

**'Renegotiated Identities'**  
**Stories of Women who are Initiated Traditional Healers and Work in a Hospital**  
**Environment in a Different Capacity**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Research  
Psychology by Coursework and Research Report

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Research Psychology by Coursework and Research Report at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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Leonie Human

Signed at Johannesburg on this:

\_\_\_\_\_ Day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2006.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Overview**

|      |                    |   |
|------|--------------------|---|
| 1.1. | Introduction       | 1 |
| 1.2. | Research Rationale | 4 |
| 1.3. | Research Questions | 7 |
| 1.4. | Report Structure   | 7 |

### **Chapter 2**

#### **Literature Review**

|        |   |    |
|--------|---|----|
| 2.1.   | Introduction  | 8  |
| 2.2.   | TRADITIONAL HEALING IN SOUTH AFRICA                                 |    |
| 2.2.1. | Introduction  | 8  |
| 2.2.2. | Indigenous Healing Cosmology and Perspectives on Health and Illness | 10 |
| 2.2.3. | Types of Traditional Healers in South Africa                        | 13 |
| 2.2.4. | Initiation: Becoming a Traditional Healer                           | 15 |
| 2.2.5. | Daily Practice and Community Role: "Being a Traditional Healer"     | 18 |
| 2.2.6. | Modernisation and Traditional Healing                               | 19 |
| 2.3.   | TRADITIONAL HEALING AND MEDICAL HEALTH CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA         |    |
| 2.3.1. | Introduction  | 21 |
| 2.3.2. | Dialogues on Traditional Healing and South African Health Care      | 21 |
| 2.3.3. | Perceptions on Integration between Traditional and Modern Medicine  | 23 |

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Method**

|        |   |    |
|--------|---|----|
| 3.1.   | METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH                 |    |
| 3.1.1. | Qualitative Research                    | 31 |
| 3.1.2. | Interpretive Approaches to Research     | 33 |
| 3.2.   | SAMPLING                                | 34 |
| 3.3.   | METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION               |    |
| 3.3.1. | Interviews as method of data collection | 36 |
| 3.3.2. | The Qualitative Research Interview      | 37 |
| 3.3.3. | Reflexivity in Research                 | 39 |
| 3.3.4. | Procedure                               | 41 |
| 3.4.   | METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS                 |    |
| 3.4.1. | Introduction                            | 42 |
| 3.4.2. | Narrative Analysis                      | 42 |
| 3.4.3. | Thematic Content Analysis               | 44 |
| 3.5.   | ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS                  | 47 |

### **Chapter 4**

#### **Results**

|      |                |    |
|------|----------------|----|
| 4.1. | Introduction   | 51 |
| 4.2. | Naledi's Story | 51 |
| 4.3. | Feziwe's Story | 58 |
| 4.4. | Tumi's Story   | 64 |
| 4.5. | Lerato's Story | 70 |
| 4.6. | Tala's Story   | 76 |

## **Chapter 5**

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 5.1. | Introduction  | 83 |
| 5.2. | Question 1: Becoming and Being a Traditional Healer                           | 83 |
| 5.3. | Question 2: Participant's perceptions of working in a hospital environment    | 87 |
| 5.4. | Question 3: Perceptions of the interface between work and traditional healing | 92 |
| 5.5. | Question 4: Perceptions of traditional healers in the hospital environment    | 95 |

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

|      |                                   |     |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| 6.1. | Summary of the main findings      | 100 |
| 6.2. | Possibilities for future research | 107 |
| 6.3. | Research Limitations              | 109 |
| 6.4. | Conclusion                        | 110 |

### **List of References**

111

### **Appendices:**

|    |  |     |
|----|--|-----|
| 1. | Participant Information Letter             | 120 |
| 2. | Consent form for participation in study    | 121 |
| 3. | Consent form for audiotaping of interviews | 122 |
| 4. | First Interview Guide                      | 123 |
| 5. | Second Interview Guide                     | 124 |

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the experiences of traditional healers who work in a hospital environment in a different capacity. A secondary aim of this inquiry is to look at how participants' perceptions of the interface between traditional and modern medicine in a hospital context influences their practices as both traditional healers and hospital employees. A snowball sampling strategy was employed and five suitable participants were identified through referral and post-interview selection. Participants were selected from a sample of South African-born women who have experienced an ancestral calling and initiation into African traditional healing, have been initiated as an *Inyanga/iSangoma* (diviner), and are presently working in a different vocational capacity in a hospital environment. All participants work and reside in Gauteng. Data was collected through two semi-structured interviews per participant. Interviews were based on an interview guide.

In looking at participants' experience as traditional healers who work in a hospital and how their perceptions on the interface between traditional and modern medicine influence their traditional healing practices, four research questions have been identified: 1. How do participants perceive themselves as a traditional healer? 2. How do participants perceive and experience their work in the hospital? 3. How do participants perceive the interface between traditional and modern approaches to healing in a hospital context? 4. How do participants experience the perceptions of others at work? A qualitative approach was adopted in order to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. Data analysis was guided by narrative and thematic approaches. Thus results are presented in a storied form with thematic categories so as to reflect participants' experiences as described in their own words. Interpretation of data focused on the ways in which these women relate to their role as traditional healer in a different vocational capacity and how their perceptions reflect a broader dialogue on the relationship between traditional and modern healing modalities in a modern health care context.

**\*\*ADD FINDINGS AT END\*\***