation. It is that thing out there which is frightening just because it is. If knowledge about

ukuthwetyulwa increased, there may be a risk of some loss of power. What seems relevant here is the power of mystery that may be created through this reluctance to talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, which may thus serve to reinforce its position as a powerful and formidable element in society. The element of fear seems to create secrecy around *ukuthwetyulwa*, which may function to enhance its power.

iv) AETIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

It seemed relevant to question respondents about their understanding of what causes an individual to become 'thwetyulwa'd. Explanations of causality or aetiology may shed light on a significant aspect of *ukuthwetyulwa*, as it may reveal how respondents fit their own belief systems or ways of understanding the world with the phenomenon of *ukuthwetyulwa*. There seemed to be a general theme in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* that it arises through some external source (for example, witchcraft and magic) as opposed to an internal source (for example, psychodynamic factors). This has been interpreted here as a feature of traditional discourse due to the magic/supernatural component, which does not seem consistent with western psychiatric discourse.

n2...there's a belief that he could be taken by sorcerers or evil spirits

n3...it's pure witchcraft...it means someone who knows you is bewitching you

c3...if somebody's jealous of you, don't want you to succeed in life, just want you to be dead, or make your parents feel sad about you...

t1...my child the witches, what they can do is very very impossible. You know somebody can have an accident, and he's not dead, its not him.

t2...they are witches, they are living people who are practicing witchcraft...they use...sort of a magic...its through jealousy...

Eisenberg (1988) has discussed the issue of external versus intrinsic causality in relation to the different explanatory models used for mental illness across different cultures. The sources of causation in respondents' discussion of *ukuthwetyulwa* vary between sorcerers, evil spirits, witches, and the concept of another's jealousy. However, explanations of causality which are external and beyond the control of the individual frequently seem to be used. This raises the question about the functions or effects of attributions of external causality. The person who has been 'thwetyulwa'd seems to be seen as a victim, with little or no control over his/her destiny. He/she is literally taken away by and at the mercy of the witches, sorcerers or evil spirits. Thus explanations of external causality may reflect the position of powerlessness and lack of control on the part of the individual who has been 'thwetyulwa'd.

If one takes the notion of the locus of causality in *ukuthwetyulwa* (often in the form of witches) a step further, it appears from the extracts that the witches are extremely powerful and they have ways of gaining extra control over their *ukuthwetyulwa* victims in some kind of bodily way:

t2:...then they (the witches) pin some nails here (points to the head) so that their mind is diminished...there's a drug that they will give them to put on their arm, whenever they are moving, so that they can give them orders wherever they are...

c3:...but before they cut off the tongue (so they cannot speak)

t2:...it's a scratch that is done so as to identify them (the ukuthwetyulwa victims) whenever they (the witches) want to take them...those scratches are working sort of a robot. This is the way they are identifying the people they are 'thwetyulwa-ing

The previous extracts seem to illustrate the powerlessness that is experienced by the *ukuthwetyulwa* victim. Functioning as a robot, having one's mind diminished, and speechlessness through the excision of the tongue may all represent symbolic features of powerlessness. Furthermore a drug is administered into the arm which seems to restrict autonomy and results in the individual becoming a "zombie". One could hypothesise from these features, that through the narrative of *ukuthwetyulwa*, a subtle critique of western medicine may be expressed, similar to well documented concerns about the way in which psychiatry may be used as a form of social control (Kleinman, 1988).

n3...sometimes they will remove part of your body, sometimes your breasts, sometimes your tongue, sometimes your genitals. If they want to do medicine, there are medicines that the witchdoctors use, they want part of your body to do that particular medicine

Witchcraft-related murders have been more widely talked about recently, particularly in the media, and this seems to constitute a very realistic danger. The threat of bodily mutilation at the hands of witchdoctors seems to indicate again a dread of the enormous power of the perpetrators, but it raises the question about why the danger has been shifted away from witches to witchdoctors: the helpers in the traditional sphere.

There has been some discussion of the features of traditional discourse which seemed to emerge in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. A more limited discussion of psychiatric discourse around *ukuthwetyulwa* will follow.

III. THE FORM OF PSYCHIATRIC DISCOURSE

It has seemed while in the process of analysing the text material in this research, that respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* may have been informed to some extent by ideas which appear to represent western psychiatry. Respondents seem to draw on psychiatric discourse in addition to traditional discourse, while talking about *ukuthwetyulwa*. There will be an attempt to highlight some of these features which have been interpreted as being associated with western psychiatry.

i) HOW IS UKUTHWETYULWA CONSTRUCTED?

It has already been said that respondents seem to give an account of stories which they have heard over the years, while talking about *ukuthwetyulwa*. This may suggest that the process of construction of *ukuthwetyulwa* may be influenced by these stories. In contrast though, a more psychiatric description of *ukuthwetyulwa* seems also to be used at times:

t2:...some of the signs and symptoms that you'll get: maybe he will not be sleeping, seeing visions...the parents will come to you and say he is behaving funny, they will say he's mentally ill...they will also tell you that he is running away...he wants to kill himself, he's having some suicidal tendencies...

t2:...some are mentally ill...they fear, they will have a fright at night...they will hear voices...or even see visions...so when it's getting worse, she will be very mentally ill, she will be very much mentally disturbed, and she will want to run away. In the medical term they will say they will be seeing delusions and hallucinations...

In the previous extracts, the western psychiatric training of this respondent becomes evident through the language she uses and her description of signs and symptoms. Being frightened, hearing voices, suicidality, delusions and hallucinations are all well documented in the literature of psychiatry as symptoms of mental illness. Perhaps psychiatric populations may have become so accustomed to this system of understanding mental illness (that is, symptom classification) that it has come to be seen as the only valid way in which an entity is created. This provides an example of the extent to which a constructed entity may become so powerful that it is seen as truth and the constructed dimension becomes obscured (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989). It would appear that while *ukuthwetyulwa* seems to have been constructed predominantly through case histories and stories that have been told over the years, respondents seem to have drawn to a lesser extent on psychiatric discourse, which highlights the significance of signs and symptoms.

Symptomatology is well documented in the psychiatric literature, the most patent example of which is the DSM IV: universally used in western training institutions as a manual of psychiatric knowledge. This may suggest that literature based on classification and other aspects of mental illness seems to constitute an important part of the way in which mental illness is constructed, understood and communicated to others in psychiatric discourse. In contrast to the way in which oral story-telling seems to facilitate fluid and changing constructions of an entity, psychiatric discourse (perhaps largely

characterised by written descriptions of signs and symptoms), seems to take on a more fixed and static form.

int: What sort of mental illness would it look like?

n3: To me it would look like a schizophrenia

In the example cited above, a particular constellation of symptoms in psychiatric discourse is seen to represent a specific disorder, in this case schizophrenia. Although the respondent seems to have drawn on western psychiatric knowledge by suggesting the comparison between *ukuthwetyulwa* and schizophrenia, her comment was in response to the researcher's having asked her to equate *ukuthwetyulwa* with a western construct. It may thus not have emerged spontaneously. However, her response suggests some consistency between schizophrenia and *ukuthwetyulwa*, presumably in the description of symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations. This respondent seems to have drawn on psychiatric discourse in her use of psychiatric labelling and description of signs and symptoms in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. Authors such as Rose (1986) and Kleinman (1988) have commented on psychiatric discourse, and association with characteristics such as symptomatology and psychiatric labels.

From the observation that western psychiatric discourse seems to filter into respondents' conversation, the question arises as to how and why psychiatric knowledge is drawn on at particular times. According to Kleinman (1988), psychiatric labelling has been used in powerful ways, an example of which is the psychiatric patient who is not considered accountable for illegal acts on the basis of a psychiatric diagnosis.

The filtration of psychiatric discourse into respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* could be attributed partly to the fact that all but one of the respondents have undergone training

based on western medicine and psychiatric principles (through psychiatric institutions), and all have had some contact with psychiatry. All but one are also employed by institutions and organisations that are informed by and centred around western medicine or psychiatry. This, as mentioned earlier, is clearly a reflection of health care in South Africa today, organised around the biomedical model. The following extract has been excised in places in order to highlight certain features that were considered to be significant.

c1:...we referred him to the psychiatrist because he's a patient, he was taking melleril...I was to take the child to (a psychiatric hospital) for placement for him to be kept there because I felt that the child was not sane...

The previous extract may suggest that the respondent is informed by and supportive of terminology and ideas that are representative of the training she has received. Parker (1990) has noted the way in which discourses support institutions. The way in which psychiatric language and principles are used in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* may be related to this, that is, it may have the effect of supporting the institutions through which most respondents were trained and employed. Thus one could suggest that discourses which seem to be associated with psychiatry and used in respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa* may serve partly to support those institutions which have been a source of both training and employment.

Traditional healers, more than other respondents, seem to agree that madness or mental illness is a feature of *ukuthwetyulwa*. This, according to them, may take various forms. For example, the witches may actually make the person mad in the initial stages of the process of being *thwetyulwa'd*:

t1: before they (the witches) thwetyula a person usually they make that person a little bit weird in the head...you know, this person will always be frightened as if there's going to be accident, as if somebody's going to attack them, they got a fright. And all the time they are being made weak because something must happen to them...

Alternatively, the features of the person who has been thwetyulwa'd may be talked about as madness or resemble that of mental illness.

int: When you say somebody's 'off their senses', what do you mean?

t1: This person is like a mad person

int: Ja, in what way?

t1: This person will want just to walk, walk around and do funny things, eat things, like soap, just take a bar of soap and eat eat, act in a way that's really mad, and become dangerous, want to hit people or run away all the time

int: The person who is likely to get mad, is that also the person who is likely to get ukutwethylwa'd?

t1: Yes, yes, yes...become depressed over nothing, nothing happened, this person is so depressed, start talking nonsense, this person suddenly even start talk about her own death, you see, suddenly this person go and hang himself.

The language used by the previous respondent (a traditional healer who has had the least contact with psychiatry), seems to suggest a rather colloquial use of psychiatric ideas of

madness, for example, "really mad"; "a little bit weird in the head" or "off their senses". Presumably, this is as a result of the respondent's having had little access to psychiatric literature as she has received no formal psychiatric training. Thus she draws on a common-sense understanding of mental illness in her description of *ukuthwetyulwa*. It would seem that colloquial talk about madness, as well as more formalised psychiatric ideas based on psychiatric labelling and symptomatology, may be interpreted as representing psychiatric discourse in respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*.

Talk around psychiatric labelling and signs and symptoms emerged from the extracts as significant features of psychiatric discourse. In addition, there have been attempts by the researcher to search in the text for talk about history, aetiology, and other features which could be linked to psychiatric discourse, in the same way as has been discussed in relation to traditional discourse. These features however, did not seem clear from the extracts. This may be attributed to a variety of factors and it seems important to reflect on the apparent omission. Perhaps it illustrates that one can make the error of trying to present a neatly packaged argument, in attempt to create some order out of talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. Alternatively it may be that when the researcher is too closely affiliated to a psychiatric framework, there is not the necessary distance which would facilitate an observation of subtle features of that framework. In this way, it may reflect a failure on the part of the researcher, and might require the perspective of another researcher.

There has been an attempt to outline some features of what the researcher has interpreted as traditional and psychiatric discourses in relation to *ukuthwetyulwa*. The way in which both these discourses are used together will be discussed in the following section.

IV. INTERACTION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND PSYCHIATRIC DISCOURSES

The following extract is a more complete version of one that was used in a previous section. The respondent was talking about a 16 year old boy who continued to seem afflicted by *ukuthwetyulwa*:

c1: ...we referred him to the psychiatrist because he's a patient, he was taking melleril...I went to the traditional healer to speak to him to get more information. I asked him specifically if it's amafufunyane, he said no, it's the evil spirits...I was to take the child to (a psychiatric hospital) for placement for him to be kept there because I felt that the child was not sane...

In the previous extract there appears to be some confusion for the respondent about whether the problem falls into a psychiatric or a traditional domain. She seems to want to ascertain which is the correct or the most useful type of management for her patient. Referral to a psychiatrist, psychotropic medication and admission to a psychiatric hospital all seem to support psychiatric possibilities, while liaison with a traditional healer, amafufunyane and evil spirits seem to represent traditional options. She appears to draw on her knowledge of both paradigms to evaluate which would be of maximum benefit for the patient.

In the extract cited above, there seems to be an interesting pattern of rather fluid movement between traditional and psychiatric discourses (as was noted in a different context by Lund, 1994). The context of the previous extract may suggest that the respondent was searching through whatever information she had at her disposal for the

most effective form of management for her patient. (Neither she nor the researcher knew at the time that the patient was later to die under mysterious circumstances). Perhaps this finding could be generalised to suggest that respondents seem to position themselves within different discourses at different times, depending on the circumstances. The fluid movement between psychiatric and traditional discourse as reflected in the extract is consistent with the argument of Potter and Wetherell (1987) in relation to the way in which people use discourses for various purposes, often creating variability and inconsistency in their accounts.

It has been noted that there seems to be an apparent fluidity in the movement between respondents' use of traditional and psychiatric discourses. In the following section, there will be an attempt to observe the purpose of respondents' positioning of themselves in psychiatric or traditional discourses at different times, and the relationship that this may have to power.

V. REJECTION OF PSYCHIATRY IN SUPPORT OF TRADITIONAL DISCOURSE

It has already been said that in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, clear associations seem to have been made with mental illness and western psychiatry. However, all respondents seem to stress that *ukuthwetyulwa* is not a mental illness that can be treated by western psychiatry.

n3: ...if you have been thwetyulwa'd, mentally you can never be all right until you are treated by a witchdoctor in order for you to be okay. Some of them they become mentally ill for the rest of their lives, especially if they are not treated. Most of them, if treated by a witchdoctor, will be okay.

n3: ...they stress it can never be treated by a white doctor, a psychiatrists or a GP or a medical officer. It must be a traditional healer or a witchdoctor or a sangoma

int: Can western medicine, western psychiatry help ukuthwetyulwa?

t2: No, not at all. You find they are giving many, many drugs that make it sleep, they don't treat it, they just make it subside for that particular moment, then it arises again

Respondents maintain that mental illness, although perhaps part of the picture of *ukuthwetyulwa*, is not part of the cause, and therefore cannot form part of the treatment. If treated by means of western psychiatry, it would merely be treating the symptoms, and would not be addressing the underlying source of the problem. In fact, even the proficiency of western medicine is called into question when the respondent says it utilises "drugs that make it sleep". While western psychiatry may offer some palliative relief from symptoms, cure is offered only through traditional healing. This suggests that there is a rejection of psychiatric treatment interventions in the treatment of *ukuthwetyulwa*. Of note, this finding seems to contrast with the findings of Lund (1994): He found support for the utilisation of psychiatric treatment in African patients with *amafufunyane*.

In this research, the rejection of psychiatry and support of traditional healing systems may suggest something about the way in which one is able to maintain or resume some degree of power. Perhaps if one succumbs to alarming and disturbing behaviour such as experiencing intense fear and hearing and seeing strange things it would seem a great deal more alarming if there is no sense of control over the situation. If these unpleasant

experiences are attributed entirely to psychiatric conditions (and the victim does not identify with western psychiatry), the power over these events is solely in the hands of people who preside over western psychiatric health-care, that is, if the *ukuthwetyulwa* symptoms are explained and treated from a different (psychiatric) framework which does not hold any meaning for the victim. However, if this kind of undesirable behaviour is attributed to witchcraft, the power base may be seen to lie more squarely in the domain of the traditional sphere. In this way, traditional belief systems and practices may escape the threat of being subsumed by western belief systems and practices; and there is a greater chance of maintaining autonomy over one's destiny. Thus the consequences of failing to reject a psychiatric interpretation of *ukuthwetyulwa* or a psychiatric intervention may be disempowering.

Thomas (1970) has discussed the way in which positioning oneself in a discourse which supports traditional healing may function to reinforce the role of traditional healing in our society. In this way, traditional discourse may assume a more powerful status than western psychiatry. Perhaps the demand for traditional healers and a space in society for traditional beliefs and practices are secured through the argument that those who have been *twethyulwa'd* can only be helped through traditional healing. There is thus an investment in this positioning, so as to perpetuate not only the work of traditional healers, but also the continuation of traditional belief systems and practices more broadly. This is especially relevant in times of increasing westernisation, because despite growing sensitivity to and awareness of traditional healing in some academic and clinical circles, there seems also to be an increasing threat to the continuation of traditional belief systems and practices.

The danger of the *ukuthwetyulwa* situation may serve as a severe threat to potential victims, and the only hope of avoiding this threat is through consulting a traditional

healer, which in itself requires at least some degree of commitment to traditional beliefs. Furthermore, it becomes clear from the respondents that the situation is not limited to the management of someone already afflicted by fate, but to everyone, as protection against possible affliction sometime in their lives:

int: What kind of person can get it? Is it any kind of person?

t2: anybody who has not been protected, you know with our society when you get to a certain stage then you get this intlanga...with some medication, so it will protect you from all those bad things, so if you are weak and they haven't done that, then they can come to you

It is not clear what is meant by this 'certain stage'. Perhaps it may refer to a life stage or a developmental point at which one is perhaps initiated into the values, beliefs and practices of one's family and society. Thus it is not enough simply to revert to traditional medicine when it is required for treatment. There is a demand to embrace it more completely by undergoing the process of protecting oneself from witchcraft, thus supporting and reinforcing traditional beliefs.

According to Parker (1990), discourses reproduce power relations. It could be suggested, based on the preceding discussion, that when respondents support traditional healing practices and downplay the usefulness of psychiatry for providing an effective treatment for *ukuthwetyulwa*, this seems to enable them to position themselves more powerfully. However, the following section will illustrate that there are times when respondents need to position themselves differently in the negotiation of power.

VI. REJECTION OF TRADITIONAL DISCOURSE IN SUPPORT OF PSYCHIATRY

While it has been suggested in the previous section that a position of power may be assumed through drawing on traditional discourse, it appears that at other times the antithesis of that position may be true. At times the respondent may be assuming a position of power through rejection of traditional discourse. The following text illustrates how the respondent seems to address the danger of denying herself a position of power through embracing traditional ideas such as witchcraft.

nl: ...these are beliefs that come from the traditional people, the people who are not westernised...

int: Are you saying you don't believe this?

nl: No. I don't. I think it's a lot of rubbish, but the people who believe this actually live in fear of these things, and it makes our lives miserable...I actually grew up in the rural areas...I was brought up by my parents who were very traditional...when I was still a child, my mother believed in all these things...my mother never suffered from any mental illness, but she was terribly paranoid, and they never fitted with me these beliefs...my whole family was actually frustrated that I never believed in this witchcraft rubbish, it never found a place in my mind, I couldn't fit it in, and I was actually angry with them most of the time for believing in these kinds of things

It may be suggested that this respondent could be separating herself from the beliefs of her own culture, for socio-political reasons, and through pressure to embrace the dominant ideology of the society in which she lives. However, a different and important

issue seems to be highlighted in the extract: It appears that she may be trying to remove herself from something that is associated with much pain and fear, and to embrace a belief system in which she has more autonomy and control over her life, rather than being at the disposal of the invincible witches. Further in the interview, it emerged how this position allowed her to assume a more powerful role in relation to her mother-in-law, when she frustrated her mother-in-law's attempts at using witchcraft on her through taking legal action against her.

In the previous extract, the respondent says her mother was "terribly paranoid". She seems to use this label as a means of condemning her family for holding onto traditional ideas. In a way, she has used psychiatric discourse to evaluate and reject witchcraft beliefs as something negative and pathological. The text seems to imply that she holds western psychiatry in much higher regard than traditional beliefs.

The same respondent apparently has very little knowledge about ukuthwethulwa herself. She was concerned about not being able to provide the researcher with the information required for the research; so she tried to assist in finding a more informed respondent:

n3: I think the labourer, or let us say the more uneducated black person can give a more detailed idea of what ukuthwethulwa is...

Thus the "more uneducated black person" according to this respondent, is likely to have knowledge of traditional ideas. An apparent criticism of traditionality seems to have emerged, a position which seems to imply that the individual who believes in witches may be inferior to someone who has progressed beyond that; that is, someone who is more educated in his/her knowledge of western ideas. This seems to share features of associations of 'backwardness' with the word 'traditional' (Spiegel and Boonzaier,1988).

In addition to this, however, the respondent seems to show an element of concern for the implications of adhering to traditional beliefs and practices:

n3: ...I always believed that witchcraft was one of those things that made the black people not advanced, and I hope that some day somebody will find a way to bury it one day, and stop the witchdoctors from feeding the people with a lot of rubbish. It's very frustrating for me to see that people are not advancing because their minds are bogged down by superstition and witchcraft thoughts

Thus, the respondent's argument may reveal something about the way in which traditional beliefs such as witchcraft may undermine one's position of power in our society: the possibility is raised that one is less able to progress in a world when one is restricted by traditional beliefs, which render one powerless over one's own destiny. This position may represent an example of liberal thinking (Littlewood, 1992), where westernisation is considered to be the most beneficial for all concerned. It seems as though this respondent, aligning herself to western psychiatry, has adapted her beliefs in a way that has been most beneficial for her. She also seems to highlight the concern she has that traditional beliefs may be keeping people away from a position of power.

Another respondent has very little knowledge of, and does not really believe in, *ukuthwetyulwa* because she has been raised in a Christian family. She related a story that she had heard concerning the death of a man: his face was bloated and his family believed that he had been thwetyulwa'd because he looked different. The respondent believes that the man was bloated because he died of cardiac problems, and the family were "in denial", in response to his death. The respondent laughed on more than one occasion at her own mention of the word *ukuthwetyulwa*. She said pointedly that she was

not trying to impress me; but although she believed in witchcraft to some extent, her Christian belief and a fear of witchcraft were not compatible. It appears that this respondent, like the previous one, has aligned herself to western psychiatry in a way that may seem rather deprecatory towards traditional beliefs (in her suggestion that the family of the man who was said to have been thwetyulwa'd was in fact simply "in denial"). This could be associated with what is acceptable and respectable in western terms, in this case represented not only by western medicine ("cardiac failure"), but also by Christianity. The respondent seems to use the psychiatric concept of psychological defence mechanisms as a means of launching a criticism against witchcraft, perhaps revealing again the way in which one is sometimes able to adopt a position of power by supporting western psychiatry. Her attitude suggests that she may be rejecting negative socially constructed associations of witchcraft (and traditional belief systems more broadly), that is, associations of ignorance and even something which induces humour in the more powerful/enlightened supporters of western psychiatry.

We have discussed something of the interaction between traditional and psychiatric discourses and the apparent relationship of these discourses to power. It would appear that, depending on the context, respondents seem to depart from one discourse and enter the other; and they interact fluidly between the two for various purposes. In this way, we have been able to see how traditional and psychiatric discourse may be used together in an attempt to affect power relations. In the following section we will focus on *ukuthwetyulwa* within the South African context.

VII. UKUTHWETYULWA IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In order to move into a deeper level of analysis of talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, an anthropological perspective is drawn on to complement the discursive analysis.

According to Kleinman (1988), anthropological research highlights the importance of the broader context in the observation of mental illness. The influences of historical and political factors form an integral part of this section (Littlewood, 1988).

An example from the anthropological literature suggests that the concept of *ukuthwetyulwa* is not entirely unprecedented. An element of comparative research has been introduced here, which may be inconsistent with the methodology used in this research. However, the comparison focusses on politico-economic factors and certain features of the phenomenon which I have described as the 'narrative'.

Ardener (1970), in his observation of the Bakweri of West Camaroons, has noted a phenomenon which bears striking resemblance to *ukuthwetyulwa*, although it is called by a different name: *nyongo*.

"A person with nyongo was always prosperous, for he was a member of a witch association that had the power of causing its closest relatives, even its children, to appear to die. But in truth they were taken away to work for their witchmasters on another mountain, sixty or seventy miles to the north...nyongo people could best be recognised by their tin houses which they had been able to build with the zombie labour force of their dead relatives...wherever the nyongo witches and their victims were, they manifested themselves as vekongi: zombie spirits" (Ardener, 1970, p. 148).

Ardener has paid attention to the political-economic context of *nyongo*, and this factor seems to hold significance. German conquest in 1894 in this region resulted in social disorder, economic decline and political oppression amongst the village folk. Then in the fifties, the economy suddenly improved through the banana-growing trade. This was the backdrop for the development of *nyongo*, believed to have been brought in from outside

by evil people. Nyongo closely resembles *ukuthwetyulwa* in its theme of the capture of the victims, who are then used by witches as "witchcraft pawns" (Ardener, 1970, p. 149). This striking similarity may serve as a basis for future research, as there may be other important associations. However, from the information available about nyongo and *ukuthwetyulwa* at this stage, a context where there is racial and political conquest, domination and oppression appear to be common to both. Interestingly, Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) have suggested that the apparent persistence of traditional beliefs and practices may be a dynamic response to changed circumstances. To illustrate this they use the example of how bridewealth has become an important way of coping with the migrant labour system in South Africa.

What seems to emerge in this research, which draws from the example of nyongo, is the possibility that the South African political context may play an important role in the formation and development of *ukuthwetyulwa*. In respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, themes of slavery, servitude, forced labour and domestic work seem to arise, for example:

t2:...the witches would have take her to the forest...she would stay there as a slave...working in the fields, cleaning the houses, ploughing, all the work, collecting wood...

t1:...that person is a zombie. That person's going to work there all his life...

c2:...so those people who have got you will use you during the night, maybe to sweep the floor or do washing, or everything they want to be done in their house...

The above extracts are starkly reminiscent of the South African context. Domestic and farm labour are some of the associations with a country dominated for many years by the apartheid system. Perhaps the discourse of *ukuthwetyulwa* reflects this: the maleficent force (witchcraft) seems to be representative of the white force, under which black South Africans have been dominated and persecuted.

Racial oppression has been a significant factor during the last few decades of South African history. Enforced domestic duties, a type of slavery, and the concept of being a zombie may represent features of this oppression, as black people have literally been forced to work for white people (in their homes and in the fields). In addition, much more could be said about a more subtle and less literal kind of slavery. The focus on forced labour and servitude in the narrative of *ukuthwetyulwa* may suggest that the South African political history with its racial associations emerges and is played out through the discourse of *ukuthwetyulwa*. Perhaps this discourse may serve a purpose, in that it may offer a voice for those who are oppressed. In this way *ukuthwetyulwa* may provide a narrative through which the political and historical South African context is communicated.

Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) have suggested that 'tradition' may be used as a resistance to white domination. It is very difficult for those who are not in a position of political power to oppose the dominant ideology in any direct way. *Ukuthwetyulwa* may be a form of subtle resistance to the sometimes not so subtle imposition of western ideas, including western medicine and psychiatry. In this way a different narrative (that is, a disorder or state of bewitchment) may be used to give expression to political impositions placed on a society over the years. *Ukuthwetyulwa* may function as a very powerful discourse which emerges concurrently to the dominant western psychiatric discourse.

Anthropologists have discussed the uses and effects of witchcraft beliefs. For example, Evans-Pritchard (1937) has described the normative effect that witchcraft beliefs have on behaviour. He has also shown how the belief in witchcraft amongst the Azande developed in their own interests and performed an important role in a functioning social system. According to Douglas (1970) witchcraft is used as a weapon of attack where there is competitiveness or contrast between advantage or disadvantage. That is, the individual who gains advantage is at risk of being accused of witchcraft. It is interesting that Douglas writes about the person who is economically advantaged as the witch, rather than the victim, who is at risk of being hunted down (and killed) in revenge for her evil works (or her personal success). One wonders if, in a way, the victim and the witch may represent one and the same thing under the broader discourse of witchcraft.

In the context of *ukuthwetyulwa*, it would seem that the individual who is progressing in some way in society is notoriously at risk for being *twethyulwa*'d:

int: Why would they (the witches) be doing this to people?

t2: It's through jealousy...maybe they don't want to see you progressing...she doesn't like to see somebody who is clever

t1: ...when there's somebody coming up in life, maybe that person's got money...when you've got a lot of cattle, more than other people...coming up in life, or maybe you sing...and when he works hard, when he's a strong man they (the witches) like it better

Thus it emerges that those who are doing well relative to others in the community are the likely *ukuthwetyulwa* victims. Perhaps attributing witchcraft to the phenomenon that is talked about and interpreted as *ukuthwetyulwa* provides a way of ensuring that no-one is

better off than the rest of the community. It may thus be used as a form of social control, so that people are kept at an equal level; and power imbalances are kept to a minimum. Similar observations have been made about psychiatry (Kleinman, 1988). Thus it appears that in addition to more obvious political issues, the power struggle may also reside within the traditional community. The person who challenges or confronts the existing policy is threatened with *ukuthwetyulwa*. This is consistent with the hypothesis of Ardener (1970, p. 149) who, in his discussion of 'nyongo', suggests that "*perhaps all this (is) turned against those who were thought to have benefitted by the events which had caused so much damage*". It could be argued that in a South African context those black people who excel often depart from traditional beliefs towards a more western-orientated lifestyle. It is precisely those individuals who are likely to become 'thwetyulwa'd. Thus *ukuthwetyulwa* may constitute a subtle and powerful threat to those individuals.

Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) have described how tradition may constitute an adaptable resource for coping with contemporary situation, and is sometimes the only viable means of expressing opposition to white domination. Perhaps the slavery aspect of *ukuthwetyulwa* creates for black people a subversive outlet for expression of the injustice that has been done to them. *Ukuthwetyulwa* may provide a representation or a symbol through which South African history is reflected and played out. Furthermore, one could suggest that perhaps the discourse of witchcraft (into which is embedded the interpretations of *ukuthwetyulwa*), subversively allows the community to express anti-psychiatry and anti-western ideas, but at the same time it may deprive that community of having power and control over their own destiny, because of the nature of the state of bewitchment. Thomas (1970) has talked about witchcraft functioning as both a conservative and a radical social force. In a similar way, *ukuthwetyulwa* seems to have a

dual appearance and a dual function: both revolutionary (anti-psychiatry) and conservative (depriving of control).

While the respondents in this study all to some extent accept western psychiatric models of illness, they also all accept the reality of witchcraft. Ukuthwetyulwa as a discourse seems to exist side by side with psychiatric discourse and is embedded in an entirely different plane of meaning. It seems to carry with it many of the associations of a history of persecution and domination. The material from the respondents may suggest that while many black South Africans outwardly embrace aspects of western psychiatry, they concurrently adhere to a different way of understanding the world: a secret discourse, full of symbolic meaning. The perpetuation of traditional beliefs such as witchcraft, as expressed through this clandestine narrative of the fate that befalls an individual who is twethyulwa'd, seems to provide a dynamic example of the establishment and maintenance of a power-base in a society where the battle for power is ongoing.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored mental health workers' and traditional healers' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. It would seem that *ukuthwetyulwa* has arisen primarily through talk amongst traditional African Xhosa-speaking people, but has evoked recent interest in a psychiatric context. This suggests that we may be able to observe something of the way in which *ukuthwetyulwa* is constructed and interpreted, drawing on both traditional and psychiatric frameworks. Mental health workers and traditional healers were selected as respondents because of their role in society in the definition and classification of mental illness (Eisenberg, 1988). The research (based on a framework of social constructionism), is informed by the theoretical and methodological principles of discourse analysis, with a focus on the constructive function of language and emphasis on the negotiation of power relations. Additionally, an anthropological approach has been essential in locating *ukuthwetyulwa* in its historical, social and political context.

In talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*, there was often a lack of clarity and consistency. However, some central features seemed to emerge fairly consistently. At a purely descriptive level of analysis, findings suggest that *ukuthwetyulwa* is understood by respondents as something which may occur when an individual dies or disappears. The explanation given is that the individual is taken away by witches, usually to a forest, where he/she is kept as a zombie and made to work for the witches. An image or reflection is left in the individual's place at home. The mental state of the individual is adversely effected in some way.

Features of both traditional and psychiatric discourses seemed to emerge in respondents' talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. They seem to have drawn on psychiatric discourse in their talk about signs and symptoms and their use of psychiatric labels. This knowledge is well

documented in psychiatric literature (Kleinman, 1988). Talk using psychiatric knowledge may reflect the contact respondents have had with western psychiatry, most of them having been trained and employed through psychiatric institutions and all having had some contact with these institutions. It may be that when respondents position themselves within a psychiatric paradigm, this stance may have the effect of supporting the western psychiatric institutions through which many of them have been trained and employed. However, it would seem that respondents draw to a greater extent on traditional discourse in their talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*. This seems to involve the development of an understanding of *ukuthwetyulwa* based on stories heard over the years which have come to be associated with *ukuthwetyulwa*. It seems also to be associated with secrecy and mystery around *ukuthwetyulwa*, as well as something which is considered to have a long history. These factors may serve to increase the power of *ukuthwetyulwa* as a discourse. Explorations of aetiology seem to suggest that external attributions of causality, often related to supernatural forces and to jealousy, may reflect a state of powerlessness of the person who has been 'thwetyulwa'd. Traditional interpretations of *ukuthwetyulwa* appear to take on a fluid and changing form, as opposed to psychiatric interpretations of *ukuthwetyulwa*, which uses a more fixed and static description of signs and symptoms.

There seems to be a pattern of rather fluid movement between traditional and psychiatric paradigms for various purposes, especially in the negotiation of power. There are times when it appears from the extracts that drawing from traditional discourse serves to reinforce and perpetuate traditional belief systems and practices in society. But it has been noted too that there are times when respondents use psychiatric discourse (for example, defence mechanisms) to denigrate traditional beliefs such as witchcraft. The incentive for this seems also to be an attempt to access power, in that it draws on the argument that one is restricted and disempowered through supporting traditional ideas.

Thus it would appear that power is continually negotiated through the fluid movement between psychiatric and traditional paradigms in talk about *ukuthwetyulwa*.

An anthropological approach leads to some discussion about what has been interpreted as the narrative of *ukuthwetyulwa*. Ukuthwetyulwa victims, captured and enslaved by the witches, are rendered completely powerless to the extent that they are speechless, their tongues having been excised. This narrative is reminiscent of the South African historical and political context, specifically regarding the powerlessness associated with racial oppression and domination. Perhaps the South African context is played out symbolically through the narrative of *ukuthwetyulwa*. But the power battle does not seem to be restricted to inter-racial politics: the individual who is progressing in society is at risk for being 'thwetyulwa'd. Thus it would seem that the threat of *ukuthwetyulwa* may function as a mechanism of social control, perhaps in attempt to dissuade people from challenging and confronting traditional ideas. Thus it has been suggested that *ukuthwetyulwa* may have effects that are both revolutionary (anti-psychiatry) as well as conservative (depriving of control and autonomy or resistant to change which may bring about autonomy). This may reveal something about the way in which *ukuthwetyulwa* seems to function as a subversive and powerful discourse which emerges concurrently with a more dominant discourse of western psychiatry.

This research serves as an initial, exploratory observation into *ukuthwetyulwa*; and there has been an attempt to investigate the meaning that it holds for respondents. Traditional and psychiatric discourses appear to have been used at different times for different purposes in the construction and interpretation of *ukuthwetyulwa*. This raises the question about the relationship of traditional illness to western psychiatry, and it highlights the extent to which the negotiation of power is involved in this relationship.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1a) Name of informant
- 1b) Language
- 2) What kind of work do you do?
- 3) What did your training involve?
- 4) How long have you been working in this field?

- 5a) Have you ever come across ukuthwetyulwa in any of your patients?
- 5b) If so, how many patients have you seen with ukuthwetyulwa?
- 5c) Please describe what you know of the person who has had ukuthwetyulwa, and how it happened to her/him, and how it effected him/her.
- 5d) What was your involvement with this person and how did you deal with it?

- 6a) What does the word ukuthwetyulwa mean?
- 6b) How did it get that name?
- 6c) Who first called it by that name?
- 6d) For how long has ukuthwetyulwa been around?

- 7a) When did you first hear about ukuthwetyulwa?
- 7b) How did you hear about it?

- 8) Why does somebody get ukuthwetyulwa/what causes it to happen?
- 9) How does ukuthwetyulwa come to the person?
- 10a) What kind of person gets ukuthwetyulwa?
- 10b) Can ukuthwetyulwa happen to any person?
- 11) Is the person with ukuthwetyulwa sick?
- 12) Is the person with ukuthwetyulwa mentally ill?
- 13) How can the person with ukuthwetyulwa be helped?
- 14) Does the person with ukuthwetyulwa get better?

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEWS

COMMUNITY WORKER (c1)

j: have you ever come across this ukuthwetyulwa (ukut) in any of your patients?

p: yes

j: how many patients?

p: so far its still one

j: yes

p: but it happened twice

j: same person

p: hmm

j: when was the first time, when did it first happen?

p: the first time it was in 93, I'm not actually sure about the month, August or July

j: and what happened with this patient?

p: the first time I come across this person, this child was when I was still doing research, when I found out that he has got ukut.

j: yes

p: he was positive to our discs

j: positive to your?

p: discs-questionnaire

j: okay, what does the questionnaire test for?

p: the sort of (inaudible)

j: oh I see, so its just some kind of pathology

p: yes

j: okay, yes, so he tested positive

j: anything more about this person, was it a boy or?

p: a boy, he was just 15 yrs at the time, but now he's 18

j: ja

p: in fact he's a child he's mildly mentally retarded

j: ja

p: and he also had this problem of ukut. and he is also psychotic. The day of ukut when it happened, they believed that the child was on his way home with 2 friends. Then he heard some voices calling his name, of which the voices were not heard by other people. Then he ran towards the direction of the voices, then then friends were amazed where is he going to, and they chased him and he was running like I don't know, like he was very fast, they couldn't catch him, he disappeared into the bushes. Then he was sort of unconscious then. After 8 days he came back to tell the story. He was in middle of the bushes, and there were many people dressed in black with their faces closed, only their eyes and their nose and their mouth. He believed that they were women

j: underneath the clothes

p: hmm, I'm sure by hearing the voices that they will be speaking. Then they put him in the middle of their circle because they made something like a circle, and on his left and right side there were 2 young men. They were having something like a ball, and then they were passing this ball from one another. then he said...

j: sorry, the 2 men were passing the ball?

p: hmm. Then when this boy was him in fact, he got very much dizzy, not being awake. Fortunately enough, 1 of the men whispered in his ear that these people, you see these people who are here, what they're going to do, they're not actually going to kill you, they're going to torture you. You will be kept here, but your picture will still appear at your home, seemingly that you are still alive, but you are not

j: but you're not still alive?

p: hmm, because they will bury him at home of-course, but won't find that he's not dead

j: oh I see, so in fact his body will be taken home

p: hmm, found lying there

j: found lying there and they'll think that he's dead and they'll bury him, but he actually wasn't dead

p: yes. Then this man said, maybe if you can run, that will help you, because now you see them, they're still discussing on how to do this, you see. Then he ran. Then when he came home, he was sent by the people, the community who knew that he was lost. Then this people try to catch him because he was running naked, his mouth was full of sand

j: sand

p: and he was taken to a traditional healer

j: ya

p: when he, because he was still unconscious

j: when you say unconscious, what do you actually mean?

p: not knowing, his mind was not there, he didn't know what was going on

j: oh, ja

p: you see, then the traditional healer tried to treat him the way he treat of which I don't know

j: ja

p: then he told the story as I'm telling it because he was the one who knew the story, people waited for him to say what happened to him. That thing carried on. He was under the eye of the traditional healer. He was still doing std 2 then

j: and he was 16 you said?

p: hmm. And he would wake up at night for instance to (inaudible) open the doors at home, asking the mother if he could hear these voices speaking. At around about 2 pm, 2am I mean, he would ask if they hear the voices and if they hear the shooting and whatever you see, and find out that other people don't hear those things. Then the other day, he was still going to school. He was going to school, and he was found by other children. In khayelitsha there are places whereby there are no houses and there are only bushes you see. Then he was sitting there in the middle of the bush alone, on a stone, sitting like a sad child you see, like a person who's very deep in thought you see. Then they ask him and they took him home. Then the traditional healer diagnosed that its still the same thing, its still the same ukut, then mum stopped him going to school because she felt that one day she would never see her child

j: ya, was fear (afraid)

p: well we tried we carried on with our work, referred him to the psychiatrist, because he's a patient, he was taking melleril

j: he was taking melleril at the time?

p: he's still taking it

j: oh

p: but now he had a problem, its a month ago, he had a problem again, and it was () said it was amafufunyane this time

s: but the mother said its amafufunyane even the day last week, no this week when she was there, coming to report

p: I went to the traditional healer to speak to him and get more information

j: hmm

p: I asked him specifically if its amafufunyane, he said no, its the evil spirits

j: ya

p: that meant there's a time when there's something that pushes him to go wherever at any time, because he would go run about even in the morning at home, at 1, 12, 11, and those places are a bit dangerous at night you see there's a lot of fighting that happen.

j: what makes it different to amafufunyane?

p: what?

j: ukut. What makes it different? How can the traditional healer say its not amafufunyane? Do you know what I mean?

p: I'm not actually sure what is the difference between the 2, but sometimes amaf can talk...can make a person violent, can make a person to move all over the show, like moving with no special direction you see, and that person, all of us maybe we would wonder how did he survived, because he would pass through dangerous places

j: oh, interesting

p: I'm not actually sure what it really...that is with him...but I asked this man because I had to have this my feeling that he's got amaf, then I made it a point that the traditional healer said its amaf then if its amaf so that I can know so that I can leave him to deal with the problem you see, we give him chance you see, because I was to take the child to Lentegur for placement for him to be kept there because I felt that the child is not sane, but I couldn't because I wanted to get sure if its a traditional thing

j: that he can stay and get treated by the traditional healer

p: ya. Because when we speak the truth, if its a traditional thing, the western doctors, they're difficult to treat it

j: yes yes

s: (inaudible)

j: why did he come to you in the first place when you found he tested positive on that thing?

p: he didn't come to me, I referred the child to the psychiatrist

j: but how did he come to you in the first place

p: I was doing research

j: oh that's right, oh, that's interesting

j: okay that's him now, um, lets talk about your understanding about ukut. is it ukutwethyulwa or ukutwethyula?

p: lwa

j: lwa, okay

j: so what does the word mean? to something?

s: ukutwethyula-to be taken by the witchcraft, I mean by the evil spirit I can say it, then you don't know and everyone won't know your whereabouts

p: sometimes it happens other people are saying I've never been I never had ukut. like my sister or whoever close to me I've never witnessed it, I hear from the other people say, maybe you are sleeping at home, and you dream like people are calling your name. Lets say for instance I'm sleeping here this is my bed, there are people waiting outside calling my name, and I open the window

j: hmm

p: I do it but to me its happening as I'm dreaming it but I'm doing it

j: yes

p: but then if nobody else in the house maybe sleeping, I'm gone

j: yes

p: maybe I'm...some other people do come back, because when I was very young, another lady from our village was sleeping...no-one knew what happened to her, she was found mos in our villages there are the mountains, she was found in the mountain in the morning, feeling very cold because she was sleeping when this happened to her with her very short night-dress, you see, and she was taken home

j: so somebody took her...she was taken away

p: they say...ya...she had ukutwethyulwa

j: oh I see, that was where? Where is your village?

p: in the Siskei

j: Siskei, and that was a long time ago

p: ya, I can't remember very well I was doing std 1 or 2

j: ya, so this thing's been around for quite a long time?

p: yes, long time

j: okay, ya, not a new thing

p: no

j: you say its never happened to you before

p: not to me

j: but its happened to people in your family?

p: I cannot actually say because some other times if its children like um the one...my brother's child, he was 10 yrs that time, he's now 18, he always had...he was a child who was always having fears more especially at night maybe he would stand up crying saying that he sees a snake and we can't see the snake we don't see the snake, and maybe sometimes he sees a woman with a bucket full of water throwing water and he would run, sort of escaping this water

j: but there was no water...

p: no. Then he would stand up because he was crying. This day he was sleeping and he said he was hearing...he was seeing 3 men calling him, and then when he was about to open the window, fortunately enough, another...my sister's child, because we were sleeping all together, heard it and he pulled him, ask him 'where are you going, where are you going? so and so'. Then he cried and told them the story. I don't...he didn't...it didn't actually happen, and then I can say in the morning what happened, to get

j: yes, yes. So ukut. means to be taken by evil spirits

P; hmm, hmm

j: to be taken somewhere

p: hmm, even daylight, night...

COMMUNITY WORKER (c2) enters the discussion (s=c2)

s: sometimes you can be found, sometimes you can't be found...then there will be a symbol, I mean somebody there as you, not you actually

p: ya, ya

s: they will bury you, they will thought that its you. Then they will have you there at the bed if you are at the bed, then they will find you there bleeding, whereas you are passed away already

j: ya

s: or swallowed up

p: yes (inaudible)

s: (inaudible) up

j: sorry?

s: as if you are a flower or a dog, like a dog, whereas you are passed away. Then if there is somebody who have got a spirit to stab you while you are dead, then they said there will be a (inaudible) coming out there, not you

j: a what? A bad spirit?

s: no not a bad...a bird flying

j: oh a bird, bird, okay, ya. Can you just say that last sentence again, I'm not sure that I understood it completely. It's difficult to understand you know when you know when its new to you

s: ya, true

j: so its like sometimes the person is um is not dead, but the people think that they is dead and so they'll bury the person

s: ya, hmm

j: and then you talked about somebody stabbing you when you're dead?

s: hmm, sometimes if your family, they can see that no this is not you, they will say that maybe no (c1) was not having such eyes or this nose and all that. Maybe (c1) will be swallowing, still swallowing or bleeding, usually bleeding, if its like that. And if there is somebody they will shoot you or stab you...

p: what happened last year in our village too, the other child was at a party with friends, great party, they drank and they were drunk...(inaudible) and he was dead...when they went there to fetch his body of-course the policeman he was found that its a man...they take him to the undertakers place...kept him there...the day of the funeral, they found that no man its an old man, not our child, then they used that...they stabbed him, stuck...in fact they wanted somebody to work the body because they believed that that this is an unnatural death, you see

s: they wanted the traditional healer

p: ya, to work the body then he was stabbed, when he was stabbed flies came out of the coffin

j: hmm

s: lot of flies lot of flies

p: hmhm

s: no body was there

j: no person?

p: no

j: hmm

p: wasn't there, they buried those flies

j: so what do you think happened?

p: they still...they kept on using the traditional healer, and the traditional healer said he wants maybe the shirt, and he was still going and knocking at home that 'I'm not dead'...'I want to go to school' He was doing std 7 then 'I want to go to school' Everyday knocking at home. But the traditional healer promised that he would bring him back

j: so the family hear him come knocking at the door
p: hmmm
j: saying 'I'm not dead, I'm just somewhere and I can't be here'
p: hmmm 'I can't come' and 'I'm hungry', 'I don't get food'
s: and then when they open the door to let him come in
p: he always run
j: do they see him?
p: I'm not actually sure. Then the traditional healer said he would bring him back. I don't know, I lost the contact with them, I don't know what happened

j: so how do you think it got the name ukut.
p: I don't know, its a thing that have been there long time
j: so you don't know who first called it that
p: no, no
j: okay. Funny that people like me don't know about it hey, something that's kept quiet?
p: its not actually happening within your community
j: no it doesn't seem to be, hey?
p: no
j: but happening within your community for a long time
p: yes. Bayathaka. Lots of witchcraft
j: yes
p: they've got all these ()
j: all these?
p: these magics
j: ya. So when did you first hear about it, when you were young?
p: ya, but I didn't know what was it
j: oh
p: but now I link it, when I link it with this thing of this child I (inaudible) its the same thing, and when I hear even from other people trying to explain how does it happen then I sort of think.
j: when you were young what did you think it was?
p: I didn't know
j: so it was just something you knew through your family and your friends
p: hmm
j: and now why does somebody get this ukut.?
p: I don't know, its because of the witchcraft, like for instance maybe they want to...like for instance they want to...to...let your family feel very sad...because its really frustrating to know that your brother was buried and he was killed in a way that you all cannot understand...and then you hear his voice...you see him...but when you try to get him closer to you you are unable to because...if it has happened like that because they say these people are always having something, is it underneath the tongue? or on their hand? It's on their hand because the tongue isn't there it is cut off
s: but before they cut off the tongue they cut off later
p: they put this thing to you so that...
s: so that no-one can see you...
p: can come and catch you, even if you see...
s: if you saw them and talked to them, then no-one can touch you
j: so they cut off the tongue and they?
p: no there is something like a ball that you keep in your hand, you don't open it
s: like a tokolosh's ball
p: then when like for instance you come and knock at your home, say 'open for me' you are hungry mos 'open for me I am hungry, give me food'...then they want to let you come

in, when they open the door you go back again...and its really painful...I think those people who do it I think they want to spite the family for what reason I don't know

j: what people would do it, the spirits you mean?

p: this witchcraft

j: are they people who are living who do it?

p: ya

j: so they make it happen?

p: hmm they've got their magics, because also that time the witchcraft...the witchdoctor would say 'its so and so maybe your family its so and so maybe your back, its so and so maybe your neighbour

j: oh so there's a person who's doing it

p: hmm

j: I wonder why

p: I'm not sure of that

j: hmm

p: can happen even if they don't know you, like for instance I can say in Cape town no-one knows my background and whatever, but maybe by having friends and maybe my friends will feel jealous of me, and then they would do that maybe to I don't know to spite who this time because my family won't see me

j: so the person doesn't necessarily do anything wrong

p: no sometimes he has stolen somebody else's money or have beaten my child and I say its the last time you will hit somebody's child, you see, if I'm the witchcraft

j: what kind of person can get it?

p: anyone

j: does it have to be a child?

p: anyone. And most of the time, sometimes it happens if people are just lost, maybe was not even sleeping maybe was gone, maybe to town whatever, then the person get lost for something like maybe 2/3 days

j: hmm and is the person with ukut sick?

p: (pause) (laughs) I'm sure he becomes sick when he is still unconscious

s: but before ukut

p: no

j: and is the person with ukut mentally sick?

p: no, anyone

s: they can twethyula me

j: ya, they can do it to you hey, and to me

s: hmm, and to you to

s: I'm scared to talk with these things

j: yes, scared to talk about it

s: yes, because maybe the witchcraft the witchpeople can hear us that we are talking this in front of you (laughs)

j: ya, no I can imagine

s: I'm scared I can be one (laughs)

j: ya, like if you talk about it it might happen

s: hmm, also it happened to our location

j: where's that

s: in Siskei, it was 1992 or 3 I don't know. My friend they was having a baby. Then the child, I don't know whether she was how many months, and he passed away, I don't know whether it was he or she, then she passed away, then after that, she get lost the mother, just get lost, then everyone in the community look to hunt to look for her but they couldn't find her...after 3 days she come home...and then she said...and then she said...she have seen people...she have seen them...so they were passing...they were passing her...she was breastfeeding her child at that time they were see...looking for her, and then she was staying on...there is a house which doesn't stay anyone...it hasn't got roof and also no

windows and doors...she think she was dead there, but there's no-one could see her because of evil spirits. And then this happened several times. People could look all over. Then she was sick she became sick after that. She will get lost 2 or 3 times and then she will come back. When people ask her she won't talk now until she set her fire...she put paraffin on herself while she was sleeping with her husband...she left her husband on the other side of the room and she pulled tied the thing and lock him in other room then she put paraffin and lit and she's passed away. Because everyone who should go there and ask, she will say I won't tell anyone

j: so it was very frightening for her

s: hmmm, until she get died

j: ja

s: so that thing there in our location happened a lot

j: hmm

s: so

j: very scary

s: they've got magic, lots of magic

j: have you ever had a patient with ukut?

s: no

j: you described earlier but I don't think it came across, what does the word ukut mean?

s: it means evil spirit, maybe they can take you even if you are not sleeping, even here. Maybe I can die here. Then they can maybe I'm there at the bush already

j: if they take you you don't necessarily die, hey

s: you die sometimes, sometimes you don't die

j: ja. And how did it get that name do you think?

s: I don't know

j: when did you first hear about it?

s: shoo, long time, forget now

j: and how did you hear about it?

s: it was just stories

j: hmm. stories from your parents and grandparents

s: yes, yes

j: ya, like um, what had happened before, people who have had ukut before

s: yes. I've heard about another lady who had ukut.....

j: why does somebody get ukut

s: maybe evil spirits

j: why did it come to them, what did that person do?

s: nothing, if somebody's jealous of you, don't want you to succeed at life...just want you to be dead...or make the parents feel sad about you...maybe they will see that you are a hard worker...you do things like...they don't want to see that you are doing...you are progressing

j: so then how does it come to the person? How does it work?

s: what do you say, I can't...

j: how does it work, how does the person get this ukut?

s: as I said before and (C1) said, she will hear maybe you don't know that there are voices calling her, then she will go there or she will get lost without anyone then you will go again look for her then he will come later on or maybe he will be find on the bush...its different

j: different with different people

s: hmm, ja

j: ya, and what kind of person does it happen to?

s: anyone, child or

j: ja. Is there anything else that you can tell me about it

s: mmm-mm
j: how is it different to amafufunyane?
s: its different because ukut...somebody with amafufunyane...the amafufunyane is there inside you...then you are doing funny things like you are having much power to do anything...then if me and (C1) and (C3) can catch you you will hit us, and even if professor can come...a man...then you will have that power to hit them even if there are 8...so you'll never know how do you get that power...and the person with amaf she will or he will throw down and she will talk different languages like Zulu, Sotho, you know
j: ja, so its different in the way that it happens
s: hmmm
j: but its also with the evil spirits
s: ja, ja, true...they sell that they say they sell that amafuf
j: hey?
s: they sell it
j: they sell it?
s:hmm. You can buy it even on the chemist...traditional chemist
j: oh
s: hmm. They are selling it. Long time they used to there was lots of them. In 1980's there at home, lots of people were having amafuf
j: hmm
s: because everyone was buying it from East London
j: hmm, but why would they want it?
s: they would say its one cent from there
j: what? But why would they want it?
s: I don't know that's jealous
j: oh then they would give it to people
s: hmm. Ja, then...no...that man who is selling it just selling it...the you will take that muti...and pour it like this...go to (C2) or go to somebody...then they will come to you...maybe there will be somebody on the door knocking ne...then you thought there will be somebody there but when you go there you say 'come in'...then its amafuf coming inside (laughs)...its like that
j: ya, ya, so they didn't mean to buy it
s: who?
j: the person who bought it from the traditional healer, they didn't mean to buy it? Or they did mean to buy it?
s: they mean to buy it so that maybe can...maybe she's jealous of me
j: hmm, she could do it to you
s: hmm, she can go
j: so that she knocks on the door and you say 'come in' and then...
s: no, she don't knock
j: ja? Who knocks?
s: the evil spirit
j: okay okay
s: she will blow that powder...then you will thought that there was somebody's knocking...I don't know how they are coming but different ways...they come through ear teeth...then you'll have this amafuf...but you don't know different things
j: shoo, that's quite confusing
s: hmm. And its scaring
j: scary
s: hmm. Because I've seen lots of people there in my location...I'm scared
j: and it causes lots of misery hey?
s: ya
j: and the family
s: ya

j: and its very different to when somebody's phambana
s: hmm, ya, its different, because she can stay as well as I am after having that talking...she will be well and doing everything
j: oh
s: but when they want to stand again talking, they like to eat bread and gin, dry gin
j: oh, ja
s: I don't know what else
j: the person whose got ukut?
s: amafuf
j: amafuf
s: like to eat too much
j: but now how is ukut different to phambana? The person's well you said just now
s: ya its true, and there in site 6 where I was staying in Cape Town, there was a man in 90...91...between 91 and 92...he was stabbed and then by another man...a young man...who was not staying far away from me... and then they take him to (inaudible) but the day she was staying he was also staying there in Queenstown...by the time there were...she was going...he was going to be taken to be buried in Siskei, I mean in Queenstown, there was lots of people there coming to (pause) to do a sort of a like a church people...to welcome her body
j: hmmm. Okay, so he's not actually really dead, he's got ukut
s: mm-mm, because we didn't even bury him
j: ya, but they thought he was dead, because they saw him, they saw his body?
s: yes, but they took her to the () but we couldn't find her
j: ya
s: at all, even mother couldn't bury him, at all, even now this year, we couldn't find him
j: and this happened a long time ago, when did this happen?
s: () June
j: now can this be treated, can the indigenous healer make it better
s: how? Because no-one knows that he's got to be ukut
j: ja, but if a person has ukut can they go to the indigenous healer
s: ja, like this one
j: but its not really making it better we don't think?
s: he is better
j: oh he is better
s: hmm
j: so it does work to go to the traditional healer
s: if there is symptoms of that, but if somebody just disappear how can you do it?
j: ya
s: you'll never know

COMMUNITY WORKER (c3)

j: have you ever come across Ukut in your work there?

p: no my dear

j: the word ukut what does it mean?

p: according what we are hearing is that a person is just normal and that it is something that is happening, which we really don't know, can't explain what is happening. And then we think the family think that somebody is dead. Which is that somebody is not dead. So when they try to bury them they will see somebody else, maybe you are as young as you are now. And then they see you with beards and something like that. Then they will think uh uh this is not Jenny. And they will take a knife or anything which is sharp to stick to stab you, to make it proof that you really are...

j: your family?

p: ya, the family of the one who is dead. If they've got a query ukut

j: ya

p: case even now if you are sick ne, you are not sick to dying. Maybe you've got a headache now once, then you go to bed, then you gone. Or sometimes you just walk and say okay bye-bye Jenny I'm going home. Then you don't come home. Then people at home think you are () you don't know where you are. That's how the things go.

j: this thing when they stab you is that only when you are dead that they will stab you?

p: yes only when you are dead

j: ya, then what happens?

p: if you are dead then you are dead, but if you are not dead you will jump up, things like that

j: oh I see

p: yes. Or change faces or things like that

j: oh I see. How do you think it got the name?

p: oooh, but I can't explain to you that one

j: hmm, who gave it the name?

p: (shrugs shoulders)

j: who gave it the name?

p: yooo! (laughs). I don't know because since we are babies we know that people are ukut, so I don't know where's it coming from, it's a long process

j: oh, I was just wondering if its a new thing

p: no its not, its not.

j: so you always heard stories about it when you were growing up?

p; yes that's true

j: who did you hear about it from?

p: from the families, or maybe your mother's ne go to that funeral and that happened in front of them. And then they will come home and they will say yeh, that person he is not dead he's been ukutwethylwa'd and things like that. The other people who are believing in that, they say if you've got a query ukut, so you mustn't slaughter a cow whatsoever for a funeral. Because by doing that, the witch, the, what would you say the witchdoctor won't be able to bring back that somebody who is ukut'd by the witch. So if you slaughter things, because of the blood, so their medicines come...make that particular person to come back. But if you don't slaughter anything, then when they work even if its after a year or 2 yrs it doesn't matter how long, but that particular person will come home, but she will be dirty and long fingernails (laughs)

j: say more about that

p: () if that person will come home, she will be a different person because she's not washing all this period she is away. Long nails and dirty and then you need to scrub...

j: so where was she all that time?

p: some of them do remember, they were in the bushes or mountains, but its a story in which there's a lot of not knowing things what was happening, its on and off, ya. And even they will say, 'I was seeing you there', which you know you were not there, but they will say they were seeing you. But sometimes they tell you that you were there but you were there really. And then you will be cross, and they will make some other more witchcraft things which will keep that person quiet to tell the other people's graves, for now she will be accusing them, say you were doing that to me, and doing that to me. Because they take you as a teacher to go and teach there the other people. If you are a lecturer whatsoever you do, what you do here with the community they would like you to do there, where you don't know, if you a driver whatsoever, so all the type of people are there. They take a child a bigger person anyone they want to take

j: anyone. Who takes them?

p: that's what we don't know. Because we are accusing the family. You say this one doesn't like me, maybe because of my child is so sick, then she has ukut'd my child. Then, that's where the confusion is, because there is this accusation in the family. Even if you go to those people who are traditional healers, they will say, 'no your your mother-in-law whatsoever, in the family, then they will say is jealous of you, la-la-la, lot of stories. Then you got that idea okay she doesn't like me, that's why my child is so sick, because of you, that's how it goes. So I rather prefer the people to cure, not to tell what is happening. Because those who tells you a lot, they won't cure the child, so rather let them bring the child back to you, then you can see what you do. Because they will tell you oh this Priscilla doesn't like you that's why he's doing that to you. Then you've got that idea. Then you create more problems for that particular person because its not friends anymore

j: I see so you're saying its better to get the person cured...

p: cured

j: how would you cure the person though?

p: if those traditional healers which only know. Me by myself I don't know (laughs)

j: shoo, tricky hey

p: it is really

j: but people haven't done much research on this hey

p: no

j: I wonder why. Why do you think?

p: maybe they take it as unbelievable, maybe they think of psychosis whatsoever

j: but its not psychosis hey

p: I don't think so because it can happen to me even from here. To you too.

j: do people get better sometimes?

p: ya. But sometimes, hey, we bury that somebody. Then that traditional people will help you try to bring that person back. And then they will do things which we don't know how they work. You can come home during the night, but you don't enter your house. You stand there by the gate. So I don't know what is confusing you not to come inside your house. And some traditional healers fail to bring you totally in. You just come and stand there by the gate, and you don't talk, you just stand there so that people can see you not dead: you go away. That is what worries me. Because that is even not even nice for a family. You know that your mother or your husband has passed away, but at night you see him there. You go and try to fetch him, he runs away.

j: how is this happening with the person, I mean, what do you think is going on with the person with ukut?

p: what?

j: what do you think he's doing in the middle of the night?

p: is what, he is he is used by these people who've got a knowledge of using people at night, because we believe that...

j: because these people who've got this knowledge, are they living people or dead people?

p: living people () people which we don't know, they are using their skills at night while you are sleeping (laughs) they don't use their skills during the day

j: so it only happens at night then

p: uh uh, you can be ukut'd during the day, but what is happening, you when you are dead, we think you are dead which you are not, so those people who have got you will use you during the night, maybe to sweep the floor or do washing, or everything they want to be done in their house

j: so this ukut is not that you are taken by evil spirits, its more that you are taken by living people

p: you are taken by living people using their spiritual things which we don't know, because they don't come straight to you and say 'sisi, masihambe', they don't do that, they use their things how they know it they call your name, then you hear the voices, then you follow, then where you follow its where you meet them.

p: hmm

j:oh

p: but luckily she didn't die. I will just tell you a short story what happened to her. She was on Thursday night. So at home we were having supper ()...on the way back she hear these voices which, I wasn't with her, you know, so she tells me, then she came home, I was not even in my home that day because we had a meeting for somebody who passed away () and I was there in the

j: hmm. And where you meet them its where you meeting the living people

p: yes

j: does it only happen to Xhosa speaking people?

p: I think so

j: does it happen to Zulu people?

p: I didn't stay long with them, but since they know these medicines have cured them, they must know these things. Because some other people here if they use our traditional healers here then they fail to bring that particular person, they had to go to Zululand or Swaziland so that they can get that somebody. Although I didn't stay with them and talk to them about. Seems our people who've got problem go to those places, I think they must know these things

j: but you don't think they get it, you don't think Zulu people get ukut?

p: how can they cure a thing which they are not used to? I've got that query

j: oh, so we don't know really

p: yes because I didn't sit down with them and ask them so I can't stand for that. But because of our even our traditional healers here, if they start to ukutwasa themselves to become those traditional healers, they go for 6 months or for a year o Jhb or Durban, then they come with those 'banje banje, I don't know what to call them', like blankets which they wear this way, so things like rastas, all those didn't get sick here, they were sick here and then they were cured by the Zulu people. When they come here they've got all the knowledge of these traditional things. Which is not even the other medicines here in our country they haven't got they have to get it from there, because some of them do order these things

j: so this is not something that happens to white people?

p: I don't think so (laughs). We've got a belief that white people can't be witchcraft, I don't know why. But that's what the people are saying (laughs)

j: so it seems like it's just people who are black

p: hmm

j: coloured people?

p: I don't think so, because they've got that name, 'towenaars', if there is a name there must be a thing which taught the people to use

j: what does towenaars mean?

p: towenaars, is those witchcraft people

j: ah

p: 'jy toor my jy, hoekom toor jy my so' (laughs) so I think although so how are they using that? Because they like to do that (laughs)

j: oh okay so

p: ya they like to use evil swearing and then ya 'ek het nie tyd vir die towenaars en n toormens' () got a swollen foot they will think 'hey, iemand het my getoor kyk hoe lyk my voet nou' (laughs)

j: have you got to go now?

p: ya (nodds)

j: okay, what kind of person gets ukut?

p: I'd say any kind, can be a child or adolescent, or

j: is the person with ukut sick?

p: from my understanding he's not sick

j: not mentally sick?

p: uh-uh, but after that he will get, because the first thing what's going to happen when that child is hearing those voices, that will happen. Even my eldest son's daughter she is now 16, when she was 12 she had this thing. But now

j: she had ukut? everyone here...she just see those people, but what she was frightened was those people were wearing the black pantihose on their face, so other house...then my mother when she comes in, then she said okay, she called her on her name, she must put the TV on because she doesn't want to put the TV on, she's afraid of breaking it...she didn't talk, she just fell down from that thing she pulled the () down she, and then the tongue was () and coming back...we didn't talk...and then my mother said to the younger one, okay go and call your mother, I don't know what is wrong with this child cause she is in the house...then they went and they called...first I didn't want to go because people are seriously there because they just hearing that somebody passed away...so now if I had to come out and (whispers)...yey, what are you sitting here for because your child is dying there now, when I say dying then they jumped, what I saw it was that she was lying down on the floor like somebody whose getting fits...and then the tongue was () and she was crying because she tried she wanted to tell us what was happening but we didn't hear (hah-hah-hah) so and then I had to go back to that house and call another mother...she took me to go and look for somebody who can help me, then I took this child, put it on behind my back...then we left to look for help...but what happened...me myself I was not right I was unconscious so I didn't know where to go so people are following me...they don't know what I'm doing, then later when we are passing the () they say to me ah mama but where are you going...then that time there was a clearance to me, I'm going to look for help...you don't talk we just walk we just follow you, we've passed all the sites where people are and if you need a taxi you take a taxi because now we are just following we don't know where we are going...then that time it looks as if there is a clearance to me...then I say okay, I wanted to go to that somebody because they even asked me where do you want to be...and I said I want to be to that woman...and they knew the woman, which is a traditional healer, and they okay, let us go they showed me the direction because now I've lost myself. the child is not talking, she's just like this, yhoo, I didn't know what to think (laughs) and I went to this house and it was late that time it was something to 10. This woman say I'm tired and I'm sleeping I won't be waking up...I say okay, I'm here and I call my name I say I'm here, so if you don't want to help me its up to you, but I'm leaving the child here, if he's dead then its your fault...then she say oh is it you, then she jumped and she took that child and she do those things which I don't know...burn some things there, but it took a long time for that child to say mama...it was not only for that day, it took her 3 days to talk...not to talk as she used to talk before, she used to say a word because she couldn't say any full sentence now or full name or what...if it's mama she used to say ma, then its some seconds then she say, then say me, but what she said to me when she was talking, she said to me she hear voices

j: how old was she at the time?

p: 12. and then she said to me mama I've heard voices, and she doesn't know who the voices will be, they are calling her name...but when she wanted to give an answer and say

hello, then the tongue just start, so when you go to those people who which you went to who want to know, what happened here, they say, its the ancestors which helped he not to be twethyulwa'd because they were calling her for that. But it took me a long time to get that child right.

j: and now, how is she now?

p: no she's fine now

j: but it was different to an epileptic fit hey?

p: no different totally. Because after that here in the house, she say they are here mama, here in the house, they are calling me, give me where I want to go to them mama...then we see its only me and you in the house there's nobody, but she said mama, and sometimes she say mama, they are watching me, let me go, then you don't know what to do...she's even frightened for she can't say this is Jenny this is whatsoever

j: shoo

p: yoo, very sad ya

SENIOR NURSING SERVICES MANAGER: n1)

m: I never really put my mind to find out what it means, I presumed that it means to be made to go away, for some reason, I never found out for what reason. But at the same time I thought maybe I'm wrong. And what I was, before I went to lie down I realised that the labourers are here, they are real Xhosa men who actually don't speak english, and I thought if they come back at 2 from lunch, I'll call them and say to them what is ukutwethyulwa? Because I realised that there is a word in Xhosa that is ukupechetwa, and that is the word that means when somebody when they believe that somebody has made them go away from home or from their husbands or from their wives, then they say bapechethywe, but ukuthwethyulwa, I've never really made an effort to find out what it means I presumed it means to go away

j: are you Xhosa speaking?

m: I'm Xhosa speaking

j: yes. That's fine, I'm more interested to hear what you have to say

m: okay

j: are you a senior nursing services manager?

m: no I'm a middle manager, I'm a junior matron, in nursing terms I'm called a chief professional nurse

j: oh I see, and is that in the community psychiatric nursing

m: in the community psychiatric service yes

j: so you were trained through UCT:

m: no I trained at Frere Hospital, and at St Monica's, Valkenberg and UWC

j:(whatever you say is important). Have you ever come across ukutwethyulwa in any of the patients that you have seen?

m: no

j: any of the patients that you have heard about through your students or through your nursing sisters?

m: no, not really, I've been in the community for years before I got into my position and I've gone through a lot with the psychiatric patients, I actually opened the first clinic in Gugulethu in 1982, but this term ukutwethyulwa I don't know what it means, I don't know what it is

j: so you've never heard about it before?

m: I've heard about it but I've never made it my business to find out what it is

j: what did you hear, how did you first hear about it?

m: I can't remember, but people use it a lot, real Xhosa people

j: what's your understanding of it from what you've heard?

m: I, as I told you, I understood it to mean that somebody has been made forcibly by using muti to leave their homes or leave their husbands, but as I say, I could be mixing it up with ukupechetwa, which is something else

j: are they made by humans, by other people?

m: yes

j: to leave their homes

m: yes, apparently, that is the belief

j: do you know anything more about it than that, I mean who does it? Who would use this muti against them?

m: there is a belief that if somebody doesn't like you, somebody maybe is in love with your husband and wants you to leave, or you marry somebody's son and she's not happy to have you as a daughter in law, that they would make you leave, but as I say, I'm not sure if the term Ukutwethyulwa is the right term for that kind of bewitchment

j: ya. Do you know of anybody who it happened to?

m: no

j: so you've just sort of heard of it in passing?

m:hmm

j: from friends or?

m: I don't think I heard it from friends and I don't think I've heard it recently, I cannot remember where I heard the term from, but I know there is a term like that, although I can't put my mind to it now where did I hear it from, or in what sense was it used

j: ja. Has it got anything to do with mental illness?

m: no I don't think so, I don't know

j: the muti, how does it make people go away?

m: well there is a belief that some herbalists can actually sell you muti that if you use it against a certain person that that person will do what the herbalist told you that that person will do

j: so is there any understanding of where they go?

m: I don't think they will go to any particular place, they will just go away from the place where they are not wanted. But as I say, these are beliefs that come from the traditional people, the people who are not westernised, and its very difficult to give sense to them in a western society, because they actually don't fit in

j: who doesn't fit in?

m: the beliefs

j: are you saying that you don't believe this?

m: no I don't I think its a lot of rubbish, but the people who believe this actually live in fear of these things, and it makes our lives miserable

j: and you say its more people in the more traditional rural based areas

m: yes

j: and you yourself you're not from that kind of situation? You're from CT?

m: I'm not from CT, I actually grew up in the rural areas

j: yes,

m:and I was brought up by parents who were very traditional. My father actually went around on Sundays with traditional healers and other people, and my mother believed in witchcraft, my mother believed that people would kill her for this and that and I grew up actually quite miserable because of her beliefs because I couldn't take them most of the time, I couldn't make sense of her beliefs, but I could see that she believed these things, so I actually grew up and they never found a place in me to stay, so I actually grew up with a lot of superstition and people who believed in these traditional things

j: do you remember at the time feeling that you were uncomfortable with it, with your mom's beliefs?

m: I actually told her that I was uncomfortable that they are a lot of rubbish and she must get it out of her mind, but she wouldn't

j: and then was it when you started nursing that you found yourself fitting into a different kind of belief system?

m: no, even when I was not nursing, even when I grew up, even when I was still a child and my mother believed in all these things that people would put poison in your food if they didn't like you and people would do this and that, my mother never suffered from any mental illness but she was terribly paranoid, and they never fitted with me these beliefs, I couldn't find a place in my mind to fit them in and I always believed that what will happen to you is what you believed in, and I always said to my mother if you believe that people will bewitch you then you will feel that way because your mind is set on that

j: I'm interested in the difference, in why your mom believed in that and you didn't

m: ya, its very hard to pinpoint it because my whole family was actually frustrated that I never believed in any of this witch craft rubbish, it never found a place in my mind, I couldn't fit it in, and I was actually angry with them most of the time for believing in this kinds of things. And the first time I realised that soon after I got married, my mother in law didn't like me, and I found her writing a letter about me one day and when I walked in she quickly hid the letter from me. I made it my business to find the letter and I found

she was writing to a man in King Williamstown and she was asking him to come to CT and help her get rid of her daughter in law

j: you?

m: hmm, because her daughter in law was going to squander her money, my father in law had just died and she had received a miserable R3000, but in 1974 I suppose that was a fortune. And she wanted this man to come to CT to fix her daughter in law. So I took the letter away and hid it...my husband asked what are you going to do with it, I said I am going to take it to a lawyer. It was the first time in the history of the black people that they were taken to a lawyer for writing a witchcraft letter, because my husband thought I would go to another witchdoctor, say that my mother in law wants to get rid of me...no I've got no time for that rubbish...I took the letter to the lawyer...so he wrote to her, and said in SA, witchcraft is not permitted, and if anything should happen to her through your interfering with her psychologically, we will see to it that you will be dealt with severely...that stopped her in her tracks...so I never believed in witchcraft, I always believed that witchcraft was one of the things that made the black people not advanced...and I hope that somebody will find a way to bury it one day, and stop the witchdoctors from feeding the people with a lot of rubbish, its very frustrating for me to see that people are not advancing because their minds are bogged down by superstition and witchcraft thoughts.

j: ...what do you think keeps people in it, what do you think keeps people embracing witchcraft?

m: you see, witchcraft makes people think they can achieve things. They think through witchcraft they can get rich, they think through witchcraft they can get the women they want to marry, they marry them by force...they can do things that other people can't do...you're either a Christian and you take your problems to God, or you're not a Christian and you take your problems to the traditional healers...they (the traditional healers) never tell you anything positive, they are forever telling you somebody's going to kill you, somebody's going to do this to you, somebody's going to do that to you...I feel they break families...a lot of patients here who are mentally ill, who do not speak to their families, who do not want to see their families, because when they start getting paranoid, they go to the traditional healers, and they say your aunt or your uncle is jealous of you, wants you never to get on in life...so the patient sits here thinking aunt so and so doesn't want me to get on in life...when they're discharged from hospital the first thing do is go and assault that person or kill that person in some instances...and I feel that if the traditional healer hadn't...they wont say who, they'll say somebody close to you wants to do this or that to you, so the patient looks at all the people in the family and thinks oh that one never liked me...so I feel that they cause a lot of trouble amongst families

j: is the person who has been 'twehlyulwa'd are they sick in any way?

m: I presumed that the person would leave their home or their husband for no apparent reason, and go and stay in another area where they couldn't explain why they have left their home. That's what I understood. Although I must say I have never really met anyone who has been living in another area and not knowing why they live there. It's just the way I thought it would be.

j: do you know how they would be helped?

m: well unfortunately, much as I don't like traditional healers, the people who believe in witchcraft...are usually only helped by traditional healers...they would look around for a traditional healer who was good at treating that thing

m: its a pity you don't interview that labourers because they are from a very traditional background, and they would know more about it than I

j: why would that be?

m: well I think the labourer, or let us say the more traditional uneducated black person can give a more detailed idea of what uku is and where it comes from and how it came about, and I think they would have more structural information on uku, they would actually know, because they are the kind of people who actually believe in that kind of

thing...we have been so long in western society. For instance in my childhood, I probably did know what is uku...but since I'm in western society I might have lost track of what that was, it might have been discussed with me when I was a child

COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING SISTER (N2)

(Most of this interview was lost because I forgot to switch on the tape. I have recollected the bulk of the interview from memory)

The respondent has very little knowledge of Ukut because she was raised in a Christian family. Although she believes in witchcraft, evil spirits and the like, she has no involvement in it, but she has the same basic understanding of it that other have discussed: That is, that people are taken away by witches, who have power over people, in the form of evil spirit possession. She says it would not happen to her, because she is not involved in that kind of way of understanding the world. She did not ever hear about it as a child, because of her Christian upbringing, and she has never come across it professionally, despite her work in the community. None of the sisters she knows have either come into contact with it. She did say however, that the only person that she has ever heard of who has been twethyulwa'd, was a man who was travelling from CT to the Transkei. She says he died of cardiac problems en route, and he became bloated as a result. When his family saw him, they said he had been twehtyulwa'd because he looked different because of his bloated face. That is, he looked so different (although his features were basically the same). However, she believes that the family were merely in denial, in response to his death. Sr Gogo says rather clearly (of her own accord) that she is not merely denying her belief in the phenomenon because she is trying to impress me, it is because of her Christian belief. The 2 are not compatible, i.e., you cannot be afraid of witchcraft and be Christian at the same time.

She heard about it for the first time after she got married, from the people in the community, and she does not know anything about it, e.g. causes, how it comes to the person except that which has already been mentioned. She says it is not in her belief system so she does not know about it. She says the person with ukut is not mentally ill. I ask if the person is sick in any way.

g: if it is believed that the person has been taken away (laughs) that person is not expected to be seen alive again, so as far as I know its not related to mental illness

j: so the person isn't expected to get better because they are not expected to come back

g: ja, they are kept as zombies, if they are ever found

j: and if they are found?

g: I don't know

J: you don't know if they would ever get better

g: I don't know what the witchdoctors would have to say

J: Could you just explain to me how you understand ukut

g: to my understanding its when a person has disappeared from the community, and people can't find the person's whereabouts, they will say that person has been twethyulwa'd

g: yes, twethyulwa'd (laughs) if there's such a word. That person is not expected to be seen alive again. And there is a belief that he could be taken by sorcerers or evil spirits

j: the sorcerer and the evil spirits, they're different aren't they? Because the sorcerer's alive and

g: a person yes

j: so how does it work, is the person taken by the sorcerer or the evil spirits?

g: um by abathakatha

j: sorcerer

g: yes

j: what do the evil spirits have to do with it?

g: well sorcerers use evil spirits

j: oh I see.

COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING SISTER (N3)

j: have you ever heard of ukut?

b: ya I have, in fact I once saw one patient when I was working for the day hospital in Khayelitsha, 1992, I was doing night duty, and this man came, the testicles were cut half way, not completely, and he was half naked, and then he was brought in by the wife and the sister, and then when we wanted to know more, they say he has been taken by the witches, so he has been ukutwethyulwa, but there was no time for me to go into details of what is happening, why people are doing that, why it is done, who does that, its only after you asked me to find out more that I happened to know about it (note, I did not ask the respondent to find out about it)

j: so this person, how did he come to have torn/cut/broken testicles?

b: it was cut by the knife

j: by the witches?

b: by the witches

j: and then how did he come to be in hospital, the family?

b: the family brought him

j: and then what happened?

b: I remember we referred him to GSH because the testicles were cut up, so he was taken immediately to GSH, but I couldn't follow him up and find out what is happening. He was not confused, he was not disorientated, he could tell exactly what happened

j: what did he say?

b: he say these people they took him from his house, and then they put him in a balloon which is used by the witches, and then they took him to place like a forest, and then they managed to they cut him, but he managed to fight through and then managed to run to get home. Khayelitsha mos its built near the forest if you know Khayelitsha, he managed to escape from the forest home to report to his family

j: what do you mean a balloon?

b: they call it a balloon, its something that the witches use during the night, their transport, its called a balloon, I don't know whether its called a balloon or not. It flies on the air, its not running like a car or a train, it flies on the air

j: ja, so they took him away at night

b: at night this particular one he was taken at night. He was brought in in the early morning, about 2 or 3. But I can't remember for how long did they keep him there

j: so he actually ran away there

b: he ran away

j: and he wasn't confused or anything

b: he wasn't-he was just scared

j: so what do you make of all of this, I mean, how do you understand it?

b: well it was the first time for me to hear about it. Unfortunately I grew up in a town, I have never been to the rural areas, so I don't really know much about those things, it was for the first time hear about it then. As I said to you I couldn't ask a lot of questions, we were concentrating on the bleeding, and then also arranging an ambulance to take him to GSH...I did ask a lot of questions (before coming here today) from patients and from staff, especially those who grew up in the rural areas, most of them they say its pure witchcraft, it can be done during the day, or during the night, they say its mostly done by people who know you, its very uncommon that somebody who doesn't know you do it, it means someone who knows you is bewitching you, they take you, its either you will see a bus, and climb onto that bus, meanwhile its not a bus

j: hmmm, its maybe a balloon

b: its a balloon in the form of a bus, you will travel there in the bus, and you won't know where you are going to, until you get where they want you to go to that particular forest, they call it egqadana

j: is that the forest?

b: ja the forest, that is used by all the witches. Its strange because you can go to any town, any place in SA, its called egqadana. Its not necessarily that those from CT call it egqadana, and those from PE call it another name, all the places they call it qgadana, have you ever heard of that name, qgadana

j: no, is it usually a forest near the town, near any town?

b: ja, its where the thing is happening, if its in CT it will be a forest in CT, if its in PE, it will be a forest near PE, and then as I've mentioned they say sometimes they will remove part of your body, sometimes your breasts, sometimes your tongue, sometimes your genitals. If they want to do medicine, there are medicines that the witchdoctors use, they want a part of your body to do that particular medicine. If you remember at some stage in Khayelitsha, there was a woman whose breast was cut, and then I don't know if it was the community or what cut his finger, I mean his hand, they both landed up in GSH, it was on TV, on the news. The reason why the woman's breast was cut its just cut by her boyfriend, apparently the witchdoctor wanted her breast to do a particular medicine, so the boyfriend offered to cut the girlfriend's breast, and then afterward it was discovered the community cut off the boyfriend's hand...if you have been twethyulwa'd, mentally you can never be all right until you are treated by a witchdoctor in order for you to be okay. Some of them they become mentally ill for the rest of their lives, especially if they are not treated. Most of them, if treated by a witchdoctor, he will be okay. They stress that it can never be treated by a white doctor, a psychiatrist, or a GP or a medical officer. It must be a traditional healer, or a witchdoctor, or a sangoma.

j: is that because its witchcraft not medicine?

b: ja, its not medicine

j: ja, but you said the person if he's not treated, he'll be mentally ill

b: ja

j: what do you think could be the connection, why is the person who is possessed by spirits mentally ill? Or are they mentally ill?

b: from the people that I've spoken to all of those that they know that this has happened to them, they are mentally ill if they haven't been treated by the sangoma. But I really don't know how is it connected

j: ja, but from what you say it seems like the person who has been twethyulwa'd is mentally ill

b: no no, I can be twethyulwa'd when I'm not mentally ill, but when I come back I will be mentally ill, I will be definitely mentally ill, until I'm treated by a sangoma

j: oh I see. So the witches will take them away, and they might do something to them, cut off

b: they might cut off a part of the body, then they'll let you go. They might kill you as well.

j: frightening thing

b: it is, I'm sure

j: have you only met this one person with it?

b: the person where it happened to him

j: the person at the day hospital

b: the patient, ja, he is the only person who I saw who has been twethyulwa'd

j: have you heard of any other people that have been twethyulwa'd?

b: not somebody that I know, but from asking people like you said I must do (which I didn't) people said ja I know someone in my location, especially from the Transkei, Siskei, I know sos and so has been twethyulwa'd, I know so and so has been twethyulwa'd, but I don't know of anybody in particular, me myself

j: when was the first time you ever heard about it?

b: only 1992 when I was in Khayelitsha

j: oh I see, so you had never heard about it when you were a child...I grew up in PE, probably that was the reason

j: oh I see, do you think people hear more about it in the Transkei

b: in the rural areas I think so, that's where witchcraft is ripe, and people believe in it a lot

j: do you believe in it?

b: partly I do, there are certain things that I believe

j: I mean it sounds like people really are doing this

b: ja, they are doing it

j: ya, as far as I understand the witches use the evil spirits, is that right?

b: ja

j: how does it work?

b: I wish I can know, I wish I can know. But I know part of it they use medicine, the medicine they take from the trees, and they crush it and make medicine out of it, they let you drink it, they force you to drink it

j: oh I see, the mental illness side...what sort of mental illness do you think it would look like?

b: you mean when they come from there?

j: ja

b: to me it would look like schizophrenia, because when it happens, someone told me that sometimes this person would hear somebody calling her, say Jenny come here, and then you would follow that person, and there's no person at all, but she did hear a voice of a person calling her. Sometimes there's a voice that she or he is not familiar with, and then when he follows that person which nobody sees which is visual hallucinations, by the time they () to this forest called qgadana then she will see somebody that she knows

j: what do you mean see somebody that they know?

b: the voice will call you and you won't recognise the voice, for example, and then you will follow me when I'm not even there, by the time we will reach there, you see oh, I didn't recognise this voice, now I can see this is Sr Beja who was following me, I've got Sr Beja now, though I didn't recognise her voice

j: oh, ja, I see, so the witches actually meet them in the qgadana?

b: in qgadana ja. That's where they do all the dirty work, the evil spirits

j: why do you think the witches are doing this?

b: (laughs)

j: I know, its a stupid question

b: no, its not stupid. I think they enjoy it. They enjoy it and sometimes they get money, like when they are going to cut part of your body and make medicine so they make money out of it. Some of them are making a living through that

j: it sounds like these witches might be witchdoctors

b: some of them are witchdoctors, some of them are just witches

j: like a bad sangoma, are there good ones and bad ones?

b: there are good ones and bad ones. There are those good ones that will help you with your problem, and I don't know if you will believe, maybe you will say I'm not happy in my marriage, my husband is fooling around, my in-laws they don't want me, and then she will give you the medicine for yourself, take this, wash everyday, put on your face, and then steam with it, that is the () part of you, its only for yourself, to make yourself more attractive to your husband and to the in-laws. There are those that I would say man, so and so has hurt me, I want him dead, or I want him on a wheelchair, or I want him to go crazy, I want him to go mad, then they will give you the medicine for that, putting it in his food, or you do whatever, you put it in his office, in his table, and then he start getting sick or die or something bad happens to her. So the sangomas are different. There are those who do a good job, there are those who do ugly things

j: so do you think somebody is a witch just because they want to be, and they've got those powers?

b: not always, as far as I know, when you become a witch, its like it runs in families, I don't know if you have heard of that, not in genes as such, if my mother was a witch, there's a belief that before she dies, one of the children, she must leave that with one of her children. If she happened to choose me, then it would be for me, then I don't have a choice, I've got to be witch as well, even if I don't like. And also if I want to hand over I will hand over to someone. Its just like a sangoma. A sangoma it runs in families. If a mother or a father was a sangoma, one of the children to take it over they will give it to him. And then you will grow up with that thing from childhood, you know having those dreams of sangoma...

j: ja. You are Xhosa speaking?

b: definitely, pure

j: I just wanted to ask you about your work in, you're at Avalon?

b: I'm at Langa

j: oh that's right in the day hospital

b: ja

j: so you see outpatients

b: ja

J: its interesting that you have only seen ukut once

b: because they know it can never be treated by the doctors, probably that's the reason we don't see it

j: ja, even the mental illness side of it, even the fact that when they come back from being twethyulwa'd they're mentally ill

b: ja, you mean like a person coming for the first time, when you take history, you mean that they never mentioned that one has been twethyulwa'd

j: no, after they have been twethyulwa'd, when they're a little bit not right

b: mentally ill

j: ja, would it still not help then to come to western doctors and that?

b: well according to the people I've spoken to it won't

j: right

b: until the sangoma does it

j: ja. Um, the word ukut what does it actually mean?

b: to be taken away by witches using evil spirits

j: and I mean how long has it been around for?

b: ooh, I really don't know, seemingly its an old thing

j: it seems like it. I'm still not clear why a particular person would get it, why the witches would single out one particular person, do you know?

b: no

j: would they have done something wrong?

b: probably if they are jealous of you

j: right, so if you are doing well

b: probably, or if they don't like your family, or if they want to hurt your parents, then they would do it to you. Or if there's been any disagreement or any quarrel between the 2 families, its like a revenge sort of. Because they say nobody who doesn't know you would do it, it would always be someone who knows you. So I'm sure it has got a reason somewhere, why was it done

j: the power that the witches have over you, is it from the medicine, or do they cast a spell, or do they just come a forcibly come and take you away? I'm just wondering how do the witches get you?

b: its seldom that they do it forcely, they do it through the evil spirits, you are not aware that its happening

j: the evil spirits will possess you

b: ja

j: ...can it happen to any person?

b: I think so

j: black/white
b: I don't know about white (laughs) but it can happen to any black person
j: ...some people say it has happened to whites before
b: really, done by whites or blacks
j: I'm not sure..you say after the person becomes twethyulwa'd, they become mentally ill, but when the witches first get them, they're not sick?
b: yes, they're not sick
j: can the person get better if they see a traditional healer?
b: yes, most of them they become completely well
j: But you know I've heard things like when people think that they're dead, but they're actually not dead, they've been twethyulwa'd, have you heard about that?
b: yes
j: could you tell me anything about that
b: mmm. They say after taking you to qgadana, it will be as if you are dead and you are not dead, what do they call it in English? It means you are still alive
j: mm
b: but not mentally okay, you can't do anything. They are hiding you somewhere. Sometimes they hide you in a wardrobe, sometimes they hide you in a forest
j: and what happens to your body?
b: your body's there, you are not dead
j: oh I see
b: they call it you become isithunzela
j: like a zombie
b: ja, like a zombie, ja, right
j: is there
b: sorry I don't know how does your family get your body, because there is a funeral, there will be a funeral after you are dead, though you are not dead you are a zombie somewhere, I don't know which body do they take in order to bury you, I don't know
j: ja. What would they do with you in the qgadana?
b: they keep you there until you die
j: do you know what they do with you, why would they want you?
b: just to be a zombie, roam around
j: roam around. And a zombie means, izithunzela-somebody who is what?
b: its somebody who doesn't know anything, just roaming around, not washing, not eating, but unfortunately we don't see those people because they're hidden away, they hide them away

TRADITIONAL HEALER: t1

J: ...so you've seen someone with ukut only once before?
m: yes, this twethyula business, I really saw it for the 1st time, and you know when I went to that boy, he came just from CT, he got so sick, and the witches they were really fighting over him, to have him, and when I came the the people, because it was December, everybody was on holiday, it was full of people, but the first person who came to help me to pick him up, so can give medicine in, he just clamped in, they had take him out, because he clamped in and he became also sick
j: oh the person who tried to help him
m: to help me-pick him up so I can put medicine-nobody had to touch him
j: what happened if they touched him, did they become sick too?
m: somebody became sick so they knew foul play is on, I also knew, and a lot of frogs were there, coming out from his waistline. You know there they lie down on the grass mats on the floor, and the frogs were coming out like anything
j: where were the frogs coming out of?
m: just out of the bed, out of the waistline, and at one time I got cross I took a little assegai I killed one frog-because I was going to-I half burnt him, but I couldn't concentrate on that, because I had to concentrate on that man because his arm was calling me to him. And when I went to him I could see its too late now
j: and then what happened?
m: its no more him. And when I went out here, I was with my uncle and other people, like a doctor never goes alone. Outside something was just tamping on my leg, and it was that frog again that I thought I killed that's half burnt. Ya attacking me outside. Ya, its very dark, but my uncle had a torch so that I could see
j: was he the only person you've ever known with uku?
m: a a lot of people. I mean people that come to me to talk, but this is something that I personally experienced. Now that night that man died. That early morning I was so cross. I know they twethyulwa'd him, they killed him on purpose...I threw this money in their faces because you did this, and I took my washing, I went to the river: there's where I saw him
j: who?
m: this man that died-he's not dead
j: so he wasn't dead when you saw him at the river
m: no. You know he was coming...its only those stepping stones coming towards one side, so he was coming there with his coat over one shoulder
j: after they had killed him?
m: after they had killed him, after he was dead, that day they buried him, I saw him the day they buried him...the funeral was there...and I was doing the washing there at the river because I was very cross and I, never anybody die like that in my hands, so I was doing the washing there he comes I saw him, he came but he didn't want to look in my face because he wanted to spare me, he had the coat over his shoulder, and he just sort of said 'mmm' because they take the tongue out so he can't talk...I just sat there looking at him and I also felt funny, sort of frightened, because its very far from home, the river. So when he walked away, he didn't look my way he looked that way, and it was only because he spared me, and I took all the washing, I stopped everything I was doing and I went home to my uncle's place to tell him that I saw this man: they twethyulwa'd him. And again, my uncle was also twethyulwa'd because, you know those dongas, big dongas, when I go there I see stones coming towards me, throwing stones...so I knew I felt somebody was dead was there, they don't want me to meet the others, otherwise it will be dangerous for me, they no more like people now. Yes, they can't communicate with people, they are zombies now

j: hmm. Could you explain to me more about ukut

m: my child, the witches, what they can do is very very impossible. You know, somebody can have an accident, and he's not dead, its not him. And there mostly in the Transkei they don't take the people to the () where they go to the ice. It's where they twehyulwa'd people. When a person die today they bury him tomorrow. It's where they twethyula the people

j: where, sorry?

m: in Transkei. So its difficult here because they take the people to the mortuary where they are done things, you know so they can't really twethyula that person, but in the country they can twethyula that person: They change automatically that person to something that's not him. You know many times a person go to identify a person, then they say its not him, and its that person

j: how do the people change them, what do they do to them?

m: you know, they change them into anything. In those days when they take a assegai to that person, just something, a baboon or anything will just jump up and run away.

Another man they twethyula'd there in the Transkei then I was there also, they tried twethyula you see, but he was strong to fight with the witches. He ran away, the people saw him the people chase him, now he also run away from the peoples, because he's been made dom, not to understand what's going on. But then they caught him, they take him to doctors, so they must medicines to put him right

j: and do the medicines help?

m: they did help, but he's not all there, he's not really all there. He experienced something that's very supernatural that's not a very natural thing

j: who does the ukutwethyulwa?

m: this ukutwethyulwa is a group of people that we call the witches, they are witchcraft people

j: are they living people or dead?

m: they're living people...see, there are times they come together, they do all miraculous things, they've got all the spiritualist fighting against people, and when there's somebody coming up in life, maybe that person got money, suddenly you hear that person's shot by somebody or dead, suddenly dead, that person is not dead, now, they want to make a joke about that person, they want to laugh at him, they want to see him, they eat that you know that...you know that thing they make beer...now that is what they eat-what is left of the beer-they eat that you see

j: okay, so how do they, when they want to get hold of somebody to twethyula them, what do they do?

m: first thing, that person must pretend to be dead, or he must get lost, like there's a certain place where there's no doctors that I went to work once. When I go to look for a med-there's a medicines you must look at dawn, not at dawn, when the sun goes down, you must look for that medicine. When I come back its full of people, people are looking for me, because they twethyula the doctors. They just get lost. So they all look for me. They say hey you must be careful, you must always take people with you, because here the people get twethyulwa'd

j: so when the person gets twethyulwa'd they get lost

m: they get lost or they have a sudden death, and all the time it is not them they are burying there. You see, that person is a zombie, that person's going to work there all his life

j: for the witches

m: for the witches

j: what sorts of things?

m: go to work in the land, they're going to work hard those people, they must forget about their own family. Sometimes they knock on the doors of their own houses, but then they're frightened for the people, they run away when they open the door. You know

those things are hard to believe, but those are things that are there...you know who was throwing the stones that I mustn't come there, that was my uncle, he was frightened for me to go there, because the other zombies they won't think nothing to harm to me

j: the people who've been ukutwehyulwa'd?

m: ya

j: and your uncle is he better now?

m: oh no, he's still there, but then I saw in a vision that his mother that was dead, and father, they went to fetch him there, and they kept him somewhere until he really dies, so he can be one of the dead people, spirits. Do you understand?

j: I understand yes

m: so that's what happened to my uncle, that's where I saw them

j: so how many people have you known who have had this ukut?

m: oh, my child, so many people, especially in the Transkei, where they do it when you've got a lot of cattle, more than other people...coming up in life, or maybe you sing, that's a really thing, you know that boy they twethyulwa'd that I was trying to heal, hoo people hear him singing there in the dongas, hoo, he could sing that boy

j: shoo, so its something that other people don't have

m: yes. He can sing, they twethyula'd him because he sing for izithunzelas, izithunzelas are the zombies

j: ya

m: and when he works hard, when he's a strong man they like it better, because then he's going to be so strong there

j: when was the first time you heard about it?

M: my mother used to tell me, and I used to grow up frightened of things and my mother used to tell me, I was very small at the time. One thing I was a little bit frightened of, I thought I'd be twethyula'd not in that manner of witchcraft, in a manner of spirits in the water. And once I spent 3 day, I was 14 yrs old, I went with a school for a picnic in Outshoorn...its happened in a funny way to me, It happened I hide from everybody. Now everybody's looking for me, they are crying, I can see they run past me, they don't see me. I thought oh well it's too late to show myself because I'm going to get a hiding, they used to hit me a lot because I was a very naughty person. So I stayed there 3 days. Then one day the doctors came there with my mother they were hitting drums, they had a cow, they had a goat, hitting drums, well I thought nobody's going to hit me now. I had a special place where I sleep. I remember how I chase a rabbit. I forgot I was a person. It was like I was that time the animal, one of the animals I represent

j: did you feel somebody had a power over you?

m: no no no, I think I was that animal I represent, because I wanted to eat this rabbit. You know I come to a bush, I thought it was a leaf, all the time it was the ear of the rabbit. Then I chased that rabbit the whole day, I was like a animal, even the what-you call its was coming out my mouth, because I wanted to eat that rabbit, no I wasn't a person that time. I was like a animal

j: ya, and that wasn't because somebody made you like that

M: no, its because ukuthwasa, I was that animal now, I was the dyakalashe (small animal) who we represent, but then we also represent the big one whose name I can't name, you see, so that was another kind of ukuthwethylwa. I was only 14 yrs, and I couldn't be a doctor yet, but then they slaughtered, and they danced...lot of doctors came, ooh they made a fuss of me, then I felt very good because today I'm not going to have a hiding, because they used to hit me a lot. Yes, that was one kind of thwethyula. There's other things that I'm not allowed to talk about

j: okay. If you talk about it is it dangerous?

m: like the things with the baboons, a certain kind of a baboon

j: is that part of uku?

m: yes, I can't talk about that, I'm not allowed to talk about that

j: yes, that's fine, I just want to ask, if you do talk about it is it wrong or is it dangerous?

m: yes, its dangerous and its wrong, I'm not supposed to talk about it

j: okay. So you've seen a lot of people with it, have you tried to heal people with it, have you tried to make them better?

m: that's been twethyula'd in that way?

j: ya, any way

m: no, that's the natural way. Yes yes, that's why you do this that you don't like. When we heal somebody, maybe this person had amafufunyane they must go to Valkenburg or so, where we healed a person like that. When you see the person is healed, you must cut him in, you put certain kind of animal medicines, lot of things together, that protects a person, so nobody can twethyula that person you see, to protect the person not ever to be twethyula'd in that way of the witches. Can't go against that kind of twethyula to be taken in the water, or to be taken there in the mountains or in the bush. That is something to do with the ancestors

j: so why would you protect a person whose had amafufunyane from being twethyulwa'd?

m: um, in the first place, before they twethyula a person usually, they make that person a little bit weird in the head

j: oh I see so they might have amafuf before?

m: ya, sometimes they go into a danger, you see, maybe they go in a car, or they just put themselves in a train, and you don't find the really reason why, and its all the time its amafuf, like a devil like a tokoloshe talking into him, 'go there', and now they do all the impossible things

j: so often a person who becomes twethyulwa'd is not behaving normally

m: yes, yes. That person sort of have amafuf. Not this amafuf they get because they smoke dagga and drugs, that's just something different, they just get like that they just get so weird in the head, so they must do impossible things, they must have a sudden death, that's very impossible. You know they go and interfere where there's danger where that person may be stabbed, only once stabbed and that person dies, was not supposed to die

j: and then he becomes twethyulwa'd

m: and then he becomes twethyulwa'd...

j: is it any person who can be twethyulwa'd, or is it a specific kind of person?

m: yes any person can

j: a woman or man or child

m: any

j: black or white?

m: black or white, that's why from small people get this cut in, its to prevent such things

j: who would do that, the sangoma?

m: there are other kind of sangomas who work with the good spirits, then there are other kind of people who also learn what they do, so we can protect the people against it. You can go to that person and say 'I want such a person to die'. Arrange a accident for that person

j: yes, and what do we call them, witches?

m: no, I wonder what you can call them, because they only work with medicines, they don't look fortune or anything

j: oh, I see, like bad herbalists

m: yes. You want somebody maybe you jealous of that person, then they say oh just bring me the spoor of a cow, so that person must have a accident, now you see, maybe that person's been protected by your dead person like your grandparent protecting you, so you don't get that accident, but you feel there is something wrong. I also get white people coming here...

j: when you cut them in you put medicine in to make it so they don't get-

m: ya, to stay there to protect them. You only do it once in your life

j: is it a secret what sort of medicine?

m: yes, its only my secret

j: okay

m: only certain people that knows that

j: oh, but its things that you make

m: its other things I order from other places, then I mix with certain things to protect that kind of person that anything they want to happen

j: how long have people been twethyulwa'd for?

m: oh, for centuries, ooh, this witchcraft if for a long time. But now I think even the witches are getting more clever. So we that's why a person must always learn more-how to protect a people from people with bad hearts and jealousies. Only jealousies that cause those things

j: you know that people like me from Valkenberg, we work with people, you know we call them mentally ill sometimes

m: yes

j: is there anything the same about people who've been twethyulwa'd and people who are mentally ill?

m: yes sometimes, sometimes they are lucky not to be twethyulwa'd, lucky to go to places to be helped, and sometimes I have people there from Valkenberg, Dr Kelly, you know him? he used to send people to me...

j: when a person's got ukut, if they had to be taken to Valkenberg and made better with those sorts of medicines, would it help?

m: It will not help. It will not help. In the end something-he must be twethyulwa'd, something weird or funny will happen to kill that person. That person was wanted to be twethyulwa'd...if this person has been made to be weird like that and go to Valkenberg, if that reason was to be twethyulwa'd, anything even there like those that hanged themselves, will happen because they need them

j: is a person who has been twethyulwa'd, is that person mad?

m: oh yes, that person changed now. He's like a zombie just listen to those people, he's got no tongue to talk to himself

j: do they cut off the tongue?

m: ya, they cut the tongue off, ya, they change him in many ways

j: in what other ways?

m: they hide them certain places; they work at night for those people; in the Transkei they work in the fields; they make bricks; when they are seen, they kill that person that sees them, they must not be seen, even the thunzela's: the thunzela's are the people who have been twethyulwa'd. Do you understand that's many ways to be twethyulwa'd?

j: not really

m: the first people who are twethyulwa'd are the people that's been made zombies of, and the other people that are twehtyulwa'd are the people who are taken to be sangoma'd. But then when the people don't come to fetch them, they stay there all their lives, then they call other people to come also to be there, like the people whose been thwetyulwa'd in the river, so nobody went there to take the cow there, if they cry they kill them, nobody must cry, and if they come with a cow, those people come out alive, that's also ukutwethyulwa: being taken by the river

j: so the word ukutwethyulwa means to be taken...by the spirits?

m: yes. Ukutwethylwa is to be taken by witches, and the other ukut is to be taken by spirits

j: is that the one with the sangoma?

m: sangoma. That's the one that I was thinking, you know one day I picked up a book, -the water babies-I would like know about the person who wrote that book because that thing is known in our tradition...you should read how the people live under water, a person just go there because you're sad, but then the life goes on, there's still another life there

j: so who would live underwater whose been twethyulwa'd?

m: say somebody whose been underwater and whose never been taken out, no cow, there must be a dark cow, a dark brown cow taken there to have that person back. If they never did that that person stayed there. That's how we all are doctors now because grand grandfather mother is there, there's a place there in the Transkei, now everybody who have been called to do this work must be taken there, take some offers there. So the people cried, the first time I went I had to go and we stopped the work because you're not supposed to dry, because they thought of those that went that never came back. So on the 3rd day I went there I build a house on top of the river, take offers there, so you become a doctor that way, you pass out

j: and if nobody finds you, nobody comes to bring the cow do you stay under the water?

m: forever but sometimes you call some of your relatives to that place

j: the dead ones

m: ya. You call them. So this doctor of ours-sangoma-that's how it goes on and on...

j: how many people have you tried to treat who have been twethyulwa'd?

m: I never treat a person after he was twethyulwa'd, only somebody was twethyulwa'd out of my hands, and I saw that person after he died. But I know of a person that they caught. The people all ran after him, they caught him he was running away form the people, because he was already making weird that he must be frightened for the people. Then the people got him. Then he was taken to another doctor, those doctors that are dangerous they can also be good, that did a thing like that. That doctor make him right, but he still a little bit weird, he could never be in his real senses like before

j: how do you think the doctor made him right?

m: he cut off the marks they had on him, the stamp that he must be taken, they must know him anywhere, so he take off those marks and he fight against them

J: have people come to you before they've been twethyulwa'd and you've been able to help them

m: yes, that I do, before something like that happens

j: you know that because they start to become a little bit mad

m: yes

j: what would happen then?

m: ya, you know this person will always be frightened as if there's going to be accident, as if somebody's going to attack them, they got a fright, and all the time they are being made weak because something must happen to them so quickly stop that

j: what do you do for them?

m: I got special medicines for that, then I cut them in so they look for him they can't find him

j: have you managed to help them, do they get better?

m: yes many people, that is my work

j: and did anybody go on to be twethyulwa'd after that?

m: never, it was only that person, it was a very quick thing, the witches work from so you must come from CT to there to be twethyulwa'd, that boy

j: did you say you can only be twethyulwa'd in the Transkei?

m: yes, but then they called him, they call a person from far

j: oh I see, so the person can be here, but they get called

m: they get called. Can call a person from far, that I know because I also do that, like when your husband goes away ... we've got medicines here to call him home-for the right reason, you see, always for the right reason, so we know that when a person is far you can call that person, they call that person to twethyula him. So that's why he went without luggage, without nothing, he leave his young wife pregnant, he don't care of he got money or not, he must go to the Transkei

j: ya, this is that same person?

m:

j: and he died in your arms?

m: he died in my arms, I had to go before he died, because I can see he's changing...he changed into a different person, like he was light in complexion, suddenly he became dark and ugly, you see, and I see the frogs and all that, and I saw the evil spirits around me, so I was also in danger that time, then in the night my uncle he had a torch, he took me there, he light the torch, goodness the frog which I stabbed, its got a mark its half burnt, but he jump at me. I was also in danger, I had also to run away, I had to go away before they change him altogether, because he was keep on calling me to go away, because he could feel

j: so is he the only person who you've had contact with whose been twethyulwa'd

m: that's the only one that've had close contact with

j: and your uncle was twethyulwa'd

m: my uncle was also twethyulwa'd, and I saw that man that was running away from the people

j: which man?

m: this man they run away, and they took him to a doctor to help him come right. There was a thunder storm you know. He's used to thunder storms he's born there. Suddenly he got so frightened, he ran away, it was thundering and lightening, that's how it happened that he became off his senses. And then they brought him to me, he was frightened to go home...so he travelled all the places with me...so he became weird, off his senses, he even he nearly was a little bit dangerous because usually he has a stick, and one day he took the stick to one of my patients, but then I can say the Lord is also with me because I put it right that he can go home

j: after that, so he became well

m: he became well

j: when you say somebody's off their senses, what do you mean?

m: this person is like a mad person

j: ya, in what way?

m: this person will wan just to walk, walk around and do funny things, eat things, like soap, just take a bar of soap and eat it-act in a way that's really mad, and become dangerous, want to hit people or run away all the time, so I have managed to calm people down-to calm them altogether, so he stayed with me, most of the time my people used to stay with me...(my children said that it was very frustrating having sick people staying with us, so I stopped doing that)...

j: do the people come with (you know people who comes from Valkenberg)-those sorts of problems?

m: yes, you know one of them is a faith healer now. She got a lot of people...she's a faith healer and she's also a sangoma...she was from Valkenberg she couldn't walk suddenly you know some of them-they get weak they can't walk-she was carried in here...she didn't use any medicine, because a doctor-I think that woman wanted to twethyulwa her-a doctor that was there long time ago and that knew me said she must come to me-I must lead her to a place there Monwabisi where the sea is, under the bridge, she's been waiting for us there, you know all the doctors didn't want to go-I went by myself...before you finished talking the sea comes like like the sea goes-that day I didn't have a hope for my own life, but I had to-you must do what you must do, you mustn't be frightened to die when you are a doctor. After everything was done, I said 'I don't want you to become a sangoma, I only came to make you strong'...so they nearly twethyulwa'd her but I prayed there, take offers, in the sea, and she was saved in that way

j:...so the only person that you've actually known with ukut is this patient that died in your arms

m: ya

j: the other people you've seen when they were a little bit mad before they were twethyulwa'd, and you helped them
m: yes, ya
j: and none of them went on to become twethyulwa'd
m: yes
j: okay. How do you think it was given that name, is it just because it means to be taken by the witches?
m: that's ukut
J; ya
m: its got 2 meanings, either its the witches, or its the ancestors maybe in the river, or even in the mountains they can take you to stay there, in the caves
j: the witches will take you
m: they are doing the twethyulwa the most
j: and then also the ancestors a bit
m: and also the ancestors when you must become a doctor
j: that's different, that's much nicer?
m: that's different. But some of them don't come back because the people don't do the right thing. Because they must take that cow and they didn't take that cow. They also stay there and then they are also one of the people that call the people to the river. Or when somebody cries, then they get cross there, then they kill that person, that person come out dead, like another man he's a coloured person, he come here today. His son had all the marks of the water snake. Maybe bitten by that because they cried when he was-he just died there, just sit there and he look, they say the time he sat there looking down in the water, somebody called him there, then he went there, then he cried, so he had to be killed
j: ...your mother told you about it first hey
m:yes
j: when you were a little child
m: ya
j: if the person has been twethyulwa'd, is there anything the person can do to help them?
m:when they come back?
j: when they're out there
m: there were people that used to take the people (izithunzela/zombies) out there...we had people long time ago that would take them there out, they're very rare, the people that can take them out
j: what sort of people would they be, special sangoma's?
m: special people, sometimes they are not even sangomas, they are the people that work, like I said, they are the different people, not like sangomas, all the work the dirty work and so, like I said before
j: oh yes, you mean they sometimes do bad things
m: they are the herbalists
j: oh yes...
m: yes, I explained there are sangomas and there are people that's very strong that do the dirty work
j: yes
m: sangomas are there to protect the people
j: ...how can you help the zombies?
m: there are people that are specially there, that do special that work to bring back the zombies after they died
j: are they living people?
m: they are living people
j: ya
m: but they are weird people, people with no tongues that can't talk
j: no no I mean the people who can help them

m: they are living people...now very rare and scarce, now you find people who say they can, take a lot of money, and they disappear, but they can't bring the people back

j: so its very difficult to bring somebody back

m: very difficult...

j: do you know of anybody who has been brought back

m: that I don't know really, that's why you know many times they come here with dead bodies, and I tell them its only the Lord that can bring a dead person back, that is what I tell them. I believe they are zombies, but people can't bring them back, there are no more people that can bring them back. If there is such a person, its very rare for that person

j: so there's nothing you can do to bring the person

m: I-me, no

j: this person whose been twethyulwa'd, and the other person's dead, here, they've been brought to you, so he's dead and he's here, but there's another part of him is a zombie somewhere

m: is a zombie somewhere else...his spirit is not with the Lord, its a zombie, being made nonsense with somewhere else

j: what sorts or things do they do to make nonsense with them, cut out their tongues and ?

m: cut out their tongues, no they make them work they are slaves, most in the Transkei, in the Transkei the place where there are zombies they see oooh lot of bricks in the morning, and then they just build houses they work in the night, nobody sees them, if a person was them, that person mustn't live...that's why we always protect our children against things like that...although its not nice, a child will grow up frightened, I used to be very frightened

j: I often wonder in what way the mad people and the witchcraft stuff, in what way they are the same, or if they are not the same at all

m: some people that's done too much witchcraft, then they get older, they get sort of mad and they start talking about the things they've been doing, there are people like that. There's a lady coming here too I chase her away, because she come to me, she want me to help her, but she talk about the things she's been doing to people

j: the person who is likely to get mad, is that also the person whose likely to get twethyulwa'd?

m: yes, yes, yes, sometimes it happens so quickly, sometimes the person just get sort of funny the people are asking one another what's the matter with that one-become depressed and all that, depressed over nothing, nothing happened, you know when a person is depressed there must be a reason, but then there's no reason, this person becomes so depressed, start talking nonsense, this person suddenly even talk about her own death, you see, suddenly this person go and hang himself, that was not supposed to be like that, its because he's been twethyulwa'd he had to do that, so the people must bury you that was not him

j: now the witches make this happen, and the witches are living people, but is it the witches who control them or is it the evil spirits that the witches are making control them?

m: it is the evil spirits

j: so the witches make the evil spirits do this to the people?

m: yes

j: are the evil spirits dead people?

m: hooo, the evil spirits are the people from the devil I can say, because they all have been there, like the tokoloshe, and the impundulu, you've never heard of those things

j: yes I have

m: ya, sometimes with lightening they strike, but its not really lightening, sometimes the accident suddenly, then you know its the impundulu bird...it comes in the form of a bird like a eagle, sometimes coming against your windscreen, make a big accident, all the time there was no eagle there. And sometimes that's when a people buy a car they let you make the cars right to protect it, especially when you got to go a long way...

j: are the witches people that know these people or are they strangers?

m: no they're not strangers, the witches usually knows those people very well...I grew up a frightened person, sometimes I see a cat, the suddenly I see this is no cat, to see things like that, it was not a happy childhood...

TRADITIONAL HEALER (t2)

j: you are a traditional healer

n: yes

j: how did that come about, is it in your family

n: ja, its something that's in the family. How it happens, you get chosen when you are born, its an inborn thing. Then you are not aware what's happening until you reach a certain stage where you get sick, you get dreams, you get someone they tell you what to do

j: ja. Do you know about ukut?

n: ja I do, because sometimes I do meet people with those problems

J; how many people have you met with ukut?

n:it depends on the area because here its not much but in the rural areas there's a lot

j: how many have you come across, how many of your patients have come to you?

n: I can't count

j: oh, really, that many

n: I can't count (laughs), because some there're in their early stages where they see visions and then you treat them and then you protect them. Some are already very ill, so you've got to treat them, some are mentally ill, () so I can't count

j: so there've been a lot

n: hmm

j: could you explain to me a bit about it, like you say some are in their early stages

n:when they start getting sick they will first, they fear they will have a fright at night, and they will hear voices like there are people calling them, or even see visions, they can even identify the people that they see, they will tell you its this person

j: are they living people that they know?

n: ya, they are living people within the community. So when its getting worse she will be mentally ill, she will be very much mentally disturbed, and she will want to run away. In the medical term they will say they will be seeing delusions and hallucinations but when you talk to them you will get sense because he will say I said this and he says I must go to a certain forest which is there, so I wouldn't say its a hallucination when he talks about something which is there. Then you've got to treat them.

j: what's this happening in the early stages, what's actually going on? Is it a sickness?

n: It's sort of a sickness because you find they have I don't know how to call it 'uhlanga' its a scratch that is done so as to identify them whenever they want to take them. So its either in the head here, she will tell you that she feels something that she feels like scratching here, and another thing maybe she will tell you that at night she sees visions or when she's () she see visions, she see somebody calling her or somebody at night coming in the room, fetching him and he will run, although you won't see that person yourself, unless you are a traditional healer then you are gifted to see. Then she will run away, people who say he is mentally ill, whereas he is not mentally ill

j: not actually

n: hmm, not actually, he's seeing visions. Then you will have to treat him

j: and what is actually happening to the person, what does ukut mean?

n: ukut means they are being taken from us, to go and live in the forest. There are certain forests that are known for twethyula people. Ja. So there they are bing used as slaves,

they work for those people, and they are ill-treated, they don't eat food, they eat this thing from the beer you know that intsipho, they will eat that

j: ja, and who's taking them away?

n: its, I don't know how can I say it because sometimes she will call a lady or a man, but its somebody who's taking her

j: yes, is it a living person?

n: it is a living person

j: and how do they do it?

n: they use the magic, sort of a magic, they use magic

j: the way some other people have talked to me about it, I want to check if you would agree with it, they would say that living people who are really witches

n: they are witches, they are living people who are practising witchcraft, then they have got this power, instead of, their power is a negative one instead of being positive, helping people, instead its counter-acting

j: why would they be doing this to people?

n: its through jealousy, its through I would say bad things, maybe they don't want to see you progressing, then they will do that, because sometimes you find that somebody who's very poor who does this, then you wonder why she doesn't use this in a positive manner, that she gets rich and all that. So I think it's through bad heart. She doesn't like to see somebody progressing, she doesn't like to see somebody who is clever

j: hmm. So what happens to the person? you say they start to see visions and they start to

n: start to see visions and they will run away, and they will termed as being mad, some end up a dying a miraculous death, maybe he will die () or a car accident-he will run to a car-and then through a car accident. What we know is that they are being transformed.

While he is-the moment he dies, its not he who is dying, its the impundu. He is being transformed to an impundulu. So the relatives who are burying that person are not burying the person as such, they have already taken that person so they leaven an image, that sometimes they say that he will grow some beard and all that, so they will bury that

j: yes. What does an impundulu mean?

n: impundulu, its one of the sorcerer things that they do

j: a bad trick?

n: yes, a bad trick, it sometimes presents itself as a snake, as a nice lady like a lady who is beautiful and a man who is beautiful, so it changes its type, it presents itself in certain images

j: and that the witches use

n: they use that

j: ja. So this person then becomes mentally ill. Now would you say it is a mental illness that's put onto them, or would you say it just looks like a mental illness?

n: its not, with us we perceive it as a mental illness because he's not behaving within our norms. But to him, its not mentally ill, he's frightened of these people so he's running away, that's why he's like that. Because he will tell you that now they've come to fetch him and he will cry and try to run away, he's trying to run away from these people, so with us because we don't see these people, we say he's mentally ill

j: ja. But what you're saying is that the people are there

n: the people are there as a magic

j: yes. So are they making him mad?

n: its not that he is mad, I wouldn't say that he is mad. It's just that we perceive him as if he is mad. When we see him behave like this, because we don't see what he is seeing. So we say he is mad. He's not mad as such. He really sees those people. And he is trying to run away from them.

j: yes. So is there anything that anyone can do to help him?

n: there are types or treatment that can be given

j: and are you able to give those kinds of treatment

n: (nods)

j: and have you been able to help people?
n: there are people that I have helped
j: if you had to try to count the people that you've helped and the people that you haven't been able to help, would you be able to say roughly
n: I don't know. I cannot count because sometimes they come, you see I haven't met the one that has been twehtyulwa'd already, have been buried and then taken away. And I don't think if somebody has died you can bring him back. That is impossible. That's from my belief, I don't know about the other traditional healers. Because once he is dead he is dead and you've buried that person. But if somebody has got lost through ukutwethyulwa, then that one I can bring back.
j: yes, and you have?
n: nobody has come being lost
j: they were still in their early ages, mad, the other child was very mad, he was seeing people from eNcobo, and he was beating his mummy
j: what's eNcobo?
n: eNcobo is the Transkei. Ja, and he was beating his mummy. He had to stay at my place. He was very violent
j: really
n: yes
j: because he was scared
n: yes. And I had to treat. Especially at night. He was a problem at night.
j: and did he get better?
n: ja, she did
j:ja. That's good. I'm sure its secret what you do to help them, but can you give me a rough idea?
n: we give, the most important thing is to do away with the hlanga, the scratch that they make, because that's what they identify them, so you must treat that hlanga, and then you must try to give him something that makes her to have hallucinations. I don't know what you call it, but we call it isishwati. That thing makes a person to see visions. Then when she sees the visions, you know where the problem is, and you know how to treat that problem. It's sort of a mirror, she sees things like in a picture, she will tell you 'here he comes, she is going there, she is taking this thing, she is giving it to me and all that' so you know what has been used to to bewitch
j: that's very interesting. So you actually bring on hallucinations? You actually encourage hallucinations?
n: ja.
j: That sounds like something you could teach the westerners
n: ja, (laughs)
j: the plant is called isi...
n: isishwati, I don't know, Isaac knows the English name...but its very toxic, somebody must use it with care, because it tends to, it can kill somebody, so must be careful when using it...use it as an enema, use it as a muti, she drinks it, she can also use it as an emetic. Even a normal person can use it, it will bring hallucinations, you will see visions, you will see your future, you will see everything
j: good heavens. Um, this child that you managed to help: If you hadn't helped her, what would have happened?
n: that child was going to get lost, because at night she used to run away, maybe she was going to get lost or get hurt
j: so what would they do with her, probably what would have happened?
n: they would have taken her
j: taken her, and then what would have happened?
n: take her to the forest
j: to the forest and then what would she do there?
n: she would stay there as a slave

j: ja, as a slave
n: and work for an indefinite period, because we don't know how long do they check those people
j: ja, and you don't know what happens to them
n: when they are there, what we heard is that they cut their tongues, and then they pin some nails here, so that their mind is diminished, so they will give them there's a drug that they will give them to put on their arm, whenever they are moving, so that they can give them orders wherever they are
j: what sort of slave-work do you think they are probably doing?
n: there are histories that you see them working in the fields, cleaning the houses, ploughing, all the work, collecting wood and all that, but I've never seen that
j: ja, the witches get them to do this work
n: mmm
j: because they're jealous so they don't want them to progress
n: hmm
j: have you known of anyone who has come back?
n: there is one child that I know from Umtata (), I was a clerk of the civil court there, he came back, but he was abnormal, he couldn't talk, he was mentally abnormal. They used to go there for a case, because there was a case that was put on about him
j: oh I see, you mean a law suite
n: a law suite yes
j: do you think he was mentally handicapped after that
n: ja, he was mentally handicapped because he couldn't talk okay, and even the things he was talking he could get just, you was supposed to listen very well to hear what he was
j: ja...when was the first time that you ever heard about it?
n: ukutwethyulwa?
j: ja
n: its a known thing, and especially in our society, especially in the rural areas, we know that somebody has died and she is seen maybe the same night he dies maybe he's seen playing with his friends, if it was a child, or he will come back home and ask for food, or you find in the morning the food is finished. Something that is common, its a common practice
j: ja, and then you realise that the person hasn't died they've been twethyulwa'd, but that someone else has been buried in their place.
n: ja
j: or an image
n: an image of him
j: okay ja. What does the word mean, ukutwethyulwa?
n: twethyula means to take from here and to send somewhere
j: do you know who first called it that?
n: no
j: and has it been around for a long time?
n: ja, a very long time
j: ja. So would you say that you probably heard about it when you were a child?
n: I heard about it not when I was a child, because when I was a child I grew up in Joburg, so I don't know anything about ukutwehtyulwa then, so when I was about 13/14 yrs I heard about it in the Transkei
j: do you remember who told you?
n: no, we just, when we were talking maybe we heard that somebody has been twethyulwa'd, he is been seen in the fields or whatever
j: ja. How does it get to the person, how does it actually happen that the witches take the person away?

n: I think they use their power, their mysterious power which I don't know, I cannot explain to you. But you know I've got another-there is another (column) there talking about voodoo, from America Northern America, where they explain how they change somebody to I can bring that to you so that, they say you mix snakes and all that, that's how they perceive it, so maybe it can help you with

j: yes

n: I was looking for it, but I will try to bring it to you

j: thankyou, thankyou very much

n: I don't know if its in the drum or whatever, but I've got it at home

j: ja, ja. So that's how they use their power.

n: mmm

j: and is the person possessed by evil spirits?

n: yes

j: ja. So its spirit possession

n: mm. Evil spirit possession

j: ja. And its because the person, the witches are jealous?

n: mm

j: what kind of person can get it, is it any kind of person?

n: anybody who has not been protected, you know with our society when you get to a certain stage then you get this intlanga

j: yes

n: with some medication, so it will protect you from all those bad things, so if you are weak and they haven't done that, then they can come to you

j: and you said when you get to a certain stage, what do you actually mean?

n: you see when the child is born, they will see that the child is not sleeping he is crying, they will take the child to the traditional healer, and they will say we would like you to strengthen this child

j: are most people protected against it or not?

n: its not almost all people especially the people who are being westernised they are not, but you find in the rural areas you find everybody has been protected

j: oh I see. I just want to try and remember what you said, the person who, you've managed to help people in that stage before they've been twethyulwa'd, and you said one person that you know of came back after they had been twethyulwa'd and was very mentally disturbed

n: mm, he was not normal

j: do you think he was normal before he was twethyulwa'd?

n: ja, he was, he was just a boy who was attending school and all that

j: I wonder why they twethyulwa'd him

n: we really don't know, because you know even in the courts nobody gets the clue, because there's no proof, no clear proof, even that case I was following it but it went away, because there was really no proof of whatever the boy was then or the parents were then, so it just went away, and its always the case with witchcraft...

j: because they can't actually prove it

n: (nodds)

j: could you tell me about any of the other patients that have come to you

n: another girl guy came to me he said he wasn't sleeping, so the first thing that you do as a traditional healer, you don't just hear from the person, you diagnose the person by calling the ancestors, so he will come to you saying that he's got a problem then you'll diagnose her. Some of the signs and symptoms that you'll get, maybe he will not be sleeping, seeing visions, and then he will tell you that he is seeing visions of maybe certain people then he's also having some sleepless nights and there are some noises that are occurring within the family

j: noises?

n: noises within the family house

j: so those are possible symptoms they could be bringing to you
n:mm
j: what other sorts of symptoms?
n: the parents will come to you and say that he is behaving funny, they will say he's mentally ill, and you tell them, no this person is afraid and he's seeing visions. They will tell you also that he is running away, he's running to the forest, he's running to the river, he's running to the cars, he wants to kill himself, he's having some suicidal tendencies
j: how long have you been a traditional healer for?
n: since '84
j: and have you always been in CT
n: no, I've been in Transkei most of the time, I just came here in '90
j: were most of the people that you've seen with ukutwethyulwa in the Transkei
n: in the Transkei, that's why I say its more common in the rural areas than in the western areas, in the urban areas
j: why do you think that is?
n: with the western civilisation there is no, I will say there is no communication, for example, I don't know who stays nest door, so I don't care about her () and all that, whereas with the rural areas, its sort of an extended family, even if you are not related to them, you prick your nose want to know what's happening
j: that's interesting, so why would that-oh, just because you wouldn't hear
n: with western, with the urban areas you don't know what is happening at her place, you are not connected, you don't come together, you don't visit each other, she has created () whereas in the rural areas, she is your next door, you must know what is happening there, or the other one there, so I think that is the problem that's where the problem lies
j: do you think that in the western areas, fewer people are twethyulwa'd, or that you don't hear about it?
n: I think its that we don't hear about it especially because here in the urban areas people don't use traditional healers as much as they do in the rural areas
j: so you think it still happens just as much, but we don't hear about it?
n: mm
j: because people aren't so close, they don't communicate
n: mm
j: what do you think happens to those people?
n: I think they end up being twehtyulwa'd and that's all
j: do you think they ever come to Valkenberg?
n: I don't know. Maybe some of them are taken as if they are mentally ill, because sometimes you find somebody is brought in here and they are said they have mental illness, but when you sit with them and talk to them you find no this person is talking sense
j: ja
n: there was a lady I was once phoned by Valkenburg, they said it was a gentleman, they said this man was mentally ill, and they heard the history that he was a traditional healer once, then I said the doctor I would like to see the person, but unfortunately we lost contact with that doctor. But what I think maybe that person was not mentally ill as such, maybe he was seeing visions of his ancestors, maybe he was being punished by her ancestors for leaving traditional healing, so I think maybe there are things like that in the urban areas where illnesses are being given medical terms whereas they are traditional illnesses
j: can western medicine, western psychiatry help western psychiatry?
n: no, not at all. Because even with the mental illness that they say its mental illness you find they are giving many drugs, drugs that make it sleep, they don't treat it, they make it just to subside for that particular moment, then it arises again
j: even with normal mental illness
n: mm

j: whereas with this drug you were talking about it actually brings out the problem
n: mm, you see even with amafufunyane, they will treat fuf with drugs this tablets, whereas what's supposed to be done, you must make the fuf mad, must make her see visions, must make her hallucinate because she will, those things are going to talk, once they talk out, then you will get how to treat that, so they will tell you where they come from, who put them in and what did he do, which mixture they used, so with the pills it just make her sleep
j: for example, what might the person with ukut, when you induce the hallucinations, what might it be, just so that I can understand it better, 'cause its hard to understand it for me?
n: mmm. When you give that, she will tell you, here is so and so, she is cunning, maybe she is giving me a drug that is filled with blood, because sometimes they tell you they are being given blood to drink, which I don't know who from, who or from which animal I don't know. See, then you will know that no this one I must give the imbisa to cleanse her inside, and give her an emetic, you see
j: oh I see
n: maybe he said you know he's putting some scratches on top of my head, then you know that I should...take out those scratches, with your medication
j: yes, why do you need to get rid of the scratches?
n: those scratches are working sort of a robot, this is the way they are identifying the people they are twethyulwa-ing
j: ok, so you have to find out what they say, to find out what the witches are doing?
n: mm. That's where your strategy lies of the treatment
j: and the people who go and work as slaves, the people who have been twethyulwa'd, if they die, or if it looks to the relatives that they have died, what actually happens, is the real body the body that's dead, or is their real body the body that becomes the zombie?
n: the real body that becomes the zombie's the body, then this one is an image, just an image
j: oh. Then you said it looks different
n: sometimes you'll find they say it looks different, it grows some beard, and if its a young man it becomes an old man, maybe you find it sweats maybe you find its hot its very hot, whereas somebody's dead
j: is there anything else that we haven't talked about?
n: no, its only that we know that, they usually advise that when you bury those people so that the process of being twethyulwad doesn't go further, no slaughtering must be done, just go to the funeral, don't slaughter anything. Because it is believed that they take that blood from whatever you slaughter, that is what they mix with their medication, to use on that person
j: oh I see, so they actually use medication on the person who has been twethyulwa'd?
n: mm
j: I thought they just used their powers
n: uh-uh, they do have some secret medications which nobody knows about
j: and do they put in the scratches?
n: (nodds)
j: I see...
n: you find the people in Khayelitsha, they know about it, but things like that are not shouted, they are talked with soft voices, even somebody who knows about it will say she doesn't know about it
j: why?
n: I think the fact that its scary firstly, and the fact that the people don't want, they think that maybe if you know about it you will be labelled as one of the witches, because there's been that thing of witch-hunting
j: yes, I can understand that, and the fact that I'm interested in it?

n: no, you are doing research, so they will understand, but you will find that other people are not keen to talk about it

j: I respect that it is something that is quite sacred, and I was wondering how right it is for me to be doing research about it, do you have any feelings about that?

n: seeing that this is a thing that is happening in our society has been hidden, I think people like you are needed to enlighten people about it

j: to enlighten the white people?

n: ja, and also the medical people, so that whenever they are treating a patient, they could have that room for maybe the patient as not only a medical problem