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**“She is my sister although she’s got factory faults”: A psychosocial study of
Xhosa women’s sister-sister relationships**

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by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **“She is my sister although she’s got factory faults”**: A **psychosocial study of Xhosa women’s sister-sister relationships** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

SIGNATURE
(Hunadi Senkoane Moifo)

DATE

ABSTRACT

The current study examines the constructions that Black, Xhosa women from the working class and in middle adulthood draw on to make meaning of their sister-sister relationships. In addition to this, it aims to uncover their motivations for investing in these meanings. It makes use of a psychosocial theoretical framework that draws on discursive psychology and psychoanalysis. Discursive psychology is used to analyse the constructions the participants used to make meaning of their relationship, while psychoanalysis is used to interpret their investments in these constructions. Six participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The findings emphasise the psychosocial nature of the participants' sisterly relationships, as caught between 'inner' world of feelings and emotions and the 'outer' world of social practices and expectations. Their narratives pointed to the obligatory nature of the sister-sister relationship, which drives participants to downplay the hatred or dislike that is present in their relationship and to emphasise traditional scripts of helping each other, promoting solidarity amongst sisters and other women. The analysis highlights the ways in which the participants negotiate and express their gender roles through sistering, reinforcing and challenging the traditional view of femininity and as a result providing for multiple femininities. In addition to these, the findings show that women may choose specific narratives to construct their sister-sister relationships as they allow them to feel safe and in control of their lives. Using psychoanalysis alongside discursive psychology enables the findings to illustrate how the participants invest in different constructions of their relationship in ways that are influenced by their values and life histories.

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INTRODUCTION

According to City Press (2012), in South Africa, the average number of children per household in 2011 was 3.4. From this, one might hypothesise that many children in South Africa are growing up with siblings. Sibling relationships are one of the longest relationships that we experience over our lifetimes (Pike, Kretschmer & Dunn, 2009). According to the literature, many siblings spend a considerable amount of time together, in their early years and know each other well. The knowledge siblings have of each other and the emotional intensity of their relationship means they have the potential to significantly influence one another's development and well-being (Cicirelli, 1995). Siblings have been associated with life satisfaction (McGhee, 1985 in Van Volkom, 2003) and have been shown to impact psychological and emotional well-being in adulthood and older adulthood (Cicirelli, 1994; Kilevsky, 2005 in Milevsky & Heerwagen, 2013). In spite of this, studies on sibling relationships are less common than those on other family relationships (Whiteman, McHalf & Soli, 2011).

Wallace (2012) and Pike, Kretschmer & Dunn (2009) allude to the fact that studies on sibling relationships only became of interest in the 1980s. According to Whiteman, McHalf and Soli (2011), historically research on sibling relationships focused on the influence of this relationship on an individual's personal development, predominantly in childhood and adolescence. Following this, numerous studies revealed various aspects about sibling relationships such as how sibling relationships are perceived (Cicirelli, 1994; Goetting, 1986, Van Volkom, 2003; White, 2001), the factors influencing the quality of adult sibling relationships (Van Volkom, 2003; Voorpostel, van der Lippe, Dyska & Flap, 2007), and the different functions sibling relationships serve at various life stages (Eriksen & Gerstel, 2002; Goetting, 1986; Weaver, Coleman & Ganong, 2003). Very few studies have tried to understand the experiences of siblings. It is the aim of the current study to understand individuals' experiences of their sibling relationships.

The aim of this study is to explore how women make meaning of their sister-sister relationship. The study also aims to establish the reasons for women's investment in specific meanings of their sister-sister relationship. It will begin with a review of literature on sibling relationships and will motivate for the importance of

studying sister-sister relationships with a specific focus on Black Xhosa women in middle adulthood who belong to the working class. It will move on to discuss the theoretical framework in an effort to provide the underlying basis for using the psychosocial approach to address the aims of the study. The study will further lay out the procedures and methods used to gather information for this study. Then it will describe the findings of this study and then discuss these findings in relation to the literature reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This chapter will explicate what constitutes sibling relationships. It will show how siblings influence each other's development and well-being, in the form of a literature review. Specifically, this chapter will review literature on sibling relationships over the lifespan to show how the nature and the quality of the sibling relationship are affected, particularly how different life stages and/or the ages of individuals influence how siblings make meaning of their relationships. This chapter will then go over literature on adult siblings and will motivate for the focus of the study on middle adulthood, as this is the age group the study intends to explore. Following this, it will review literature on cultural and gender influences, laying out how they have an impact on how siblings make meaning of their relationships. These factors will also help clarify the intentions of the study to focus on sister-sister relationships as well as explain the importance of studying sisters from the Xhosa ethnic group.

2. Characteristics of sibling relationships

Cicirelli (1991) defined sibling relationships as "the total of the interactions (actions, verbal and nonverbal communication) of two (or more) individuals who share common parents, as well as their knowledge, perception, attitudes, beliefs and feelings regarding each other from the time when one sibling first became aware of the other" (p. 291). Sibling relationships comprise of explicit actions and interactions (physical and verbal) between sibling pairs, as well as non-verbal communication (Cicirelli, 1995). The presence of covert subjective, cognitive and affective components in the sibling relationship makes it possible for sibling relationship to continue to exist even when the siblings are separated by distance and time without frequent interaction. Although people may construct siblings in a different light, what sibling relationships have in common is that they are enduring, they are ascribed rather than earned, they are of relative consensus, and that they have a history of shared and unshared family experience (Cicirelli, 1995).

Sibling relationships are one of the longest relationships that we experience over our lifetimes (Pike, Kretschmer & Dunn, 2009). As they grow up together, usually in the same household, siblings often spend more time with each other than anyone else (Edwards, Hatfield, Lucey & Mauthner, 2006; Sanders, 2004). Cicirelli (1995) indicates that this may appear to be true even among half-, step-, and adoptive siblings, whose relationships usually begin early enough in life to have a longer time course than relationships with parents, spouses, offsprings, or most other friends and relatives.

According to Cicirelli (1995), sibling relationships are ascribed rather than earned. In other words, sibling status is obtained by birth or legal action, as in the case of stepsiblings and adoptive siblings. Similarly, kin siblings are also ascribed when individuals are assigned the status of a sibling, based on custom and desirability. As such, most siblings have a commitment to maintain their relationship.

Cicirelli (1995) mentions that the sibling relationship is often seen as one of relative egalitarianism. That, even though there are differences in power and status between siblings, based on their age, size, intelligence, knowledge, social skills, economic success, other achievements, parental influence and so on, there is usually reciprocity in siblings' feelings and acceptance of one another, which allows them to relate as equals.

Furthermore, siblings have a long history of intimate family experience (Cicirelli, 1991), however, their environment is not similar and/or is experienced differently. Siblings have a long history of shared experience and unshared experience in common (Cicirelli, 1995). The shared experiences contribute to similarities between siblings and the unshared experiences contribute to individual differences. Furthermore, the reciprocal interaction between the siblings' shared and unshared environments might further contribute to individual differences. All these characteristics have a bearing on how siblings conduct their relationship. They also contribute to what it means to be a sibling within their social context.

3. Sibling relationships over the lifespan

As sibling relationships persist, they change over time (Cicirelli, 1995). The basic nature of a sibling relationship may remain the same, but over time, some aspects of

the relationship itself change considerably. For example, in childhood and adolescence, the sibling relationship may involve more intimate contact as siblings interact at home. On the contrary, siblings' intimacy in adulthood is maintained at a distance by telephone communication, letters and periodic visits. Whiteman, McHalf & Soli (2011) attributed some of these changes to hierarchical and reciprocal elements in sibling relationships, which makes them unique from other relationships. For example, in childhood and adolescence, a younger child may rely on the older child for protection and support, but in adulthood, siblings may have a peer like relationship based on mutual support (Goetting, 1986; Sanders, 2004).

Siblings can be a source of support and responsibility across the lifespan (Connidis, 2005). Many have a genuine interest in each other's wellbeing, which helps them remain close throughout the lifespan (Connidis, 1989, as cited in Eriksen & Gerstel, 2002). Siblings often perform tasks for each other that may persist throughout their lives, although they may vary in intensity at different life stages or are characteristic to a specific life stage (Cicirelli, 1995; Goetting, 1986). For example, Goetting (1986) claims that many siblings in childhood and adolescence offer each other patterned and situational services. Whereas, Cicirelli (1979, as cited in Cicirelli, 1995) and Goetting (1986) claim that siblings in early, middle and late adulthood offer each other support in specific situations, like crises, as opposed to on a routine basis. According to the literature, siblings, particularly in late adulthood, frequently receive assistance first from their children and grandchildren, and would then allow siblings to step in when the responsibility is great.

The quality of the sibling relationship therefore changes through the different life stages siblings go through. According to Sanders (2004), sibling relationships may be divided into five stages. Sanders (2004) asserted that the first stage begins when a child realises he/she has a sibling. Many theories have hypothesised that it is during this stage that sibling rivalry and competition for parental attention is set off.

The next stage consists of the experience of growing up together during early childhood, middle childhood and preadolescence, when more positive aspects of the sibling relationship (for example friendship and companionship) develop and become stabilised as the younger sibling becomes acquainted with the older sibling and the older sibling responds positively towards the younger sibling. During this stage, siblings do not regard each other as the most important emotionally supportive figure

in one another's lives (Moser, Paternite Dixon, 1996, as cited in Rittenour, Myers & Brann, 2007), even though they would rely on each other for advice on various issues (Tucker, Barber & Eccles, 1997, as cited in Rittenour, Meyrs & Brann, 2007). For example, they may perform the task of mutual regulation for each other (Bank & Kahn, 1975, as cited in Weaver, Coleman, & Ganong, 2003), which may aid in their identity and gender development. This task involves trying out new roles and behaviours in the sibling relationship and receiving feedback on one's role or behaviour before they are acted out in front of other family members and peers. For example, one's behaviour may be regulated when a sibling asks or obtains advice on what to do, or when a sibling frowns upon his/her sibling's behaviour or indicates by a nonverbal signal how she/he feels about a certain behaviour. Schvanveldt and Ihinger (1979, as cited in Weaver, et al., 2003) claimed that when mutual regulatory behaviours increase the rewards and reduce the costs of new roles and behaviours for siblings, solidarity between the siblings is strengthened.

During the third stage that corresponds with adolescence and early adulthood, siblings separate from each other and their families, and rely more on their peers (Sanders, 2004). The sibling relationship is usually at its lowest point during this stage. Siblings would generally renew their relationship during the fourth stage, during adulthood, when they no longer experience the pressure of living together and are no longer competing for the same needs to be met by their families (Connidis, 1992, Sanders, 2004). Many of the patterns set down in childhood may continue, or siblings may establish new patterns as they attempt to re-find their relationship.

In the fifth and final stage, in later life, siblings are often involved in caring for their elderly parents, especially women (except where there are only brothers). Their relationship becomes of significance as siblings remain as the last co-relation (Sanders, 2004). Throughout these stages, many siblings stay committed to their relationship (Rittenour, et al., 2007) and remain actively involved with each other's lives, helping each other regardless of crises that may occur (Kahn, 1983, as cited in Rittenour, et al., 2007). This does not discount the fact that siblings often experience challenges that complicate their relationships, contributing to infrequent contact and decreased support resulting in the relationship being less significant. It is therefore crucial to pay attention to the specific life stage of the sibling relationship and also

the unique social context of individuals as it affects the nature and the quality of the sibling relationship.

4. Adult sibling relationships

Adult sibling ties are assumed to be volitional in nature, where the rules of choice and discretion that strengthens the relationship between friends are assumed to apply (Eriksen & Gerstel, 2002). This means that adult sibling relationships may function like friendship and that their relationship may be based on mutual support (Whiteman, McHalf & Soli, 2011). Adult siblings would often help each other by babysitting for each other, providing each other with financial support and caring for each other and family members during illness (Bank & Kahn, 75, as cited in Weaver, et al., 2003, Bank & Kahn, 76, as cited in Weaver, et al., 2003; Goetting, 1986).

Goetting (1986) describes adult sibling relationship as a stage during which “the tasks of nurturance, caretaking, and teaching must be transformed into the tasks addressing adult needs as persons become spouses, parents, and children of ageing parents” (p. 707). This means it is also a time when adult siblings may feel a decreased sense of responsibility to each other, indicating that other ties (for example to spouses, children and parents) may take precedence to the sibling relationship (Connidis, 1992).

Wallace (2012) alludes to the fact that during adulthood, siblings may have decrease contact and assistance due to adult life responsibilities, but emphasises that siblings would nonetheless remain life-long parts of most adults’ lives. Some adult siblings maintain contact with their siblings out of obligation or duty, out of commonality, or because of the impression they have that sibling relationships are permanent and enduring, while some do so merely because they love their siblings (Myers, 2011). For some siblings, contact is maintained for the sake of the family. For example, becoming a parent may encourage them to maintain ties so that their children could have active relationships with their aunts, uncles and cousins (White, 2001).

Most studies of sibling relationships in adulthood seem to focus on emerging adulthood (for example; Conger, & Little, 2010; Milevsky & Herwagen, 2013) and old age (for example, Voorpostel et al, 2007; White, 2001). Studies on emerging

adulthood often highlight the distance created by siblings as they move out of their parental home, get married, have children and establish careers in early adulthood (White, 2001). On the other hand, studies on siblings in old age highlight a moment when siblings take on a renewed importance in old age, a time when most elderly leave the labour force and lose other long-term familial ties (Connidis, 1992), when they are single, due to widowhood, divorce or having never been married, and often lack the support of children or spouses (Van Volkom, 2006). There seem to be limited studies that explore the sibling relationship during middle adulthood, the focus of this research.

Although Connidis (1992) and Sanders (2004) claim that siblings generally renew their relationship during the adulthood stage, when they no longer experience the pressure of living together and are no longer competing for the same needs to be met by their families, it seems middle adulthood presents a challenge for siblings to maintain their relationship. Katoch and Nandwana (2010) and Nandwana and Katoch (2009) assert that during middle adulthood, individuals are still actively involved with their families of procreation and economic endeavours. According to Katoch and Nandwana (2010), middle adulthood is also a period during which individuals start to review their lives and acknowledge that their lives are finite, which may precipitate increased stress often acknowledged as a mid-life crisis. It is also during this stage when contact in the sibling relationship has become voluntary, and when the bond between siblings is loosened and diffused (Nandwana & Katoch, 2009). Intimacy in sibling relationships during middle adulthood may have decreased, however siblings would maintain their emotional bond, by spending time together, visiting each other and communicating by telephone or letters (Wallace, 2012). Katoch and Nandwana (2010) indicate that although individuals in this stage do not nurture other kin relationships, they would still rely on their siblings for psychosocial, financial and other kinds of support. For example, siblings in middle adulthood would view their relationship as a source of aid in time of crisis, and would provide each other with companionship and support each other in times of crisis or serious family problems. It is therefore crucial to focus on this specific age group, not only because it has not been thoroughly explored, but also to explore the siblings' relationships at a time when individuals have to deal with life demands that often make it difficult to enhance their sibling relationships. Other factors that affect the sibling relationship

include the sibling structure, particularly birth order, the size of the sibling group, age difference and the sibling sex composition.

5. The sibling structure

The sibling structure refers to “a hierarchical network of positions that identifies the status of each sibling relative to other siblings in the family” (Cicirelli, 1994, p. 13). This arrangement of siblings is described in terms of the number of siblings in the family (or size of the sibling group), their birth order, gender, chronological age, and the age difference between the siblings. The sibling structure may cause the siblings to have different experiences and to view life from different perspectives. Individual experiences and life perceptions may affect how individuals feel or relate with each other as siblings, and in turn how the siblings construct their relationships. For example, some theories on sibling relationships purport that birth order determines how an individual’s personality unfolds, affecting how people interact with their siblings. Milevsky and Heerwagen (2013) provide a good example when they mention that older siblings often experience stricter family rules as opposed to their younger siblings, and that they receive the most blame for sibling fights, as parents expect older siblings not to start fights or that they should know better. This may result in resentment by the older sibling. Otherwise, older siblings tend to take on caring roles, to develop dominant, conscientious and confirming personalities while younger siblings are seen as creative and risk taking, with middle siblings viewed as peacekeepers (Edwards, et al., 2006). Older siblings were also found to experience difficulties drawing lines between being the authority figure and a friend to their younger siblings, as they are frequently expected to serve as their role models (Milevsky & Heerwagen, 2013). This shows that birth order also affects social expectations of how they should treat each other, which may influence how siblings construct their relationships.

According to Cicirelli (1994), in non-industrial societies, more children in the sibling group offer a greater support system for parents in old age as well as for members of the sibling group themselves. On the contrary, Stocker, Lanthier and Furman (1997, as cited in Wallace, 2012) found that the more children in a family negatively correlated with warmth, and positively correlated with rivalry. This was

attributed to limited availability of parental love and attention in larger families, contributing to less warmth and increased rivalry in the sibling relationship. Siblings closer in age range are observed to have a closer bond, as are those who live closer together in adulthood (Mauthner, 2005b). Such siblings perform many activities together as children, separate from adults. However, when the age difference is great, birth order takes over, with the older sibling taking the caring role and the younger sibling being cared for rather than both being like-friends (Seymour, 1993). Furthermore, same-sex siblings are seen as a source of rivalry and competition in the sibling relationship (Cicirelli, 1995, as cited in Wallace, 2012). This was attributed to the fact that same sex siblings are easily compared by parents and teachers, often in an unfair and unrealistic manner, leading to rivalry and negative feelings. All of these however interact with the cultural context of individuals to influence the meaning siblings make of their relationships.

6. Sibling Relationships and Culture

6.1 Culture and class

Cultural context is important when studying sibling relationships as it is composed of both the family setting in which siblings develop and express themselves, and the relevant meaning systems that shape and constrain the development of sibling relations (Nuckolls, 1993). What it means to be a sibling varies according to different cultural contexts. For example, siblings in industrial societies tend to be identified primarily by biological criteria, whereas in non-industrial societies the term sibling is enlarged through the extension to other kin members or through classification (Cicirelli, 1995). There are also variations in the significance of the relationship amongst siblings in different cultures. For example, siblings in non-industrialised societies tend to assume greater importance throughout life as opposed to siblings in industrial societies (Cicirelli, 1994, as cited in Sanders, 2004). This is because in non-industrial societies, the sibling relationship tends to be more essential in determining family functioning and the family's adaptation to the larger society, with sibling cooperation critical to attain marital and economic goals (Cicirelli, 1994).

Nuckolls (1993) conducted research on adult sibling relationships in South East Asia and found that sibling interdependence tended to be greatly valued with

competition between siblings discouraged (Nuckolls, 1993). He found that siblings in South East Asia habitually depended on each other for economic prosperity as it promotes survival. They would share subsistence resources, and decision-making roles regarding allocation of resources, remain involved in decades-long negotiations and interdependent decisions about marriage, wealth and residence. Nuckolls argues that sibling relationships in South Asia assume great importance because they are driven by strategic effort to attain economic, marital, ritual or other kinds of benefits. As such, these sibling relationships tended to be obligatory and to be characterised by solidarity.

This is contrary to sibling relationship in western societies, where sibling relationships tend to be more discretionary and less characterised by solidarity. Cicirelli (1994) & Weisner (1993) attributes this to the lack of customs that would spell out economic and social duties of sibling relationships in industrial societies. In industrial societies or Euro-American cultures, individuals tend to either ascribe sibling relationships with less importance or can determine how much importance they want to ascribe to this relationship (Cicirelli, 1994, as cited in Sanders, 2004). In industrialised societies, siblings tend to decide based on their desires, to behave in a certain way towards one another or to remain involved in each other's lives throughout the life course (Cicirelli, 1994). They can live separately and make important decisions about economic and social life with their parents, spouses, or work colleagues, but not always primarily with siblings. This is contrary to some non-industrial societies where siblings frequently live with or live close to each other to facilitate their interdependence. For example, siblings in South Asia live with or near each other, or feel compelled to produce culturally accepted reasons not to live closer to each other (Weisner, 1993). This is because unlike most siblings in industrial societies, those in non-industrial societies tend to have constraints imposed on them, based on social norms that they should behave in a certain way towards each other. As such, siblings in non-industrial societies like in South Asia generally participate in shared activities throughout their lives.

There tends to be a greater emphasis on sibling caretaking in non-industrialised societies as opposed to industrial societies (Cicirelli, 1994). In non-industrial societies, sibling caretaking is frequently institutionalised and made part of the larger culture, unlike in industrialised societies where parents are most often the

main caretakers, with siblings only helping occasionally (Cicirelli, 1995). Sibling caretaking is more greatly valued in non-industrial societies as it prepares children for adult roles they would assume later in life, and promotes a sense of esteem for a young carer performing a vital role for the family. It also promotes social responsibility, increased nurturance, earlier, stronger sex-role identification, and more task-specific division of labour (Nuckolls, 1993). Because the type of care received from siblings differs from the type of care received from parents, sibling caretaking contributes to the diversity of social interaction and experience for the younger child and provides a foundation for life-long reciprocal relationships.

Sibling caretaking in non-industrialised societies is also valued as it contributes to flexibility for a mother, allowing her to devote time to caring for much younger children and other subsistence activities (Cicirelli, 1994). Similarly, the socio-economic status of a family can affect how families organise their lives and in turn influence how sibling relationships develop. For example, siblings in the lower social class, tend to live closer to each other and maintain more contact (Sanders, 2004), whereas siblings in the higher social classes tend to have greater geographic distance and would maintain less contact with their siblings (Connidis, 2007). According to Lareau (2003 as cited in Walker, Allen & Connidis, 2005), working class parents often raise their children in such a way that encourages them to identify with one another, whereas individuality and competition between siblings are frequently encouraged amongst middle class children. Economic prosperity in industrial societies often leads to loss of contact with the family and would be associated with less significance to the sibling relationship (Sanders, 2004). For example, some siblings experience the diversity of resources they have and the different lifestyles they lead to create barriers to closeness in their sibling relationships (Connidis, 2007).

The significance of the sibling relationship also differs between different ethnic and racial groups. For examples, African Americans were more likely to live with their siblings than non-Hispanic whites, while Both African and Hispanic Americans were more likely to live closer to their siblings, to see them more often and to cite them as their main emergency contact (Van Volkom, 1996). This also shows how different cultures influence how people construct sibling relationships. It is important to also state that there is significant in culture variation between sibling relationships.

In addition, the interaction of culture and sibling structure also affects the quality of the sibling relationship, and hence meaning making in sibling relationships as is shown in the next paragraphs.

6.2 Cross-cultural sibling structure

Sibling structure variables, in non-industrial societies tend to be used to institutionalise sibling behaviour (Cicirelli, 1994). In other words, societal norms would be in place to guide siblings' behaviour depending on the factors such as the ordinal position they occupy, age difference and gender. For example, in some remote rural villages of Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Central and South America, an older brother has the greatest seniority in the family, followed by the oldest sister and then younger siblings. Younger siblings are taught to respect older siblings and to obey them as they would a parent, with this authority continuing into adulthood. Older sisters often play the role of the mediator between the older brother and the younger siblings when conflicts develop. Furthermore, although inheritance customs may vary, the older brother or the older sister are responsible for the distribution of wealth to other siblings. In industrial societies like Canada, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, older siblings have a considerable influence on the cognitive, social and emotional development of their younger siblings. They may serve as leaders, models, teachers, counsellors and confidantes, even though there are no norms that they do so. Inheritance customs in industrial societies used to favour the transference of inheritance to the eldest son, however there is a trend in recent times, to distribute the family wealth equally amongst siblings or for each family to decide on how they would like to distribute its inheritance.

Families in non-industrial societies tend to have large number of siblings, with smaller spacing between them, while families in industrial societies tend to have a smaller number of siblings with greater age spacing between the siblings (Sanders, 2004). In non-industrial societies, the number of children tends to be larger as the children are often needed to help maintain daily functioning and survival through work (Cicirelli, 1994). Larger sibling groups also offer a great support system for parents in old age and for other members of the sibling group. On the other hand, they also offer the greater potential for conflicts between siblings to arise. The

number of children in industrial societies however seems to be declining, due to factors such as the entry of women into the workforce, the rising cost of raising children, and the availability of birth control methods.

Siblings in non-industrial societies tend to assume certain adult responsibilities much earlier than children in industrial societies (Cicirelli, 1994). Older siblings may take on responsibility for child care, household tasks, food production and so on, with a chain reaction as some tasks are delegated in turn to younger siblings. In industrial societies, siblings are not expected to assume adult responsibilities at an early age, although parent may delegate limited responsibilities in some cases. However, modernisation and urbanisation may give rise to changes in cultural values and custom maintained by societies.

7. Effects of modernisation and urbanisation

Modernisation and cultural diffusion bring changes in societies that affect sibling relationships as well as a wide range of cultural values of a society (Cicirelli, 1995). The forces that may be contributing to the changes in cultural values of a society include amongst many factors, changes from a subsistence farming and a gathering economy to a wage economy, migration to urban areas and increased contact with outsiders. These may result in loosening of authority of the elders in the society over its younger members, increasing deviations from traditional cultural norms, and ultimately the erosion or replacement of the norms themselves.

For example, in some countries in Africa, as a result of modernisation and/or urbanisation, the migration of families to urban areas for work, has interfered with traditional sibling caretaking groups, with a transition leading to formal schooling (Cicirelli, 1994). In some patriarchal societies, women have found themselves relenting their roles as housewives to find employment in order to help contribute to the sustenance of their families. In addition to this, some families would find that the demands of conjugal obligations and childcare would make it difficult for parents, particularly women to seek employment. In some situations, this contributed to the disintegration of conjugal family units, like in Niehaus' study (1994) where sibling cooperation become the major model underlying household formation, where siblings lived together in a household and were able to rely on each other for

financial and practical support. This was attributed to the fact that sibling relationships, unlike spousal relationships, were perceived to be relaxed, to lack specified obligations and to have a greater component of willing reciprocity.

Urbanisation, in some cases, would lead to the disruption of traditional sibling exchange marriage patterns, and would interfere with traditional sibling caretaking and sibling interdependence (Cicirelli, 1994). In some instances, cultural values regarding inheritance and sibling relationships would shift to an urban-friendly model where small nuclear families are prioritised, with the pressure for self-reliance and achievement. South Africa is a typical example that reflects how urbanisation and modernisation have affected the family, and in turn the sibling relationship.

8. Siblings in the South African context

South Africa, with its diverse culture and the history of apartheid and the migrant labour system present an interesting context for studying sibling relationships. This is because most research on adult sibling relationships is contextualised in western settings where the developmental trajectory of leaving home, getting married and having children is normative. Moreover, most studies on siblings make use of white middle class participants and may not be relevant to the South African multi-cultural context. The circumstances of participants in those studies may differ from those of some families in the South African context, who due to different cultures, life experiences or due to high levels unemployment may experience difficulty leaving their families of origin. As such, a focus on the historical context and the family structure would promote greater understanding of sibling relationships. This is because sibling relationships happen in the context of a family, and are influenced by historical experiences family members endured (Nuckolls, 1993).

The African family structure has generally been viewed to be different from the Western family structure (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007). The foundation of Western family structure is the institution of marriage, which is based on principles of individualism and independence. On the other hand, the African family is based on the principles of collectivism and interdependence. Like in Western societies, marriage for African families is the basis of family. However, family for African families includes a much wider circle of people who live together, and whose

relationship could be traced through kinship or marriage; people often referred to as the 'extended family'. This is because "African households have never been exclusively for the man and his wife or wives and their children" (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998, p. 415). Nkosi and Daniels (2007) claim that the extended family structure is not universal, and that its existence is influenced by the availability of resources or the ability to sustain such a structure. African families organize themselves based on the conditions under which they live and the way they earn their living (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). Ziehl (2002) also notes a significant difference in the family patterns of Black and White South Africans and that extended families are much more common amongst Blacks than in Whites. Some family arrangements would be in a state of influx, with some members leaving members of their families behind to look for work in order to sustain their families, while their children stayed behind in the care of relatives or grandparents (Bozalek, 1999). Other families, particularly in the urban middle and the working class are broken up by high incidences of divorces, reshaping notions of the conventional family (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007). Black South African families have undergone significant changes in structure and function as they operate in an environment different from which the traditional black family existed in.

Black South African family households are fluid and consist of a complex family structure due to the history of apartheid and the migrant labour system. The vision of the apartheid regime was to reserve the cities for the white population, with the African population living in separate homelands (Budlender & Lund, 2011). Some workers of the African population, mostly men, were allowed to live in the cities, town and on commercial farms on a migrant basis to work for white-owned interests, leaving behind their wives, children and other family members behind in the homelands. The families of migrant labourers depended on funds earned through migrant work; however, often these funds would fall below the subsistence level (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007). This made poverty a reality, particularly for those relying on migrant labourers for income.

While the migrant labourers (the men) were away, those who remain in charge of households would be elderly women and other women (wives and other female relatives, who are married, unmarried or widowed), with a large number dependents (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). It was mainly the elderly women, who headed households because younger women were sometimes also forced into migrant

labour, leaving the elderly women to care for their offspring, their unmarried siblings and other relatives. According to Lesejane (2006), the absence of men, particularly fathers, sharpened household division of labour. Women and/or mothers were ascribed the roles of nurturers and care-givers, whereas men were given the role of a material provider, leaving out of other forms of parenting such as guiding and being a role model, that were traditionally their responsibilities. Due to their absence, some of these men's responsibilities were shifted to people who remained to take charge of their households, usually women (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998).

While poverty and the absence of supportive infrastructures made it difficult for households to sustain themselves, the unsteady economic conditions also weakened the social support of families and the community (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007). As families strive to sustain themselves, subsequent emotions such as apathy and despair made families vulnerable to economic shock and to domestic disturbances. Women found themselves having to fulfil the roles of both the breadwinner and care provider in the challenging circumstance of high unemployment and very limited economic opportunities (Budlender & Lund, 2011). The high prevalence and the increase of HIV/AIDS also added on to the load women carry to provide care for those with HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, while more women take on paid work in addition to their household responsibilities, men have not adjusted by taking on significantly more household tasks (Moser, 1996, as cited in Bozalek, 1999). It is worthwhile to note how women are affected by the historical and socio-economic status of their society, as they are the focus of the study. Women would be overburdened with a range of responsibilities, from providing for nutrition, survival and well-being, while they have been traditionally disadvantaged in a largely patriarchal system (Nkosi & Daniels, 2007). To relieve them of such burden, children would help with caring work and other domestic responsibilities such as cleaning and cooking (Bozalek, 1999).

Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) asserts that the ways in which African families organise themselves under new conditions is greatly influenced by their cultural values; that African families make their households a home to a collective or the 'extended family', depending on who of the kin members may be or may not be present at the time. However, Niehaus (1994), notes sibling cooperation as a central principle of household formation in the central eastern part of South Africa. This was attributed to sibling solidarity related to the experience of childhood socialisation in

the context of migrant labour system. While the wage-earning parents are away for work, children would be dispersed to be cared for by relatives or neighbours. Some children would be left at home, without an adult to care for them. For such children, domestic and child care duties would be transferred from the parents, particularly to the older children. Through such experiences, these children develop greater independence from their parents and would foster extremely close bonds amongst themselves as siblings. Manona (1991, as cited in Niehaus, 1994) asserted that the importance of jural kinship and marriage has weakened and that siblings (and their mutual parents) have become prominent in facilitating adaptation to the urban environment. According to Niehaus (1994), this may have been due to the demands of geographic mobility due to the migrant labour system and difficulties experienced by spouses to fulfil their responsibilities and to sustain a domestic life. This was also attributed to the tension resulting from the employment of women within households. For example, in conjugal bonds, each member has specific obligations; husbands are considered to be 'providers' and wives 'housekeepers', and the employment of women threatened men's dominant positions as 'providers'. The disruption of 'traditional' family roles demanded a lot of adjustment from all family members (Niehaus, 1994).

Some literature argues for the emergence of the female-headed household in response to socio-political and economic adjustment of the time. For example, other women would choose to remain unmarried throughout their lives and would avoid marriage altogether (Budlender & Lund, 2011; Niehaus, 1994). Nevertheless, they would choose to have children and would rely on relatives to help take care of them while they worked. Other families would rely on their neighbours and larger social support network to sustain their families. They would share resources and support each other through adversities, drawing on the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation encompassed in the practice of *Ubuntu*. This practice encourages humanity to others as it acknowledges that people need each other, as they can only be human through other persons- *I am what I am because of who we all are*. It is no surprise that Black South African families have taken on different family structures. These may affect the way families and societies function, and may have an influence on how sibling construct and are constructed by their relationships.

The history and the culture of the society influences how families organise themselves and how they function. In turn, they influence the experiences of children in the family with regard to how they relate and treat each other, affecting the nature and the quality of the relationship. These experiences in turn, influence how siblings make meaning of their relationship, and how they are shaped by the meanings, they make. The gender of the sibling is also of particular importance as it influences the subjective experiences of the individual sibling, and influences their gendered identities.

9. Gender, siblings and sistering

It is imperative to look at the role gender plays in sibling relationships because gender is one of the ways in which human beings organise their lives and therefore provides different life experiences (Lorber, 1994). Gender creates the social differences that define 'man' and 'woman'. Individuals learn through the process of socialisation what is expected of them and then they internalise social definitions of what behaviours and attitudes they should have according to whether they are labelled male or female (McKay, 1990). For example, individuals learn that men are aggressive and competitive, whereas women are caring and nurturing (Lorber, 1994). Gender, is also used to divide labour or assign different responsibilities in the home or in a work environment, to legitimate those in authority, and organize sexuality and emotional life (Connell, 1987, as cited in Lorber, 1994). For example, women are expected to do house chores, care for children, and to influence children's emotional attachments and psychological development, in the process, reproducing gender. Gender also ranks men above women of the same race and class, whereby men are expected to take up positions of authority and provide for their families, often leaving women with less power, prestige and economic rewards (Lorber, 1994). Men are also expected to act strong and not cry, whereas women are expected to be expressive of their emotions. Gender identity- what it means for individuals to be male or female in terms of appropriate role performance, personality structure and attitudes and behaviour – is therefore socially constructed. Throughout their lives, as individuals interact, they learn what is expected, see what is expected and behave in ways that are expected, simultaneously constructing and maintaining

the gender order (Lorber, 1994). It is therefore useful to outline here how sibling relationships are affected by gender.

According to Cicirelli (1995), sibling relationships (in industrial societies) vary according to the gender of siblings involved. For example, sisters provide more emotional support to their siblings than brothers (White & Riedmann, 1992, as cited in Van Volkom, 2006) and are more likely to receive more comfort and solace from their siblings as opposed to brothers (Katoch & Nandwana, 2010). Sisters seem to be important for the emotional security of their brothers in later life (Cicirelli, 1995). According to Cicirelli (1977, as cited in Cicirelli 1995), elderly brothers who have more sisters reported greater feelings of happiness in life and less worry in areas that affect their basic security, such as lack of finances, loss of job role, loss of spouse or other important family relationships, and dealing with younger people. It appears that the mere availability of sisters is important for their brother's morale, apart from any specific interactions or helping behaviours. On the whole, having a female sibling is associated with life satisfaction (McGee, 1985, as cited in Van Volkom, 2006).

In industrialised societies, sisters assume a unique and important role throughout the entire life span that is not matched by relationships between brothers or brother-sister relationships (Cicirelli, 1994). They are important for promoting a higher quality of relationships between the siblings in the family, play a role in preserving family relationships, providing care to elderly parents and giving emotional support to brothers in later life. Women are allegedly viewed as the 'kin-keepers' and are more likely to initiate and maintain contact with family, including siblings (White, 2001). This may be because women are socialised to talk about their feelings more openly, and would use conversation to develop and maintain commitment to and involvement with others (Katoch & Nandwana, 2010). It seems that by assuming their social roles as expressive, caring and nurturing women, women and sisters manage to build and maintain large social networks.

Sisters provide the greater help to one another in tangible services and psychological support when needed (Eriksen & Gerstel, 2002). It seems like providing care and assistance to siblings constitutes most tasks that women do elsewhere as mothers, wives and daughters. This highlights the construction of women as nurturers, oriented to the needs of others. For some women, these gender roles

present the most honourable way of being a woman and ideologically justify the subordination of women to men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005)

Sister-sister pairs appear to have the closest relationship, with the sister-brother relationship intermediate in closeness and the brother-brother relationship pairs as the least close. The sister-sister pair has a warmer relationship, may maintain closer and more affectionate relationships than the brother-brother pair. However, they may have more arguments, conflicts, jealousies than their male counterpart (Wallace, 2012). Sisters are more likely to have more contact, to live closer to each other, to feel emotionally closer and to feel more responsible for the well-being of their siblings as compared to brothers (Lee, Mancini & Maxwell, 1990).

Sister-sister relationships are important to women's morale and general wellbeing from a young age even into old age (Cicirelli, 1995). This is contrary to the brother-brother pair, to whom closeness seem to have less relevance for their morale and wellbeing. For example, some sisters show signs of depression when their relationship is disrupted and would make efforts to restore the relationship.

Lorber (1994) mentioned that in all their encounters human beings produce gender by behaving in such a way that they learnt is appropriated for their gender statuses. Similarly, sisters take up the social roles of their gender identity and perform them in their sibling relationships. This practice of femininity- ways of doing girl or woman- in particular, fits in with collective ideas about what women in any particular society do (Paechter, 2006), in line with the social constructionist approach. It therefore follows that this study will elucidate on how femininity is constructed in the sister-sister relationships. This is particularly important as, an emphasis on the socio-cultural meanings for the gendered identities and accounts of lived experiences of women in sister-sister relationship are minimal in sibling research (Mauthner, 2005b).

Mauthner (2005b) argues that sistering is not well-defined because it is a socially invisible and diverse tie. Sistering takes on different forms and contains aspects of both the family relationship and friendship. As an experience (and practice), sistering has not received much focus because it existed in the private realm of private life, and was not recognised as a social institution. Studies on different kinds of relationships would focus on public, institutional and structural forms of social life and neglect to explore sister-sister relationships. According to O'Connor (1992, as cited

in Mauthner, 2005a), previous studies on relationships involving women focused on their servicing roles in domestic lives, as opposed to female ties per se more connected with leisure and friendship. Sister-sister relationships have not received much focus because of the reluctance to explore power relations between women. In particular, sisters' subjective experience of sistering has received little attention in research (Mauthner 2005a, 2005b).

Mauthner (2005a, 2005b) asserted that sistering is as fundamental as mother-daughter relationships as it affect the way women's gendered identities are formed as they grow up. Mitchell (2011) confirms this when she claims that girls' femininity is constructed as much from sister-sister relationships as from mother-daughter relationship. Mauthner (2005a) asserts that sister-sister relationships provide girls and women with an early playground on which they could learn to maintain personal relationships using language, silences and emotions. On the whole, the meanings sisters make of their relationship is constructed by their gendered identities. It is for this reason that this study will explore how the participants make meaning of their relationships drawing on what it means to be a woman.

10. Summary/Conclusion

It has been established that literature on sibling relationships is scarce. Furthermore, of the literature available on this relationship, very few of this explores siblings' experiences of this relationship. This study aims to understand the meaning siblings make of their relationships. In particular, it will try to unfold how Xhosa women, in middle adulthood, particularly those belonging to the working class, make meaning of their sister-sister relationships. The focus on sister-sister relationships is because it is a subject that has not been explored in detail, internationally and here in South Africa. Black, Xhosa women are chosen to explore a different population group in contrast to the western and white population that most studies on sibling relationships focused on. Sisters from the working class are preferred because abundant research on sibling relationship focused on individuals in middle class population. Moreover, sisters from middle adulthood are selected because little research on sibling relationships has been conducted on individuals in this age group. It is therefore the aim of this study to address these identified gaps in

literature on sibling relationships, and to encourage and contribute to better understanding of Xhosa women's experiences in their sister-sister relationships in the South African context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH

1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss literature from the psychoanalytic perspective and the social constructionist perspective as they provide structure and background to the current study. It will start by exploring the psychoanalytic perspective of sibling relationships. This perspective will help elucidate the value of focusing on the sibling relationship on its own, separate from the parent-child relationship. It will also touch on the influence of the sibling relationship on identity development while it argues for the usefulness of psychoanalysis as part of an approach used in this study. Following this, it will move to a discussion of a social constructionist perspective of siblings and the sibling relationship. Within the discussion of sibling relationships from the social constructionist perspective, the literature review will explicate on how this approach is useful for understanding how individuals make meaning of sibling relationships. The chapter will then move on to describe how these two theoretical traditions are brought together in a psychosocial theoretical framework that is interested in both how women construct their relationships with their sisters and why they emotionally invest in these constructions.

2. Psychoanalytic siblings

Sigmund Freud laid down the main conceptual groundwork of psychoanalytic thinking with the notion of the dynamic unconscious and the centrality of the Oedipus complex in the development of the personality (Edwards, et al., 2004; Sanders, 2004). Of particular interest is Freud's concept of the oedipal complex, which is assumed to have established the foundation for all other relationships. The Oedipus complex has an impact on how sibling relationships are understood from the psychoanalytic perspective. For example, most early psychoanalytical theorists do not view sibling relationships for their intrinsic value. Instead, the parent-child relationship is viewed as the most important in creating an environment in which children can grow into psychologically healthy individuals, with the sibling relationship coming second. Siblings as a result are understood from a vertical

paradigm. For example, on the one hand, an intense sibling relationship is viewed as a response to inadequate parenting or as a substitute for good -enough mothering (Edwards et al, 2004 & Whiteman, McHale & Soli, 2011). On the other hand, a sibling relationship is considered to be valuable in helping children deal with separation from their parents when parenting is deemed satisfactory. As they focus on parent-child relationships, such psychoanalytic views on siblings seem to hinder theoretical consideration of siblings and other lateral relationships.

Mitchell (2011) challenges the omission of siblings in psychoanalytic theorising and argues for the place of siblings in psychoanalytic theory. Mitchell (2011) writes that although absent in psychoanalytic theory, siblings are present in observational material of psychoanalysis. Mitchell (2011) highlights that leaving out the sibling relationship and merely focusing on the parent-child relationship limits our understanding of the parent-child relationship, as both the sibling and the parent-child relationships affect each other. Mitchell (2003) argues that siblings can also be understood from the lateral paradigm; that individuals, like in the Oedipus complex, need to work out problems of future social interaction with their siblings in early childhood so that they are not played out in later life. Mitchell (2006, as cited in Dent, 2009) posits that the sibling relationship is important as it encompasses who we are in relation to those who occupy a similar position. The challenges of the sibling relationship, help individuals recognise their “own place in a world of similar others, contributing to object love, self-esteem and the capacity for thirdness” (Mitchell, 2006, as cited in Dent, 2009, p. 157). Siblings are particularly important, as they are interactive in forging the social world (Mitchell, 2013).

Mitchell (2011) suggests that sibling trauma presents an opportunity where we may place the sibling relationship on a horizontal axis in psychoanalytic theorising. Sibling trauma is an excessive excitation or disturbance arising from within an individual in response to the arrival of a sibling. Initially, Mitchell (2006, as cited in Dent, 2009; 2013) explains that before the baby arrives, the child eagerly looks forward to the baby as someone who is similar to the child. However, the arrival of the new baby separates the child from the mother. The child then experiences the arrival of the new baby as a destroyer of his or her existence, as the new baby takes away the child’s unique place with his or her mother. Traumatized by the fact that he or she is no longer the only baby (or even a ‘baby’ at all), the child makes temporary

(and permanently repressed) identifications with the mother and with the new baby. The child's ego splits; he or she will be both the baby and a big girl / big boy. At one moment the child will be regressed. At the next, the adult the child plans to be. The new baby introduces the child to a threefold relationship, a triangulation of mother, baby, and toddler, as later, with the Oedipus complex, it will be mother, father, and child. As the child strives to attain his or her unique position in the world, he or she makes the new baby the recipient of negative emotions and fantasies. The process of disidentification alleviates hatred towards the new baby and that eventually, the child will love the sibling as a different and unique person. Once the child starts to disidentify with the mother, the mother can become the toddler's 'object of love'; as such she is ripe for the child's Oedipal love. Once the toddler starts to disidentify with the baby, the baby will become the 'other', whereby their relation is transformed into a social one.

Mitchell's formulation of the sibling trauma draws on Freud's understanding of siblings (Coles, 2003). This perspective of siblings conceives that as the older child develops these negative feelings and fantasies; he/she has to deal with these feelings in such a way that keeps these negative emotions and fantasies hidden from consciousness. At the same time, the child also has to address these fantasies in a way that allows the child to move on to the next stage of development. This psychoanalytic understanding of sibling trauma and rivalry is often viewed as a negative and as an unacceptable aspect of sibling relationships.

Coles (2003) argues that earlier psychoanalytic understanding of siblings conceives sibling rivalry as the norm and draws attention to an understanding of siblings as problematic. Coles (2003) also challenges Freud's centrality of the Oedipus Complex, on grounds that it ignores sibling experience and does not consider siblings as contributors to the development of the psyche. Coles (2003) draws on the object relations view, particularly Melanie Klein to show the important impact of siblings on the psyche. Klein, Coles (2003) notes, believes in the importance of sibling love and is certain of its worth on the developing psyche. Coles (2003) writes that Klein therefore puts much greater emphasis upon the importance of siblings than Freud does: "Sibling love is crucially important and a failure to be loved by or to love peers and siblings can emotionally distort later relationships" (Coles, 2003, p. 53). Coles (2003) writes that Klein suggests that siblings promote

emotional development and help in distancing the child from the parents. Coles (2003) notes that Klein does not deny sibling rivalry and jealousy, but highlights that these emotions only play a part in the experience between siblings and are not the foundation upon which the sibling relationship is built.

Like Klein, later psychoanalytic understanding, particularly Neubauer (1982 as cited in Sanders 2004) draws on sibling rivalry, but emphasises its positive contributions on personality development. Neubauer (1982 as cited in Sanders 2004) considers the role of sibling position and the impact of the negative emotions, which continually change, on personality organisation and character formation. Neubauer (1982 as cited in Sanders 2004), mentions that the negative emotions of rivalry, envy and jealousy promote increased alertness that facilitates comparisons and therefore promotes differentiation of objects and the self. Neubauer (1982 as cited in Sanders 2004) also notes that sibling experience provides children with frequent and ongoing opportunity to develop empathy.

Vivona, (2007) also writes about siblings rivalry and supports Mitchell's (2006, as cited in Dent, 2009) claim that the lateral dimension, maintained in sibling relationships and in relationships with peers, partners and other relationships in life, is structured around the challenge of finding one's unique place in a world of similar others. However, Vivona (2013) mentions that the predominant challenge of the lateral relationship is to find one's identity; that is what one's position amongst his or her siblings allows her to be. This is because "identity is, among other things, a means to adapt to the others around whom one must fit" (Vivona, 2013, p. 70).

According to Vivona (2007), psychoanalytic theories suggest that sibling rivalry is often managed by the process of identification and does not recognize differentiation as a process of identity development. Vivona (2007) suggests the process of differentiation also as a response to developmentally provoked conflicts associated with sibling rivalry or in identity development. Identification is the process by which the characteristics and the desires of another person are adopted as one's own, resulting in sameness. Differentiation, on the other hand, refers to a process of becoming what the other is not, by intensifying different qualities and minimizing similar ones. In sibling relationships, it involves one sibling using another sibling as a measure of what one does not want to be. Bedford (1996, as cited in Van Volkom, 2006) writes about differentiation as a conscious process, where an individual makes

a conscious effort to become the opposite of their sibling so they can have their own distinct identity.

Vivona (2007) notes that differentiation and identification are unconscious defence mechanisms to deal with sibling rivalry. Vivona (2007) also mentions that as defence mechanisms, these processes only weaken and do not resolve sibling rivalry, as by adopting a different identity, one is still refusing to surrender his/her special position to his/her sibling, continuing the desire to win it over without any victory. In order to resolve sibling rivalry, a sibling must be willing to give up the wish to regain the 'treasured position' he/she once held, from which he/she was displaced by his/her sibling(s). The rivalry is resolved when one becomes aware that there is no 'treasured' position, that the arrival of other siblings does not entail the replacement of older siblings and that they can all be loved and receive attention from their mother in their state of succession.

Overall, the psychoanalytic approach to understanding siblings is useful for its notion of the dynamic unconscious, and the defended self (Edwards, et al. 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This involves the notion that sometimes part of our personalities experience memories, wishes and impulses that we feel are forbidden, that may be experienced as threatening to the self, creating anxiety. Anxiety precipitates defences against these threats on the unconscious level, in a way that influences people's actions, lives and relations.

The existence of the dynamic unconscious decentres the idea that as humans we are completely rational and consciously self-aware (Edwards, et al, 2004). It introduces the possibility of ambivalence: that we hold contradictory feelings about others, including our siblings. Psychoanalysis' concern with the defended subject also offers a framework and approach that could help shed light on the unconscious psychological processes behind individuals' investment in their meaning making around their sibling relationships (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). This notion allows for interpretation of levels of perception and experiences that are deeply irrational. The challenge with the psychoanalytic approach, however, is that it is often viewed as too theoretically driven (Frosh & Saville Young, 2011), suggesting that it knows studied subjects more than they know themselves (Frosh & Baraister, 2008). In a research setting, it may risk leaving out siblings' perspectives of their relationships. The psychoanalytic approach also neglects to explore the larger family context,

which affects the way siblings conduct their relationships (Bank & Kahn, 1997). To address this, this study will make use of the psychoanalytic approach in collaboration with a social constructionist approach. The social constructionist literature on sibling relationships will now be reviewed.

3. Siblings as socially constructed

Defining siblings in a simplistic and universal way has proven to be challenging. This is mainly because the meaning of siblings differs according to different cultural contexts (Allen & Connidis, 2005; Cicirelli, 1995; Sanders 2004; Walker, Allan & Connidis, 2005). The Oxford dictionary defines a sibling as “each of two or more children having one or both parents in common” (Thompson, 1998, p. 846), implying only a genetic link between siblings. White (2001), on the other hand, defines siblings as individuals with whom one shares most closely genetics, family, social class, and historical background, and with whom there is a lifetime bond by a network of interlocking family relationships. Edwards, et al., (2006) argue that the increasing diversity of family structures in most Western societies that occur due to divorces, separations and re-partnering makes it challenging to define technically what a sibling is. As such, Edwards, et al (2006) do not reduce being a sibling to a technical biological fact, but bring into it the social element of identity and relationality; proposing that being a sibling is a socially constructed relationship. For example, Cicirelli (1994) notes that a sibling in an industrialised society is identified by biological criteria, legal criteria and by affective and behavioural criteria; while in non-industrialised societies, siblings may be defined not only by these criteria but also by an extension of the term to certain types of blood relation (Cicirelli, 1994). This is evident in children of both parent’s biological siblings (like in Cook Islands); in children of the parent’s cross-sex siblings (like in Solomon Islands); and cousins of the same sex, parent’s siblings of the same sex and grandparents of the same sex (like in New Hebrides), who are all viewed as siblings (Cicirelli, 1994, as cited in Sanders 2004). This goes to show that people’s perceptions of siblings are different, and highlights how individuals draw on their own knowledge and understanding to construct their own meaning of a sibling. It is for this reason that this study draws on

discursive psychology to help understand how participants construct their meaning of their sister-sister- relationships.

Discursive psychology is based on social constructionism, a broad discipline, that highlights how “knowledge is negotiated and invented out of material made available through social and interpersonal means, and that this knowledge is self-referential in that it constructs the knower it produced” (Frosh, 2003, 1552). Social constructionism asserts that meanings and realities are negotiated and shared between people (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, as cited in Edwards, et al., 2004) and as such, are fixed in socio-cultural processes that are specific to a particular time and place (Lock & Strong, 2010). According to Lock & Strong (2010), a discourse is a structured way in which meanings come together around a held proposition, which gives them their own worth and significance. It is “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (p. 1), and it is what we use to make sense of and to influence each other. Discourses are therefore a system of meanings we use in our everyday lives that are a product of the social world (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Discursive psychology acknowledges that people’s ways of talking do not objectively reflect our world, identities and social relations, but that they play an active role in creating and changing them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Discursive psychology helps to investigate how people use discourses to create and negotiate representations of the world and their identities, and to analyse the social consequence of this (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Positioning is therefore viewed as an essential part of the processes by which people construct accounts of themselves as they interact with others, and can be understood as a process of negotiating. It is seen as a process of negotiating because people sometime take on competing discourses; as subjects of discourse or an agent in the socio-cultural reproduction and change. Discursive psychology is relevant in this study to help identify and try to understand different discourses participants in this study draw on to construct their sister-sister relationships; and to understand how their constructions shaped their identities. Discursive psychology, however, presents a challenge as it does not account for why people position themselves within (or invest in) particular discourses. Because of its tendency to focus on the social to understand individuals, psychoanalysis will complement discursive psychology by

introducing the focus on the individual. This will be done by uncovering unconscious motivations individuals have to invest in certain discursive positions. Integrating both discursive psychology and psychoanalytic approaches is referred to as a psychosocial approach (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

4. A psychosocial view of sisters

It has already been highlighted above that sibling relationships have been studied from the psychoanalytic and the social constructionist perspectives. However, there is paucity of literature on siblings studies from a psychosocial view, particularly studies on sisters. This study will make use of the psychosocial approach as it values both the socio-cultural context and the subjective experience of participants in understanding sistering. The psychosocial approach makes use of psychoanalysis and discursive psychology to promote better understanding of sisters.

We cannot assume that the experiences of women are universal, or that the experiences of being sisters are similar across cultures or even worldwide. The experiences of women as sisters in their families are influenced by their context, particularly their culture, history, economic status and other variables. As this study focuses on Black, Xhosa women in middle adulthood from the working class, it would be interesting to observe how these influence how they make meaning of their positions in the social world, and in particular how they construct their sister-sister relationships. This relates to the social constructionist or discursive understanding of sisters. Furthermore, women in their sister-sister relationships are also influenced by their subjective experiences of the world. They are influenced by unconscious conflicts, which push them to invest in certain discourses, in turn affecting how they relate to each other. It would thus also be interesting to draw out Xhosa women's motivations for investing in certain discourse in their relationships with their sisters. This relates to the psychoanalytic understanding of sisters. This study adopts a psychosocial approach in its exploration of sister-sister relationships. The psychosocial approach draws on both psychoanalysis and discursive psychology.

Discursive psychology tries to uncover the discourses people draw on to construct their realities through their conversations with others. It views 'talk' as an activity

mediated by the availability of discourses in the social and political realm (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). Psychoanalysis on the other hand presumes that behind the surface of social life, lie hidden unconscious motive-forces. Psychoanalysis therefore, views 'talk' as an activity that is mediated by relational dynamics and unconscious processes. It perceives 'talk' as "suggestive of psychic structures that organise individuals' internal worlds in particular" (Frosh and Saville Young, 2008, p. 110). This study draws on both discursive psychology and psychoanalysis, to move beyond understanding how individuals construct themselves in their sister-sister relationships, to understanding why they do. This is done by observing participants as psychosocial subjects.

5. A psychosocial subject

The psychosocial approach, as such, views individuals as psychosocial subjects, who are simultaneously psychic and social, with unconscious desires and anxieties that motivate them to take up specific positions and to select accounts through which they portray themselves (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Frosh & Baraister (2008) used the image of a 'moebius strip' to describe the psychosocial individual, who is "underside and topside" and whose "inside and outside flow together as one..." (p. 349). Through the psychosocial approach, people's subjective experiences are understood from the social perspective, at the same time looking at their social lives from the 'individual perspective'. Subjectivity, according to the psychosocial approach is then viewed as an ongoing dialectic tension between inter-subjectivity and individuality in relational life (Hollway, 2008). In other words, using the psychosocial approach helps us to explore the extent to which people's experiences can be explained by their shared social circumstances and by unique aspects of the individuals (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The psychosocial approach sees people "not just as positioned in discourses as a result of social forces..." but "rather they are 'invested' in certain positions and that these investments inform their provisional, fluid and potentially conflicting positions they take up" (Hollway, 2011, p. 5).

Psychoanalysis is used to elicit people's investment into certain discourses. It holds the idea that individuals are not transparent to themselves (Hollway, 2011) and that they have a dynamic unconscious, which defends them against anxiety and

significantly influences people's actions, lives and relations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This idea of a defended subject shows how subjects invest in discourses when these offer positions that provide protection against anxiety and therefore support to identity.

Psychoanalysis proposed that people's investment in certain discourses serves a defensive function; that it serves to defend the self against anxiety (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Defences are complex responses individuals build in response to people and events in the social world. They are inter-subjective, meaning they come into play in relations between people. For example a defence mechanism of transference and countertransference; transference is the unconscious transferring of other emotionally significant relationships on to the therapist (or researcher) by the patient (or interviewee); while countertransference refers to the therapists (researchers) responses to the transference, as well as their own transferring of emotionally significant relationships on to the patient (interviewee). According to psychoanalysis, our interactions are mediated by internal fantasies, which derive from our histories of significant relationships. Such histories are often accessible only through our feelings. This makes the information of our feelings in and around the interview of value in understanding the dynamics of the research relationship.

The psychosocial approach therefore suggests that people's meaning of experiences are fixed around discourses or a central proposition, which give them their value and significance, and that certain desires or anxieties motivate them to take up specific positions or accounts through which they portray themselves (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).). The psychosocial subject is therefore psychic because it is a product of a unique biography of anxiety-provoking life events and the manner in which they have been unconsciously defended against. It is social for the following three reasons; because such defensive activities are affected by discourses, because these defences are processes that affect and are affected by others, and because of the real events in the external, social world that are appropriated discursively and defensively.

6. Summary

In this chapter, the psychoanalytic perspective and the social constructionist theoretical framework were discussed. These perspectives were discussed to pave the way for the psychosocial approach that this study will be using to understand siblings; particularly how women in this study make meaning of their relationships, how these meanings shape their gendered identities and in finding out why these women invest in certain meanings in their relationships with their sisters.

METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. It discusses the psychosocial methodological approach as part of the qualitative research paradigm that is used in this study. This chapter sketches out the aims of the study, particularly how the methodology will help address the research aims. Sampling and recruitment procedures used are laid out. An explication of the processes used to collect and analyse data is given. Furthermore, this chapter discusses validity and reliability of the study, as well as the ethical considerations.

2. The qualitative research design

A qualitative research design was used in this study as it is interested in exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of individuals (Smith, 2003a). A qualitative approach studies individuals in their natural settings and attempts to make sense of their experiences, interpreting how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The current study adopts a qualitative approach and aims to understand rich descriptive accounts for how women make meaning of their experiences in sister-sister relationships. Of specific interest, it focuses on understanding how the participants construct their sister-sister relationships. The study also aims to explore how these meanings or constructions affect their gendered identities, and to understand why these women invest in the identified meanings or constructions. Investments are people's conscious or unconscious desires and motivations that motivate them to take up specific positions and to select specific accounts with which they portray themselves (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

3. Research Aims

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences of Black, Xhosa, and working class women in middle adulthood in sister-sister relationships from a psychosocial perspective. This study aims to understand how these women make meaning of their experiences of sister-sister relationships. In particular, it will explore how the participants construct themselves in relation to their sisters. The study will elicit different discourses that the participants draw on to make meaning of their relationships with their sisters. This will require careful attention to the discursive context within which various accounts are constructed and to trace their consequences for the participants in a conversation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This will help in understanding how these meanings and/or constructions affect the participant's gendered identities. Finally, it will examine one particular woman's investments in the meanings she makes of her sister-sister relationship. In particular, it will identify the psychic functions that investing in certain discourses serves.

4. Sampling and recruitment procedures

A small sample was selected in order to produce information rich and very detailed data on participants (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Participants for this study were recruited through the use of purposive sampling and convenience sampling techniques.

Purposive sampling allows participants to be deliberately selected in order to provide information that cannot be attained well from other participants (Maxwell, 1996). Sampling in this study was conducted based on gender/sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, sibling status, and language proficiency. The sample included six Xhosa speaking women, who work in the cleaning division in an educational institution. Participants are all in middle adulthood (35-50 years), all have at least one biological sister, and were happy to be interviewed in English. Xhosa participants were chosen because there is scarcity of literature on siblings of Xhosa ethnicity. The study included participants from a working class socio-economic group because participants in this socio-economic class are often neglected in social research. The focus on a specific class may also help us to explore the impact of the

socio-economic context on sister-sister relationships. As highlighted earlier, the study focused on sisters in middle adulthood because siblings in this age range often deal with challenges that make it difficult for them to sustain sibling relationships at this stage. Furthermore, there seem to be a scarcity of literature on sibling relationship for individuals in this age range. English was chosen for use in the interviews because English was considered a language that would accommodate both the researcher and the participants, because the researcher was not conversant in isiXhosa.

Convenience sampling refers to selecting participants who are accessible to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher selected to use cleaning personnel of an educational institution in the Eastern Cape, as they were relatively accessible to the researcher. Written approval was obtained from the Human Resources Division of the institution to approach female cleaning personnel to take part in the study (See Appendix A). The cleaning personnel's supervisors were also consulted to allow the researcher to recruit and interview the prospective participants at the time of their convenience. The researcher approached the female cleaning personnel over numerous days, as they came to sign off for lunch, at their supervisor's office. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and distributed a small flyer (See Appendix B), with information about the study and the researcher's contact details, as she requested to interview them for this study. Five female cleaning personnel agreed to be interviewed. Their contact details were taken on the spot and the researcher spoke to them telephonically to arrange an appropriate time and place to conduct interviews. Of the five participants, only one withdrew from the study. This participant did not provide a reason for withdrawing from the study.

The researcher experienced difficulties recruiting a sufficient number of participants for the study. She also experienced challenges collecting data, as she had to postpone numerous interviews when some participants failed to show up for their appointments due to unexpected events and personal commitments. As such, three female supervisors for the cleaning personnel were approached and requested to take part in the study. These supervisors met the criteria already described. All three agreed to be interviewed and their contact details were obtained on the spot to use later to arrange appointments with them at a time of their convenience. Of the

three supervisors, only two were interviewed for this study, as one of them withdrew from the study as she was going on maternity leave.

5. Participants

The next table provides a summary of the participants' biographical details. The names used in this study are all pseudonyms selected by the researcher, except for Mhase, who chose the pseudonym for herself.

NAME	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER OF SISTERS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	EMPLOYMENT
Xoliswa	52	Single	One (1)	One (1)	Supervisor to cleaning personnel
Phumeza	45	Married	Three (3)	Two (2)	Cleaner
Mhase	50	Divorced	One (1)	Three (3)	Supervisor to cleaning personnel
Babalwa	49	Married	Three (3) (2 living, 1 deceased)	Two (2)	Cleaner
Lumka	40	Single	Two (2)	One (1)	Cleaner
Zukiswa	44	Single	Three (3)	(two (2))	Cleaner

Table: Participants' demographics

6. Data collection

Data was collected making use of psychoanalytically informed methods of psychosocial research. These methods are psychoanalytically informed because they are based "on working through the subjective, affective experience of the

psychoanalyst” in order to understand the participants (Hollway, 2011, p. 12). These methods also make use of “biography and life history interviews” to locate unconscious mental processes within the subject’s life history (Clarke, 2006, p. 1164). These methods include the free-association narrative interview and reflexive field notes. Although it is part of the psychosocial approach, using multiple sources of information is useful across qualitative methods as it helps bring about better understanding of participants (Ritchie, 2003)

The free-association narrative interview incorporates free association to allow the interviews to elicit significant personal meanings, and particularly to gain insight into motivations, forces, anxieties behind the construction of meaning of specific experiences, which are not conspicuous to the participant, particularly at the time of the interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). What this entailed is that interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner, with minimal and/or no interpretations from the researcher to allow unconscious ideas to come out (Clarke, 2002). Hollway (2011) asserted that such an interview is “capable of eliciting accounts that remain close to experience and embedded in their settings, because this method depends on narrative based in language...” (p. 12). Free association is based on the premise that meanings underlying interviewees’ elicited narratives are best accessed by means of links based on spontaneous association of ideas, as opposed to word and word clusters and/or whatever consistencies can be found in the told narrative (Hollway, 2011). Using the free-association narrative interview offered the researcher richer and deeper insights into a person’s unique meanings. This is because it made the emotional sense of the story more important than the cognitive logic, revealing an individual’s subjective meaning making (Hollway, 2011). It is also because it is based on the psychoanalytic concept of a defended subject and assumes that “subjects are not necessarily transparent to themselves” (Hollway, 2011, 12). What this entails is that although the participants may be aware of the spoken responses they provide, they may not be aware of some hidden meanings that may be elicited in their responses.

The free-association narrative interview was adapted from the biographical-interpretive method, which based its methods on four principles that are designed to facilitate the production of a meaning frame. The first principle involves the use of open-ended questions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Open-ended questions give

participants complete freedom to respond to questions in a manner they wish to (Keats, 2000). They do not impose structure on participants' narratives, and are therefore useful in exploring meaning of participants' life experience (Clarke, 2006). The second principle is that of eliciting stories (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Participants' stories as opposed to structured responses tend to be revealing as they include details of the telling, emphasis on specific points and morals drawn from stories (Clarke, 2006). They also provide the researcher with an opportunity to look at various forms of unconscious communication that take place in the interview relationship (Clarke, 2006, Clarke, 2008). The third principle is to avoid 'why' questions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). According to Clarke (2006), avoiding 'why' questions may seem counter-intuitive because these kinds of questions elicit people's explanations for their actions, which are useful in helping researchers understand people. However, Clarke (2006) and Hollway & Jefferson (2000) noted that 'why' questions often produce conjured and rehearsed responses from interviewees. The final principle is of 'using the participants' ordering and phrasing' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This involves careful and attentive listening (and where possible some note taking) in order to be able to ask follow-up questions using the participants' own words and phrases, without offering an interpretation (Clarke, 2006, Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). These allow the researcher to respect and retain the participant's meaning frames (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

This approach also makes use of two interviews for each participant (See Appendix C for interview schedule). Some participants were interviewed in a venue chosen by the researcher, while others were interviewed in the venue of their choice. The venues used were quiet, with minimal disruptions from outside. The first interview included an unstructured life history interview used to obtain the participant's narratives about their experiences of their sister-sister relationships (Clarke, 2006). The second interview was composed of semi-structured interviews, used to explore themes that may be significant though not thoroughly explored in the first interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The second interviews also gave interviewees a chance to reflect. The initial interviews lasted on average 40 minutes, while the second interview was conducted over 23 minutes on average. The times between the initial and the second interview ranged from about a week to three weeks.

Reflexive field notes were used to record the interviewer's impressions of the participants and their narratives, as well as that of the interview process and the relationship to help with data analysis (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The researcher also noted the emotional responses she had towards each participant, a process called countertransference, often viewed as a form of unconscious communication, (Hollway, 2011). Countertransference in this case is noted as the researcher's emotional responses to the emotionally significant relationships transferred by the participants, as well as the researcher's own transferring of emotionally significant relationships on to the participant (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). As noted earlier, these can be obtained from being aware of what is happening in an interview setting, and they are important as they give us a better understanding of the dynamics of the research relationship. This process involves being reflexive.

Reflexivity is concerned with being aware of what the researcher is bringing to the research process. It involves observing one's emotional responses to the participants, observing how the research process affects the researcher and considering how the researcher may influence the participants' meaning making activities (Frosh and Baraister, 2008; Hollway, 2011). Reflexivity is based on the idea that affect-laden meanings are being communicated between two people and can be used to understand people better (Hollway, 2011). Reflexivity is crucial in psychosocial research as the approach itself involves conceptualising both the researcher and the participant as co-producers of meaning (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, as cited in Clarke, 2008). Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody (2001, as cited in Clarke, 2008) asserted that as researchers, we have influence on participant's narratives, that "no matter how many methodological guarantees we try to put in place, the subjective always intrudes" (p. 122), further emphasising the value of being reflexive during the research project.

Reflexive note taking happened after each interview session and it involved setting aside theory and knowledge to allow experience to make its impact (Clarke, 2008). In being reflexive, the researcher bore in mind that "research is not a process of uncovering 'truth' about people, but rather exposes the ways in which people are positioned by theoretical structures used (by participants as well as researchers) to understand them" (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008, p. 112).

7. Data analysis

Data was analysed making use of transcripts of interviews and reflexive field notes as sources of data. Data analysis began with listening to and performing a detailed transcription of each participant's interview from audiotapes. This was followed by careful repeated reading of all the transcripts, with no attempt to analyse it, in order to experience some of the discursive effects of the text (Willig, 2003). The next step of analysis was coding or the selection of sections of material for analysis, based on the participants' accounts of how they experienced their relationships with their sisters. This included highlighting, copying, and filing relevant sections for analysis. Data analysis then proceeded to a discursive reading of transcribed material. Only four out of the six participants' interviews were used in the data analysis to provide support for the findings. All six transcripts elicited similar discourses, however only four were used as they presented participants' account of their experiences with their sisters in a rich and descriptive manner that was not noticeable in the other two. The use of the participant's second language may have affected the richness with which they could express themselves.

Conducting a discursive reading involved paying close attention to the constructive and functional dimensions of discourse. This involved identifying interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas participants experienced, and subject positions adopted by participants to illustrate how participants constructed sistering and are shaped by their experiences of sister- sister relationships. This is because language from a discursive point of view is viewed as an action that is essential to finding out what people are doing when they talk (Billig, 2006). On the same path, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) acknowledged that we use language to create representations of our reality, to relay information about our mental states, behaviour and facts about the world, and that language also acts as an instrument that produces, and as a result creates our social world.

According to Edley (2001) interpretive repertoires are fairly consistent ways of thinking about and talking about objects and events in the world, that serve as building blocks of conversation. It includes terminology, stylistic and grammatical features, and preferred metaphors and other figures of speech that participants may use in their construction (Willig, 2003). According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002),

each repertoire provides resources that people use to construct versions of reality. The aim of this kind of analysis is not to categorise people but to identify discursive practices through which categories are constructed. This is done by paying careful attention to the discursive context within which various accounts are constructed and to trace their consequences for the participants in a conversation. The researcher elicited consistent accounts of how participants talked about their sister-sister relationships, particularly how they constructed their experiences of their sister-sister relationships.

Edley (2001) defined Ideological dilemmas as competing or contradictory themes or ideologies. By ideologies, Edley (2001) referred to beliefs, values and practices of a given society or culture, condensed wisdom of a given culture or society, ways of life or common sense (and positions) in the participant's stories. This level of analysis involves looking for the dilemma and exploring how it is used for a wide variety of rhetorical purposes and for wider cultural significance (Edley, 2001).

Althusser (1971, as cited in Edley, 2001) asserted that "subjectivity is an ideological effect" (p. 209), that ideologies create or construct 'subjects' by drawing people into particular positions or identities. Subject positions are locations within a conversation, identities made relevant by specific ways of talking (Edley, 2001). Subjectivity and subject position were used to identify how participants 'position' themselves in relation to their sisters.

Following this discursive reading, a psychoanalytic reading was conducted based on the interview of one participant. First, an extract was re-transcribed, paying particular attention to the tone used, interruptions and pauses in the participant's narrative. The psychoanalytic reading involved an analysis of the participant's personal biography, an application of psychoanalytic concepts to narrative material and analysing the research relationship drawing on the field notes (Frosh and Saville Young, 2008). An analysis of the participant's personal biography helps promote better understanding of the participant. An application of psychoanalytic concept involves doing a brief discursive reading on an extract and then using applicable psychoanalytic theory and concepts to explain the participant's investment in the identified discourses. An analysis of the research relationship will elicit some of the interaction and emotions that the participant picked up, that relate to or are similar to

the relationship with her significant others, in this case her mother and her sister. The analysis will be grounded on transcribed material, psychoanalytic interpretations and the reflexive field notes (Bailey, 2008). This action is referred to as triangulation of data sources, and it involves using different data sources, such as initial and a follow up interviews, as well as reflexive field notes to support or to check for the integrity of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

8. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important concepts to consider as they help define the strength of data produced. However, they constitute invalid criteria for evaluating psychosocial research, as they are more suitable for quantitative studies. As such, alternative criteria that are relevant to and are more suitable to psychosocial studies are used to assess the quality of this study. These include credibility and transferability of findings.

Credibility is concerned with the extent to which phenomena under study is accurately reflected and provides confidence in the truth of the findings (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured through use of reflexivity, triangulation, coherence, and transparency. Reflexivity as explained earlier is concerned with being aware of what the researcher is bringing to the research process and observing one's emotional responses to the participants, observing how the research process affects the researcher and considering how the researcher may influence the participants' meaning making activities (Frosh and Baraister, 2008; Hollway, 2011). This is because the researcher cannot separate herself from the research, causing her subjectivity to influence her understanding of participants (Hollway, 2011). Reflexivity here is useful to strengthen theoretical conviction and to guard against misreading of data collected. Supervision by an experienced researcher and clinician was also helpful to maintain 'objectivity' and to help separate experience of researcher from those of participants.

There is a concern, about using psychoanalysis outside the clinical setting, where interpretations could be difficult to validate, risking of lack of control over interpretations (Frosh & Saville Young, 2011). Furthermore, psychoanalytic interpretations in a research setting is often criticised as risking distorting

psychoanalytic concepts usually used in a clinical setting, and for pathologising and individualising participants (Saville Young, 2009). In addition to this, Frosh and Emerson (2005) argue that psychoanalytic interpretive strategies require more biographical and interpersonal information than is available from conventional interview texts. The lack of fixed meaning in psychoanalysis also raises questions about the constraints researchers would operate on interpretations, given that meaning is constructed in specific situations through particular inter-subjective encounters, which allows for viable and equally persuasive alternative interpretations. This is why reflexivity proves important. Reflexivity is also useful because interpretations were only carried out during data analysis. This meant that there was lack proper methods of 'testing' psychoanalytic interpretations, particularly that of close observation of the analysand's response to interpretation (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008).

Interpretations are made with an awareness that there are no absolute truths in the researcher's interpretations, hence the stance of tentativeness and uncertainty the researcher maintained in her interpretations (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). The researcher's interpretations are rooted in biographical information and in a dynamic contact with participants that allow space for emotional connectedness and the observation of thoughtful reflection of the relationship that arises. This can also be viewed as triangulation of data.

As defined earlier, triangulation involves using different sources of information with the hope that it will verify or improve the clarity (and accuracy) of research findings (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). According to Berg (2007), triangulation is an attempt to relate data in order to counteract the threats to validity identified in each. Triangulation was therefore useful as it helped to establish credibility of the findings. Coherence is also achieved by ensuring that the design, data collection and analysis are appropriate to the theoretical framework and the aims of the study (Smith, 2003b; Tracy, 2010). It is worth noting that the manner in which data is collected in this approach can be viewed as psychoanalytically appropriate as it privileges participants' in-depth accounts of their own perceptions of their experience as opposed to 'factual' information (Frosh & Emerson, 2005). Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the stages of the research process are outlined clearly, that

her interpretations are logical, and that where there were contradictions in the results, they were explained, to enhance coherence (Smith, 2003b).

Transferability is concerned with whether the findings can be applied in other context. To assist with transferability, research findings, along with sufficient details about participants and their experiences of sistering and about the context of the study are provided to enable any reader to make his or her own judgement about whether the findings can be transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). The provision of such details also promotes the credibility of the study as it shows the reader the circumstances and context of the narration and allows to the reader to make their own conclusions about the meanings, to the extent that they can see, trust the findings and make decisions based on them (Tracy, 2010). Transparency is crucial in this study as it outlines how the researcher arrived at her findings. It is achieved by clearly discussing the processes used in this study particularly to how data was collected and analysed. The researcher and the participants' words are also included in the analysis to reflect a joint narrative work.

9. Ethical Considerations

Approval to conduct this research project was obtained from the Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC), with an understanding that the researcher is aware of professional ethics and would implement ethical decision making during the research project (Refer to Appendix D). This also included being reflexive to ensure the treatment of participants in a fair and impartial way.

In line with the research principles of beneficence, which requires that the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible (Kvale, 1996), the nature of the study imposed minimal risks towards participants, and avoided potential risk and/or harm towards the participants. The researcher had a plan in place in the event that the participants experience emotional distress during the data collection process. These included debriefing the participants and then referring them for appropriate intervention when the need arises. The researcher has experience as an Intern Clinical Psychologist and has the skills to debrief and refer client for further intervention.

The participant's rights were respected at all time. For example, this study complied with the ethical principle of informed consent. Participants were informed about the nature of the study, the implication of taking part, and the consequences of the study (refer to Appendix E). No deception was used. Participants consented to being interviewed at the times of their convenience, with the knowledge that they could withdraw from the study without an explanation or negative consequences, when they no longer want to continue to participate, or even after the interviews have been conducted. Participants also gave their approval to have interviews recorded and for some of their responses from the interviews to be cited in the final document (Refer to Appendix F). However, the participant were not fully aware of the extent to which they were exposing themselves, given that the study involved analysing unconscious meanings behind their descriptions of their sister-sister relationship. This raises concerns around the extent to which individuals could give their consent (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The participants' real names and any information that could expose the participants' identity were disguised to ensure confidentiality.

The participants were treated with respect, in a sense that they were observed carefully (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Careful observation here entailed making use of the participants' biographical history, stories and feelings about their relationships with their sisters and observations of their demeanours as they related their relationships with their sisters. This study however, could have profited more from biographical information than that obtained. Furthermore, one may argue that how data was interpreted displayed some form of disrespect; particularly that interpretations were one-sided and were not confirmed by participants. As such, the study could have benefited more from testing interpretations with participants during the interviews. This however raises more ethical issues, particularly that there is a preference for interpretation of unconscious motivation to be confined to a clinical setting where professional support is available. Given the researcher's training, this may have been handled efficiently however, it may have changed the nature of the study from psychosocial research to a case-study type of research. The interpretations used in the data analysis may be experienced as distressing. Alternatively, they could be seen as a means to offer participants 'true recognition'; an uncomfortable but realistic appraisal of an individual by someone independent of

this individuals' omnipotent wishes as well as independent of his or her self-serving defences.

Data was analysed and reported following the principle of integrity, which involves presenting data that is accurate, that contained candid details of information and processes obtained during the project (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In this study, this may have been challenged by insufficient background information about the participants' sisters or other biographical details that may have lead to the production of speculative analysis. However, this was addressed by efforts to approach data analysis in line with the principle of honesty (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This involved approaching data in an unbiased manner and with an open mind, in a spirit of enquiry and not that of advocacy, only making claims that are supported by evidence and not ignoring evidence when it suited the researcher.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology used in this study. It has discussed the usefulness of the qualitative research design in the study, and the value of adopting the psychosocial approach for the current study. This chapter summarised the aims of the study, explicating on how the methodology will help tackle the research topic. This chapter also delineated the sampling and recruitment procedures, and the methods of collecting and analysing data used. Discussions on the validity and reliability of the study, as well as the ethical considerations were also presented.

FINDINGS

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a discursive reading and a psychoanalytic reading of the interview data, both readings together make up the psychosocial approach to the data. The discursive reading is concerned with drawing out the constructions made by the participants when they spoke of their sister-sister relationships, and what these constructions do in a specific context. This discursive reading is particularly interested in exploring how Black, Xhosa women construct sistering. The discursive reading is conducted across all the participant's interview transcripts, whereas the psychosocial reading is only conducted on one participant's interviews. The psychosocial reading is concerned with showing how one participant constructed her relationship with her sister, as well as in exploring the emotional investments the participant may have had in these constructions. This entails making use of a discursive reading and a psychoanalytic reading. The use of psychoanalysis in this psychosocial reading makes it more fitting that this psychosocial reading focuses on a single case study, as it is common in the psychoanalytic field to focus on case studies to explore and refine theoretical ideas, as well as to encourage fine-grained analysis of the case chosen, for an in-depth understanding of the individual. The psychosocial reading will be conducted on the participant whose interview stood out as she focused more on her challenges in adulthood rather than on her relationship with her sister.

2. Discursive reading

2.1 Introduction to the discursive reading

From the participant's narratives, two interpretive repertoires were consistently drawn upon to construct the sister-sister relationship, namely the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love and that of financial support. These interpretive repertoires are discussed separately, where each repertoire is followed by a discussion of the ideological dilemmas they give rise to and the subjective positions they facilitate. The discursive reading will draw on extracts from the interviews

throughout the presentation of the interpretive repertoires in order to ground the findings in the data collected.

2.1.1 Interpretive Repertoire of Unconditional Love

The participants in this study drew on the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love to construct their sister-sister relationships. Through their constructions, the participants are seen to engage with the dilemma of loving their sisters from an emotional place and loving them out of a sense of cultural obligation. The participants end up taking the position of sisters who love out of obligation and seem to underplay the discourse of hatred that is also revealed in the participants' narratives about sisting. Next is a discussion of this interpretive repertoire.

Extract 1:

Hunadi: Ok! So, how would you describe your sister, if you had to –to-to maybe to explain how she is to other people, how would you describe her?

Xoliswa: Do I... To other people or to me?

Hunadi: Err. Ok! (Xoliswa and Hunadi both break out in laughter)

Xoliswa: Err, her star sign is a Libra! (Mhm). And she is born the 29th of September (Mm). Erm, from growing up, I think I'm, I'm used to thinking of myself as, I am not sure whether I am a Good Samaritan or what, but I-I-I like to help (Mhm), financially, physically and otherwise (Mm). So, I-I-I am not the kind of person who, who takes a-a back seat (Mm), I always want to see-to see to it that things are done, and they-they-they are done successfully. And she is the kind of a person who, who would look busy, but is kind of taking a back seat (Mm). For instance, err her elder daughter, err (Slight pause), before she got married, she got a daughter out of wedlock, ne! (Mhm). So, that daughter grew up at our house.

In the above abstract, Xoliswa uses a metaphor of a Good Samaritan to construct herself in relation to her sister. This metaphor draws on the parable of the Good Samaritan from the bible. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches about what it means to love unconditionally. Unconditional love, as is self-explanatory requires that individuals should love one another without any conditions, such as

loving without prejudice and without expectation of return. Drawing from the parable, unconditional love also includes the conventional exercise of 'practicing what one preaches'. In other words, it requires expressing that love for another and showing that love through actions. When Xoliswa draws on the metaphor of a 'Good Samaritan' to describe herself in relation to her sister, one of the ways in which she constructs herself is as a sister who loves unconditionally, meaning she is not only unreservedly affectionate towards her sister, but shows that love through her actions as well. Another way in which she constructs herself is as a sister who loves her sister without hoping to get anything in return. Xoliswa's construction reinforces the idea that women should not only love one another unreservedly, but also be able to show that love through what they do for one other and not expect a reward for showing that love. Unconditional love in this instance corresponds to obligatory love or a love from the outside- a cultural expectation. It is the kind of love that is prescribed by society or in this case is specifically prescribed by Xoliswa's Christian religious belief, as opposed to the kind that she feels from inside; the affection she has for her sister that Cicirelli (1995) describes as an internal state within an individual.

When Xoliswa says, "*Erm, from growing up, I think I'm, I'm used to thinking of myself as...*" Xoliswa indicates that she has always perceived herself as someone who loves her sister unconditionally; that she has always honoured cultural expectations when it comes to how she relates and treats her sister. As such, Xoliswa constructs herself as someone who has always assumed the identity of the 'Good Samaritan'. However, when she says "*...I am not sure whether I am a Good Samaritan or what...*" she expresses doubt in assuming the identity of 'the Good Samaritan'. Xoliswa's doubt in accepting the identity of the Good Samaritan rather constructs her as a sister who is humble, implying she does not expect recognition or a reward for assuming that identity or for playing that role. This is relevant to the idea of expecting nothing in return incorporated in the concept of loving unconditionally. It is also an idea from society that is imposed on the individual. Society often views humble people as 'good' people. Humility as a character is often expected from 'good' women; however, it sometimes underplays women's contribution to the wellbeing of others.

Furthermore, Xoliswa constructs herself as a woman who has a habit of helping others. Xoliswa also says “...*I like to help, financially, physically and otherwise*”. By expressing that she likes to help, Xoliswa constructs herself as a woman who derives pleasure from helping others. Although this comes off as something that comes from ‘inside’ of Xoliswa, this is also something that is socially expected of sisters and women; that they should be able to help others in many ways possible. This elucidates the way in which sibling relationships are psychosocial in that they are in between ‘internal’ feelings and ‘external’ obligations. Furthermore, it is consistent with the traditional view of women as helpers.

When Xoliswa explains in detail how she likes to help; for example, that “*I like to help, financially, physically and otherwise*”, she constructs herself as a woman who is not only helpful, but gives her all and would do more than is required of her to help others. This is also evident when she says “*I am not the kind of person who, who takes a-a back seat, I always want to see-to see to it that things are done, and they-they-they are done successfully*”. This relates to the idea of doing more than one is obliged to, and it is indicative of the sacrifices women are expected to make to help others. As she constructs herself as a woman who would work hard and possibly put in an extra effort, doing whatever it takes to show her love for her sister, again she puts into effect the principle of ‘practicing what one preaches’ of unconditional love. Xoliswa’s constructions reveal she shows her love for her sister by the things she does for her, particularly to help her. Her efforts to help were depicted in her account of how she helped her sister by raising her daughter, how she provided for her sister (and her niece) when her sister was going to school, and how she would consistently help her sister out of various ‘crises’.

In the above extract, Xoliswa describes her sister as belonging to the Libra star sign because she was born on a the 29th of September. Although this does not come out explicitly, it constructs her sister as someone who could not help but be the way she is, because she was born on a certain date, under certain ‘forces of the stars’. This construction imposes an obligation on Xoliswa to tolerate her sister’s traits and behaviour, particularly when she finds it unpleasant to do so. This is in line with the expectation that women should be considerate and patient. Xoliswa also constructs her sister as deceptive and somewhat unreliable when she says “*And she is the kind of a person who, who would look busy, but is kind of taking a back seat*”.

Her sister's unreliable nature was also revealed in accounts of how they would agree that Xoliswa's sister would do something (for example pay for her daughter's matric farewell dress or repay the loans she took from Xoliswa) but then fail to live up to their agreement. Furthermore, her deceptive nature was evident when Xoliswa was asked to describe her sister, to which she responded by saying "To *other people or to me?*" which may indicate that her sister may have a character that she reveals to other people, while she acts differently towards Xoliswa. Xoliswa constructs her sister's behaviour in a negative manner, particularly in comparison to each other. This may be because her sister acts in a way she does not associate with being a 'good' woman, a woman who is honest and reliable. Xoliswa also does not associate her sister's behaviour with that of a 'good' woman, particularly the fact that she is not giving of herself. This is reflected in the next extract.

Extract 2:

Xoliswa: I think she is selfish (Mm). She is not just doing this, err to me, even to other family members as well (Mm). She is selfish; she only wants things for herself. She is not prepared to sacrifice or share with other people (Mm)...

Here, Xoliswa constructs being a 'good' sister and being a 'good' woman as requiring selfless giving of oneself without expecting anything in return, which she constructs as indicative of unreserved love. By constructing her sister as behaving in a way that reflects she is selfish and unwilling to share, Xoliswa suggests that her sister is failing to behave in a way that 'good' women are expected to behave. It is worth noting that this could be constructed in a positive manner as being ambitious and self-driven, but instead it is constructed negatively and in opposition to building familial relations. Furthermore, Xoliswa constructs herself as a woman who has to love her sister despite her sister's negative traits described above. This is indicative of the obligatory love with which Xoliswa constructs her relationship with her sister; that she is obliged to love her even though her sister does not make it easy for Xoliswa to love her. This emphasises the expectation that sisters and women should be sympathetic and accommodating.

Xoliswa's constructions suggest that sistering requires that one should act with obligatory love. Xoliswa feels obliged to love her sister because of her Christian

faith and her cultural expectations around what women should do for others. These are consistent with conventional views of women who are expected to show love and humility, to help others, to be understanding and accommodating, and to act in a self-sacrificial manner to keep things cordial in their relationship with others. In her relationship with her sister, these constructions expose Xoliswa to exploitation by her sister, underplay Xoliswa's contribution to her sister and her daughter's wellbeing, and risk leaving her feeling unappreciated. The next extract also tries to show how another participant drew on the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love to construct her relationship with her sister.

Extract 3:

Hunadi: May I ask? How would you describe her (Phumeza's sister), besides the-the bullying and the situation- the difficult situation she has created for you and your sisters (Mm), how would you describe her as a person?

Phumeza: Err, she is a bully like this neh? If she want to do something, she don't care even if how do you feel. She want to do things as the way she want, as long as its suitable for herself, you ask like that?

Hunadi: Has she always been like that?

Phumeza: She is always like that (Ok). She is always like that, as long as things suit for her (Mm) which is meaning it suit for all of us...

Hunadi: For everyone.

Phumeza: ... or everyone.

Hunadi: Mmm. And how would you describe yourself in comparison to her?

Phumeza: Mm, I am the person like this; I love my family. I love them. Especially for herself, I love her too much (Mm). You see (Mm). Even, I let her come here at [place of work] ne? (Mm) She was working in- she was doing i- what is that? It's not a training! It's training like i- (slight pause) SETA? You know that SETA project, you don't know that SETA?

Hunadi: Like a skills training?

Phumeza: Like training. Ja! (Mhm). She was doing that for 2 years (Mhm). I- communication, i- (Taps her finger on the arm of the chair as she thinks) (slight pause). She do something like that man, like skills, but she do have matric. (Ok) No, she was doing social development.

Hunadi: It wasn't communication, it was social development.

Phumeza: Ja, for 2 years here (Yeah). So, I-I-I bring the forms for her, and then I bring everything to [place of work], in HR, when they need people like-like- like she was- she passed matric mos, as I pass matric, while I see there was an opportunity for her (Mm), I give to her.

Hunadi: Ok, so you describe (yourself) as someone who is caring, who looks out for other people. But she is not like that? (Mhm). Oohh!

Phumeza: You see! (Mm) I want, I want to build home when I was doing that (Mm), because my mother was already passed away (Mm). And she have an other side, she do have a good side because she was the one who look after my mother (Ok!). But at the same time, I support her, because I am working and I was the one who bury my mother (Mhm). Do you see?

In the above extract 3, Phumeza constructs her sister as inconsiderate and as a bully. This follows an account in which Phumeza portrays her sister as impertinent for treating their childhood home as her own place, and for bringing her boyfriend to live there with her. Phumeza's sister is the only sibling that resides in their childhood home and she has shown discomfort when Phumeza shows up unannounced and 'makes herself at home' in their childhood home, when Phumeza has her separate home with her husband. In the Xhosa and some African cultures, the family home belongs to all the siblings (especially if the parents did not have a son or the siblings a brother, to leave the house to, or if the parents did not leave a will allocating the house to one or a limited number of siblings). This points to cultural scripts that exist to maintain sibling ties and parent-child ties in adulthood. Similarly, Phumeza sees their childhood home as her own home too, despite the fact that she is married and has her own home that she shares with her husband. Phumeza expects her sister to be considerate of her need to use their childhood home for when she experiences challenges with her husband in their marital home. Phumeza sees her sister's actions as disrespectful because their culture does not permit her to live with a man she is not married to in their childhood home. She therefore constructs her sister as cheeky and as inconsiderate of and as disrespectful to her and their culture. Phumeza constructs her sister's lack of respect and thoughtlessness as behaviours that are not indicative of obligatory love, as they are devoid of the love, care, respect,

thoughtfulness and the self-sacrifice that 'good' sisters and 'good' women are expected to show. As such, she constructs her sister as behaving in a manner in which 'good' women are not expected to. Phumeza here contrasts a considerate position with a position of self-assertiveness. This assertive position is constructed negatively and in opposition to building familial relations, whereas it could also be constructed positively as standing up for oneself in an effort to maintain some privacy.

In the description of the kind of person she is, in extract 3 above, Phumeza elucidates on how she shows affection for her sister. Phumeza initially expresses in her own words that she loves her sister when she says: "*I love my family. I love them. Especially for herself, I love her too much. You see?*" In so doing, Phumeza acknowledges that she loves her sister. She constructs herself as having affection for her sister- the kind of love that is from inside and is not necessarily from social expectations about how she should feel or behave towards her sister. When she says "*I love her too much*", she constructs herself as a person who loves her sister more than it is good for her, consistent with the expectation of selfless giving with which 'good' sisters and 'good' women are expected to act in accordance. This also reveals the way in which sibling relationships are psychosocial – constructed between feelings from 'inside' participants and social obligations demanded from 'outside'. Phumeza also mentions her sister's negative traits, and then reveals that she loves her, making it clear that she loves her sister, even when her sister acts inconsiderately towards her. This is consistent with the traditional view of women as understanding and accommodation and it reverberates obligatory love.

When Phumeza says "*Even, I let her come here at [place of work] ne?*" she constructs her own act of letting her sister come to her place of work as a symbol of her love; that she is not just affectionate towards her sister but can show that through her actions- 'practicing what she preaches'. Phumeza also constructs herself as having power over her sister as someone employed and as someone with virtuous qualities. She specifically constructs herself as having the power to bring about her sister's attainment of work. This is evident when she says "I let her come...". Phumeza mentions how she helped her sister find work, when she says; "*I bring the forms for her, and then I bring everything to [place of work], in HR*". These are also illustrations of what she has done for her sister, not only to help her find work, but

also to show her love for her, illustrating the principle of practicing what one preaches. As a virtuous person, Phumeza indicates how she exercised her power and at the same time showed her affection when she explains how she sacrificed a career opportunity for her sister. She says “... *when they need people like-like- like she was- she passed matric mos, as I pass matric, while I see there was an opportunity for her (Mm), I give to her.*” Before she could explain how she made a sacrifice for her sister, Phumeza starts off by putting herself on the same standing as her sister when she says “*she passed matric mos, as I pass matric*”. This conveys the message that they were both on equal standing and similarly qualified for the opportunity. In addition to this, Phumeza relates that she had the power to take that opportunity for herself, but then saw it as fitting, an opportunity her sister could benefit from, and then eventually made a sacrifice, and chose to give the opportunity to her sister. Phumeza constructs herself as a sister who would sacrifice her needs for those of her sister’s. Her act of self-sacrifice serves as an example of the love she feels for her sister and her tendency to do more that is good for her. These are further supported by her intentions to ‘build a home’ and to provide for her sister, even though Phumeza has a home or a family with her husband and does not earn enough money to sustain both families. Phumeza’s constructions are consistent with traditional views of women to put others before themselves and can be associated with obligatory love.

Phumeza’s constructions highlight how she loves her sister from an emotional place, and how she is obliged to love her sister despite the fact that her sister is inconsiderate, disrespectful and a bully. This notion of self-sacrifice is also revealed here, in accordance with what it means to be a woman in a traditional sense. These constructions also reinforce the idea that ‘good’ women should love their sisters more than they are obliged to and that they should show that love through their actions. Following, is a discussion of the conflicts that participants engage in as they construct sistering.

2.1.2 Ideological Dilemma

In both their constructions of the sister-sister relationships above, Xoliswa and Phumeza highlighted how ‘good’ sisters and ‘good’ women should love one another.

However, there seems to be a conflict here between loving sisters from an emotional place and loving sisters out of obligation. In particular, Xoliswa seems to negotiate between whether she is a good woman when she loves her sister from a cultural place rather than from an emotional place inside of her. This is shown in the next extract.

Extract 4:

Hunadi: But besides that, like how are things, how do you feel about her, even though she, like she does those things to you?

Xoliswa: Have you ever heard a saying that says “You are my sister, although you’ve got factory faults”? (Xoliswa and Hunadi both laugh). She is my sister although she’s got factory faults.

Hunadi: Even though she’s got factory faults. Ok!

Xoliswa: And the problem is that she is my only sister, we don’t have a brother (Mm), we don’t have a another sister (Mm), it’s just the two of us.

In the above extract 4, Xoliswa avoids talking about how she feels about her sister from the inside, even after she was specifically asked about how she felt about her. She mentions that her sister will remain her sister despite her imperfections. This speaks to an obligatory link they have due to their blood relation. Furthermore, when she says “... *the problem is that she is my only sister, ... we do not have another sister ...*”, Xoliswa constructs herself as forced to have a relationship with her sister because this is the only sister she has. This is also evident in extract one above, where Xoliswa constructed her sister as someone who could not help but be the way she is, because she was born under the Libran star sign. This, as discussed above, implies that her sister could not help but be the way she is, and that Xoliswa has no other choice but to accept her as she is. This highlights a lack of agency on Xoliswa’s side to relate with her sister and is indicative of their relationship being constructed from ‘outside’. As such, Xoliswa constructs the love she has for her sister as obligatory. This construction, when put against the fact that Xoliswa omitted to mention how she felt about her sister and instead highlighted that she is obliged to love her sister may mean that Xoliswa has feelings of dislike for her sister. Xoliswa seems to be negotiating whether she is a ‘good’ woman when she loves her sister

from 'outside' rather than from the inside. On the other hand, Phumeza seems to be negotiating between whether she is a 'good' woman if she loves her sister from an emotional place inside and sometimes hating her. This is evident in Phumeza's account in the extract below.

Extract 5:

Hunadi: How has that affected you?

Phumeza: Noo, its affected me but there's some stages (Mm), I don't feel, I don't-I don't feel right (Mm) for her. There's some stage I just think she is my sister. Because I cannot let she die because she is my sister. (Ohoo). You see, I don't have hate.

Hunadi: You don't hate her...

Phumeza: I don't have a hate. I am a person who like this: If is not right, it is not right, but my heart I don't hate her. In my heart.

Hunadi: It's just that you don't like...

Phumeza: I don't like things she does. (Ok). I cannot have the hate of my sister we are one blood! (Mm). But, I don't have a hate for nobody.

Phumeza here implies that there were times where she has felt her sister has acted in ways that has evoked hatred, but that she felt that she was still her sister and did not hate her in spite of her actions. Furthermore, she goes on to clarify that she has an obligation not to hate her sister because of their blood relation. This is particularly evident when she says "*I cannot have the hate of my sister we are one blood!*". Phumeza seems to struggle between loving her sister because the love she feels for her inside is so strong, and at other times disliking her. This is because their blood relation obliges her not to hate her sister. Phumeza seems to be negotiating between whether her love for her sister is from an emotional place of loving or from outside, a cultural place of 'you should love your sister'. She seems to be negotiating whether she is a 'good woman if at other times she does not love her sister. The next segment of this discussion will elucidate how Xoliswa and Phumeza position themselves in relation to their sisters.

2.1.3 Subject Positioning

Through their narratives, Xoliswa and Phumeza constructed themselves as good women who love their sisters. In extract 4 above, Xoliswa avoided talking about how she felt about her sister from the 'inside' and focused on a narrative that indicated the obligatory love she has for her sister. This construction allows her to honour the discourse of love as obligatory. Xoliswa constructs herself as a 'good' woman who as expected honours her obligation, does things for her sister and sometimes puts herself out for her as a sign of her affection. On the contrary, Phumeza in one instance accepted she loves her sister from the 'inside', but then in another instance focused her narrative on how she is obliged not to hate her sister. Phumeza's construction seems to negotiate between the discourse of obligatory love and that of love from the 'inside', particularly whether she is a 'good' woman if sometimes she dislikes her sister. When she constructs herself as a woman who does not hate others, her constructions emphasise the notion that 'good' women and 'good' sisters do not hate, but instead, that 'good' women and 'good' sisters love one another. Both Xoliswa and Phumeza's constructions seem to subjugate or minimize the fact that sometimes they feel hate for their sisters as they highlighted the obligation they have to love and not to hate their sisters. Their constructions therefore emphasise the notion that 'good' sisters and 'good' women do not have hate, which concurs with the discourse of obligatory love.

2.2.1 The Interpretive Repertoire of Financial Support

The participants also drew on the interpretive repertoire of financial support to construct their relationships with their sisters. As they construct their relationship drawing on this interpretive repertoire, one participant struggled with the dilemma of financially providing for her sister out of inner love and providing for her sister out of a cultural expectation and a construction that 'sisters help each other out financially' and as such, will do the same in return, when the need arises. This leads to the participants taking up the subject position of the financial provider.

The next extract will help explain this discourse of financial support.

Extract 6:

Hunadi: All right, thank you so much. Can you tell me about your relationship with your sister when you were growing up.

Lumka: Ok. When my (Hunadi giggles) both sister when we growing up, I am helping my mother to buy err clothes neh? (Mm). Buy a clothes and food, because it's me, it's only me helping my mom and my sisters (Mm). And also when they starting at school, I am support them to buy a uniform (Mm), pay fees, that-that are there, paying fees, but now they are not paying fees (Mm) and also err buying clothes (Mm). Err, last month on August was err farewell, matric farewell (Mm) they asking me to, they phone me to ask me to buy err dress (Mm), shoes, and also the money to make hair (Mm). And erm, they said in this weekend (Mm), they send me a message to said, she going out for camping (Mm), Matric camping (Mm), she back on 11, they asking some "Sisi can you buy us a panty and nighty for the sleep and money for the" (Mm), "for buy something there". I-I did send for them (Mm). And then they said, you must look for a place for school for next year neh (Mm). They said they want to go there in [educational institution], or else if it didn't get place they want to go there in [another educational institution].

In the above extract 6, Lumka relates on how she has always helped her mother and her sisters by financially providing for them in order to meet their needs that vary from clothing, nutrition, education and entertainment. Lumka constructs herself as a 'breadwinner' to her mother and her sisters. She constructs her sisters as dependent, making demands on her to provide for them financially. Lumka also constructs herself as a responsible older sister who ensured her sister's needs are addressed through her financial support. This draws our attention to the expectations for older sisters not only to practically care for their younger siblings, but to provide for them financially too. Lumka's self-constructions are positive and indicate that 'good' women should financially support their sisters when there is a need. The same is reflected in the next extract, in the case of Xoliswa.

Extract 7:

Xoliswa: ...I was also getting err part-time jobs, so I was also assisting her (Mm), with err-err her school needs, and whatever-toiletries and whatever-whatever (Ok).

Because my mother was still a domestic worker (Mm). And when I got my-my, I gave birth to my son, she-she-she was pregnant I think two years later (Mm). So I was also the one that was err, err buying her daughter clothes, nappies, whatever, whatever, whatever, because the father of the child was err in Uitenhage (Mhm) and she was not err not financially providing for her (Mm). So that was the time I felt very close to her (Mm), because I didn't want her to-to-to feel that err, she is suffering (Mm), err she didn't have the necessary needs for herself and the kids. For instance, even in my account, err I used to have an account with Sales House. So, I would give her a buying slip to go buy. If I buy shoes, I will buy shoes for me and myse- for her (Mm). If I am buying toiletries it was for me and for her (Mm), you know? I was very close to her (Mm), until such time err she-she..., you know, even-even-even when err, I think I noticed her, because when I went back to school in 1980 (Mm), I was doing standard nine at Debeneck (Mm). And, so, the part-time job that I had, I left it for her to-to go and be employed there (Mm). So, she was employed and she was able to -to get some money (Mm), you know (Mm) err whatever little money was. So, with that little money err she, I expected her to also do what I was doing (Mm), but she was doing the very opposite.

The above extract 7, shows Xoliswa constructing herself as her sister and her nieces' main financial provider. Xoliswa also constructs herself as a carer and a responsible older sister when she relates how she is concerned about her sister and her nieces particularly that she wanted to protect them from suffering. This highlights an internal motivation to provide for her sister. At the same time, it is consistent with the expectations for older sisters to take responsibility over the younger sisters, further drawing attention to the fact that sibling relationships are psychosocial. Xoliswa further constructs her relationship with her sister as close. This is evident when she says "*So that was the time I felt very close to her (Mm), because I didn't want her to-to-to feel that err, she is suffering (Mm), err she didn't have the necessary needs for herself and the kids...*". Xoliswa's narrative constructs her financial provision as a contributor to the close bond she shares with her sister. This is further supported by the fact that Xoliswa mentioned that their close bond was broken when her sister did not provide for her, where she says; "*I was very close to her, until such time err she-she..., she was employed and she was able to -to get*

some money, you know err whatever little money was. So, with that little money err she, I expected her to also do what I was doing, but she was doing the very opposite". Xoliswa expected her sister to financially provide for her when she was no longer working- just as she did for her when she still had a job; however, her sister did not provide for her as she expected. As such, Xoliswa constructed her sister as unreliable. Xoliswa constructions reveal that 'good' sisters and 'good' women should provide for their sisters financially when there is a need. Her construction of her sister in a negative manner after she failed to help her financially also supports that notion particularly because her sister did not act in a manner that 'good' sisters and 'good' women are expected to. Phumeza's constructions also reveal the same, as evident in the next extract.

Extract 8:

Phumeza: Ja! Ja! But she likes to go to my house, I am the one who-who like to give to-to. I like I like to help my sisters (Mm), you see (Mm). I look after them (Mm). I can say that, but only thing I am married.

Hunadi: Yes!

Phumeza: You see, I'm- I am one of like-supposed to say, suppose to say breadwinner at home.

Hunadi: Ohh, you help them out maybe with money and with other things.

Phumeza: Ja! I support them (Mm) too much (Mm), because for example, when my mother was pass away, I was busy (Mm). I was burying my mother (Mm). You see? (Mm). Even this dinner¹ we will have, I will make it. I am always do things (Mm), for my family.

Hunadi: I see!

Phumeza: I am one like who is stronger than others.

Hunadi: Even-even-even though, like, you know with some cultures you expect the big ones to be strong, but you as the middle one (Mm!), you feel like you are stronger....

Phumeza: Ja!

Hunadi: ... than the others?

¹ A traditional ceremony held for the participant's deceased mother

Phumeza: Because, it's-it's-it's, I say that because anything, nothing will happen except I think.

Hunadi: Ohhoo!

Phumeza: You understand? (Mm). Nothing can happen except I say "We need to do that, we need to do this, we need to do that!"

Hunadi: So, you are the only one, only one always saying "we need to do this, we need to do that"?

Phumeza: Ja! Ja!

Hunadi: They don't come up with ideas...

Phumeza: Mm-Mm. No one can come out with something, it's like (Mm), I don't have money myself neh? (Mm) I don't have money (Mm). Because, you know we work for the-a little money (Mm) at [place of work], but because I'm-I'm-I'm, I'm a strong wom-, I am a strong person. To see, I know this time now, this time (Mm) it's been a long time, we supposed to do it (Mm), for my mother, you see?

Phumeza in the above extract 8, constructs herself as the 'breadwinner' in her family. Moreover, Phumeza constructs herself not only as a financial provider, but also as leader, initiator and decision-maker, in relation to her sisters. This is seen when she says; "*Because, it's-it's-it's, I say that because anything, nothing will happen except I think*" and when she says "*Nothing can happen except I say 'We need to do that, we need to do this, we need to do that!'*". Phumeza constructs herself as responsible and as the executor of things that need to be done in her home, which also emerged when she narrates that she buried her mother, will be making the 'dinner' for her mother and that she is always doing things for her family.

Furthermore, Phumeza constructs herself as stronger than her sisters. She constructs herself as stronger because despite being younger than some of her sisters. Phumeza disregarded social expectations around the usual age hierarchy of the older sisters having more responsibility to provide for the younger siblings and took over the responsibility of her older sisters. This may be because her sisters would not assume the responsibility to provide for their younger sister and also ensuring that their traditions are followed. Phumeza saw a need to provide for and to manage her family affairs when her older sisters were not taking these responsibilities. This is evident when she says "*...nothing will happen except I think.*",

“Nothing can happen except I say ‘We need to do that, we need to do this, we need to do that!’”. Phumeza may also construct herself as stronger than her sisters because she manages to find a way to provide for them despite not having much to provide them with. This is evidenced by her statements when she says *“I don’t have money myself neh? I don’t have money. Because, you know we work for the-a little money at [place of work], but because I’m-I’m-I’m, I’m a strong woman, I am a strong person”*. Phumeza goes on further and says *“To see, I know this time now, this time it’s been a long time, we supposed to do it, for my mother...”*. Constructing herself as knowledgeable, since she was able to know and comprehend the family responsibility to perform the dinner for their mother since it was overdue.

Phumeza’s construction reinforces the notion that sisters and women provide for each other when there is a need. Phumeza constructs her role of financial provision as carrying more responsibilities than just providing for others financially, such as having to lead, to make and implement decisions, and requiring strength and accountability. Like Xoliswa above, Phumeza also links her financial provisions to the closeness she feels towards her sister, as reflected in the end of the next extract.

Extract 9:

Hunadi: Ok! (Slight pause). Do you remember a time in your life when you felt very close to her?

Phumeza: Ja!

Hunadi: Can you tell me about that time?

Phumeza: Mm! That time it was very, very nice time, because in, when she was doing matric, (Mhm) I used to spoil her, ...

Hunadi: Ok.

Phumeza: I remember, even the-the- the dress, the something of farewell (Mhmm) I bought that dress, I make her smart. Even now we still not, we are not in good terms. You know? (Mm) I still spoil her, when I see something I buy- I buy her something, I give my daughter to give to her.

Phumeza here attributes the close relationship she shares with her sisters as her financial provision. This speaks to an internal drive and benefits to provide for her sister. These together with the obligation Phumeza feels to provide for her sister

also point to the psychosocial aspect of the sister-sister relationship. Similarly, Mhase, in some measure, also links the financial provision to the closeness she felt towards her sister, as revealed by the next extract.

Extract 10:

Mhase: ... It was only my sister who was selling alcohol and having money (Mm), and otherwise, I don't want to lie, she played- played a big role...

Hunadi: Your sister?

Mhase: Ja! (Mm) and to-to bury my-my (Mm). Ja! and we were close by that time, because I was praying because, you know what? I was like, I didn't want us to be disgrace, an a disgrace (Mm), you know? (Mm). But, fortunately, she buried my brother...

Mhase here was relating about how she and her sister organised to have their brother buried following his death after a car hit him. Mhase constructs her relationship with her sister as close during the time when they were organising their brother's burial. She links their closeness to the mutual challenge they experienced and to some extent also links this closeness to her sister's ability to relieve them from financial stresses and 'disgrace' through her financial provision. Even though they were able to work together to successfully bury their brother, Mhase attributes most of the success to her sister's financial contribution, as she was the only one who had an income at the time. Mhase constructs her sister as having played a 'big role' in burying their brother, which highlights the responsibility she carried as an older and only working sibling. However, Mhase, in the next extract constructs her sister negatively as her sister currently does not financially provide for her (and her family).

Extract 11

Mhase: For instance (short pause), she is supposed to-to-to do all these things that's I am doing at our home (Mm), because it's not my house it's our home (Mm). I'm, you know what? I am repairing everything (Mm, mm), I am buying furniture for-for my mom (Mm), I am doing all that stuff (Mm), only when she is at-at-at-at our

home, she took everything that she wants to her house (claps her hands as she says this), every time.

This extract is taken from Mhase's narrative about her sister, who lives with her husband and children at their home, separate from where Mhase lives with her mother and other relatives. Unlike in extract 10, here Mhase is employed and is providing for her mother, her three children, and her niece. Mhase here constructs her sister as an irresponsible sister who has neglected her responsibilities. It seems Mhase expects her sister to help her with finances as that would also contribute to her mother and niece's wellbeing. Mhase expects her sister's financial contribution because 'sisters are supposed to provide for each other financially'. She mentions that she is buying and fixing things in the house alone, when in fact her sister should also be contributing financially. Mhase also expects her sister to be involved in financial expenses involving their home because the house is their home and not just her home. This draws attention to an obligation for sisters to provide each other with financial assistance, because they share their childhood home. Throughout this narrative, Mhase constructs herself as the breadwinner and the responsible sister, as highlighted by her declaration that she provides for everyone and takes care of all the things that are needed at her house.

Drawing on the interpretive repertoire of financial provision, Lumka, Xoliswa, Phumeza and Mhase construct 'good' women and 'good' sisters as financial providers. This emphasises the notion that being a 'good' woman requires providing for their sisters financially when there is a need. The participants also linked their closeness with the financial support they gave to or received from their sisters. The next section discusses ideological dilemmas a participant experienced from drawing on the interpretive dilemma of financial support.

2.2.2 Ideological Dilemma

As they construct themselves as women who provide for their sisters when there is a need, most participants seem to experience no conflict with that construction, except one, Xoliswa. The dilemma presented in the Xoliswa's construction involves

financially providing for her sister out of inner love, as opposed to providing for her sister out of a cultural expectation and hence hoping her sister would do the same, as is culturally expected of sisters to 'provide for their sisters when there is a need'. Following is a discussion of this ideological dilemma.

Earlier, in extract 7, Xoliswa constructed herself as a woman who provides for her sister financially when there is a need. Xoliswa may be drawing on her expectation as an older sister to care for and to protect her younger sister. Through her construction as a sister that provides for her sister when there is a need, Xoliswa also constructed herself as providing for her sisters out of inner love. This was marked by her assertion that she provided for them because she did not want her sister and her daughter to suffer. This shows a motivation from 'inside' to provide for her sister. The fact that Xoliswa also constructs her financial provision as contributing to their closeness, may indicate that she was acting solely on her affection, as she was responding to something she was feeling from inside as opposed to out of obligation. However, as indicated above, Xoliswa mentions that their bond was broken because she expected her sister to financially help her in return. This reveals an expectation from an outer place of 'sisters should help each other financially when there is a need'. It is possible that Xoliswa has been providing for her sister financially with the hope that her sister would do the same for her in return. Xoliswa seems to be negotiating between financially providing for her sister out of love and financially providing for her out of obligation and with an expectation that she would return the assistance to her too, as is culturally expected of sisters to help each other out financially when there is a need.

2.2.3 Subject Positions

Drawing on their constructions of her sister-sister relationship using the interpretive repertoire of financial support, Lumka, Xoliswa, Phumeza, and Mhase constructed themselves as breadwinners in relation to their sisters. This construction enables them to honour the discourse of financial provision; particularly that 'good' sisters and 'good' women should provide for each other financially when there is a need. Xoliswa's constructions also draw on the discourse of a financial provider, however

instead of providing for a sister solely because she sees a need, she seems to provide for her sister with the expectation that she will do the same for her.

2.2 Conclusion

Overall, the common interpretive repertoires elicited in this study are those of unconditional love and financial provision. The interpretive repertoire of unconditional love was drawn upon to elicit a love from the 'inside' place of loving and a cultural place of 'you should love your sister'. As such, participants were seen to negotiate the tension between loving their sisters from an emotional place and from the external or cultural place; particularly whether they were 'good' women if they only loved their sisters from the outside or if they also hated their sisters. The interpretive repertoire of financial support pointed to the participants' practices of financially providing for their sisters from an emotional place and from cultural expectations. A participant negotiated the conflict between providing for her sister out of inner love and out of cultural expectations, with the expectation of getting financial support in return. The participant's constructions honoured the discourse of providing for sisters from a cultural place. Following is a psychosocial reading of one participant that aims to draw out the participant's investments in the above interpretive repertoires, drawn from her interview transcripts.

3. Psychosocial reading

3.1 Introduction to the psychosocial reading of a case

A psychosocial reading is carried out on the interview with Mhase, to help us understand Mhase's investments in the above interpretive repertoires. This psychosocial reading will start with a description of Mhase's early life history in order to provide some biographical information. This will be followed a discursive reading of a chosen extract of her interviews and by a psychoanalytic reading of the same extract. The extract used in this analysis was chosen because it was the only extract that was on her current relationship with her sister and that it included narrative cues

such as use of specific phrases and mannerism indicative of meaning making and emotionalism.

3.1.1 Biography

Mhase is a 50 years old, divorced woman who lives with her mother, her three children and her late brother's child. She was born second, of three children by her mother. Throughout her childhood, Mhase's mother was unemployed and abused alcohol. Her father was absent from her life and that of her siblings. In her early years, Mhase grew up in her grandmother's house, with her grandmother, her mother, her little brother, her two uncles, a wife of one uncle and their three children. She recalls that her grandmother was the only one working then and that their lives were hard because they didn't have enough money for food and clothes. The house they lived in was also small, and they struggled with space as they tried to accommodate all the family members in it. This highlights the impact of socioeconomic context on adult parent-child relationships, particularly the value of parent-child relationship in adulthood for support, as seen here by Mhase's grandmother taking care of Mhase's mother, her uncles, one of their uncle's wife and all their children. Mhase and her sister were reared apart due to the hardship they experienced in their mother and grandmother's care. This also draws attention to the impact of socioeconomic context on the value of support from the extended family in distribution of childcare responsibility as well as the impact on childhood sibling relationships.

Mhase's sister was raised by their great grandmother, however, they were aware that they were sisters, particularly that they have the same mother. Mhase's sister lived with her great grandmother until she was around 17 years old. She moved out of her great grandmother's house to live with her boyfriend. Afterwards she and her boyfriend had their first child, who Mhase reported was left in Mhase's care, while her sister stayed with her boyfriend. Mhase's sister fell pregnant by another man while living with her boyfriend. Mhase's sister later got married to the same boyfriend she was living with and they raised four children together. Mhase's sister is unemployed although she used to sell alcohol for their livelihood at some point in her life.

Mhase spent most of her early life living in her grandmother's house. During her teens, Mhase was moved to live with her uncle and his wife, who did not have children then, and they treated Mhase as their first child. This emphasises the impact of socioeconomic context on the increasing significance of sibling relationships as here childcare is taken over by another adult sibling. Mhase's uncle and aunt later had three children of their own. Mhase reported living comfortably with her uncle, his wife and their children and that she was able to dream and have aspirations of a good future without having to resort to desperate measures to ensure her basic needs were met. During her stay with her uncle and his wife, Mhase also developed a Christian faith. Her faith seemed to uplift her as she attributes most of her success and strength to overcome all her life challenges to God.

Mhase had her first child, a son at the age of 26. She secretly got married to the father of her child around the age of 31, and they lived together in their own home and then had two more children, daughters. They officially married with 'their parents blessings' around eight years later. Mhase reported that her husband had all the qualities of a man she wanted; that he was a nice and handy man, who helped around the house even with their children. However, the problem was that he would become abusive when he was drunk. Mhase mentioned that she couldn't see herself living like that for the rest of her life. Therefore, at the age of 45, she divorced her husband, moved out of their home with her children, leaving her husband with 'the house and everything in it'. Mhase took her children and moved back into her uncle's house. At the time of her divorce, Mhase was working as a cleaner, where she started off working in the kitchen. A year later, her uncle died. After a while, Mhase and her uncle's wife did not get along well. Mhase mentioned that she and her uncle's wife had altercations over Mhase's contribution to household expenses, to which Mhase did not contribute much to as she claims she did not have money. Mhase's aunt (uncle's wife) advised Mhase to look for a house of her own where she can stay with her children. Around that time, her pastor approached her and told her this: *"God says you must come down from-from the tree that you are climbing on, you must come down"...* *"Go and make peace with your mom"* (Interview 1. p. 7). Mhase was initially apprehensive about moving back with her mother as she would have to *"meet her standards"* (Interview 1. p 7). Mhase moved back into her grandmother's house to live with her mother and her children. She attributed her

courage to move back to live with her mother to her faith in God. She decided to rebuild the house, replace old furniture with new one and to rekindle her relationship with her mother. She mentions that although her mother still drinks alcohol, her alcohol consumption has decreased to a point where they are now able to have a good relationship, *“make that bond I needed by the time I was young”* (Interview 1. p 7) and that they are both happy in their relationship.

Mhase also related on the challenges she experienced between 2011 and 2012, after she had a squashed disk and could not work for over 6 months. She highlighted how she ran out of leave and medical aid after the six months, just when she was due for an operation. Mhase had to go back to work even though she had not recovered, even without an operation and that she managed to pull through, recover on her own and end up getting a promotion to the position of an acting supervisor.

3.1.2 A Discursive reading of Mhase’s extract

This discursive reading of extract 12 below discusses the interpretive repertoires of unconditional love and that of a financial provider that emerge from Mhase’s extract. These are the same interpretive repertoires that other participants used to construct their relationships with their sisters. These interpretive repertoires, however are discussed together, followed by the ideological dilemma they bring about and the subject positions they facilitate.

Extract 12:

1. **Mhase:** And my sister, my sister is-is married (Yes),
2. and she is living err, to herrr house.
3. But we used to fight.
4. It’s like sort of- she issss jealous of me (Wow). For instance..
5. **Hunadi:** And she is your older sister?
6. **Mhase:** Ja! (with certainty)
7. **Hunadi:** Ok!
8. **Mhase:** For instance, she is supposed to-to-to do all these things that I am doing at our home (Mm),

9. *because it's not my house, it's our home (Mm).*
10. *I'm, you know what?*
11. *I am repairing everything (claps her hands as she says this) (Mm, mm),*
12. *I am buying furniture for-for my mom (Mm),*
13. *I am doing all that stuff (Mm),*
14. *only when she is at-at-at-at our home, she took everything she wants to her house (claps her hands as she says this),*
15. *every time.*
16. **Hunadi:** *How does it...*
17. **Mhase:** *Ev-even food. (Mm)*
18. *She'd just open the fridge and take all the things (claps her hands as she says this) that she wants and get out*
19. *you know, without telling me,*
20. *because I am the one who is buying food (Mm).*
21. *You know what? So our relationship, I don't want to say it's not nice,*
22. *it's nice to-to me (Mm),*
23. *but there are some things I dislikes (Mm) from her (Mm),*
24. *because, she is so jealous,*
25. *but I don't, I-I-I don't, I-I don't tell her (slight pause), that I, I see what you are doing (Mm).*
26. *It's wrong (Mm).*
27. *I'm just, for instance, if I am home, I said "You know what? Why you didn't tell me you did you did this you did that",*
28. *and say "No! I was about to tell you"*
29. *and then "Ok! No! its fine".*
30. *But deep down in my heart it's sad.*
31. *I don't know really,*
32. *because she is hurting me most. You know (Mm). Ja!*
33. **Hunadi:** *So she makes you feel hurt when she does all these things when ...*
34. **Mhase:** *Mmm, mm, because I am the only one who is working there (Mm).*
35. *And there's these kids of mine (Mm),*
36. *the 24 one? (Mm) it's not working.*
37. *And the- these three girls (Mm),*

38. *you know and my mom (Mm).*

39. *So, no one is working, it's only me.*

40. *And we're, we're staying in-in a three room, three rooms, one bedroom.*

In the above extract 12, Mhase starts off by constructing her sister as 'married' (12. 1). Marriage has most often been constructed as an ideal institution for intimacy and seems to be desired by most individuals, particularly women. This may be because women's femininity is based on having a connection with a man to protect and care for her (Reynold and Wetherell, 2003, as cited in Sharp & Ganong, 2011) and in doing things for men as expected by the society (for example as girlfriends and wives). People who have partners and children are assumed to live happier and more fulfilling lives than those who are not (Depaulo & Morris, 2005, as cited in Sharp & Ganong, 2011). Therefore, by constructing her sister as married, Mhase sees her sister as living a happier and more fulfilling life. Mhase also constructs her sister as 'living in her house' (12. 2), which construct her as living separate from her family and having something of her own, away from her family of origin. However, Mhase also constructs her sister as having an obligation to care for her family of origin. She says the following about her sister "...*she is supposed to-to-to do all these things that I am doing at our home...*" (12. 8). In the African tradition, when a woman is 'married off' to a man, she becomes part of a new family and is no longer part of her original family. It is the men who have the responsibility over the original family and to carry its name. However, because Mhase and her sister lost a brother, who was supposed to be responsible for their family, it seems unclear who is supposed to care for their family. It is possible that Mhase may see that the responsibility now falls on both herself and her sister as the remaining children to care and contribute to their family of origin, while her sister may view herself as absolved of that responsibility since she is married and 'living in her house'. Mhase could be drawing on the notion that older sisters have a greater responsibility over the family when she constructs her sister as having the responsibility to do all the things that she is doing, also implying that it is only her sister who was supposed to care for her family. However she adds on to say "... *because it's not my house it's our home*" (12. 9), she emphasises that they both have a responsibility to care for their home. This situation is interesting as it refers back to the cultural context where

the parental home is a space where adult children can return to, however, it seems to create problems as Mhase's sister already has her own home whereas Mhase does not. It is therefore evident that Mhase expects her sister to contribute financially to the wellbeing of her family, as a member of their family. This, she expects even though her sister does not live with them and is supporting her own family.

Mhase constructs herself as the breadwinner and the responsible sister when she says "*...I am the only one working there...*" (12. 34), "*...I am the only one who is buying food*" (12. 20), "*I am repairing everything*" (12.11), "*I am buying furniture for-for my mom*" (12.12), "*I am doing all that stuff*" (12.13). However, Mhase's use of numerous examples to indicate what she is doing, constructs a position of doing too much for her family. Mhase also claps her hands as she describes what she is doing to indicate disbelief (12. 11). This emphasises that she is the only one doing all these things when that does not have to be the case. This relates to the notion of selfless giving or doing more than is required, that is often expected of women. Mhase has found herself stepping up in providing for her family and doing more than is required of her, because her sister is 'not doing her part'.

Mhase makes use of the phrase "*You know what?*" (12.10) before she lays out the things she does that her sister is not doing, to emphasise the shock and oddity of her sister's behaviour. Mhase expects her sister, as a 'good' sister and a 'good' woman to financially support her family. However, not only does Mhase's sister neglect to perform as expected, but she also depends on Mhase's provision. This is indicated by Mhase statements when she says "*...only when she is at-at-at-at our home, she took everything that she wants to her house* (12. 14), and that "*She'd just open the fridge and take all the things that she wants and get out'* (12.18). Here, Mhase constructs her sister in a negative manner, as a woman who takes away from her family of origin. This could be constructed positively as depending on Mhase's financial contribution, however it is not. This is because her sister lives in her own home, does not contribute to Mhase's household expenses, yet seems to take advantage of Mhase by taking the things Mhase buys for her family. Mhase constructs her sister as jealous (12.4 & 12.24), as she describes her sister's efforts to take away from Mhase's family but not contribute anything towards assisting Mhase in caring for their family. Mhase again claps her hands as she talks about this to indicate disbelief. This further highlights her sister's behaviour as unexpected and

not in line with Mhase's construction that 'good' sisters and 'good' women should provide for their sisters financially when there is a need. Mhase constructs her sister's actions as hurtful when she says "*But deep down in my heart it's sad*" (12. 30) and when she says "*because she is hurting me most*" (12. 32). These further emphasise that her sister's behaviour is unacceptable and does not build family relations. Through these constructions, Mhase expects sisters to financially provide for their family.

When Mhase constructs her sister as jealous, she constructs herself as being in a better position than where her sister is; and her sister as wishing to be where Mhase is. The construction of her sister as jealous also constructs her sister as wanting something that Mhase already has, that she feels should belong to her. Mhase's construction of her sister as jealous comes out as negative, and highlights the notion that sisters should love their sisters unconditionally- that they should love and be happy for their sisters' achievements, as well as accept them even though they are doing better than them. Mhase constructs her sister as a 'bad' woman who does not love unconditionally because she does not feel happy about Mhase's achievements. This is interesting because when Mhase talks about her sister 'living in her house' (12.2) and herself as 'staying in a three room' (12.40), she constructs her sister as living in a spacious house, as having something better than she has. Her construction of her sister as 'married' also positions her sister in a better position than hers, as having or living a more fulfilling and happy life.

Mhase refrains from constructing her relationship as 'not nice' (12. 21), and instead constructs her relationship with her sister as 'nice' (12. 22). Moreover, Mhase acknowledges that there are some things she does not like about their relationship, which she attributes to her sister's jealousy. As she constructs their relationship as nice, Mhase therefore disregards the conflict and the displeasure she often experiences in their relationship. Furthermore, she mentions that although her sister's behaviour hurts her (12. 30 & 12. 32), she does not tell her sister that what she is doing is wrong. Mhase here seems to be drawing on the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love, particularly that she is obliged to love and get along with her sister. This also related to the notion that women should be understanding and to sacrifice for other, as she puts her feelings aside and tolerates her sister's behaviour.

Mhase seems to be negotiating between asserting herself or telling her sister not to take things from her without her knowledge, and letting her sister take from her, on condition that she tells her what she is taking. She evidently experiences displeasure when her sister takes from her without letting her know, when she says *"She'd just open the fridge and take all the things that she wants and get out"* (12.18), *"you know, without telling me"* (12. 20). Although, Mhase feels that what her sister is doing is wrong and that it hurts her, she refrains from telling her this. This may be because as a young sister, she is expected to respect her older sister. Mhase may feel obliged to let her sister to carry on the way she does out of obligation. By not confronting her sister about what she is doing, Mhase may also be trying to avoid a conflict with her sister for the sake of peace. This relates to the obligation women have to build family relations and keep the peace in the family.

When Mhase tolerates her sister's behaviour, chooses not to confront her sister and lets her sister take things from her home and to do so without telling her, her behaviour allows her to honour the discourse of obligatory love. Mhase may let her sister get away with her behaviour because she feels obliged to tolerate these behaviours by her sister, to accept her sister as she is and respect her as the older sister by not telling her what the rightful thing to do in her eyes is. This concurs with the notion of women as understanding and self-sacrificing. At the same time, it clashes with the notion of women as nurturers, contributing to other's personality and moral development. In this instance, it leaves Mhase vulnerable to exploitation by her sister and may cause resentment in their relationship. In the lives of women, in general it may also contribute to the subordination and continued exploitation of women.

When Mhase avoids confronting her sister about contributing to their household expenses, taking things from their home and from asking her to let her know when she does take things from her home, her practices draws on the interpretive repertoire of a financial provider. In particular, she draws on the discourse that 'good' sisters and 'good' women provide for each other financially when there is a need. This is because by not confronting her sister, she continues to provide for her family on her own, without the assistance of her sister. She also continues to support her sister even though she lives in a separate home and allows her to take things from her house without telling her. These constructions challenge

the traditional notion of women as dependent on men for financial support and empowers women while promoting feminine solidarity. It also challenges the traditional age hierarchical expectations for the older sibling to be responsible for the younger siblings, enabling any sibling regardless of their age, to provide for other siblings when there is a need.

3.1.3 A Psychoanalytic Reading of Mhase's extract

The purpose of this reading is to spell out Mhase's emotional investment in the interpretive repertoires of a financial provider and that of unconditional love. This will be done by using psychoanalytic concepts to explicate what Mhase gains psychically from drawing on the above interpretive repertoires, grounding these interpretations on Mhase's extracts, and the research.

The researcher argues that Mhase invests in the interpretive repertoire of a financial provider, constructing herself as the financial provider, as this construction allows Mhase to construct her sister as jealous. This is shown above as she presents herself as being in a better position to that of her sister and having what her sister wishes she had. This is because Mhase herself may be feeling jealous of her sister's accomplishments. It is possible that Mhase may be projecting the feelings of jealousy that she may harbour onto her sister. Projection involves reacting to one's inner qualities as if they are outside of the self. After all, Mhase constructed her sister as 'married' and living a happy and fulfilling life, as well as having her own (and spacious) house, while she currently lives in a 'three room' house with her mother. This construction highlights an achievement on her sister's side in an area where Mhase aspired to achieve, but failed to, because her marriage ended in divorce. It depicts a picture of her sister being in a better position and having what Mhase dreamt of achieving. This puts Mhase in an inferior position to her sister, incites jealousy, as Mhase is divorced and does not own her own house. Moreover, Mhase's sister seems to have more than what Mhase has. She has the support system that includes Mhase herself, whereas Mhase has no support and tries to make ends meet without having to rely on anyone. Mhase could be drawing on the interpretive repertoire of a financial provider to mask the feelings of jealousy that she

has for her sister, which she may find overwhelming to accept, as it would mean she has to accept that she has 'failed'.

Based on her biographical narrative it seems that sending Mhase's sister away from her mother and her siblings to live with her great grandmother may have unconsciously incited feelings of guilt in Mhase for not being sent away. This may be a further reason why Mhase may be investing in the interpretive repertoire of financial support, constructing herself as a sister that provides for her sister and forgives her for what she feels is unacceptable behaviour. Mhase may be overcompensating for the guilt she feels for staying with her mother and her brother and for not being sent away. It could also explain the way in which Mhase experiences her sister as entitled (for example, helping herself to everything in their fridge without Mhase's consent) but allows her sister to get away with it.

The researcher argues that Mhase also invests in the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love and feels obliged to let her sister get away with the things that make her feel sad. It is possible that she experiences difficulty confronting her sister about her behaviours because she may feel guilty that she and her sister never grew up together; particularly that her sister was sent away from their family unit of her mother, her brother and Mhase. Mhase may believe that she had a better life experience than that of her sister because at some point she was raised by her uncle and reported living a comfortable life, which enabled her to dream and have aspirations of a good future, without having to resort to desperate measures to ensure her basic needs are met. Her sister on the other hand may have continued to struggle under her great grandmother's care as seen by her efforts to make a living by selling alcohol at some point in her life; something that Mhase implied she managed to avoid because of the care of her uncle as reflected in the next extract.

Extract 13

Mhase: *"There was never, having that thing "Ohh! I am struggling now, maybe if I can be a str- a prostitute, my life can be ok. If I can sell alcohol, or I can-I can - I can drink, my life maybe can be nice, I've never think about those things"* (Interview 1. P. 13).

As Mhase constructs selling alcohol as unwholesome and as something people do because they have no choice as they are suffering, she also paints a

picture of her sister as struggling and forced to do unpleasant things like selling alcohol, and herself as the innocent, moral and responsible sister since she does not or never had to sell alcohol. The good traits that Mhase ascribes to herself may seem more acceptable than admitting the feelings of guilt. Mhase may be using the defence mechanism of reaction formation, which involves turning a disturbing idea of guilt, into its opposite- that she is moral and innocent. This may be because in her effort to conceal the feelings of guilt she has over the hardship her sister may have endured and for not being sent away from her family, Mhase present herself as a victim, when she makes sacrifices for her sister, doing a lot for her sister and letting her do things that upset her. It enables Mhase to come out as 'good' in relation to her sister.

In addition, while Mhase assimilates her role of a financial provider, she also struggles with providing her sister with financial support and wants her sister to contribute to their household expenses and to provide for herself. It is possible to view this as Mhase having displaced her feelings and expectations for her mother on to her sister. This is because it is expected for sisters in adulthood to rely on each other for financial assistance. This is why participants were observed to draw on the discourse that sisters should help each other out financially when there is a need. It is likely that Mhase may feel uneasy about doing all the things she is doing for her mother because her mother never provided for her and her sister. Mhase evidently felt forced to live with her mother. This is evidenced by her reluctance to move back with her mother in her narrative, when her pastor told her to "*...come down from-from the tree that you are climbing on*" and to "*Go and make peace with your mom*" (Interview 1. p. 7). For the most part, it is confirmed by her concerns when she said "How poor is my mom? And then my mom is an alcoholic, and so I'll go down, down, down, down, cause I have to meet her standard now" (Interview 1. p. 7). Perhaps Mhase was aware that moving in with her mother entailed taking over the responsibility of providing for her. It seems Mhase reluctantly obliged because she did not have a choice as she did not have another home to go to. She may resent having to do all the things she is currently doing for her mother, but because it seems unacceptable and overwhelming for Mhase to admit these, Mhase unconsciously displaces these feelings to a more acceptable and less threatening object, her sister. Mhase also presents herself as taking pleasure in providing for her

mother and in restoring their mother-daughter relationship. By portraying herself as the good and reliable sister that provides for her family, Mhase may mask her feelings of resentment for feeling forced to provide for her mother as well as feelings of resentment for her mother's inability to care for her earlier in life.

It is possible that some unconscious communication may have passed between the researcher and Mhase as is commonly understood in a psychoanalytic interpretation. Mhase's narration about her expectation for her sister to help provide for their household expenses and for her sister to stop taking things from her house evoked negative feelings in the researcher. The researcher felt bothered by the fact that Mhase seems to get along with her mother and not her sister. This is because in the researcher's understanding, Mhase's mother contributed to the circumstances that caused Mhase and her sister's hardship as children. The researcher was aware of one incident by her sister, which may have contributed to Mhase's hardship while growing up. In particular, when Mhase's sister left Mhase to take care of her first child while she lived with her boyfriend, which restricted Mhase's freedom to do as she pleased as a young child, as she played the role of a mother to her nephew. However, the researcher excused her sister's behaviour as a way of responding to her life circumstances. The researcher felt that perhaps Mhase's sister felt it was alright to do that with her child, as she herself was raised by her great grandmother because her mother consumed a lot of alcohol and couldn't take care of her. The researcher was also astounded by the lack of empathy Mhase had for her sister and wished Mhase could be more forgiving of her sister. The researcher wondered if this is how Mhase's sister could be feeling too, in her relationship with Mhase. The researcher's thoughts and feelings may have resulted from the transference of Mhase's sibling relationship on to the research relationship. It is possible that during their interaction, Mhase may have experienced the researcher as her sister and may have transferred to the researcher the feelings she has for her sister, and that the researcher may have responded to Mhase as if she was her sister. The researcher claims that if how she felt relates to how Mhase's sister may be feeling in her relationship with her sister, then her feelings of countertransference may serve to confirm that Mhase may resent having to provide for her mother. It may serve to confirm that Mhase is indeed displacing her feelings of resentment against her mother to her sister as it is less threatening and more acceptable for her to do so.

Mitchell (2003) noted the importance of siblings in early childhood as they help individuals work out the problems of future social interaction then, so that they are not played out in later life. Although Mhase and her sister were reared apart, one cannot assume that they have not resolved their childhood rivalry as they (particularly Mhase) grew up around other children and were able to explore and address such challenges with them. However, it is worth noting that while growing up (in early childhood, childhood and pre-adolescence) Mhase and her sister did not have an opportunity to develop a close sibling relationship, as they did not have much opportunity to interact as sisters. When Mhase and her sister finally interacted as sisters, it was when her sister needed her assistance with childcare, when she would leave her child with Mhase so she could be with her boyfriend. Mhase reported that the responsibility her sister assigned her with deprived her of the freedom she felt she deserved as a child. Therefore, for Mhase as a child to handle such a responsibility, she may have resented her sister for some loss of her freedom in childhood. Mhase may feel that her sister owes her the kind of care that she never received from her as an older sister, the care that Mhase however managed to give to her sister's child. This may have caused Mhase to fantasise and express wishes for her sister to make up for or rectify the past experiences with her sister. Mhase may be trying to undo her feelings of resentment she feels for losing out on her childhood as she fantasises about having a close, loving and supportive relationship with her sister, as reflected in the next extract:

Extract 14:

Hunadi: Ohh, ok! Um. Can you describe to me; if you could have an ideal relationship with your sister, what would you want your relationship to be like?

Mhase: Like I need the relationship, like my biological sister (Mm), err, I can share, when I have a problem I can sit down and share my problem with my sister, and when-when there's tough times, my sister can err comfort me, you know what? (Mm). If she can do all that our-our cultural expectations from the older sister (Mm), to me that would-that would be good, because I can adjust myself (Mm), and also you know? I am so flexible, to be adjusted (Mm), really (Ok)...

Earlier in the interview, Mhase had elaborated that culturally, older sisters are expected to play a motherly role for their little sisters, which is something Mhase expressed as never having had experienced from hers. In the above Extract 13, Mhase expresses a desire to have a loving and close bond with her sister, and to be taken care of by her sister. This theme lingered over Mhase's narrative as she talked about the challenges she endured as an adult, when she was temporarily incapacitated and could not work. It was also as if she was questioning her sister's whereabouts throughout her ordeal, like wishing her sister could have been around to help her through it. Alternatively, it may also show an unconscious wish to be without a sister, as it would mean that she is the only ones receiving all the love and attention from her mother. Mhase's wishes for a close, loving and supportive relationship with her sister may serve to undo the loss of childhood and the absence of care by her mother and sister. Perhaps this is what it means when she says that, *"I can adjust myself... I am so flexible, to be adjusted ..."*, that she is willing to let go of her current responsibilities so she could be cared for as she longs for a nurturing relationship and would benefit from and would appreciate the relief from the care and provisions she wishes to receive from her mother and her sister. Or that she would appreciate not having to fight for the attention that seemed hard to obtain from their 'unavailable' mother.

The researcher experienced some strong fantasies, particularly a strong need for Mhase to belong and to get along with her sister, which may serve as evidence for countertransference in the research relationship. In psychoanalysis, it is possible for unconscious communication between the therapist and the client to evoke fantasies from the client. It may be feasible that through their interaction, Mhase's narrative evoked these fantasies in the researcher. These come out in a form of the researcher's personal pursuit to understand the meaning of Mhase's name and where it comes from. Although this was never explored in the interview, the researcher imagined that it was from the Afrikaans word "Ma se kind", which means "mother's child". The researcher imagined that Mhase's name may have been reduced and changed in spelling to resemble a name. The researcher imagined that this was the name that Mhase was given to by her older sister and that the sisters had a close relationship, where they not only knew they were sisters but treated each other lovingly to reflect this. Mhase may have transferred the relationship she

shares with her sister onto the research relationship, and the researcher may be responding to her transference as well as transferring her relationship with her sisters on to Mhase. The researcher may be experiencing the same emotions Mhase's sister feels from Mhase and may be responding to them, expressing Mhase's sister's wishes for their relationship. These fantasies by the researcher and wishes by Mhase to be cared for could serve as evidence for Mhase's efforts to repair her past experiences. These indicate that Mhase is not entirely happy with how her relationship with her sister is, but has accepted how things are as this is how things are between Mhase and her sister. It is possible that Mhase's sister feels the same way and wished for a good relationship with her sister. Alternatively, imagining that Mhase's sister sees Mhase as 'mother's child' may also indicate an unconscious feeling of having been replaced when she was sent away to live with her great grandmother. Leaving Mhase to be the only recipient of her mother's love and affection.

3.2 Conclusion

Overall, the psychoanalytic reading has argued that Mhase invests in the interpretive repertoire of a financial provider as it allows her to project her feelings of jealousy onto her sister, which she finds overwhelming to accept, as they would make her aware of her failures. The same interpretive repertoire allows her to do more for her sister than she is obliged to in an effort to overcompensate for feeling guilty that her sister was sent away to live without their mother, their brother and Mhase. It also allows Mhase to come out as a victim as she makes sacrifices for her sister, and enables Mhase to present herself as the 'good' sister. The researcher argued that Mhase invests in the interpretive repertoire of unconditional love, and implements the defence mechanism of reaction formation, changing feelings of guilt for not being sent away from her family, to those of care. This allows her to come off as the innocent, moral and responsible sister. It was argued that the above interpretive repertoires help Mhase hide the feelings of resentment she feels towards her mother that she seems to have displaced on to her sister, as this is less threatening than when they are directed to her mother. The researcher argued that through her fantasies, Mhase wishes to 'undo' her past as a sign that she is not happy with how

things are in her relationship with her sister, and that Mhase unconsciously experienced her sister's departure as a way of winning and becoming the sole recipient of her mother's love and affection.

DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of the study in relation to the literature reviewed. This section summarises the claims made by the current study and ascertains what literature supports or contradicts these claims. The implication of the findings will also be considered. Following this, an evaluation of the study will be conducted, outlining the strengths and the limitations of the study. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for future research based on the findings.

2. Key Findings

The findings of this study revealed the use of two dominant interpretive repertoires that the participants used to construct their relationships with their sisters. The analysis has demonstrated that the participants feel obliged to love their sisters from an external place. It has also highlighted that they feel obliged to help each other financially when there is a need.

While they constructed themselves as having an obligation to love their sisters, the participants' constructions also pointed to an expectation for them as sisters and as women to be self-sacrificing, understanding and accommodating. These constructions are consistent with the traditional view of femininity, and it was argued that these contribute to the subordination of women and the maintenance of patriarchy in our societies. This is in agreement with Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) when they argue that even though gender role norms are not enacted by everyone, they present the most honoured way of being a 'man' or a 'woman' and ideologically legitimate the subordination of women to men. It also supports the claim that gender is constructed and that men and women position themselves through discursive practice that allow them to express their gender roles (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, as cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is of particular interest that the sister-sister relationship is a significant relationship for these women and one that impacts on their gender identities. In relation to this, Mauthner (2005a, 2005b) and Mitchell (2011) argued that sister-sister relationships are as fundamental as mother-

daughter relationships as it affect the way women's gendered identities are formed as they grow up. The constructions of the participants drew on discourses of obligatory love, particularly that they are 'good' women if they do not love their sisters from the 'inside' but still showed them their love out of obligation, and did not hate their sisters as 'good' women do not hate. These constructions downplay a discourse of hatred that nonetheless exists in their narratives about sistering. This may put a lot of unnecessary pressure on women to disregard their emotions in an effort to do right by social expectations.

An important finding in the study is that the participants feel obliged to provide their sisters with financial assistance when there is a need. Their constructions reveal a motivation to provide for sisters out of a desire to follow a particular cultural script. This construction deviates from and challenges the traditional view of men as financial providers, with women as dependent on them. It allows for the construction of femininities as dynamic and multiple, and of women as helpful, loving and independent. It also highlights traditional scripts for women to help each other, just as they are expected to help others. This promotes solidarity amongst sisters and women.

The findings that these participants feel obliged to financially provide for their sisters when there is a need, supports Connidis (2005) and McHalf and Soli's (2011) claim that siblings can rely on each other as sources of support and responsibility. It also highlights the impact of socioeconomic context on sibling and family relationships. The findings support Sanders' (2004) assertion that socio-economic status may have an impact on how siblings organise their lives and in turn influence how sibling relationships develop. The findings show that socioeconomic status can cause sibling relationships to become highly significant relationships of financial assistance, and can also place extra pressure on sister-sister relationships as resentment grows.

However, the finding that these particular women feel the obligation to love and provide for their sisters indicates that their relationships with their sisters are not volitional. This is contrary to Eriksen & Gerstel (2002), Goetting (1996, as cited in Sanders, 2004) and Whiteman, McHalf and Soli (2011) who have shown that adult sibling relationships function like friendships and may be based on mutual support. It is possible that due to their culture and due to their socio-economic status, the

participants were socialised to believe that as siblings they will always need each other and should always rely on each other despite where they are in life. This supports Myers' (2001) assertion that siblings learn from a young age to maintain their relationships. It also supports the claim by Lareau (2003, as cited in Walker, et al, 2005), that the working class parents raise their children in such a way that encourages them to identify with one another. Furthermore, it shows the impact of socio-cultural context, highlighting its importance for understanding sibling relationships.

Although their constructions highlighted obligatory love and providing for their sisters out of obligation, it is significant to also explicate that the women interviewed for the study also mentioned that they love their sisters from 'inside' and have indicated that they provide for them financially due to internal motivations, even though these were downplayed. This brings in the psychological (or psychic) perspective as it involves feelings, which can sometimes be irrational and not in line with what is expected by culture and society. This is the perspective that was employed to explain why one participant named Mhase invested in the discourses of unconditional love and financial provision in her constructions of her relationship with her sister.

The analysis above has argued that Mhase draws on the interpretive repertoire of a financial provider as it allows her to project her jealousy on to her sister in order to mask her own feelings of jealousy that she has towards her sister, which she may find overwhelming to accept, as they would force her to accept her failures. The researcher argued that this interpretive repertoire allowed Mhase to hide her feelings of guilt for not being sent away from her mother and brother by overcompensating when she provides for her sister more than she is obliged to. The interpretive repertoire of unconditional love allows Mhase to use the defence mechanism of reaction formation to mask the feelings of guilt by portraying herself as innocent, moral and responsible. Moreover, the researcher argued in the analysis that Mhase may also mask her feelings of resentment for feeling forced to provide for her mother, which she seems to have displaced on to her sister. These findings reveal the tendency to ward off the anxiety experienced when individuals have wishes and impulses that they feel are forbidden on the unconscious level. These anxiety provoking wishes push individuals to make use of unconscious defences to

drive out the anxiety and as a result adopt certain behaviours that feel acceptable, influencing how they relate with people.

In the psychosocial reading, using defences that made her feel safe allowed the participant to present herself in a good light. This resonates with Vivona's (2013) argument that the predominant challenge of the lateral relationship is to find one's identity, that is what one's position amongst his or her siblings allows her to be. In their relationship, Mhase and her sister could be competing for their mother's recognition of their uniqueness and worth, particularly when their mother's affection is difficult to attain. In an effort to reclaim her unique position in her world shared with her sister, Mhase may have learnt to project onto her sister, and at the same time relinquish the qualities she already sees in her sister; respectively accepting and intensifying those opposite in herself (Vivona, 2007). This may have resulted in Mhase constructing herself as different from her sister and as better in ways that she values; contributing to Mhase's identity as the caring, moral, innocent and responsible sister. Mhase may emphasise the difference between herself and her sister, because it allows her to be herself and to be different from her sister and allows her to strive for a unique position in the world. Mitchell (2006, as cited in Dent, 2009) posits that the challenges of the sibling relationship, help individuals recognise their "own place in a world of similar others, contributing to object love, self-esteem and the capacity for thirdness" (Mitchell, 2006, as cited in Dent, 2009, p. 157). It seems apparent that Mhase in relation to her sister has not been able to successfully resolve their sibling rivalry. This may be because Mhase's sister was sent away and allowed for Mhase to be able to 'occupy' the 'treasured' position. This may have taken away the opportunity for Mhase to work out their rivalry with the hope of realising that , there is no need to occupy the treasured position or fear being replaced because they can all be loved and receive attention from their mother in their state of succession.

This reading draws attention to the importance of the individual subjectivity of participants and to the role of their emotional lives in employing particular discourses or constructions over others for defensive purposes. This shows awareness of the demands of sister-sister relationships and the possibility for alternate narrative accounts of this relationship. It also points to the complex psychic dynamics that are at play within adult sistering.

3. Strengths and Limitations

The current study was conducted by a Pedi speaking researcher who is not conversant in isiXhosa, hence the motivation to conduct the interviews in English. Conducting this study in English may have limited the participants from expressing themselves with ease, even though they were able to speak and showed understanding of English. The use of a female researcher however may have contributed to a good relationship with the participants and may have compensated for the possible language barrier the participants may have experienced, by making them feel comfortable speaking to another woman.

The study could have benefited more from using a researcher from the Xhosa culture as she may have had better understanding of their constructions and may have been able to steer the interview in directions that may have elicited a deeper understanding of how Xhosa women constructed sistering. However, there are benefits also in being an outsider in an interview context as participants are required to explain taken for granted cultural meanings in detail.

Although the study had a small sample which is traditionally viewed as a weakness in quantitative research, it is viewed as a strength here as it allowed an exploration of the participants' rich and descriptive accounts and for an in-depth analysis of their narration in line with the recommendations of qualitative research. The study however, could have benefited from more stringent sampling procedures; for example, ensuring participants and their sisters were raised together and that they live closer/further apart to ensure the homogeneity of the group.

4. Recommendations for future research

The aim of this study was to understand how Black, Xhosa, working class women in middle adulthood make meaning of their experiences of sister-sister relationships and to understand their investment in these meanings. The study revealed that women use ways of being a woman that are available in their society to make meaning of their relationship. These meanings have contradictorily been found to reinforce traditional feminine roles whereas in another instances it challenges these traditional roles and provides for multiple feminine identities. The study has also

shown that women have various narratives they can draw on to construct their relationship, but that they choose specific narratives as they allow them to make meaning of their relationship in a way that makes them feel safe and in control of their lives. This could contribute to better understanding of the pressures and the demands women face in the world and enlighten those who work with women of their challenges and contradictions they face as they negotiate the various roles and identities they are assigned. This is crucial as it points to the continuously changing roles that women have to negotiate in their relationships with others.

Future research could explore case study research implementing the same psychosocial approach to allow for an in-depth analysis of individual's investments in specific meanings of sister-sister relationships. The case study could also include a set of siblings to explore different siblings' perspectives of the same relationship instead of focusing on one sibling's perspective of their relationship to contribute to further and comprehensive theory development on sibling relationships.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study have been discussed in relation to the literature. These contribute to a better understanding of women in their family relationships and in other relationships. The findings of the study draw attention to the psychosocial nature of the sibling relationship, as revealed by the participants' effort to negotiate between what they feel for their sisters on the 'inside' and what is expected in their relationships based on their social practices and expectations. They indicate the influence of social practices and expectations on the sister-sister relationship, particularly the obligation they feel towards each other. The findings point to the constructions of women that are in line with their traditional feminine roles and the constructions of women that challenge the traditional feminine role. They also indicate the role that individual principles and biographies play in why participants invest in different constructions of their relationships. In particular, that the participants chose the narratives that allow them to make meaning of their relationship in a way that makes them feel safe and in control of their lives. Bringing discursive and psychoanalytic readings together into a psychosocial understanding

of the subject matter forces us to pay attention both to the social context and to the deeply personal.

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APPENDIX A

Unit 18 Aries Nest
Grahamstown
6140
20 June 2014

Ms. Sarah Fischer: Director of Human Resources
Human Resources Department
P. O. Box 94
Grahamstown
6140

Dear Madam,

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RECRUIT RHODES CLEANING STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH AS REQUIREMENT FOR A MASTERS DEGREE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AT RHODES UNIVERSITY

My name is Hunadi Senkoane Moifo. I am a student of Rhodes University. I wish to conduct a psychosocial study into Xhosa women's personal meanings of sister-sister relationships, with Rhodes University cleaning personnel, in order to fulfil the requirements of my Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology. This research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Saville Young of the Psychology Department.

I hereby request your consent to approach and distribute flyers to female cleaning staff to request them to participate in the above-mentioned research.

Kindly find enclosed a copy of my thesis proposal which includes copies of the consent forms and other documents to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Research Ethics Review Committee and the Humanities Higher Degrees Committee.

Should you require any further information, I can be contacted on cell no.: 0724184912 or on this e-mail: h.moifo@ru.ac.za. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Hunadi Senkoane Moifo

APPENDIX B

An example of the flyer distributed during recruitment of participants

Volunteers are needed to take part in a psychosocial study of women's experiences in sister-sister relationships.

Participants should be Xhosa women between ages of 35-50 years, with at least one sister and should be conversant in English.

You would be interviewed for 2 sessions.

Session 1: ± 2 hrs

Session 2: ± 1 hrs

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Hunadi Moifo

cell: 072 418 4912

Email: h.moifo@ru.ac.za

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW 1:

(Interview will start with capturing of basic biographical details of participants and their family make-up such as: name, age, marital status, occupation, residential place, and family details (age of parents and siblings, occupation, residential place))

1. Will you please tell me about your relationship with your sister when you were growing up?
2. How would you describe your relationship with your sister now?
3. In what way do you think having a sister has influenced the person you are now?
4. Can you describe for me what happened the last time you saw your sister?
5. Can you describe a time when you felt really close to your sister.
6. Can you describe a time of conflict with your sister.

Probing and follow-up questions:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- How would you describe your sister?
- How would you describe yourself in comparison to your sister?
- What about your relationship with your sister made it ...(feel a certain way)...?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share about your relationship with your sister?
- Is there anything else that you would like to say?
- Do you have any questions for me?

INTERVIEW 2:

The questions in the second interview would be guided by gaps in the initial interview.

Probing and follow-up questions:

1. Would you describe to me how you experienced the first interview? (What did it feel like when you talking about your sister?)
2. What is your relationship with your sister like compared to your relationship with your brother?
3. What is your relationship with your sister like compared to your relationship with a friend.
4. How does your Xhosa culture influence the way you are a sister? What sorts of things are expected of you as a Xhosa sister?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your relationship with your sister?

APPENDIX D

Approval from the Ethics Committee



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Glenkeurum • Groot • South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

11 June 2014

Hunadi Senkoane Mofe
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Hunadi

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2014/08

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2014/08 and title, 'A Psychosocial Study of Xhosa women's sister-sister relationships, served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 11 June 2014. The project has been given ethics clearance.

Please ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael Guilfoyle
CHAIRPERSON OF THE RPERC

APPENDIX E

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

Greetings,

My name is Hunadi Moifo. I am a student at Rhodes University. I would like to invite you to take part in a study aimed at understanding the experiences of women in sister-sister relationship, in order to fulfil the requirements of my Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that you have a choice to be part of the study or not. You can also decide not to participate in the study, and your decision not to participate would not be held against you. If you decide to be part of the study, you would be expected to tell me about your personal experiences you have had of a relationship with one of your sisters. Some of the questions asked would include your demographic, personal and family information. This information would be obtained over two interview sessions conducted on campus, with the first session lasting a maximum of two hours. The second session would be conducted approximately one week after the initial interview and would last a maximum of one hour.

It is not likely that there will be any harm or discomfort from talking about your personal experiences. However, if you find some questions uncomfortable or that they bring back painful memories, you do not need to answer them. You are also allowed to withdraw (or decide to stop taking part) at any time you feel like it and there would be no consequences to you for withdrawal. You are also allowed to withdraw your permission to have your interviews used in the study.

The interviews would be audio-recorded with your permission and I would be writing notes during the interview to record your comments and to note the things I may want to ask. The recordings of the interviews would be transcribed and analysed by me, and would be kept in a secure place, until the study is completed. Afterwards, they would be destroyed.

In instances where you may also worry about how others will react to what you say, please note that your recorded and transcribed interviews would not be made available to other people. Your real names and some of your characteristics would be disguised in the thesis report and when some of my interview extracts are used in the report to protect your identity.

You would not benefit directly by taking part in this research, however, your involvement would contribute to a better understanding of women's experiences in sibling relationships.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

I.....agree to participate in the study conducted by Hunadi Moifo, concerned with understanding women's experiences in sister-sister relationships.

Please tick a statement you agree with:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I agree that I am participating in this study voluntarily.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without any consequences, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I give permission for my interview to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can also withdraw permission to use the data, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that and therefore give permission for disguised extracts from my interview to be quoted in the final thesis report.

Signed.....

Date.....