CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW:
FOUNDATIONS FOR QUESTIONING AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON
PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 form the literature review. The literature review forms the nucleus of
the present investigation. This chapter commences with aspects of the literature that
explored the foundations for questioning an African perspective on psychopathology,
and may be appreciated as the platform for a more comprehensive understanding of
the literature in Chapter 5. The current section of the thesis includes literature that
provides a context for specific ideas relating to African perspectives on
psychopathology. The chapter is designed to follow a developmental path, beginning
with the historical context of psychopathology. The researcher then introduces the
cultural context and relates these to issues such as race and ethnicity. However, as was
anticipated and discussed in the introductory chapter, the literature review included
pertinent questions such as the definition of African, as well as aspects of African
identity. However, these issues are also addressed in topics such as cosmology and
legend.

4.2   The cultural context

People ardently defend their cultural worldviews (Eagle, 2005). This is
understandable as worldview defines the nature of reality and all epistemological
notions thereof. Indeed, culture and religion define the acceptability of affect,
cognition, and connation. One such behaviour includes suicidal behaviours (Dein &
Dickens, 1997). As an example, a common Muslim view is that suicide is forbidden
in Islam, but in certain Japanese communities it may be seen as honourable.

Draguns' (2000) review of literature indicates that clinician empathy is vulnerable to
decay if continuously applied beyond his/her own cultural realm. This decay is due to
the clinician having to actively engage clinical material with little understanding of

the cultural dynamics influencing that material. It is unsurprising, therefore, that current views reflect a need for cultural self-knowledge, as well as interventions which are culturally-sensitive (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000).

If erudition in culture logically suggests cultural competency, then it may be hypothesised that potential benefits exist as a result. The present body of academic literature, cantered on culture and counselling, suggest that counsellors ought to be competent in addressing cultural dynamics. Being knowledgeable in cultural dynamics suggests that the counsellor be equipped with the information and skills needed to work with diverse populations. Results may include the supplication of culturally-sensitive treatment, and may also foster the establishment of rapport in clinical interactions (Pope-Davis et al., 2002).

There appears to be an increase in the body of literature regarding ethnic, racial, and cultural perceptions (Draguns, 2000; Patterson, 1996; Tomlinson et al., 2007). These appear to focus on increasing awareness into various perspectives on psychological distress (Patterson, 1996). As a result, recent research has attempted to explore what *culture* means in clinical psychology (Eagle, 2005).

Eagle (2005) is of the view that the term *culture* possesses significant rhetorical energy. As such, culture creates a context whereby psychopathology has meaning and assists in developing theories about psychopathology. Furthermore, culture provides a foundation which allows patients and families to know what to expect. Likewise, understanding culture allows professionals to appreciate the human condition in such a way that the professional may provide services that are culturally competent (Beiser, 2003). Unfortunately, the terms culture, race, and ethnicity have been applied with confused utility, and have consequently represented a noteworthy hurdle in the development of cultural psychology (Trujillo, 2008).

It is true that culture is associated with ethnicity. As such, one may contend that culture and ethnicity intermingle, but are not the same (Sen & Chowdhury, 2006). Eshun and Gurung (2009) point out that many individuals, including professionals and untrained individuals, misuse and variously imply culture to represent ethnicity,

race, and/or culture. It appears that these terms are often, and incorrectly, used interchangeably. The obvious question here is: what is culture?

4.2.1   The evolving definitions of culture

In line with White's (1959) reasoning, some have defined culture as conditioned behaviours, while others appear to define culture as an abstraction of behaviour. While material objects may be perceived as culture, culture is not dependent on material objects. Often, culture appears to relate to objects and behaviours which are perceptible, but it is equally fair to state that culture exists in the mind. The vast possibilities in defining culture are so intricate and complex in its diverse conceptions of energy, that physics would probably become convoluted if it were able to encompass culture's verve (White, 1959).

These ideas fascinated White (1959), but did not account for the technical aspects of a definition for culture. White's rigorous exploration of these technical aspects yielded the following result. The scientific definition of culture entails that a belief, operation, or article is associated with culture if (a) it relies on symboling, and (b) relates to the extrasomatic context, including nonhuman characteristics which may not rely on symboling. These nonhuman characteristics may include personal grooming, suckling, and fornication practices which subsist in the social milieu. However, duality, plurality, and sociality do not differentiate cultural and/or human occurrences from noncultural and/or nonhuman occurrences. Symboling is the differentiating feature. In addition, the extrasomatic context includes any and all elements of culture, irrespective of the quantity in its class (White, 1959).

There is little doubt that defining culture is difficult. The body is a cultural and physical object. Attempting to define the end of physical matter and the beginning of cultural perception is complex (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). The difficulties herein are compounded by the observation that many definitions appear to suggest that culture exists within a person (López & Guarnaccia, 2000). The social world represents an important cultural setting because social events have the propensity to influence the way people behave. However, to assume that behaviour exclusively represents culture suggests that behaviour represents beliefs. This reinforces the

notion that behaviour is based on psychological constructs which reside within the person. To consider psychological processes in culture does not imply disregarding the social world. The most apt view would be to consider social and psychological worlds as equally producing human behaviour (López & Guarnaccia, 2000).

Culture is dynamic in that it may be simultaneously unadorned and multifaceted. As such, culture may involve predefined functions for cultural members, social positioning, systems of power, and the dynamics involved in experiencing collective forms of distress (Wilson, 2007). When culture is exclusively characterised in this way, culture is a composite and multifaceted conception (Eshun & Gurung, 2009). The definition of culture is not static, and has changed over time (López & Guarnaccia, 2000).

Culture certainly is an authority that supplies rules and social norms in order to train the individual body to comply with the needs of the political and societal bodies (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). As a collection of edicts, passed from community to individual, it defines the community's worldview, the nature of interpersonal relationships, and the nature of being. These edicts are diffused through language, customs, art, and symbols (Helman, 1990).

Culture is also a network of dynamic attributes that direct and train perception, reasoning, interaction, and behaviour (Mazrui, 1986). It is resourceful and dynamic in the sense that large groups may share specific histories and contexts, and that some cultural features may be common to these groups. Society experiences shifts, and people must adapt to these shifts continuously. Accordingly, culture cannot remain static and is reconstructed according to these shifts. Culture, therefore, evolves (López & Guarnaccia, 2000).

As a unit of interrelated attitudes, beliefs, ethics, and behavioural perceptions shared by a community and carried down from one generation to the next, it is a construct that operates at the collective level and does not relate to biological or individual performance. It does, however, reside in the individual's knowledge schema and is developed during childhood, but is fortified during the life-cycle (Triandis, 1995). Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, and Maynard (2003) consider culture to be socially

interactional and consist of collective practices and joint interpretations of phenomena. The process of cultural intercourse is therefore one which is communicated and structured within developing contexts.

As a result, culture forms collective meaning, and structures communities via folklore and history. Culture therefore creates a foundation for organising ethnicity, but is not ethnicity. Because culture relates to meaning, it influences aspects such as belief systems, traditions and lifeways that represent *real* ethnicity. While ethnic boundaries signify the structural aspects that influence ethnic opinions, culture signifies human agency and in-group operations of cultural protection, renovation, and advancement (Nagel, 1994). A superior definition of culture must appreciate the person's agency in creating his/her social world. This suggests that people do not inherit culture from generalised society. While society helps shape cultural perception, so does the individual's life experiences. It is reasonable to appreciate that a person may transform, augment, or discard aspects of culture based on personal perception (López & Guarnaccia, 2000).

4.2.2 The locus of culture

The views of culture as directly, or indirectly, perceptible elicit the burning issue regarding the locus of culture. Culture is positioned in time and space and can be appreciated as existing within people. Thus, culture is evident in beliefs, views, concepts, and feelings. Furthermore, culture operates in objects which are external to the person, but relate to social interactions between people. Therefore, culture is evident in material elements such as art and technology. Finally, culture functions in interpersonal relationships. These considerations suggest that culture is extraorganismal, interorganismal, and intraorganismal (White, 1959).

With regards to culture being rooted in time and place, it has the capacity to transform, and is affected by contemporary views as well as environmental pressures (Sen & Chowdhury, 2006). Culture in Africa is frequently linked to early practices, particularly those which operated prior to colonisation, modernisation, and Westernisation. Along these lines, culture may denote something inborn to a group of people. In a sense, this refers to the quixotic perception of culture as authentic and

unpolluted. This view of culture communicates a longing for the pre-modern (Eagle, 2005). However, culture as a construct must not be oversimplified to suggest that it does not transcend individual, material, and temporal dimensions. Culture is an elemental facet in the memoirs of each society (Cabral, 1974). Shared history cultivates a shared culture (Ritchie, 1997). Ritchie indicates that even though European cultures have nuances which appear to render them unique, various European societies facilitate a common culture anchored largely in shared historical experiences.

Consequently, the construct *culture* has multiple meanings, particularly when discussed in African, and South African, contexts. This is due to the political association of the term (Eagle, 2005). In the context of modern-day South Africa, for example, the term culture is applied with various rhetorical aims. These include authority, affirmation, opposition, and sedition (Eagle, 2005), which may suggest systemic patterns relating to discord with the present sociopolitical system and/or may reflect historical tensions fostered by the previous sociopolitical system. The researcher was unable to locate supporting evidence in this regard.

4.3.3 Culture as a multidirectional construct

Confronting allegations that biologically-complete hominids spontaneously contrived culture is a view opposed by Shore (1996). Shore suggests that culture may be attributable to evolution, but is independently a selective feature of evolution.

Many traditional African communities discuss past and present experiences in rhetoric, using expressive and symbolic language devices to communicate personal experiences. The simultaneous use of verbal and nonverbal communicative devices is employed to unite and divide, magnetise and resist, underpin and transform. With these processes at play, it becomes extremely complex to distinguish between history and representation. Here, it must be appreciated that history exists within the representation. While this suggests rhetoric, it does not suggest stark contrast to realism. Thus truth, and the perception of truth, form consciousness. Within consciousness, history fashions culture, and culture fashions history (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1987).

In addition, much research regarding culture and aspects of the self have been conducted. These have included numerous topics which have transcended disciplinary peripheries. Areas which have exhibited much interest in this field include social psychology, sociolinguistics, and psychological anthropology (Miller, 1999). Anthropological research in the first half of the 20th century illustrated the way in which culture influenced personality. More recent trends appear to aim at exhibiting the way in which personality and culture interrelate and influence people's lives (McCrae, 2001).

Longitudinal research has found that personality traits remain constant, notwithstanding major shifts in life experiences (McCrae, 2001). In terms of culture-related data, cross-cultural research indicates that personality traits in adulthood are universal. Furthermore, behaviour-genetic research reveals that genetic disposition is a major determinant of personality traits in adulthood. Consequently, while one may notice some cultural influence on personality, personality traits appear to transcend culture (McCrae, 2001). As an additional observation, Dzokoto and Okazaki (2006) indicate that it is also likely that emotions are experienced differently, depending on the culture. However, culture and behaviour interrelate and influence people's lives. White (1959) is of the view that behaviour is a reaction to, and function of, culture. As such, behaviour is the dependent variable, and culture is the independent variable. If the culture transforms, the behaviour will also be transformed (White, 1959).

While these considerations certainly relate the person and culture, they do not account for the constitution of national culture. National culture affects the cultural contours of individuals. However, personal experiences and personality will foster variation. This invariably influences value orientations and generate diversity within socio-cultural factions (Thomas, Au, & Ravlin, 2003).

Hofstede (2001) distinguished four dimensions relating to national cultures. These dimensions were based on global multivariate research of work-related principles. The first dimension is individualism-collectivism and concerns the extent to which a person experiences himself or herself as either naturally integrated into a community or family, rather than as a self-contained, self-governing individual. Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi (2003) are of the view that people generally define themselves as

either collectivistic or individualistic. On the one hand, the individualistic self is differentiated from other people and more focused on independent actions. On the other hand, the collectivistic self lacks a distinct boundary between the individual and one's community. While the individualistic self is prone to separation and self-blame, the collectivistic self is prone to interpersonal rejection and guilt (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003). Of significance to the current review are Watkins et al.'s (2003) view that many African populations embrace collective cultures, and a collectivistic self. Another dimension refers to power distance and relates to the acknowledgment of inequity in social positions and financial revenue. The third dimension relates to femininity-masculinity and indicates the extent of gender-role differentiation and the value of compassion and relationship versus triumph and accomplishment. Lastly, uncertainty avoidance concerns the degree of distress encountered in amorphous, vague conditions. These notions are discussed in sections 4.8 and 5.11.

4.3.4 The framework of culture

Culture encompasses creed, mores, family ideals, race, geographical location, physical attributes such as degrees of aggression, frequent outward traits such as attire, explicit and implicit attitudes, and subjective positions such as perceptions relating to gender and nationality (Eshun & Gurung, 2009). It has symbolic utility as a meaning system and includes collective appreciation of the facets of experience, in addition to regulatory functions such as norms for behaviour. Moreover, culture also provides constitutive functions by circumscribing and generating particular realities. Culture's role in generating these realities is wide-ranging and includes elemental epistemological wisdom, artefacts, roles, and acknowledged social institutions (Miller, 1999). Perhaps examples in this regard would be beneficial. A birthday card is an artefact, a teacher fulfils a role, and marriage may be seen as an example of a social institution.

It is also appropriate for psychotherapists to consider phenotype, as interpersonal relationships influence the lived experience of the person, including perceptions of one's position in his/her world (McDowell et al., 2005). Phenotype refers to the way in which physical and biochemical features are influenced by environmental and

genetic influences. Phenotype, therefore, influences worldview (see McDowell et al., 2005).

Adjustment, or cultural adjustment to be more precise, ought to be seen as dynamic positioning on a continuum. The one end of the continuum indicates complete adjustment, while the other end indicates no adjustment. Adjustment, here, refers to psychological adjustment and a person may shift and change positions depending on his/her context (Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004). The result of such adjustment has the potential to facilitate cultural empathy.

Being skilled in cultural empathy indicates that a therapist is able to appreciate the patient's cultural worldview. Cultural empathy is absolutely essential in therapeutic processes involving people of diverse backgrounds. In addition, the therapist must demonstrate sensitivity and maturity in communicating similarities and differences in such a way that the patient feels comfort in sharing his/her lived experience. Within this process, the patient is able to experience a deep sense of connection with the therapist. However, success in this area implies that the therapist must be willing to engage in deep reflection of, and confront, his/her own cultural experiences (McDowell et al., 2005). Certainly these facets percolate psychological experiences and, by implication, the manifestation and experience of psychological distress.

In addition, recognising culture-specific indicators of psychopathology is a diagnostic necessity that takes advanced education and prodigious respect for cultural dynamics (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). Understanding the role of culture in the development of psychopathology has the potential for clinicians to be proactive and to facilitate preventative measures before the pathology develops (Miller & Pumariega, 2001).

4.3.5   'Culture' misunderstood

Regrettably, the term culture is often employed to suggest perspectives which are not Western, and not Eurocentric. As such, culture may imply a focus on those populations which are marginalised. Perhaps this definition of culture demonstrates complexity by being reliant on a contradicting construct. References to culture, in this regard, suggest *other than* and may be interpreted as a challenging view, as well as a

type of co-option compared with those hegemonic characteristics (Eagle, 2005). *Culture* should not erroneously be equated with any culture apart from Western culture. Western medicine, for example, is also entrenched in a specific culture, the Western culture (Anderson, 1996).

Influential considerations that arise at this stage, and which must be confronted within this review, include areas relating to pure forms of specific cultures, acculturation, and enculturation. Consider the *kulturkreis*, for example. The kulturkreis is regarded as the vicinity where every cultural facet originates in its most authentic form (Herskovits, 1926). However, the kulturkreis has been criticised for being a concrete process of arranging cultural material into specific, linear patterns (Herskovits, 1926). The view does not appear to lend itself to dynamic understandings of cultural phenomena, specifically in terms of the multifactorial processes at play. The prominent question of *who is African?* attests to this observation. Further literature in this regard will be addressed further in the review.

As a point of note, it has been suggested that the outcome of schizophrenia in developing countries is often more positive than the outcome in first-world countries (Bhugra & Bhui, 2001). Bhugra and Bhui hypothesise that this occurrence might be due to developing countries exercising healthier coping strategies, mind-sets, family communication, and operate within a more accommodating culture. Further deliberation in this regard will be explored within the review.

4.3.6   Culture and psychopathology

In terms of culture in relation to mental illness, an overarching definition of culture may be extremely useful in appreciating patterns of psychopathology (Eshun & Gurung, 2009). For this reason, culture must also be appreciated as a quality which is environmentally acquired which contains beliefs, principles, standards, activities, and symbols. It therefore reflects mutual societal experiences, is conveyed cross-generationally, and transforms in due course. Culture is also self-sufficient, and consists of concrete and abstract components. Furthermore survival and acclimatisation of a population are dependent on culture. Many aspects of culture, such as cultural principles, impact the manner in which people perceive and react

(Eshun & Gurung, 2009). Amplifying the definition of culture assists in unearthing the opulence of cultural analysis as regards the investigation of psychopathology. Furthermore, an extensive definition allows further appreciation of intracultural variation (López & Guarnaccia, 2000).

Briefly, culture exerts pathogenic, psychoselective, psychoplastic, pathoelaborating, psychofacilitating, and psychoreactive influences. According to Tseng (2001), the pathogenic effect refers to culture's propensity to affect the course of the disorder. In essence, and upon reflection, I propose that the pathogenic effect be appreciated as the way in which culture *habituates* psychopathology. The psychoselective effect refers to the way in which cultural variables enable the person to tolerate stressors. Of equal importance is the psychoplastic effect, which elaborates the manner in which culture modulates the expression of psychopathology. Structured manifestation of this modulation, as implied in mainstream categories as well as culture-specific illnesses, suggest culture's pathoelaborating effect. However, as psychopathological experiences often relate to the personalised experience of psychological disturbances, the psychoreactive effect explores the subjective reaction to the disturbance (Tseng, 2001).

4.4   Ethnicity

Unlike culture, ethnicity refers to a group that shares social and cultural norms, which are preserved within the group, and across time. Individuals within the ethnic group share origin and history, and are therefore easily able to identify with one another (Last, 1995). Nagel (1994) indicates that ethnicity is an interactive and progressive aspect of identity formation, for both individuals and groups. Culture and identity are central to ethnicity. In constructing identity, individuals address issues relating to ethnic restrictions and meaning. Ethnic groups structure culture and self-definition, thus constructing ethnicity.

Belonging to an ethnic group does not mean that one ascribes to all values and norms of that ethnic group (López & Guarnaccia, 2000). Community processes arrange alliances, adversaries, authorities, and boundaries. This creates specific divides and unions, and is characteristic of ethnic group processes. These processes fall under the

umbrella of ethnicity, specifically the subdivisions constructed by culture, language, religion, ancestry, appearance, and geographical location. Ethnicity, in terms of boundaries, is subject to revision, negotiation, and revitalisation. This may be facilitated by ethnic members, as well as external observers (Nagel, 1994).

The current state of psychopathology suggests that the comprehension of collective definitions of ethnic groups, and the heterogeneity thereof, necessitate deliberate consideration so as to assure depth in understanding and facilitate evocative analyses (Bhugra & Bhui, 2001).

4.5   Race

The term *race* is commonly used to signify society's constructions of physical attributes (Cashmore, 1988). The biological conception of race denotes genetic and physical attributes such as pigmentation of skin, the colour of eyes, and the texture of hair. These attributes produced historical taxonomies such as Negroid (Black), Caucasoid (White), and Mongoloid (Asian). In contrast, the sociocultural conception of race suggests the geographic exodus and process of identity construction. Thus, the concept of race is employed to assist in describing people, albeit representative of constructions created by people (Eshun & Gurung, 2009).

Racism is restrictive and often creates a divide between Black and White. In truth, the social fabric is more complex than racial categorisation (Mabie, 2000). Recognising skin colour does not imply racism, nor does it instinctively initiate racism (Swartz, 2007). The reality of African consciousness, race, faith, education, racial discrimination, and the socioeconomic and political position of African people must be acknowledged (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). If one employs the concept of race as a social construct, race is associated with ethnicity. This is accounted for by the process whereby culture organises individuals into racial clusters as maintained by a collection of socially important features (Sen & Chowdhury, 2006).

In terms of racism, some traditional Africans appear to be of the view that they are victims of adversity due to racial discrimination (Sharpley et al., 2001). Racism is of great consequence in the areas of psychopathology and politics. Racism, in this

regard, is defined as systems that malign persons in the grounds of phenotypic traits or ethnic association. All works focused on culture must encourage discussions regarding racial discrimination and, in so doing, challenge racism (Sen & Chowdhury, 2006).

A lasting ethnocentric view, on the margin of racial discrimination, is the implied view that the perceptions and experiences of African people are primitive or disordered (Mezzich, Kleinman, Fabrega, & Parron, 1996). Subtle, daily forms of passive-aggression and racism towards Africans may be termed *micro-aggressions*. Many African people believe that micro-aggressions have a negative impact on their health (Sharpley et al., 2001).

Especially in South Africa, the term *Black* often implied *non-White*. In South African society, Black comprised indigenous African, Indian, Coloured, and Chinese people. According to Modood and Ahmad (2007), the concept of Black was first divided into different race groups, and later fragmented into identity categories, including religious identities, such as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, traditional, and so forth. This suggested the development of a pluralistic condition. South Africans are fixated with race (Swartz, 2007). Historical racial tension has reinforced this process. Often, dialogue regarding race is met with anxiety. Similar to the experience at a grass-roots level, clinicians and academics should question whether these anxieties immobilise professional deliberations and practices (Swartz, 2007).

Reality, including the reality for those who have been subjected to trauma such as racial prejudice, is forbidding and iniquitous. The neurotic tensions that overwhelm all people are, to a large extent, a product of lived experience. Some of the psychosocial mêlée, those internalised tensions, are not resolved by environmental change. The focus in therapy ought to include reinforcing and developing the patient's capacity to successfully cope with the demands of the external world (Wohl, 2000).

4.6   Who is African?

It is feasible to conceive Europe in terms of physical regions. It is equally feasible to conceive Europeans as those people who live in Europe (Ritchie, 1997). The

analogous question, then, is whether this is the case with regards to Africa and Africans. Ritchie is of the opinion that discernment of shared culture and history may initiate Eurocentricism. Within the African context, this suggests possibly initiating Afrocentricism. This is a fine line to tread, specifically within an investigation aligned to the scope of the current literature review. It is my opinion, however, that these subjects, contentious as they may appear for some, be explored in order to allow the literature to inform the review.

Makgoba (1998) is of the view that for many scholars, Africans are diverse and include negroids, caucasoids, and orientals. This view is as much a question as it is a statement as it is an argument. Multiple consciousness is widespread in Africa. Even when race is removed from the equation, Africans see themselves as possessing many identities including, but not limited to, ethnicity, subculture, kinship, and language (Airhihenbuwa & DeWitt Webster, 2004). Africa has also been influenced by Western and Eastern traditions. As such, Africa has traditions which are multiple, intricate, interlinked, and interacting. These traditions help Africa to preserve its uniqueness, as well as to adjust to modernisation. African thought is born out of, and grows, from intrinsic and extrinsic features (Makgoba, 1998).

Bhui and Bhugra (2001) have observed that many studies claim to be African but are essentially American studies of Black Africans and African Americans. They, therefore, urge researchers in Africa to produce more research in order to facilitate further appreciation of African culture, from contexts within Africa. For Toldson and Toldson (2001), the African versus African American debate has little value since all Black people are imbued with a traditionally African identity. Kwate (2005) is of the view that African models of personality suggest that the fundamental place of origin defines the primary features of personality. As such, African people across the world, with differing values, share equivalent subterranean cultural and personality structures. Assessment may therefore be homogenous, irrespective of seemingly variable environmental influences (Kwate, 2005).

Jones (1995) and Kwate (2005) are in agreement in this regard. Jones suggests that African consciousness inheres in the innermost self of Africans and African descendents. Aeons have not altered that the African psyche is imbued with

traditional African beliefs and attitudes, irrespective of whether the African person resides in Africa or not (Jones, 1995). Urbanisation, acculturation, and modernisation influence, but do not eradicate, these deeply-entrenched cultural perspectives (Nsamenang, 1992).

But is African more closely linked to Africa? Watkins, Akande, and Mpofu (1996) assessed self-esteem from an African perspective. Participants in their study were approximately 13-years-old and resided in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. Their results indicated that self-esteem was more similar between African children, than when compared to African and Australian children. The study, therefore, suggests the possibility that African consciousness as a construct deserves some merit. However, it could not be ascertained if the instruments used in the study were culture-fair.

Most erroneously, it appears that many authors refer to tribalism when converging on the subject of Africa (Mafeje, 1971). African culture is all together pre-modern, modern, and postmodern. It is also traditional, thus pre-scientific; Western, thus scientific; and integrative, thus post-scientific (Du Toit, 1998). Literature regarding African epistemology is often loaded with emphasis on non-biblical views of the supernatural. These are often based on traditional African legends (section 4.8.7) and correspond with theme 15 in Chapter 6. Some would refer to this as stereotyping as African culture has many other belief systems, such as nutritional techniques and medical care. However, scholars in African literature are reviving, as well as proliferating, traditional perspectives. This must be embraced without trepidation that deep-rooted, traditional perspectives hamper growth and/or progressive views (Du Toit, 1998). Supernatural influence is not unique to African perspectives, nor does it suggest the level of development in a community (Du Toit, 1998). To therefore exclude comprehensive exploration into supernatural phenomena would imply that the African cosmological stance is somewhat aberrant.

According to Makgoba (1998), debates regarding Africa appear to stem from non-Africans. In searching for *Africa*, challenges in exploring African science, language, and democracy are rampant. The difficulty in pursuing the quest for *unique Africa* is a moral and political dilemma. *Unique Africa* gives the impression that one attaints the authority to explore the self. In this way, the person develops mastery into identity, a

supposed constitutive of subjectivity. Essentially, the African begins to assert his/her differences, instead of wavering the position of alter ego for being African (Mbembe, 2002).

With regards to the history of defining Africa, race relates to the moral arena, as well as to the inherent fact of consciousness. Irrespective of the perceptions of diverse forms of Pan-Africanism or negritude, the insurrection has little to do with a discrete race, but much to do with perceptions of race as inferior (Mbembe, 2002). As an appeal to proponents of the multicultural perspective, at least temporarily, bear in mind the historical influences suggested in the development of the Afrocentric perspective (see Asante, 1980). The Afrocentric view appears to relate strongly to Africanity.

Constructing ethnicity and negotiating ethnic boundaries involves self-identification, as well as perceptions of external views. In this way, the view of the self is contrasted against what others assume your ethnicity to be (Nagel, 1994). Being African, therefore, comprises the way in which the self and others negotiate one's identity. Hence, the view that a non-Black person is African is entirely plausible. The current review, however, will initially pivot on traditional African cosmology, and thereafter introduce modern African views.

For 200 years, the perceptible, material, and emblematic borders within Africa have increased and decreased. The flux has transformed the area. Novel territorial structures and unanticipated forms of locality have emerged. These boundaries differ from official boundaries. Inconsistently, discourses which have the capacity to illuminate the transformations have obfuscated them. One long-standing view is that colonialism defined boundaries, detaching African states based on capricious boundaries which ultimately divided societies, ethnic groups, and cultural communities which naturally fashioned a homogenous gestalt before colonialism. This view may be perceived as simplistic due to the historical connotations associated with boundarying in Africa. Most notably, the reductionistic view that boundaries serve international law as opposed to the law of the people, suggests that territory is an object of appropriation used to influence populations (Mbembe, 2000).

These opinions are based on little consideration for whether the law of the people differs from international law. Furthermore it affords weight to arbitrary boundaries, thereby fleecing the potential of Africa's people to supersede synthetic peripheries. In addition, according to Mbembe (2000), many of the boundaries are formed in harmony with natural limitations such as mountain ranges, for example. While the colonial boundaries were not fashioned by Africans, negotiation among the colonial powers was often employed, as was consideration for the old kingdom. In addition, religious, military, and political boundaries were established, redefining the terrain. Boundaries in Africa, as a result, are complex in that some were created out of necessity, others for convenience, and yet others were imposed. Subsequently, the structure of the African experience is influenced by a long-standing social and cultural process (Mbembe, 2000).

The idea that subcultural variation within Africa deserves more exploration in that the unified African unity has been severely contested. Nsamenang (1992) suggests that no other continent has experienced as much internal movement as Africa. Traditional African populations have historically travelled the continent, leaving traces of ethnicity throughout Africa. Africanity, the African cultural inheritance, was steadily constructed. Subcultural distinction, therefore, deprives the African of his/her true African heritage (Maquet, 1972; Nsamenang, 1992).

Surely, contestation in this regard may be easily contrived. Yet, to contest this view suggests a fracas of epistemological views – one which African-focused theorists refuse to accommodate (see Kwate, 2005; Nsamenang, 1992). The intention within this review, will be to initially focus on perspectives aligned to the philosophy of Africanity (Nsamenang, 1992), but to introduce differing views at a later stage.

African-centred psychology focuses on culture-specific models and in so doing unites subcultural groups in Africa. This view is heretical in the general social sciences, but necessary in the Pan-Africanist worldview (Kwate, 2005). African-centred psychological models are dependent on indigenous African perspectives, irrespective of whether the theory is developed by, or relate to, Africans in the Western world. These models focus uniquely on the experience of people of African ancestry and do not relate to the APA's DSM psychiatric classification system (Kwate, 2005).

The African continent presents a significant framework for studying the association between culture and well-being. In particular, the African context has highlighted that theory and practice suggest particular interpretations of reality (Adams & Salter, 2007). Africa is diverse in every possible way. However, in general, Africans have a holistic perspective and find significance and symbolism in phenomena. Additionally, group identity features greatly in Africa (Makgoba, 1998). For Africans, disease is both spiritual and physical (Mbiti, 1970).

African descendants enjoy an opulent culture and are more suited to psychotherapeutic interventions attuned to traditional African culture. Innate to every African descendent is a focus on collectivity, spirituality, oral tradition, and interpersonal significance (Asante, 1980; Nsamenang, 1992). Occasionally, these foci are inconsistent with what Asante considers to be European culture. African cultural processes support specific styles of cognition and information processing. Holism, as opposed to European-focused analytical thinking, is valued in African culture. Owing to the weight afforded to holism, African descendents are perspicacious in perceiving ostensibly disparate variables and phenomena. Indeed, these persons set great store by inventiveness as is evidenced by their cultural transformations. The Afrocentric view has deeply influenced African American psychotherapists, even those who do not support the perspective (Asante, 1980).

Mafeje (1971) suggested that if African history was written by Africans, atypical concepts may have been utilised to explore experience, thereby altering history. In Mafeje's opinion, this would have allowed for African-aligned concepts to be used, thus precluding the application of Western-aligned concepts to explore African experiences. For purposes of contextualising the current discussion, it seems apt to define *Africa* as referred to at this stage.

Africa comprises many cultures, subcultures, and ethnic groupings. Yet, these divisions are not substantially alien in each others' beliefs that general assertions cannot be made (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). The outward diversity exhibited in African countries deceives the inveterated cohesion across subcultures in Africa (Nsamenang, 1992).

Africanity is made up of Africa's subcultural unanimity. There are three processes which facilitate Africanity. First, African cultures are exposed to similar environmental circumstances and must employ comparable acclimatisation devices. Secondly, Africans share indelible experiences of distress related to slavery, colonisation, racism, and poverty, for example. Finally, cultural traits are diffused and reintegrated into all African cultures through acculturation and enculturation between African societies (Nsamenang, 1992). Gibson (2004) indicates that collective memory is an additional feature which appears to reinforce the notion of Africanity. Collective memory refers to conventional truths within a community. The manner in which a community perceives historical events, and agrees to the validity of those perceptions, suggests a collective memory. An embedded collective memory makes it extremely difficult to deny its existence (Gibson, 2004). Certainly there are many arguments, relating to European theory, which may be considered in this regard. The collective unconscious, as proposed by Jung may be one such example (see Jung, 1969).

It appears important to consider that *community* does not simply refer to a group of people living in close proximity to each other. The term suggests the inclusion of the entire bios. Thus, the elements, people, animals, and plants all form part of the community. Maintaining harmony with the entire bios signifies success in life (Setiloane, 1998b). Throughout ontogeny, the environment influences the biogenetic constitution and implements developmental change (Nsamenang, 1992).

Do these views suggest that African people differ to people in general? Some have vocalised that African cognitive processes differ. Makgoba (1998) suggests that academia reconsider patterns of African thought. According to this author, *patterns* suggest that particular thought processes operate amongst Africans, and that atypical thought processes are genetically inherent to African people. Furthermore, a pattern points toward the idea that consistent components create coherence. Makgoba prefers the latter approach. The uniqueness or lack thereof regarding African thought processes remain contentious and debatable. This argument will certainly not augment the scope of this review, nor is it one which merits defence or opposition. Reflexive views in this regard will be explored further on in the thesis. It appears logical that a discussion on Africanity ought to be followed by a discussion on African identity.

4.7   African identity

Cultural identity includes perceptions of the person's reference group, as well as his/her degree of involvement with additional cultures (APA, 1994). With regards to African identity, the view that there may be multiple identities, or a single identity, both have value (Makgoba, 1998).

Identity is a social construct because it does not refer to a reality, as such. It refers to a discourse aimed at fostering organisation and classification (Gervais-Lambony, 2006). Researchers often imply that discourse allows access into social reality. This assertion points toward the epistemological, not ontological, stance. Therefore, discourse represents reality while bringing cultural constructions into play. Two interconnected levels may be considered in endeavouring to explore determining discourses such as culture, and constructing discourses such as agency. The socio-cultural level configures daily discourse, while the interactional level negotiates significance in daily communication (Puttergill & Leildé, 2006).

Who one *is*, is not identity. Identity refers to what we *do* (Puttergill & Leildé, 2006). Every person belongs to communities defined by various identities. Based on the context, the person may therefore choose which identity s/he prefers. Identifying with an identity says much about whom one is, and in so doing, says much about whom one is not. In this way, shared identity creates a sense of mutuality among some, and simultaneously differentiates one from others. Identity is complex in that it refers to the individual, as well as to the collective (Gervais-Lambony, 2006). Cultural identity forms a great part of self-definition and its dimensions include race, language, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and spiritual convictions (Trujillo, 2008).

Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi (2003) are of the view that the evolution of the self has become a prominent theme in cultural psychology. Of particular interest has been the contrasting perception of defining oneself within collectivistic and individualistic cultures. A collectivistic self is conceptualised as flexible to varying circumstances and lacks an explicit margin between the individual and other people. Psychopathology in collectivistic cultures would be expected to be characterised by the experience of humiliation, unfulfilling interpersonal relationships, and social

rejection. An individualistic self, on the other hand, may be described as greatly differentiated and invariable across time. The experience of psychopathology in individualistic cultures may be expected to be characterised by isolation, and self-reproach. This certainly suggests correspondence with uncertainty avoidance. On the high end of uncertainty avoidance, reliability and articulation are valued. On the low end, however, intuition and sensing is accepted (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003).

Watkins et al. (2003) suggest that the interpretation of self as individual is inaccurate for the majority of people in non-Western cultures. These populations, therefore, exemplify subdued power distance. Elevated power distance encourages the progression of an encapsulated self and is focused on personal status. Subdued power distance cultivates a more preambled self and is focused on rewarding interpersonal relationships. Power distance may be coupled with feelings of hopelessness and lack of success in not being able to meet typical standards of achievement (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003).

Identity is dynamic, and can represent an independent perception, or a group perception. Sidestepping the idea that independent identity is a fallacy since all people belong to a group, is unfortunately, a fallacy in itself (Gervais-Lambony, 2006). Identity is a personal feature, although the group may influence it. Furthermore, it is multifaceted, and can be transformed (Gervais-Lambony, 2006).

In many cultures, genders portray themselves on an individualistic-collectivistic continuum. Basically, a specific gender in one culture may view itself as group orientated, while the other gender may view itself as self orientated (Watkins et al., 2003). Collectivism and individualism also affect the individual's perceptions of, and responses to, psychopathology (Eshun & Gurung, 2009).

An interesting view of the self, which is sometimes confused with collective identity, is evident in the idea of the multiplicity of selves. Some societies, such as the Cuna Indians (Colombia and Panama) and the Bororo people (Brazil), perceive themselves as consisting of more than one person. The Bororo, for example, believe that each self exists in relationship. S/he is therefore perceived as a particular self by a parent and a different self by kinspeople, for example. The Cuna Indians believe that they

comprise eight selves. Each self corresponds to a specific part of the body, and his/her character relates to which part of the body dominates him/her. For example, the hand dominates a thief (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

Identity is made up of self-identification, social-identification, and the context within which the person operates (Kim, 2003). Multiple selves in Western perceptions of psychopathology may easily be classified as a dissociative state, often diagnosed as schizophrenia. Non-Western perceptions often view these states as typical, and may suggest an altered state of consciousness, or possession by a spiritual force. The Western idea of a single self disallows cultural institutions predicated on ethnopsychology's view of multiple selves as normal. In Haiti and Brazil, for example, female saints are encouraged to learn to summon dead saints at will. This is appreciated as both religious and therapeutic (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). While Scheper-Hughes and Lock do not clearly examine the dynamics of identity in their example, they intimate that the religious view would regard the saint as a separate entity, while the modern view would probably appreciate the saint as an aspect of the self. James (1907) would probably have suggested that these experiences were both functional and real for the person in terms of epistemological perceptions, but that persons with other epistemological views would probably be unable to appreciate the experience as real. Perry (1996), however, would later suggest that James would acknowledge the different epistemology as one rooted in spiritualist views focused on mental events as a function of the soul.

Later expansions on James's works, by Hermans, Kempen, and Van Loon (1992), suggest that the multiplicity of selves may be appreciated as an operation of the dialogical self. The dialogical self refers to an internal, extended topography within the self in which the person may accommodate more than one spatial position. In a sense, the separate selves may dialogue with each other and thereby construct the narrative self (Hermans et al., 1992).

Ethnic identity is compulsory as much as it is voluntary. An individual, therefore, may select from an array of ethnic identities, and is also liable to operate within the confines of those categories (Nagel, 1994). Choosing an identity is informed by experience, and may include past, present, future, and dream experiences. These

aspects influence experience and shape identity in the process (Gervais-Lambony, 2006). Appreciating this view of identity may be extremely valuable within the psychotherapeutic process, and certainly suggests the acknowledgment of diversity.

Respect for diversity includes realising that the process of developing an African identity has immense therapeutic significance for Africans (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). African history is essential to the African identity, as well as to optimal well-being (King, 1990). History has influenced the African psyche and shaped social identity (Nsamenang, 1992). The oneness of being operates within the psyche of each African person and symbolises an authentic African identity (Mbiti, 1970). Sub-Saharan Africans give emphasis to unity in interpersonal relationships. Children revere parents and elders who, in turn, provide much support for children. Being a parent is consonant with traditional African cultural identity, and is vital to achieving personhood and provides the person with a sense of well-being (Watkins et al., 1996).

Cultural identity is flexible. Each person may incorporate those cultural influences which resonate with him/her. As such, categorising cultural identities is generic in that it refers to those people who ascribe to the conventional worldview of the culture (Trujillo, 2008). For many migrant workers in South Africa, for example, the notion of a masculine identity serves as a coping mechanism, and buffers daily stressors (Campbell, 1997). *Masculinity* is exemplified in subjective perceptions of being a man. Campbell found that migrant workers experienced themselves as masculine because they occupied high-risk jobs and were able to concurrently support their families financially.

4.7.1 Developing an African identity

In Africa, a person is expected to internalise the role of community member and enact the duties defined by this role. This is part of a developmental process in Africa, and the person systematically achieves personhood if s/he adheres to these norms. Existence does not equal personhood. In this way, an older person is more of a person than a child. During ontogeny, people endure progressive humanisation. Personality, therefore, continues to develop throughout life (Nsamenang, 1992). The child is seen as a person-in-progress. The vital source is contained within the body. Self-hood

embarks its ontogenetic development when a child receives his/her name. Naming a child is of great importance as it signifies the potential for development (Nsamenang, 1992).

During ontogeny, different behaviours are expected at various stages in life. In early childhood, the child is expected to meet biological standards such as teething, sitting, and so forth. However, when a child learns to walk, s/he is expected to begin to meet social standards, such as munificence, 'good' conduct, and so on. Africans anticipate that social maturity will overcome the limitations of biological maturity (Nsamenang, 1992).

Social ontogeny consists of seven stages. The first stage is at birth. Soon after birth, the child is given a name. The name projects a socialisation process, denoting the family's expectations of the child. The second stage of social ontogeny is infancy. During this stage, the child is expected to meet biological milestones. The third stage runs from childhood to early adulthood, and is characterised as a time when a child must be systematically and regularly coached into an assortment of social roles. The fourth and fifth stages occur simultaneously and are referred to as an intermediary process. During this process, the individual moves from social novice (stage three) to socialised neophyte. In addition, the individual may participate in puberty rites and begin his/her social internship. During the sixth stage, adulthood, the person is expected to marry. S/he is also expected to want to have children and become a conscientious parent. Old age is the final stage of social ontogeny. While many of the aged are regarded to be physically weak, they are revered as the embodiment of social expertise (Nsamenang, 1992). Social ontogeny falls within the ambit of self-hood.

There are three dimensions of self-hood. The first dimension is the spiritual self-hood and begins at conception and ends at the point when a child receives his/her name. The second dimension is the social self-hood and occurs from the point when a child receives his/her name, until the time s/he dies. Third, the ancestral self-hood extends from the natural death through the ritual initiation until s/he enters the higher spiritual realm (Nsamenang, 1992).

Because societies institute different learning conditions for its constituents, developmental fortes vary from culture to culture. The environmental and cultural influences revolutionise the developmental process in terms of cognitive learning, socio-affective wisdom, and performance dexterity (Nsamenang, 1992). In terms of gendered identity, the feminine self tends toward affect, altruism, and relationships, while the masculine self focuses on effectiveness and productivity. While masculinity may produce subjective experiences of self-denigration and guilt, femininity may produce experiences relating to anxiety and dependent symptoms (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003).

Language affects identity, and for non-English speakers, knowledge of the English language introduces new perspectives (Kim, 2003). One may contend that the converse is equally valid. In the context of this investigation, knowledge of African languages may illuminate areas of knowledge which were previously inaccessible and/or difficult to conceptualise. Language transmits meaning and fosters acceptance within a culture. It also implies that the person probably ascribes to those cultural norms and values (Gervais-Lambony, 2006). There is a desperate need for further research into English-as-second-language and its influence on identity (Kim, 2003).

Interestingly, African populations prefer healing processes focused on identity and the self. Traditional healing focuses on aspects of the *self*. It considers people and the universe as a whole. Many African people refuse to compare traditional healing with science and often indicate that science is unable to encapsulate facets of the self (Ashforth, 2005).

4.7.2 Acculturation

Acculturation can be unidimensional. This implies that migrants ultimately adapt to the majority culture. This view has received much criticism, particularly with the observation that people maintain much of their original culture and thereby retain a bicultural identity. Bidirectional views of acculturation have supplanted unidirectional views in academia (Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004). Biculturalism is also referred to as integration. This implies that the person attempts to combine aspects of the original culture with the new culture (Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004).

If the person maintains his/her original culture, and chooses not to accept any of the new culture's perspectives, s/he is said to engage in a process of separation (Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004). Assimilation is the reverse of separation. With assimilation, the person incorporates the new culture and forfeits the original culture (Kottak, 2005; Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004). Marginalisation refers to a process whereby the person fails to incorporate aspects of the new culture, but concurrently forfeits the original culture. It is not uncommon for second or third generation youth to experience marginalisation (Van der Vijer & Phalet, 2004). In a diverse country such as South Africa, one wonders about the ways in which acculturation processes have shaped African identity (see section 5.1.4).

Wolf, Kahn, Roseberry, and Wallerstein (1994) suggest that many studies illustrate the way in which communities employ *agency* for self-construction, relative to interest and power. Agency, therefore, rises above power-irrelevant relativism. Furthermore, essentialist views of culture are forestalled, while compositional, constructionist perspectives are embraced. In this way, culture is compiled and recreated from various facets, in preference to opaque, cyclical, and static regiments. Therapists and researchers must be aware that issues of identity and history have shaped the patients they work with (Moodley, 1999). Qualitative methods, such as those methods aimed at exploring phenomenological issues, are adept at communicating identity as constant, multifarious, and emotional in nature (Nesbitt, 1998).

4.7.3   Influences on identity

According to Watkins et al. (1996), physical appearance does not define self-esteem. Self-esteem and self-definition relate to the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships, and are reflected in value orientations of togetherness. The terms used to describe this sense of togetherness include *ubuntu* among the Nguni, *unhu* among the Shona, and *tabia* in Swahili. However, self-concept is affected by physical attributes and many African people refer to one's body parts as an insult (e.g. your head!). Apart from self-esteem, culture and personality shape one's views, thereby perturbing identity formation. Recent research has reconceptualised personality traits as endogenous tendencies which interact with culture and produce habits, views, and

aptitude for example (McCrae, 2001). In addition, psychopathology influences identity. For example, Caribbean women affected with Anorexia Nervosa evidenced that the disorder posed a significant threat to identity formation (Katzman, Hermans, Van Hoeken, & Hoek, 2004).

According to Nsamenang (1992), Africa's struggle has been to foster an environment that could meet the political and economic needs of the African population, but also to sustain an African identity. This process would be compounded in multicultural Africa. According to Kim (2003), this is because defining identity in a multicultural society is multifaceted and challenging due to the identity transformations experienced by people so as to obtain acknowledgement and belonging.

4.8   The influence of colonisation in Africa

In 1482, identity was defined by the collective experience of sharing language and culture. It is probable that colonisation and segregation fostered racial categorisation (Mabie, 2000). Colonisers were able to sustain political power by repressing the natural cultural lives of indigenous people. In order to rule, a substantial component of the dominated people had to be subdued (Cabral, 1974).

When more than one population falls within the governance of one order, each population attempts to preserve those conditions which are compatible with the order existing prior to the contact. Maintaining this position differs from the various populations and is often at odds with the various shifts (Lieberson, 1961). Often, the contradicting shifts breed conditions fostering a hierarchical structure, and renders one group superordinate and the other subordinate. At this juncture, societies fail to conform to a foreseeable social development cycle (Lieberson, 1961).

In previous times, North African citizens assumed 'abnormal' experiences to be a spiritual interface. However, with French colonisation came the reframing of 'sacrosanct' to 'psychosis' (Bullard, 2001). Earlier, Fanon (1968) observed a phenomenon whereby colonised Africans began to integrate colonial dictates, language, and culture into their psyches and came to believe that they could become 'White.' This observation does not reside exclusively in bygone literature, and is

evident in the putative African disorders suggested by Kwate (2005), and will be discussed further on in the thesis.

Similarly, Hickling and Hutchinson (1999) emphasise that psychopathology in Africa is closely linked to oppression and colonisation. African people continue to experience pathology related to issues of identity, particularly with regards to the ambivalence present in personal and collective histories. Hickling and Hutchinson further propose that many psychotic symptoms evident in Western countries develop due to the same process suggested in the evolution of disorders such as roast breadfruit syndrome. That is to say, the double-bind experienced by Africans in Western society has an adverse influence on racial identity.

4.9   Cosmology

Rene Descartes was most influential in articulating direct antecedents of modern biomedical perspectives regarding the human being. He resolved to only hold true that which evidenced verifiable proofs; Descartes argued the existence of only the body and mind, his view being that the body was palpable, while the mind was intangible. Faith, however, stage-managed his perception and was expressed in his widely-renowned maxim, *I think, therefore I am*. As a devout Catholic, Descartes sought to resolve the dilemma of religious beliefs and attempted to reunite religious constructs with verifiable proofs. He therefore spent much time in researching evidence that the soul resided in the pineal gland. Along these lines, he was able to maintain the body as an artefact of science, and the soul as a facet of theology. His unrelenting notions of dualism afforded biology the licence to pursue extremist Cartesian views, especially fortifying dramatic ideas of clinical and natural sciences. Regrettably, this process forced the theory of mind to be neglected, at least in Western science, for no less than three hundred years (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) provide a prolegomenon regarding the Cartesian approach explored in academic works, most often assumed to be associated with biomedicine. The dualism fostered in this approach splits soul and matter, psyche and body, actual and invisible. This epistemology is not a universal one, and is itself a cultural and historical construction. Appreciating those perceptions which differ from

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the main implies the prorogation of usual perceptions related to the tension of supposed opposites, such as rational/magical or mind/body. Essentially, one must integrate the notion that the body is inextricably a physical and symbolic relic, a construction of culture and nature, and attached to a specific epoch (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). Cosmology, as such, defines selfways.

Selfways are perspectives, worldviews, cultural prototypes, and social interpretations that provide and encourage specific cognitive patterns with regards to the perception of self and collective truth. African selfways are defined by the reciprocality between rational mind and emotional body (Adams & Salter, 2007). However, to assume that all African cultures assume a coalesced mind-body structure would be incorrect (Patel, 1995). Africa continues to teem with traditional perspectives. However, many African people have to incorporate two or more worldviews into their being (Du Toit, 1998). This is explored further on in the thesis.

Where different cultures operate within the same landscape, often, the contradicting shifts breed conditions fostering a hierarchical structure, and renders one group superordinate and the other subordinate. At this juncture, societies fail to conform to a foreseeable social development cycle (Lieberson, 1961). As a result, research into diverse perceptions must be comprehensively explored in order to develop an appreciation thereof.

Culture serves as the nucleus from which reality is structured, characterised, and deciphered (Okello & Musisi, 2006). Culture comprises endogenous and exogenous symbols. Endogenous symbols include beliefs and attitudes, for example. Exogenous symbols include artefacts and institutions, for example (Okello & Musisi, 2006). The nucleus of one's identity comprises fundamental perspectives, and is represented by cosmology (Hammond-Tooke, 1998).

Cosmology endeavours to impose meaning, and thereby make sense of the world (Hammond-Tooke, 1998). Cosmology and worldview may be used interchangeably and refer to perceptions of reality. It defends the authentic nature of reality, standards which define the plausibility of explanations, the legitimacy of reasoning, and perceived racial values (Hammond-Tooke, 1998).

Cosmology refers to the examination of the universe as an organised, congruous gestalt. The two major sections in cosmology are philosophy and astrophysical study. The former deals with the foundation and constitution of the universe, while the latter deals with the arrangement and fundamental dynamics of the universe. In this way, studies of cosmology may be scientific or metaphysical (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998).

This area need not suggest logical consistency. The human mind is competent in acclimatising to contradiction and inconsistency (Hammond-Tooke, 1998). Cosmology may be expanded to include all cognitive approaches employed in organising perceptions of the world. As such, cosmology may include religion, kinship, botanical and zoological taxonomies, perceptions of illness, political views, ecological wisdom, and technical expertise. In this way, composite cosmology includes secular and sacred perceptions (Hammond-Tooke, 1998).

4.9.1   African cosmology

In traditional African cosmology, humans appeared on the earth as a community, not as individuals such as Adam and Eve portrayed in the bible. It is perhaps for this reason that African spirituality suggests that the group supersedes the individual. The idea that individualism is disfavoured in traditional African thought attests to this. People exist in relationship, and everybody *belongs* to a community (Setiloane, 1998a). Life is defined by fulfilling one's basic needs and it is regarded as sinful to disturb homeostasis. Sin, malevolence, and cruelty are always punished by spiritual forces (Setiloane, 1998b).

The African worldview is incomplete if one does not consider the world of invisible beings. These include the ancestors, spirits, deities, and God (Appiah, 1992; Patel, 1995). Spiritual forces are deemed to be real (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). In fact, the dead are presumed to be alive and reside in the spirit world (Patel, 1995). The Ugandan Bagandas, of the Bantu people, ascribe to this belief, but do not consider the spirit world to be a parallel world. Instead, they refer to the spirit dimension (Liddell, Barrett, & Bydawell, 2005). Ancestral spirits are alive in the world of the dead, and influence the physical world. They may be labelled the *living dead* (Mbiti, 1970). Ancestors maintain their positions in the family and therefore allow the family to be

indemnified against possible harm. This may be done if the family members maintain kinship affiliation and reciprocate other kinspeople. Communal virtuosity is recognised by the ancestors who then consider the person as having achieved the status of full personhood (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998).

Certainly, death is mourned in the African world. However, death is believed to be a conduit from the physical world to the supernatural world. In West Africa, for instance, the person transcends the self. The person is believed to be part of the greater universe, not particularly part of the physical world. The recent dead are assumed to have a close relationship to the living and are therefore referred to by personal names (Nsamenang, 1992). Igbo and Tabwa cosmology are two examples that illustrate traditional African cosmology.

4.9.1.1   *Igbo cosmology*

The Igbo, from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, believe that before birth, people negotiate their destiny with Chiukwu (God). This negotiation is fortified by spiritual essence called chi. Being in harmony with one's chi suggests that the person is moral and virtuous. Once s/he has agreed, the child enters the human world at an intersection between the physical and spiritual worlds. At this intersection, a water entry port controlled by Nne-miri (a spirit guard), the child encounters deities who aim to test the determination of the person. To conduct this test, the deity attempts to sway the person from following the conditions stipulated by Chiukwu and thereby influence the person to become devoted to the deity. The moral and virtuous will not succumb to the deities, and will enter the physical world with their destiny unchanged (Achebe, 1986).

However, the immoral person submits to the deity and alters his/her destiny. People who submit to the deities are often physically attractive, become successful, and are talented. They are often referred to as ogbanje. However, these persons are viewed negatively in the Igbo culture, especially as any association with Nne-miri is assumed to imply that the person will not marry as s/he is in a relationship with mammy water. Furthermore, this relationship signifies that the person will have a short natural life. Ogbanje (spirit children) are thought to be capable of communicating supernaturally

with other ogbanje through dreams and hallucinations. Dreams and hallucinations are seen as a medium to indulge in sexual behaviours, socialise, or impose group discipline on other ogbanje, which manifest as peculiar diseases (Achebe, 1986).

4.9.1.2   *Tabwa cosmology*

The Tabwa are from Tanzania and Zambia and are a traditionally African people, meaning that they ascribe to traditional cultural mores. Tabwa perspectives of pathology appear to overlie many other African perspectives in the way that psychological distress is constructed from a traditional point of view. This is a result of Tabwa cosmology's clear relation to the majority of other African cosmologies (Drewal, 1988; Roberts, 1988). Tabwa cosmology may be explored by focusing on the central ideas within the culture's perspective. Foremost to Tabwa cosmology is the idea of duality. This relates specifically to seemingly opposing factors such as light and dark, and negative and positive. Hierarchical structures are interwoven in order to accommodate duality. Within these structures are chiefs; benevolent and malevolent spirits; and twins that possess both light and dark qualities. The eternal lines of symmetry serve as the structural pattern of Tabwa cosmology, and are referred to as Mulalambo. Within this worldview, every person is imbued with power, but the way in which power is perceived determines the way in which it is experienced (Lubell-Doughtie, 2009).

4.9.2   <u>The creation of the universe</u>

Similar to the biblical view, many traditional Africans believe that God sustains the world. They also believe that the visible and invisible universe is undivided, with representational power and relationships (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). The leading view with regards to the creation of the universe is that God, the Supreme Being, created it (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). The two primary views regarding the order of creation is that (a) the heavenly universe was created, followed by the physical world, people, vegetation, animals, and other creatures; or (b) the sky was created, followed by the physical world, water, vegetation, people, and animals (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998).

Cosmology in West Africa is based on multiple worlds. A three-tier *next* world respectively includes the Supreme Being, higher deities and remote ancestral spirits; and lesser deities and recently dead ancestral spirits (Nsamenang, 1992). Although God controls the universe, the deities, ancestors, and spirits govern and oversee the natural order, including human concerns (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998).

Predestination is a common belief in Africa. Many traditional Africans are of the view that the courses of their lives were decided upon before they entered the world in human form. However, the preordained destinies relate only to major events in one's life, but may be altered if specific customs and rituals are observed. These customs and rituals regulate people's roles, but also maintain equilibrium in the universe (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). Similar to the ancient Greeks and Romans, African cosmology consists of many ancestors, gods, witches, and spirits. In addition, the person is regarded to be a physical, as well as psychosomatic, entity. Various events in a person's life are decided on by spiritual beings (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). The social representations regarding the supernatural constitute consensual realities and are prominent in traditional, as well as Western, settings in Africa (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005).

An important dimension of the African experience includes a bidirectional relationship between group identity and communal accountability (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). The African cognitive process is primarily influenced by an appreciation of the collective, not the individualistic. In this regard, the maxim *I am since we are, and because we are hence I am* is embedded in all African descendents (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997). African identity is intrinsic to collective cultures, but also includes reverence for elders and the acknowledgment of spiritual influences (Toldson & Toldson, 2001).

African spirituality refers to the full spectrum of life. It regards all energies that are essential to human life. Life, and the world, are rejoiced but is nothing more than spiritual. Ubuntu, the reverential relationship between people, gives depth and dimension to life, as does the unseen supra-empirical spheres. Furthermore, maintaining harmony and equilibrium is vital to holistic engagement with all fields of reality (Edwards, 1998). Daily life is marked with spiritual pragmatism in order to

integrate nature from a holistic perspective. The interconnectedness of cosmological organic units defines the pursuit of each African to search for meaning. This quest has certainly been equally evident in Arab and European cosmologies (Chandler, 1998).

African perception is also influenced by spiritual forces and affects common facets of everyday living. Consider, for example, that the concept of time cannot be separated from life force and is therefore not perceived as being measurable and invariable. For the African population, time resides in the spirit of experience (Kwate, 2005).

Many cultures, in general, refer to the person possessing a soul. Some, after translating the many African words, come to believe that Africans also refer to the soul (Nsamenang, 1992). However, accurate interpretations of the words indicate that Africans refer to a *vital source* (sometimes referred to as vital force) which is similar to the general understanding of *soul*. Respect between people is expected in recognition of the vital source contained within the body. The vital source, not the body, is linked to God. When the body dies, the immortal vital source rejoins the spirit world. The vital force belongs to nature and permeates human existence entirely (Nsamenang, 1992).

According to Nsamenang (1992), African people are greatly offended if one does not offer a greeting. Greeting another person reflects respect for the presence of the *vital force*. It is therefore habitual for Africans to expend much time on greeting others. This is a symbol of the deep veneration of the vital source within (Nsamenang, 1992). Non-Western cultures exemplify the embodied world. The human body therefore symbolises the physical environment (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987), but is simply a container for the vital source within (Nsamenang, 1992). Traditional African people appear to focus on the spiritual dimension more than the material and physical dimensions (Kwate, 2005).

Similarly, kinship is significant in African society and defines the individual and collective self. Furthermore, kinship extends beyond people, and in the essence of oneness, envelops plants, animals, and inanimate objects (Kwate, 2005). Kinship systems are usually suggested in ethnobiological views as regards procreation. Communities with unilineal descent have certain beliefs and accentuate the role of

gender in patrilineal and matrilineal societies. In Ghana, the Ashanti follow matrilineal lineage and believe that spirit is inherited from the paternal line, while flesh and blood are inherited from the maternal line (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

Africans do not shy away from specific gender roles, and males and females are expected to fulfil specific duties. Child-rearing is an example of a female-specific duty (Watkins et al., 1996). It is also not unusual in African populations to hear people refer to the neonate as 'it.' It follows, then, that the course of people's lives move from it-ness to person-ness (Nsamenang, 1992). Personhood is a process. The African perception that genital-shrinking (discussed later) results in the inability to reproduce has significant implications, as local conceptions suggest that becoming a parent allows one to achieve full personhood, as well as the opportunity to become an ancestor (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005).

Infancy and late adulthood are transitional phases in which the vital source prepares to experience significant domains. The infant is about to embark on a journey towards attaining self-hood, while the elderly person is about to embark on a journey of ancestorship (Nsamenang, 1992).

4.9.3   Worldview and psychopathology

Worldview has a direct influence on conception of illness, the manifestation of symptoms, and pathways to healthcare. That is to say, values, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, and behaviour influence the psychological functioning of people (Aponte & Johnson, 2000). Being connected to the community is significant to the Xhosa person, as disconnectedness often implies the induction of distress (Berg, 2003). Speight (1935) suggests that many African descendants perceive psychopathology as a symbol of dysfunction within the broader social framework and therefore requires therapeutic intervention at both the individual and collective levels. Consider that Hehe patients in Tanzania, irrespective of the nature of psychopathology, receive community support once they are engaged in traditional healing. This allows the patient to conclude the process of catharsis and re-enter the community (Edgerton, 1971). Catharsis is perceived as an efficacious treatment for biological and psychopathological illnesses. Here, catharsis is defined as the expulsion of the adverse

in order to accomplish homeostasis. This is a process coveted in Western and African cultures (Littlewood, 2007). It should be noted that while Edgerton's and Speight's works are relatively old references, they stem from the context of the themes under discussion, and are relevant to the current review.

In African models of psychopathology, health is defined as that which promotes collective health, while dysfunction refers to the dissonance from African moral codes and a focus on individualism (Kwate, 2005). African people believe that misfortune stems from many sources. Four of these sources, however, appear to carry the most weight. First, personal or collective iniquity may invoke negative spiritual operations. Second, however, misfortune may simply be part of one's destiny. Third, it is possible that other people impose misfortune on so-called *innocents*. Lastly, exposure to adversity may be thought to be an act of God. Causality, as implied in the four sources of misfortune, supplies African people with an acceptable justification for misfortune and disorder (Nsamenang, 1992).

Environmental conditions also have the potential to significantly influence interpersonal relationships (Pronyk et al., 2006). Individual indicators of psychological distress are thought to be representative of social difficulties (Okello & Musisi, 2006). Furthermore, failing to conform to cultural codes may displease the ancestors and thereby result in harmful consequences. Consequently, many psychopathological conditions are perceived to signify a challenging relationship between the physical and spiritual entities (Okello & Musisi, 2006).

4.9.4   The African epistemology and psychopathology

Culture determines the definition, course, and treatment of illness. Clinicians ought to ensure that they understand the context of the patient's perception of the illness (Saldaña, 2001). Moral indiscretions are regarded as spiritual transgressions and result in psychopathology. The transgressions foster imbalance in the group and the individual, thereby encouraging illness (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). In African cosmology, the ancestors have the authority to influence health (Okello & Musisi, 2006). Having lived in the physical world; ancestors are expected to have knowledge about worldly affairs. Rituals are performed by people of the earth so that the

ancestors may negotiate with the African concept of God, in support for people's causes and thereby expel the illness (Nsamenang, 1992).

Taboos are suggestive of social control and refer to the moral codes of society. Taboos are believed to be codes prescribed by supernatural forces and cover most areas of life. Contraventions of these prescriptions warrant punishment from the spirit forces. However, punishment may affect the individual, the family, and/or the entire community. Rituals serve to pacify affronted spirits (Kudadjie & Osei, 1998). Furthermore, many of the forbidden sexual behaviours represent the African view that health may be negatively influenced by death, a process imbued with supernatural *pollution* (Green, Zokwe, & Dupree, 1995). In terms of pollution, women are often 'polluted' during times such as menstruation, for example. Pollution has become associated with 'dirt' related to witchcraft and immorality (Jewkes, Levin, & Penn-Kekana, 2003). Specific sexual behaviours are considered as taboo in traditional African societies. These include intercourse with a widow who has not undergone cleansing rituals subsequent to her husband's death, homosexuality, having intercourse while the female menstruates, having intercourse after a miscarriage or abortion, having intercourse immediately after birth, engaging in commercial sex, engaging in fellatio and cunnilingus, and having premarital sex (Green et al., 1995).

Worldview influences the way in which psychopathology is experienced, as well as the way in which patients and their families respond to the pathology. Those patients who hail from communities that regard psychopathology as possessing a mystical foundation, appear to prefer the services of traditional healers (Mateus, dos Santos, & de Jesus Mari, 2005).

Due to the dynamic nature of culture, cultural perspectives have transformed and acclimatised to adapting epistemological views (Liddell et al., 2005). In some parts of Africa, physical and social states of ill-health may coexist. Somatic complaints, including stroke-like symptoms, are believed to emanate from a physical illness, as well as a social illness. While xistroku refers to the English equivalent for stroke, xifulana is an illness caused by human beings which inhibits blood circulation in various parts of the body (Hundt, Stuttaford, & Ngoma, 2004). For this reason, the Western diagnosis of the stroke-like symptoms would, from a traditional African

perspective, be a partial diagnosis as it only accounts for a fractional view of the disorder. In a similar way, while the traditional African groups investigated in Jilek-Aall, Jilek, Kaaya, Mkombachepa, and Hillary's (1997) study were aware of modern dietary behaviours to maintain the afflicted person's positive health, they attached traditional views to the negative associations of eating these foods. Thus, when clinicians taught them that specific foods were inadvisable to consume, the local people reinterpreted these messages and indicated that these foods were imbued with evil influences, for example.

In contrast to modern biomedicine, many non-Western ethnomedical systems do not differentiate between self, mind, and body. As a result, psychopathology cannot reside exclusively in the body and/or mind. Pathology, in these cultures, suggests that the person is vulnerable to feelings, desires, nature, the behaviour of others, and supernatural influences. In effect, the body is perceived as a microcosm in the macrocosm (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

Comaroff and Comaroff's (1987) study on perceptual disturbances in African patients suggested that the content of the disturbances often contained communicative devices. Psychotic persons often communicated their distress through visual imagery, while non-psychotic persons explored psychological states of distress through verbal metaphor. Therefore, they concluded that clinicians become privy to the dynamics of these experiences by regarding the symptoms as poetic expression of the patient's experiences (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1987).

From a traditional African perspective, treatment devoid of spiritual influence is implausible, or at the least, somewhat ineffective (Iwu, 1986; Yoder, 1982). Performing rituals allow for spiritual influence. Ritual is often used as a coping strategy. In this way, ritual coping is the active expression of spiritual coping (Utsey, Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007).

Some South African Zulus, for example, believe that psychological and spiritual realities are interwoven (Wilson, 2007). Because supernatural influences dictate human experience, the negative implications associated with violating spiritual codes of conduct are perceived to be judicious (Okello & Musisi, 2006).

4.9.5   Witchcraft

Ashforth (2001) states that witches and witchcraft are endemic to the lives and experiences of African people, and particularly to the influence and understanding of hardship. Witchcraft refers to the aptitude of a person to initiate socially-prohibited power and/or prosperity via supernatural agency and is a predominant feature of African life in South Africa (Ashforth, 1998). Witches are equated with criminals in many African societies, and are often perceived to be a danger to society as a whole (Ashforth, 1998). Witchcraft forms part of the daily dialogue in Soweto (Johannesburg, South Africa). Although the daily discussions of witchcraft in Soweto appear to reflect frivolous concerns, witchcraft is perceived as extremely grave (Ashforth, 1998). Deeming witchcraft as a cause provides an explanation regarding the reason for the misfortune, as opposed to the way in which it occurs (Pritchard, 1937). From an African perspective, all people are susceptible to malevolent influences (Nsamenang, 1992). Many Africans believe that it is sacrilegious to alter God's creations. That is to say, engaging in witchcraft is perceived negatively as manoeuvring positive and negative influences are meant to remain within the prowess of God (Toldson & Toldson, 2001).

Christianity typifies witches as malevolent. The introduction of Christianity in South Africa elicited much contestation in terms of deep-seated traditional beliefs in supernatural influences (Hundt et al., 2004). Witchcraft permeates many facets of life in African communities, and many resources are invested into preventing potentially negative effects (Ashforth, 1998). Many Africans are of the view that witchcraft is real. Many Africans also link wide-ranging difficulties, such as unemployment, to witchcraft (Ashforth, 1998). Social anthropology's exercise in assessing the schismatic and synthesising dynamics of witchcraft as a social process, deduced that witchcraft permits communities to engage in social action, thereby alleviating and transforming social pressures (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005; Pritchard, 1937).

Cosmological information suggests that witchcraft is conceptualised as real, not as a social function (Ashforth, 1998). Local perspectives suggest that witchcraft is mostly the result of jealousy. Jealousy dwells in the sinister alcoves of the heart and thrives on acrimony. The witch is prompted into action by jealousy, and may be jealous of

almost everything. There is a spherical process in the nature of the witch's jealousy. S/he becomes jealous, the jealousy generates abhorrence, and the abhorrence impels witchcraft (Ashforth, 1998). It is valuable at this stage to consider Ashforth's (1998) study. Even though some of the participants in Ashforth's study were disappointed with traditional healers in that they did not achieve their desired outcomes, they continued to believe that they possessed supernatural powers and highlighted the battle between good and evil in everyday experiences. Their hope was that inyanga's (traditional healers) actively work towards maintaining the common good. It appeared that the participants in Ashforth's study desired to experience the victory of good.

The researcher is cognisant of the fact that this section relies heavily on Ashforth (1998). However, attempts to accrue supporting sources from reliable avenues proved unsuccessful. This does not indicate that the literature was absent, but was inaccessible to the researcher during the research process.

4.9.6   Symbolism

In Africa, symbolism prevails over the restraints of brain-centred rationalisation. Over and above the five senses, symbolism fosters an association between inner knowledge and external investigation (Makgoba, 1998).

In diverse kinship groupings, concealed technologies as regards nature can be discovered. Human, plant, and animal bodies, as well as the environment, exhibits fruition, innovation, and involution. The Dogon from Mali and Burkina Faso, for example, live in circular homes, believing that power travels in circles. A square represents the finite and logical. Africans appreciate that metaphysical constructs facilitate discernment, consciousness, and engagement with the creative dimension that exposes the relativity of truth and interprets the mysteries of the physical world. The African perception of the circle, therefore, represents the *spirit-space* and framework within which power moves (Chandler, 1998).

The collective assessment of symbols which transcend all African communities reveals philosophical archetypes. Consider the primeval egg as a coffer for impartiality which pulsates and traverses an entryway; the blacksmith as a spiritual

intermediary between the active (hunter) and the passive (farmer); the phases of nature and agriculture as sequential enumerators; and the elderly as imbued with God (Chandler, 1998).

4.9.7 Legend and mythology

African mythology refers to the collection of legends which Africans have narrated as part of their oral traditions. African legends of genesis shape African theology (Setiloane, 1998a). Exploring these legends appear to be useful in appreciating African cosmology, and may further aid acknowledging what may be perceived as reality, perceptual disturbances, psychopathology, and the like.

4.9.7.1 *The Zulu creation story*

uMvelinqangi was the first being and marks the origin of everything. After some time, the princess uNomkuhbulwane appeared and gave birth to a man. The story does not suggest that uMvelinqagi and uNomkuhbulwane related to each other. The birth of the man was followed by other births and so the people began to multiply. uMvelinqangi decided to send a chameleon to notify the people that they were immortal. uMvelinqangi, however, soon thereafter decided to send a lizard to inform them that they were liable to die. During the journey, the chameleon sojourned to enjoy a feast of wild berries. This allowed the lizard to take the lead in uMvelinqagi's quest. By the time the chameleon had reached the people, its message that they were immortal was duly unaccepted, as the lizard's message was appreciated to be the first, and therefore authentic, message. Throughout this time, uNomkuhbulwane encouraged fecundity of vegetation, people, and animals. uNomkhubulwane's proposal that women perform specific rituals during spring served to ensure fruitful harvests, an abundance of cattle, and healthy children (Ngubane, 1977).

4.9.7.2 *The Boshongo creation story*

The Central African Boshongo believe that Bumba (God) vomited the sun, which dried up the water that consumed the earth. Bumba then vomited the moon, stars, animals and humans (Crystal, 2010).

4.9.7.3 *The Abaluyia creation story*

The Kenyan Abaluyia are of the view that God made people entirely for the sun to have someone to shed its light upon (Crystal, 2010).

4.9.7.4 *The Bushman creation story*

The Bushmen believe that Kaang (God), people, and animals existed beneath the world. However, Kaang decided to allow the people and animals to live above this world. Once Kaang moved the people and animals to the new world, he warned them not to produce fire lest they be inflicted by great evil – a warning which the people assured Kaang that they would abide by. However, when the sun set for the first time, fear enveloped the people. Unlike the animals, the humans did not possess the prowess to adapt to the darkness. Distressed and forlorn, the people decided to create fire, and thereby defied Kaang. While the fire comforted the humans, the animals feared the fire. The fire, therefore, separated the humans from the animals, species that previously were able to live harmoniously. Fear had come to define the former friendship. To this day, however, traditional Bushmen believe that the human spirit may travel and reside temporarily in an animal's body. This suggests the ancient link between people and animal (Crystal, 2010).

4.9.7.5 *The legend of the bed of reeds*

The south-eastern Bantu people, the Nguni, share a prevalent legend called *the myth of the bed of reeds*, which straightforwardly relays that the first people tore their way out of a patch of reeds (Setiloane, 1998a). It is uncertain as to why the word myth is attached to this legend, and further investigation in this regard proved unsuccessful. In addition, investigation into whether the Nguni people also referred to this legend as a myth proved similarly unsuccessful. The same was true for the hole in the ground myth.

4.9.7.6   *The hole in the ground myth*

The hole in the ground myth is a Bantu story relating to the way in which people entered earth. According to this legend, families and their animals entered earth from a hole in the ground. These people and animals lived with Modimo, the Supreme Being, in the *big abyss*. Modimo asked his representative, Loowe, to guide these people through the hole and into earth. Loowe, a person of mammoth proportions and single-sided, thus appearing to be someone who had been cut through the middle, guided the people to earth and returned to the big abyss to reside with Modimo and the other denizens. People who live on earth are thought to return to the land of Modimo. Bantu people celebrate this myth at funerals by sending fond messages and greetings to the other inhabitants of the big abyss (Setiloane, 1998a).

4.9.7.7   *The miraculous child of Sankatane*

The miraculous child of Sankatane is widely-known to the Tswana-Sotho people. Kgodumodumo was a person-eating monster and could be heard from afar. He used his sense of smell to locate people who feared him. Kgodumodumo attacked Sankatane, a village where non-violent people lived, and devoured the villagers and their animals. But unbeknown to Sankatane, one pregnant villager was hiding in fear and went into labour. A child prodigy was born. He could walk and talk and appreciate his surroundings. The child asked his mother what had happened to the village. She sadly explained to him what Kgodumodumo had done. After enquiring further, the child armed himself with a spear and his dead father's shield and sought to find the monster. As advised by his mother, the boy found Kgodumodumo by the mountainside, asleep. His snore was fear-provoking, but the child found the courage to furtively approach the beast and sever its major blood vessel with the spear. Because the blood vessel was located in the neck, blood could not be transported to Kgodumodumo's brain, thus immobilising the monster. The powerless monster had no choice but to watch as the child extracted the villagers from Kgodumodumo's stomach. The people were then restored to Sankatane (Setiloane, 1998a).

4.10   The historical context of psychopathology

It is pertinent to include this section as part of the literature review in that it creates the context of the present conditions and constructions of psychopathology. Stated differently, it forms the foundation of the present climate in psychopathological nosology. It is, therefore, advantageous that fairly contemporary literature (e.g. Pilgrim, 2007) is cited in order to construct the historical context of psychopathology. This appears to suggest the ongoing and present-day interest in history's influence on current clinical practice. In addition, exploring the historical context of psychopathology allows one the opportunity to examine whether specific cultural perspectives (e.g. Western) have shaped psychiatric nosology, or if culture-relative perceptions (e.g. Western) have come to be constructed as culture-free perspectives. As a result, the historical foundation inherently addresses the research question.

Early philosophers initially placed less emphasis on the value of psychopathological symptoms and instead questioned the locus of pathology. Socrates believed that psychopathology resided in the diaphragm or heart (Hergenhahn, 2005; Pilgrim, 2007). Hippocrates revised this view by questioning the manifestation of psychopathology. However, he remained dubious as to whether symptoms or syndromes were meant to be explored (Green & Groff, 2003; Pilgrim, 2007). Using the observations of former observers, Galen embraced a solitary symptom method and explored conditions such as uncertainty and exhilaration (Pilgrim, 2007).

Time saw many evolutions of the conceptualisations of psychopathology and its manifestations. In Scotland, the 18th century saw Cullen's proposal for a diagnostic system of then so-called *neuroses*. It was only in the late 18th century that de Sauvages, of France, presented a disease classification system. Soon thereafter, the classification of psychological disease began to grow rapidly, particularly in Germany (Pilgrim, 2007).

The early observations, while not entirely representative of the modern conception of mental illness, suggested depth in contextualising symptoms in relation to the gestalt of experiences of the person. Ancient Greek philosophers and doctors promoted holism. In fact, Socrates was of the view that if the person-as-a-whole was unwell, no

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part of the person was well (Mezzich, 2007). While Patel (1995), for example, was of the view that all cultures distinguish between body and mind, the current review will attest to influential literature that refutes this observation (see Adams & Salter, 2007).

4.10.1   Misunderstanding psychopathology

As it appears, historical views aligned themselves to the belief systems of the observers of the time. In many ways, the cultures relative to the epochs and geographical contexts determined the development of present-day psychopathology formulation. As such, the understanding of psychopathological symptoms varied from place to place, time to time, and community to community. None of the formulations, however, appear to have received as much academic interest as the Western view of mental illness. Bhugra and Bhui (2001) hold that the misdiagnosis of what they describe as Western-specific psychopathology may occur due to limited cultural awareness. This is particularly evident if one considers the body of knowledge signifying, for example, that auditory hallucinations are dependent on the pathoplastic influences of culture. Pathoplastic influences of culture refer to the ways in which psychological distress manifests (Bhugra & Bhui, 2001). This is discussed later on in the review.

Language, as a basic medium of interpersonal intercourse, has come to suggest that differences thereof adapt the connotations attached to the experience of affective and perceptual disturbances. Trujillo (2008) is of the view that differences in language and culture have the potential to severely compromise the clinical encounter between clinician and patient. As a result, rapport may not be established, the patient may not feel understood, and the diagnosis may be inaccurate.

With this potential limitation in mind, Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi (2003) suggest that flawed diagnoses may give rise to clinicians' falsely equating deviance with psychopathology, and may in turn facilitate the escalation of apathy on the clinician's part, due to lack of insight into the patient's condition. This, according to Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi, stems from a lack of appreciation with regards to the patient's cultural milieu and subjective experiences. Moreover, overemphasis in considering diminutive cultural features often facilitate the development of stereotypes and

impede the appreciation of individual traits, as well as grasping the dynamics of the patient's affective range and perspective (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003).

To illustrate this observation, consider the literature regarding comparative studies focused on the resemblance and dissimilarities of schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like disorders across various cultures (see Habel et al., 2000). On the subject of schizophrenia, it is not uncommon for pathological symptom phenomena to fall within the categorical structure of the schizophrenia spectrum. This ought to be construed as misdiagnosed schizophrenia, as the diagnostic formulation lacks perspicacity of the distress state which may be culturally sanctioned (Bhugra & Bhui, 2001).

Thus, the lack of correspondence with regards to the clinician's frame of reference and the patient's frame of reference falls short of allowing reciprocal discernment. Bhugra and Bhui (2001) consider the adoption of this cognitive process to be restricted and offer meticulous discussion in this regard. Of note, they explore how this closed system of cognition contaminates methodological processes in research, and interpretative processes in psychotherapy.

Within the domain of research, Cheetham and Griffiths (1981) observed many diagnostic inaccuracies with regard to the interviewing phase of Indian and African patients in South Africa. It was evident that these errors were accountable to the misinterpretation of presenting symptoms. At times, it appeared that the apparent somatic complaints were suggestive of malingering. Malingering suggests false reports with regards to psychopathological experiences. Thus, illness is feigned with the intention to achieve some secondary purpose (Reber & Reber, 2001). To attest to Cheetham and Griffith's view, consider the study which assesses whether patients actually exhibit symptoms of specific syndromes or may be malingering (see Rogers, Salekin, Sewell, Goldstein, & Leonard, 1998).

4.10.2   Progressive philosophical conceptualisations on mental health

Tomlinson et al. (2007) indicate that comprehensive investigation into the patient's complaints will initiate, and accrue, opulent description, and not focus specifically on

classificatory symptomatology. This enriches clinician understanding of the phenomena, as well as meeting the patient's need to further appreciate the dynamics of his/her experiences. In this regard, psychiatry's interpretations are debatable as they rely on a clinician's perception of the distress. It may be argued that underlying philosophical systems justify psychosis in a more comprehensive way than psychiatric conceptualisations, particularly as philosophical systems include moral and political concerns (Thomas & Bracken, 2004).

4.11   Conclusion

This chapter reviewed aspects of the literature that explored the foundations for questioning an African perspective on psychopathology. The chapter served as the dais for literature in Chapter 5. This chapter included literature that highlighted a framework for particular ideas relating to African perspectives on psychopathology. The chapter followed a developmental path, beginning with the historical context of psychopathology and then introduced the cultural context. These were related to issues such as race and ethnicity. However, the literature review considered important areas such as the definition of African, aspects of African identity, cosmology, and African legends.