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This mini-dissertation is dedicated to my late Aunt Phumla Nozolile Mnukwa '*akwaba ubusaphila mpofu ukuze ubone imisebenzi yezandla zakho*'.

"I hereby declare that the mini-dissertation submitted for the partial fulfilment of the Masters of Arts in Industrial Sociology degree to the University of Johannesburg, apart from the help recognised, is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another university or institution of higher education for a Degree."

Kanyiso Walaza

Johannesburg, June 2005

## **List of Abbreviations**

**AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**

**ANC-African National Congress**

**HGM-Harmony Gold Mine**

**HIV-Human Immune Virus**

**IFP-Inkatha Freedom Party**

**NUM-National Union of Mineworkers**

**NRF-National Research Foundation**

**RAU-Rand Afrikaans University**

**TB-Tuberculosis**

**UJ-University of Johannesburg**



# 1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

## *1.1. INTRODUCTION*

Misfortune is defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as an “event or conjunction of events that causes unfortunate or distressing results”. According to Dictionary.com, misfortune is an unnecessary and unforeseen dilemma resulting from an unfortunate event. For example, mineworkers put their lives at risk by going underground on a daily basis. Mining work is dangerous and difficult and mineworkers have to work in a hazardous and antagonistic working environment. As a result of these unfavourable working conditions, miners are prone to misfortune, accidents and illnesses. Many lives have been lost because of mine accidents and many miners have developed chronic illnesses because of their working conditions.

## *1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION*

The primary **research question** focused on how mineworkers perceive and experience misfortune. If they do, how do they explain it and deal with it? The purpose of the research therefore was to investigate mineworkers’ explanations of their perceptions and experiences of misfortune as well as the ways by which they protect themselves against misfortune. Doornkop mine shaft in Soweto; Johannesburg was used as the research setting and as a case study to provide illustrations of misfortune as experienced by workers in the mining sector.

The underlying purpose is to discuss misfortune in general, but because it is experienced by individuals, for the purpose of this study two elements are important. The first element is how mineworkers explain their perceptions and experiences of misfortune. The second element is, after providing their explanations, how they cope or deal with misfortune. Misfortune is not only an interesting concept but also problematic to those who believe in it. Misfortune can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it becomes real in the miners’ lives and directly influences them.

Believing in misfortune is sometimes considered to be an ancient practise of African tradition, seen as barbaric and superstitious. Regardless of how these practices

are perceived, there are still people who strongly believe in the existence of misfortune. The occurrence of misfortune, especially in the African context, is often attributed to a wide range of sources, such as ancestors, river people, pollution and witches. The concept of misfortune was applied to the workplace particularly in the mining sector. When exploring this phenomenon of misfortune, the following topics can be identified and will be covered in this study: nature of misfortune, sources of misfortune, manifestations of misfortune and counter measures to misfortune. The following discussion has been divided into these four sections, in order to present a logical and systematic argument.

### ***1.3. NATURE OF MISFORTUNE***

Underground mine work is associated with misfortune. Moodie (2005:4-5) has argued that miners regard their work as violent. It is violent in the sense that miners often battle with the environment, heat, rock falls, unnatural condition and bad air. To most miners, death underground is just a misfortune (Moodie, 2005:4-5). As pointed out earlier, working underground makes one vulnerable to misfortune and accidents because the miners are working in a place considered sacred for the dead. The occurrence of misfortune is often attributed to a wide range of sources, such as ancestors, river people, pollution and witches. Misfortune can therefore arise from one, or a combination of these four factors. Additionally, it may arise by natural and non-natural means. The next section introduces the sources of misfortune.

### ***1.4. SOURCE OF MISFORTUNE***

This section addresses and investigates the origins of misfortune. According to Ashforth (2002:126); Hammond-Tooke (1975) and Ngubane (1977), witchcraft, pollution, ancestors and the river people provide an explanation of evil and misfortune.

Ashforth (2002:126) defines witchcraft as the “...manipulation by malicious individuals of powers inherent in persons, spiritual entities and substances to cause harm to others”. A problematic aspect relating to witches is that they may or may not be a person close to one (Hammond-Tooke, 1989). Minnaar, Offring and Payze (1992:17) argue that, “...witchcraft in African society is a great evil since it strives to

eliminate either the life force of a person (meaning those forces which keep a person alive and healthy)". This suggests that witches are perceived to have powers to intervene in a person's life and disturb their health conditions, which could eventually lead to death. There are three forms of witchcraft that could be employed in order to fulfil these purposes: the casting of a spell or curse on a person, poisoning the person's food and/or striking them with lightning. Another category that is said to differ from witchcraft and sorcery is the belief about pollution.

Sometimes people find themselves unexpectedly in a state of ritual impurity, including widows, women who have had abortions or miscarried and people who have handled dead bodies. These people are believed to be polluted, and this pollution is thought to refer to "heat" (among Sotho people), "darkness" or "dirt" (Zulus) (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:50). "*Umnyama*" (pollution) is conceptualised as a mystical force which diminishes resistance to diseases, and creates conditions of poor luck, misfortune (*amashwa*), "disagreeableness" and "repulsiveness" (*isidina*).

Ancestral initiated misfortune occurs as a result of not respecting the ancestors and not performing rituals for them. These misfortunes, amongst others, are in the form of accidents, illnesses and sometimes mental breakdowns. Hammond-Tooke (1989:58) argues that "...it is true that illness and misfortune is sometimes said to be caused by 'God', but this only occurs if a more precise cause cannot be determined".

It is argued that ancestor illness or misfortune occurs to remind the living descendants to perform specific rituals at home (Hammond-Tooke, 1989). Ancestors are believed to be able to punish and/or reward their descendants. It is believed that when they are angry with their descendants, they turn their backs on them. As a result, people become vulnerable to all kinds of misfortune and diseases (Ngubane, 1977). It is recommended by tradition that one is placed under the protection of ancestors from birth by slaughtering a goat to make a sacrifice, known as *imbeleko*. This is the equivalent to the baptism of a child in the Christian religion and is another way of placing it under God's protection, in addition to protecting against evil spirits. This suggests that people become vulnerable to misfortune from childhood, so securing some form of protection against this vulnerability becomes important.

Quarrels or squabbles within the family can upset ancestors and misfortunes can then prevail (Ngubane, 1977:69). In many families, ancestors are regarded as people of peace and therefore conflicts are believed to shake their bones and make them angry with their descendants. That simply means that ancestors are sensitive

about family life and should be respected, because they are concerned with harmony, cohesion and togetherness.

River people form part of the traditional African belief system. It is believed that misfortune can arise from the river people as well. In the African belief system river people are regarded as ancestors who train diviners. Hammond-Tooke, (1974:8) argues that the river people are dangerous because they are capable of sending an illness characterised by pains and swelling of the body. The literature presents a contradiction as to the nature of the river people. Some sources consider river people as ancestors while others argues that they are not ancestors but have a relationship with them. Having discussed the causes of misfortune, the next section looks at the manifestations of misfortune.

### ***1.5. MANIFESTATION OF MISFORTUNE***

Misfortune is believed to manifest in various ways, e.g. failure of health, prosperity, gender and personal safety etc.

In Zulu, these (failure of health, problems with regard to business and personal safety (e.g. experience of marital problems) ).

In Zulu, these (failure of health, prosperity and personal safety) physical conditions are referred to as “*Izifo*”. Ngubane (1977) states that “...in Zulu the word *isifo* (disease) applies...to diseases that are manifested by somatic symptoms, to various forms of misfortune, and also to a state of vulnerability to misfortune and disease”. Failures refer to a lack of prosperity in any attempt that one is trying, while losses include death in an unexpected and suspicious manner or losing a job.

When people are thought to have “*Umnyama*”, other people near them tend to dislike them without reason or provocation. In addition, they are isolated and tend to be repulsive to others. This can be regarded as a misfortune, as many relate it to witchcraft. Pollution does not only make people prone to misfortune, but also makes them unacceptable within the society.

A consequence of this pollution is that people become vulnerable to accidents and misfortunes, and are encouraged to avoid risky and dangerous undertakings (Ngubane, 1977:78). Consequently, pollution is not necessarily related to witchcraft or ancestors but may develop as a result of one’s personal life circumstances. In its

worst form, “*umnyama*” is thought to be contagious” (Ngubane, 1977:78). The next section discusses ways that could be employed in dealing with misfortune.

### ***1.6. COUNTER MEASURES FOR MISFORTUNE***

According to Whyte (1997), preventive strategies for evil and misfortune are as different as the causes. The kinds of experiences of misfortune that are taken into consideration are physical conditions, failures and losses. Misfortune can be explained in those three broad conditions. For example, physical conditions include many kinds of illnesses and accidents. As a result of fear of illness and accidents, mineworkers turn to other indigenous protection mechanisms to ensure survival under hazardous conditions. *Ubulawu* (medicine of the home) is used mostly by immigrants when communicating with ancestors. They wash their bodies with the medicine and then call out the clan praises to invoke the clan and lineage ancestors. Miners take some of the medication to work so that they may wash any time that feel necessary, for example after nearly experiencing misfortune (Mayer, 1961: 214-215). *Ubulawu* is an important preventive medicine of misfortune used by mineworkers and is not only used to prevent misfortune, but also to communicate with ancestors and to secure fortunes, such as being favoured by an employer (Mayer,1961). Home medicines are considered crucial in protecting people against witchcraft and cleansing after experiencing misfortune.

According to Kejriwal (1994:11), “...underground mining in particular is an adventure and like all adventures, is associated with risks”. In Africa, as in other parts of the world, illness may be treated with herbs very successfully. However, interestingly, in Africa, illness also has a spiritual dimension. For example, in some instances illness may be seen as a punishment from God or the deities, or it might be the result of ill will from an enemy. In this case, some form of spiritual power will be needed to combat it. A medicine man or woman will then be consulted (BBC World Services, 2003). Many blacks refer to “the Creator” or “God” as a “Supreme Being”. According to traditional African beliefs, no rituals or prayers may be offered to the Supreme Being directly. People must appeal to God through their ancestors, who are the most important and respected “people” within the family, that is family members who have died. Ancestors are regarded as people who look after their descendants’ interests, but they can also send illness and misfortune when moved to wrath.

## ***1.7. CONCLUSION***

This mini-dissertation has not produced full or sufficient answers to the above-mentioned questions. However, its purpose is an effort to open up what is hopefully a fruitful line of enquiry.

Africans seem to hold a strong belief in misfortune and as such take certain steps to prevent it or to secure protection against it. Literature on misfortune, especially among mineworkers, raises a number of questions for this research: What is misfortune? Is it experienced as real? If it is considered to be real, how and where can people suffering from misfortune get help? What are the perceived causes of misfortune? What are the preventive strategies believed to be in place to protect people suffering from misfortune? And lastly, do mineworkers fear misfortune at all and if they do, what do they fear most about misfortune? And what are they doing about their fear?

## ***1.8. CHAPTER OUTLINE***

Chapter two provides an explanation and understanding of the concept of misfortune with specific focus on the theory of African traditional religions and related issues. This chapter will identify and briefly discuss the different categories of misfortune. The last part of this chapter discusses the assumed causes of misfortune, which are considered to be ancestors, witchcraft and pollution. The other important part of the chapter is the discussion on fears related to misfortune and witchcraft in the mines. In this chapter, rituals that can influence the impact of the supernatural realm are explored.

Chapter three deals with the research methods used in researching the topic of this study. This chapter explains the different themes that were used in the fieldwork to investigate the phenomenon of misfortune among mine workers. The chapter also explains the aims of the study, the method that was used in the selection of respondents, and data collection techniques. The limitations of the study are also discussed.

Chapter four moves to the most important part of the research, which is the discussion of research findings. The findings are discussed in accordance with the

themes that were used to investigate misfortune as outlined in chapter three. Themes that emerged during data analysis are also discussed. The profile of the respondents is discussed in this chapter, which include variables such as occupation, gender, religious affiliation, and length of employment, place of origin and ethnic groups.

The last chapter, which is chapter five, deals with the conclusion and research recommendations based on the findings discussed in chapter four. The first part of the chapter is the interpretation of the data, which has been done in accordance with the themes that were used to investigate the topic. The other part of the chapter provides recommendations to the mine, hospital and other scholars. The last part of the chapter is the conclusion of the dissertation.



## 2. CHAPTER TWO

### EXPLORING MISFORTUNE

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is firstly to clarify what, in a general sense, is meant by misfortune. Secondly, it provides a critical review of the theories of misfortune. Thirdly, it paints a picture of the mineworkers, as the main target groups of this study to better understand their fears, beliefs, and practices against misfortune.

#### 2.2. MISFORTUNE IN A GENERAL SENSE

The term misfortune means a variety of things to different people and sometimes people interpret it based on the incidents they have experienced. On the basis of their experiences, people may for instance decide whether it was a case of ancestral anger and/or witchcraft. People often visit traditional practitioners to seek advice and/or interpretation of their misfortune and seek advice on remedies. For example, if a person has been told that their misfortune is caused by ancestors, they have to slaughter chickens or a goat to appease. If the cause of the misfortune is thought to be witchcraft, then people seek protection from the practitioner.

Whyte (1997:13-17) groups misfortune into four categories which could also be presented as ways in which misfortune could manifest itself. According to Whyte, misfortune can firstly manifest in *failure of health*, which entails a person, perhaps a close relative, falling ill. Failure of health also includes strange or unusual behaviour and signs of spiritual possessions among others. There are various forms of health conditions that are worth explaining, i.e. physical, mental health, and social health. The second category of misfortune refers to *failures of prosperity*. This includes lack of progress in employment, business or financial problems and children failing at school. The third category is *failures of gender*, which includes marital problems, reproduction and sexual problems. The final category is *failures of personal safety*, such as persons and/or their belongings being struck by lightning, accidents, signs of

aggression and death. The above categories outline the wide spectrum of misfortune people may experience. Hirst (1990:76), like Whyte, identifies other forms of misfortune, such as unemployment, lost property, accidents and injury, as well as conflicts in domestic groups or among neighbours, co-workers and members of local associations (e.g. church members). All these categories may affect miners.

According to Green (1997:8), there is evidence that these misfortunes (accidents) are not randomly distributed, but mostly affect certain classes of people more than others. Mineworkers may be considered one of these categories of people who are said to be mainly affected by misfortune.

### ***2.3. CONCEPTUALISATION OF TERMS***

This section provides conceptualisation of the terms used in this mini-dissertation. It should be noted that these terms are defined and understood differently according to various academic sources, and the meanings attached to them also vary from culture to culture, and time to time. However, part of this project aims to clarify them, and this section is a step towards that goal. These concepts are ancestors, diviners, herbalists or traditional healer, witchcraft or sorcery, faith healer, ministers and pollution. The reason for specifying these concepts are that they are of key significance in this study. As indicated above, they mean different things to different people and the definitions and explanations that are provided in this regard are those that will be used in the research.

**Ancestors** are defined by Allais and McKay (1995:245) as “...the dead lineal ascendants (relatives) of living persons”. Ancestors are concerned with the affairs of their descendants and can cause trouble or illness if not properly treated (that is by being given sacrifices of food or beer). They are believed to exist in the realm of the supernatural. Ancestors would be explained further in the ancestor dynamics section.

The most significant connection between human beings and the supernatural is the **diviner**, known as *isangoma* in Zulu/Xhosa. Unlike herbalists (to be discussed below) no one becomes a diviner out of personal free will. The similarity between a diviner and herbalists is that they both compete for the limited supply of cash in their areas of operation. Both rely on nature’s bounty to fill their medicine bags for healing because without the specific medicine it is difficult to perform their sacred job as healers. Diviners and herbalists view the natural environment and its medicines as an

important resource to be protected. Whenever they collect their medicine in the fields they always leave some unpicked for the next time. They both treat a collection of illnesses and misfortunes (Hirst, 1990:61).

The diviner has to be called by ancestors who then regard him or her as a servant. If someone has consulted a diviner for a misfortune related case, the diviners function is to discover which ancestors and/or sorcerer are responsible for the harm or misfortune (Allais and McKay, 1995:235-239). Hirst (1990:174) emphasises that "...diviners, among others, believe that their power and that of their medicines are enhanced and reinforced by the regular performance of traditional rituals addressed to the paternal shades". This indicates the ongoing connection and interaction between diviners and their ancestors to be able to fulfil their duties as diviners and healers. Hirst (1990:36-37) argues that "...novice diviners, male and female, are easily distinguishable by the white clay (*ifutha*) they smear on their faces, arms and legs and the white beads (*amaCamagu*) they wear round the neck, wrists and ankles. Diviners (men and women) like copper ear-rings and bangles, but they do not ordinarily wear beads unless they put on their ceremonial regalia of skin skirt (*umthika*) and hat (*isidlokolo*) when attending a dance (*intlombe*)".

An expert on the use of traditional medicine for healing is known as a **herbalist** or **traditional healer** (*inyanga/ixhwele*). Herbalists or traditional healers are the same thing in African societies, and will therefore be used interchangeably in this dissertation to avoid conceptual confusion. There are two kinds of herbalists: the herbalist proper and the doctor of the medicine digging-stick. The latter was once a trainee diviner but did not complete the initiation process but gained some important knowledge of herbs, medicines and charms and applies his skills similar to herbalists (Hirst, 1990:24). In most cases this profession is believed to be hereditary, in other words a father or mother would pass the knowledge to his son or her daughter. During the apprenticeship period (training period) a daughter or son learns how to work with this medicine. He or she would serve as an apprenticeship to a senior herbalist. The herbalist relies solely on the powers coming from the medicine (*imithi*) (Allais and McKay, 1995:233).

In this whole debate about misfortune being caused by pollution, ancestor wrath or witchcraft it is also important to consider the critical role played by traditional healing. Due to the high rate of witchcraft related incidents, people consult traditional healers not only for medical treatment, but some people may for example

ask them for advice before taking a long journey. Others want protection from physical danger or from evil spirits such as the so-called *tokoloshe* (Niehaus, 1995:46). This outlines the importance of traditional healers among black people. Traditional healers are not only important for giving advice or providing protection but if one experience misfortune they are consulted to investigate the cause behind such misfortune.

Africans tend to rely more on traditional medicine because they believe that there are certain sicknesses that western medicine cannot treat successfully like mental problems and misfortune related sicknesses. In other cases you might find that although people use western medicine they will also combine it with traditional healing. Western medicine can only cure what the patient has disclosed but with traditional healing, people causing such sickness can be disclosed as well. It has been argued that medical doctors are mainly concerned with physical manifestations and scientific causes of illness, whereas on the other hand, traditional healing is considered to touch the individual's physical and spiritual state, as well as the person's relationship with the greater community, the living and ancestors.

Remedies could involve the application of straightforward *muthi* or holding certain ceremonies to appease ancestral anger (Maier, 1998:77-78). This points out the importance of understanding traditional healing in the debate on misfortune and its remedies. Maier indicates that traditional healers have powers to tell the cause of misfortune and to establish if it is caused by witchcraft or ancestral anger and how it can therefore be resolved. If it's an illness, application of medicinal plants would be a solution while if ancestral anger is involved one would be advised to offer a sacrifice to appease ancestors in whatever wrong doing that has been revealed. Traditional beliefs are still prevalent and the challenge is therefore now to use those traditional beliefs and the influence of the healers to explore mineworkers explanations of misfortune which is in other words to answer the research question (Maier, 1998:86).

Freeman and Motsei (1990:5) argue that "...traditional healing is advantageous because it not only involves curative intervention but is used in relation to the prevention of illnesses and mishaps or misfortunes. The traditional healer thus becomes a full part of the socio-cultural life of the members of the community as a whole". As it has been argued elsewhere that traditional medicine is very important to Africans because it is believed not only to be good for treating or curing diseases but it is also believed to be able to prevent illnesses and misfortunes. This points out that

it is very complicated to understand causes of misfortune without exploring further the beliefs and traditions of Africans more especially if one is targeting Africans. For other reasons traditional healing is popular among Africans more especially those of rural background because they grew up without any western health resource centres so they have been socialised into traditional healing. The exposure to traditional healing since childhood is believed to make one more confident in this healing method than the western medication he gets introduced to in urban areas being treated by strangers.

What makes diviners and herbalists similar is the use of traditional medicine and in most cases they use certain medicine to strengthen someone against misfortune, accidents or illnesses by making small incisions in the person's skin and rubbing the black medicines into these incisions (Allais and McKay, 1995:242-243). Mbiti (1969:170) argues that herbalists and diviners "symbolise the hope of society: hope of good health, protection and security from evil forces, prosperity and good fortune, and ritual cleansing when harm or impurities have been contracted". In townships like Soweto, in Johannesburg, where dozens of traditional faiths and tribal cultures collide with modern city life, belief in *sangomas* is widespread. They are consulted not only for medical treatment, but for different kinds of advice. Others want protection from physical danger or from evil spirits such as *tokoloshe* (a hairy little troll like menace that brings misfortune). Some Sowetans, especially the older ones, perch their beds on tin cans to raise them off the floor and out of reach of the *tokoloshe*. Sometimes white business people, especially ones with lots of black employees, consult a *sangoma* to obtain, say, protection for their company from theft (Niehaus, 1995: 46). An estimated 80 percent of South Africa's African population (black people) still continues to rely mostly on consultation with traditional medical practitioners, who are commonly known as *inyangas* (Maier, 1998: 39). As much as they are different (*Sangomas* and *Inyangas*) it appears that in most cases they are consulted for the same job by different people.

Mbiti (1969:202) explains **witchcraft** and **sorcery** to mean the same thing. He argues that "witchcraft is a term used more popularly and broadly, to describe all sorts of evil employment of mystical power, generally in a secret fashion. African societies do not often draw the rather academic distinction between witchcraft, sorcery, evil magic, evil eye and other ways of employing mystical power to do harm to someone or his belongings. Generally the same word is used for all these English terms".

Sorcery and witchcraft for African people stands for employment of anti-social mystical power, and sorcerers and witches are the most feared and hated members of their communities. It is feared that they employ all sorts of ways to harm other people or their belongings (Mbiti, 1969: 200). The similarity between witchcraft and sorcery is that they are both believed to employ mystical power that hurts their victims. As elaborated further by Mbiti (1969:200) “African peoples feel and believe that the various ills, misfortunes, sicknesses, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers and unhappy mysteries which they encounter or experience, are caused by the use of this mystical power in the hands of a sorcerer, witch or wizard”. Even if it’s regarded as sorcery or witchcraft at the end of the day, they are believed to perform similar functions in the same way which is why they are used interchangeable in this dissertation. Allais and McKay (1995) concludes that “...beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery may provide reasons for illness and misfortunes in traditional societies”. That implies that in most cases witchcraft and sorcery are always at the top of the list when one seeks reasons for any form of misfortune and or illness.

Freeman and Motsei (1990:1) identified and explained other traditional practitioners being **faith healers** (*abathandazeli*) whose health care integrates Christian rituals and traditional practices. Faith healers are also popular in prophesying the future of people who consult them and disclose their problems in general. This mini-dissertation does not intend to underestimate the role of traditional doctors and diviners in misfortune.

The **ministers** (*Abefundisi*) in the established Christian churches form another important group of religious specialists among the Africans. Candidates in this ministry are expected to receive a call to office from God. After completing the training and successfully meeting all the church requirements they will be ordained in the church according to a method similar to the initiation of the diviner. It should be noted that the ancestor/ancestral complex of beliefs and practices takes second preference to Christian theology in official church teachings. However this does not prevent the minister or congregation members from consulting diviners, herbalists or faith healers in cases of illness and/or misfortune. It also does not stop the offerings of traditional rituals directed at ancestors (Hirst, 1990:25).

*Umnyama*, is the Zulu term referring to the night, which is also the term used for **pollution**. Pollution in this context would mean someone is unclean and that person is said to be prone to all sorts of misfortune, sickness and accidents. People are

considered unclean due to a number of different factors to be discussed later in this chapter. Polluted people are sometimes said to be in darkness without light. As the name (pollution) suggests, it is associated with the night, which is seen as a time of evil, disease and blackness (Allais and McKay, 1995:243).

After explaining the key concepts in this section, the communication patterns used by ancestors to communicate with their descendants will subsequently be explained. Ancestors interact with human beings through a variety of methods like dreams, accidents and sicknesses to name a few. In most cases it is diviners who are able to interpret all these cases and tell the person what the ancestors want. There are particular symbols that would be obvious if ancestors are interacting with people and these symbols are often seen as "...a sign that is related to the phenomena it refers to (its referent) in a conventional (rather than natural) manner. A ritual symbol is an object or other sign that has a number of culturally important meanings" (Allais and McKay, 1995:246). If ancestors are therefore interacting with diviners, elderly people would seek such special symbols to be able to interpret and suggest remedies.

Human beings interact with ancestors through sacrifices and/ or traditional beer offerings. When these offerings are being held an elderly person in the family would address the ancestors explaining the purpose of that sacrifice. This system is referred to as a ritual which means a stylised, repetitive pattern of behaviour, often used only for religious purposes (Allais and McKay, 1995:246).

Allais and McKay (1995:239) highlight the fact that it is the function of the diviner to discover which ancestral spirit, or which sorcerer, is responsible for the harm or misfortune. This points out that diviners are the main people that one could rely on in discovering the one behind his/her misfortune or harm.

Having conceptualised the important terms used in this dissertation, the next section further explores the different causes of misfortune.

## ***2.4. CAUSES OF MISFORTUNE***

In order to understand the causes of misfortune it is significant to outline the African belief systems because, in most cases, it is from here that beliefs about misfortune are formed.

Peek (1991) argues that if one is seeking the cause of misfortune a variety of different possible causes must be considered not only one cause. This is so because

there are a number of causes of misfortune and as such the connection between them should be understood. According to Hammond-Tooke (1970:27) “...all illness and misfortune, and all deaths, except from extreme old age, are attributed to sorcery and witchcraft. Some deaths are attributed or seen as punishment by ancestors for neglecting rituals”. This attributes misfortune to witchcraft and/or ancestral anger. According to Hammond-Tooke, people in the African context consult diviners to allocate blame or to identify the cause of their misfortune to either a witch or ancestor.

Green (1997:6-7) argues that “although the kinds of misfortunes we call ‘accidents’ (unmotivated and unpredictable chance events) may always have happened, they are not always labelled as ‘accidents’ or understood in the ways (Westerners) understand them”. Evans-Pritchard (1937), in his account of Azande cosmology<sup>1</sup>, describes a belief system within which accidents cannot happen, because all misfortunes are potentially attributed to witchcraft. Although this is the case, not all misfortunes are necessarily attributed to witchcraft alone. In this dissertation it will be argued that there are other misfortunes that are attributed to ancestors or pollution. Also, depending on one’s religion, some people see misfortune as the test of their faith and they need to pray to overcome it. In the following section, the causes of misfortune will be discussed.

#### **2.4.1. Ancestral dynamics**

Ancestors are regarded as deceased people who spiritually help one to escape dangers. If migrants have returned safely without an accident in the workplace that would be regarded as ancestral help and /or protection (Mayer, 1980:210).

Religion in Africa is not a discreet human activity, separate from other aspects of living. This is in contrast to some branches of Christianity, where the spiritual is sometimes seen as separate from the physical, and heaven is entirely separate from earth. In African traditional religion as in many other ancient belief systems in other parts of the world, religion, or the spiritual permeates every aspect of life (BBC World Services, 2003:1). The majority of Africans believe in the Creator of earth and heaven but know nothing about him/ her. Mtuzze (2003:1) argues that “...they (Africans)

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<sup>1</sup> The Azande are a Negroid people who live on the Nile-Congo divide. They are mesaticephalic, of medium stature, and of a skin colour varying from chocolate to light reddish-brown. They were studied by Evans-Pritchard between 1926 and 1936.

worship, if they do worship, the ancestor who was the first of their particular branch of the tribe”. There are various terms or names that are used by Africans when they refer to God. For example, Xhosas refer to their God as *Qamata*<sup>2</sup> and Zulus as *Mvelinqangi*. Xhosas believe that *Qamata* could not be approached directly. One has to go through the ancestors who act as intermediaries between humanity and *Qamata*. The ancestors are approached through sacrifices and appropriate propitiatory addresses or prayers. The ancestors in African society effectively replace saints in western religion. Their presence is essential to ensure safety, good health, peace or communion with *Qamata*. Whenever there is a ritual to be performed, the names of the ancestors will be recited in litanic fashion by the most senior member of the family in the same way that some Christians particularly Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers would send supplications through Mary (Mtuze, 2003:48). The above statement is the interpretation of ancestral belief in a Christian way and is not necessarily applicable to all Xhosa or all Africans.

Mtuze (2003:48) argues that “...the amaXhosa, while acknowledging afterlife as a spiritual existence, view the ancestors as living beings much like as when they were in this world”. Mbiti (1990:69) points out that “the living-dead occupy the ontological position between the spirits and men and between God and men. They in effect speak a bilingual language of human beings whom they recently left or God to whom they are now nearer to than when they were in their physical life”. This suggests that the African traditional religion is directed at God the creator and mediated through the ancestors. It is also crucial to note the believed interaction and cooperation between ancestors and God, as indicated by Hirst, (1990:48) when he interviewed a diviner “...these ancestors, indeed grandfathers, they were put there and created by God. My ancestors work together with God. I see no difference between *uQamatha* and *uThixo* (Almighty God) because the traditional custom (of animal sacrifice) is in the Bible”. Mayer (1961:150) quotes a migrant worker claiming that “...the ancestor religion is our own proper religion. It is the root of our Xhosa customs”. This again suggests that to some Xhosa people ancestral belief is a religion on its own and is sometimes referred to as *ukholo lwemveli* (indigenous religion), meaning that it can be studied on its own and be interpreted uniquely and not as a combination with Christianity as seen by Mtuze. African religion is found in the

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<sup>2</sup> The name to refer to God used by Xhosa people before missionaries came to preach Christianity.

rituals, ceremonies, festivals of the people, shrines, sacred places and religious objects, art and symbols, music and dance, proverbs, riddles and wise saying, names of people and places, myths and legends, beliefs and customs, and all aspects of life (Mbiti, 1975:19-27)

“Ancestral spirits are also seen to mediate between this world and the spirit world. They play a significant role in most cultures, are easily accessible, and generally considered to be benevolent. When still alive these ancestors led lives judged to be honourable and well respected. They are well placed to give advice and warnings. They are in many ways as real to the people who talk to them as the living” (BBC World Services, 2003:1). According to Hammond-Tooke (1989:47) “...ancestors are believed to look after the interests of their descendants, but they can also send illness and misfortune if moved to wrath. Thus ancestor belief provides an explanation of sickness and misfortune”. Neglect of customs of the family, of the necessary rituals that should be performed, particularly in the most important stages of the life cycle (birth, initiation, marriage and death) and failure to offer the expected respect to elderly are believed to be the main reasons why ancestors would interfere in the lives of the living (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:47). This points out the importance of respecting ancestors and living accordingly and in so doing, preventing ancestral anger. This again suggests the importance of one abiding by the rituals that one is expected to perform at correct times to prevent this anger.

It has been argued therefore that it is the characteristic of ancestors that they are invested with mystical authority and right. They have restricted powers of intervention in people’s lives. Acknowledgement by their descendants authorise their interference in their (human beings) lives (Fortes & Dieterlen, 1965:16). This suggests that people who do not worship or believe in ancestors cannot expect anything from them. These would include Christians who see ancestor worship as paganism or regard ancestors as belonging to the spiritual domain of the deceased which should not be tampered with.

Ngubane (1977:51) argues that the ancestors are believed to be concerned with the welfare of their descendants, and as such “...when good things of life are realised people say, the ancestors are with us. When misfortunes happen they say the ancestors are facing away from us for the ancestors are believed to withdraw their protection and gifts of good fortune from erring descendants. Without their protection the descendants become vulnerable to all sorts of misfortune and disease”. This points out

that those ancestors are not only capable for sending misfortune to their disobedient descendants but also diseases. On the other hand ancestors are capable of securing protection to their obedient descendants against not only misfortunes and diseases but also witchcraft. Ancestral misfortune brought about by a lack of proper procedure in regard to the ancestors can manifest in the form of accident and/or illness, and may be rectified through ritual performance (Hammond-Tooke, 1975; Ngubane, 1977).

Ngubane (1977:59) outlines different types of rituals that are performed for ancestors in ensuring continued good relations with their living descendants:

1. *Imbeleko*, a goat, which is the first sacrifice offered for a baby and which, places it under the protection of lineage ancestors.
2. *Ukubuyisa*, a goat and an ox if the deceased was a married man, a goat and a cow if a deceased was a married woman, a goat only if the deceased was a minor. The sacrifices integrate the deceased with the rest of the body of ancestral spirits.
3. *Ukubonga*, a goat or an ox, to thank the ancestors for good things of life, e.g. a good win at the races, or a good job, or a generally satisfactory life.
4. *Ukucela izinhlanhla*, a goat, to ask for blessings of the ancestors before undertaking any major or risky task, e.g. before going out to major cities to seek employment.
5. *Ukushweleza* a goat, to appease the ancestors if there is evidence that they had been annoyed.
6. *Ukuthetha* a goat sacrificed to “scold” the ancestors if misfortunes continue to happen in spite of all efforts made to put things right.
7. *Ukukhomba inxiwa* a goat to show the ancestors “the new home” if the descendants move house.

What makes all these sacrifices unique and important is that they all have their own names and specific expected outcomes. They are all similar in the fact that one has to speak to the ancestors explaining the purpose of such sacrifice. Hammond-Tooke (1989:63) argues that “...the presence of the ancestors is the most important factor in maintaining the good health of people and animals. Their influence is essentially benign and all-embracing, for they are present at all times, ‘brooding’ over the homestead and following their descendants wherever they go, for, unlike the case with witchcraft, which operates only over short distances, ancestors are ubiquitous and

follow their charges everywhere even into the urban areas”. That suggests the responsibility of ancestors among their descendants, which add more value now on why descendants should consider it important to respect their ancestors. Hammond-Tooke (1970:19) argues that:

“Relations with the ancestral shades are established and maintained by blood sacrifices performed by the lineage head on behalf of lineage members. Specific calling of the ancestors by name (*nqula*) is confined to particular killings to propitiate the shades in times of misfortune diagnosed by a diviner as being caused by neglect of custom. In practice this custom concerns the ritual killings appropriate at life-cycle rituals, especially at birth (*bingelela*), initiation, and death. Neglect of the *guqula* killing, to end the mourning period and incorporate the deceased into the world of the shades, is a particularly common cause of ancestral wrath”.

As argued elsewhere one of the best ways to prevent ancestral anger is to ensure that you maintain good relations with them through sacrifices when the need arises.

Although the above arguments are applicable to many Xhosa tribes it should be noted that not all of them do practice all these rituals. The *Guqula* ritual for example is not performed in Hlubi and Bhacas to name a few. However the importance of maintaining customs to prevent ancestor wrath that will lead to misfortune is highlighted. Fortes and Dieterlen (1965:20) conclude that “...ancestor spirits have to be brought home in the appropriate way for them to be accessible to prayer and persuasion”. That now indicates the significance of the *ukubuyisa* ritual (to bring them back home) so that people could easily access them and express their concerns, problems and joys.

According to Peek (1991:155) there are “...three categories of misfortune agents emphasising the moral universe of kinship. Senior relatives (both matrilineal and patrilineal) were thought able to curse if their rights were not honoured, if bride wealth was not paid and redistributed properly, if they were not treated respectfully. Ancestral ghosts were said to send misfortune to remind their descendants of their obligations to commemorate them through sacrifice and ceremonies. Similarly clan spirits could make demands upon members of the clans with which they were associated” (Whyte, 1997). Attributing misfortune to these agents emphasised one’s identity as a junior kinsman (related to a curser), as a member of a local descendent

group (descended from a particular forefather), or as a member of a patrilineal clan (associated with a specific clan spirit).

#### **2.4.2. Witchcraft dynamics**

It should be noted that the terms witchcraft and sorcery are used to mean the same thing in this dissertation. In Nguni languages they refer to the same thing. It should be acknowledged that the concept of witchcraft is a complicated one. Allais and McKay (1995:232) argues that "...beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery may provide reasons for illnesses and misfortunes in traditional societies". "Witchcraft, better referred to as the more neutral '*occult force*' due to the broad implications inherent in the African conceptualisation of the term, is understood as the manipulation by malicious individuals of power inherent in persons, spiritual entities and substances to cause harm to others" (Ashforth, 2002; Geshiere, 2002). Hammond-Tooke (1974:18) argues that "...both witches and shades (ancestors) can cause illness and misfortune, but there is a crucial difference between the two. Ancestral sent misfortune is always due to neglect of custom and, as such, is merited. Witch caused misfortune is frequently the product of unmotivated envy and malice". There is a common belief that if the illness has been brought about by an enemy then the likelihood is that the enemy consulted a witch. People judged to be witches are usually women. They are outsiders; they may be very old or very ugly without children or family. They may admit to witchcraft or not. The point is they are seen as a threat to the community (BBC World Services, 2003:1). Although part of this maybe true not only women can be suspected of witchcraft but men also. Young people can also be suspected of witchcraft if their parents are suspected as well. In most cases people accused of witchcraft are family members or relatives who are regarded to be jealous.

Whyte (1997:178) points out that "sorcery is a deed carried out against another person... Sorcerers work upon people through the manipulation of powerful material substances which can be acquired". Sorcerers send misfortune not because of punishment for failed obligation as is the case with ancestors but out of such immoral motives as envy, jealousy, hatred, and vengefulness. It can be argued that sorcery was the most dangerous cause of misfortune, and it was the cause to which death was most frequently linked (Peek, 1991:155).

Another form of witchcraft capable of killing, is poisoning (*idliso/isidliso*). According to Ashforth (2001:130) "...once inside its victim, the *isidliso* is in a battle to the death and the victim must engage a powerful healer to repel it before it completes its destruction. The more powerful the witch, the stronger the *isidliso* and the more protracted the struggle for cure. If the victim is weak however the battle itself can kill". This powerful and quick form of killing is placed in the victim's food. In many cases people use this poison for revenge, someone to carry the duty on their behalf has got jealousy.

Witches are also believed to be capable of casting a spell (words used in charm) or cursing a person (consigning a person or thing to destruction) (Minnaar, Offring and Payze 1992:16). However cursers and witches are not the same as people can curse somebody and that is not generally regarded as witchcraft. Other people regard cursing as reprimanding and/or as a way of discipline. In this case it is only the witch who is aware of such actions and the results can be seen by the deterioration of the victim's health. The essential characteristic of a witch is not the intention to make someone ill but to kill the person. Witches are believed to be possessed with an evil spirit that aims at harming others (Reynolds, 1963:15). This suggests that witches are using evil spirits or powers to cause harm or kill people. Hammond-Tooke (1974:6) argues that "...witch beliefs quite clearly provide, with aspects of the ancestor cult and that of the river people, an explanatory theory of evil and misfortune". This suggests that people who believe in witchcraft would easily explain certain kinds of misfortunes and evil. On the other hand the above statement implies another factor, which might be regarded as causes of misfortune, which is the river people that will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.4.3. The river people**

River people form part of the traditional African belief system. Together the river people (*abantu bomlambo/ abantu basemlanjeni*), the ancestors and witchcraft provide an explanation of evil and misfortune. Misfortune can therefore arise from one, or a combination of these three, or additionally from natural, non-spiritual means (Hammond-Tooke, 1975; Ngubane, 1977). There seem to be contradictions and different views on whether river people are ancestors or not. Some sources argue that river people are not ancestors but there is a relationship between them and ancestors.

Other books indicate that river people are ancestors. There is also a belief that the river people are a branch of ancestors which live in the rivers (Personal communication)<sup>3</sup>. Because they are ancestors, they are therefore considered to be spirits and not real people. In other instances, people would be guided to offer sacrifices in the rivers for them if they encounter particular misfortunes.

The people of the river are mostly associated with the diviners and in most cases diviners who were trained by people of the river are seen to be stronger in healing than those trained at the forest or elsewhere. Bernard (1999:1) agrees with that as is evident from the following: "...those healers who claim to have been taken under the water by the snake (or by the water spirits) are frequently acknowledged as having access to the most potent source of spiritual power, which enables them to communicate directly with the 'great' ancestors (*amakhosi*)". The ancestors in this regard require healers to do good and one spiritual healer indicated that "...as a spiritual healer, you get your powers of healing through communication with the ancestors" (Bernard, 1999:12). Hammond-Tooke (1974:7) disagrees with the previous statements as he indicates that river people are not ancestors.

As argued elsewhere *sangomas* are capable of producing *muthi* to kill or harm. The above respondent outlines the strictness of the river people against such things. The other thing that comes out of this topic is that diviners are directly accountable to ancestors. As indicated earlier they communicate with ancestors and get power to heal from ancestors. That points out that on his or her own they are not capable of healing or providing help to the needy. Hammond-Tooke, (1974:8) indicate that:

"On the other hand the river people are dangerous because they send an illness called *umamlambo* characterised by pains and swelling of the body 'as with water' and 'heaviness' (*nzima*). Sometimes the sickness is preceded by dreams of drowning: to dream the dirty water means that the river people are angry. Some state that *umamlambo* can also be caused by walking over the spoor of a snake (*umamlambo*). Such an illness might be diagnosed as being sent by the river people. They also cause drowning by calling a person to them: 'they do not really intend to kill him. They call him because they like him'".

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<sup>3</sup> With Babalwa Sishuta a Sociology Lecturer, Penny Bernard, a diviner and an Anthropology Lecturer respectively at Rhodes University on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

A specific ritual would be held to appease the river people should such incident occur but if people are ignoring certain signs those misfortunes tend to follow. Some people who have ignored river people or failed to follow the correct procedures when performing the *ukuhlwayela* ritual, is believed to have been killed by the river people and found floating to the surface (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:9). River people differ from witches in the sense that they are capable of sending misfortune to their descendants as a form of punishment. Their duties and responsibilities are similar to those discussed under ancestor dynamics. The next section will discuss pollution.

#### **2.4.4. Pollution as a cause of misfortune**

Pollution in this regard refers to someone being diagnosed by the traditional practitioner to be unclean. Ngubane (1977:77) states that in “...Zulu the source of pollution is essentially a happening associated with birth on the one hand and death on the other hand. Pollution is conceptualised as a mystical force which diminishes resistance to disease, and creates conditions of poor luck, misfortune, disagreeableness and repulsiveness whereby the people around the patient take a dislike to him/her without any provocation. In its worst form *umnyama* is contagious”. Polluted people are believed to be vulnerable to accidents and all sorts of misfortunes (Ngubane, 1977:78). Pollution is referred to as *umlaza* in Xhosa.

Hirst (1990:234) demonstrates that “...diviners maintain that not only does pollution destroy the efficacy of traditional rituals addressed to the ancestors of which the main aim is to enhance the power of flowing from the ancestors, but it also destroys the power of medicines to heal and, if left unchecked, results in illness and death in man and beast”. It is also crucial to note the important need to remedy pollution before it brings misfortune, illness and death among humans.

Hammond-Tooke (1989:94) states the following perceived causes of pollution: firstly, the death of a close relative (especially a spouse or child), secondly, certain types of sexual intercourse e.g. during menstruation, during first three months of pregnancy. Men who have sexual intercourse with such woman can allegedly become “blocked” and cannot pass urine. Thirdly, a pregnant woman is polluted; she is not allowed to go to the room with a sick person or even to handle small children. Fourthly, miscarriage is another form of pollution and this applies to both parents. Fifthly, the ancestors are not polluted but they can be if someone has angered them.

Lastly, people who handle corpses are considered to be polluted and should be treated by having small cuts made on the wrists into which medicine is rubbed.

Hirst (1990:233) outlines pollution in the interview with Mandla as coming “...under the law (*komthetho*) which has been put to one that one must not do. Even if one is a diviner and one has gone to one’s women, on one’s return one washes? [with medicine] in the morning before one handles medicines (*amayeza*). The name of that thing is pollution (*umlaza*)”. This is in the process of purifying one from this state of uncleanness. Pollution is argued to bring about the decrease of power of people and objects and if left unattended, it results in deaths and illness in the same manner as the neglected traditional rituals that may lead to ancestors withdrawing their protection against their descendants. That ancestor withdrawal makes descendants prone to witchcraft, illness and death (Hirst, 1990:235).

In this section four causes of misfortune have been discussed. Having outlined all the causes of misfortune, the next section looks at the fears of misfortune and witchcraft among mineworkers.

## ***2.5. FEARS OF MISFORTUNE AND WITCHCRAFT AMONG MINEWORKERS***

This section aims at discussing misfortune among mineworkers in general, their beliefs, reactions and practices. It also seeks to investigate the existence of misfortune in the mines. It will also indicate protective measures that people take against misfortune or witchcraft. The quotes of miners in this section have been obtained in the literature reviewed.

Gordon (1977:62) argues that “...mining is a tough business. The nature of the work, its difficulties, arduousness, unpredictability and ever present dangers coupled to the economic vulnerability of the industry, combine to give mines a distinctive, coercive type of organisation”. It is these dangers of the industry that one miner has argued that death is so real in the mines, expressing their vulnerabilities to all sorts of misfortunes. Due to dangers of working in the mines, some mineworkers use traditional medicinal plants to protect themselves against evil spirits. As stated elsewhere, in the Xhosa tradition, a ritual is held before departure for the mines. In this ritual it is expected that in order to protect oneself “...at the dawn the youthful migrant washed his body in the cattle-byre with a special medicine of the home

(*ubulawu*), invoked his father and the ancestral shades, took up a special food for the journey prepared by his wife or mother and left without entering a hut” (Moodie, 1994). *Ubulawu* strengthens against witchcraft, misfortune and other evil spirits. *Ubulawu* is very important to mine workers because they are seen as strong men and if bewitched they become strong zombies (that is the living dead).

Other protection mechanism mineworkers opt for are the use of traditional medicine mainly because they believe that God does not help them. It is believed that He helps whites only. One man “...emphasised that in the work situation you need maximum protection...the use of *muti* (traditional medicine) complements whatever help God might give you” (Moodie, 1994:17).

However, there are other black mineworkers who believe that God protects them also. An old Sotho miner, as quoted by Moodie, (1994:16) expresses that “...working in the mines is an agonising painful experience...whenever you go down the shaft, you are not sure that you will come out alive...death is so real, you keep on praying and thanking God each time you come out alive”. This suggests that miners are so vulnerable to any accident that may occur while they are working underground and as such they have committed themselves to die for their jobs. Having discussed the fears of misfortune among mineworkers, in the next section rituals that can influence the impact of the supernatural realm will be discussed.

## ***2.6. RITUALS THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE IMPACT OF THE SUPERNATURAL REALM***

In the previous section it was pointed out that mine workers do fear misfortune and the question this section will be addressing is what they are doing about their fears of misfortune. In other words, it seeks to identify their actions to either protect themselves or to remedy misfortune where it already exists.

There are various ways to deal with misfortune and among those methods, are rituals. According to Hammond-Tooke (1989:64) “...rituals are performed typically on three types of occasion: (1) at the life cycle rituals of birth, initiation, marriage and death; (2) to thank the ancestors for their successful accomplishment of a task, especially a long journey; and (3) when illness strikes”. In general terms rituals are understood to refer to ancestral sacrifices to thank, appease or request from ancestors.

After discussing different causes of misfortune in the previous sections, this section intends to discuss a few rituals that are performed by miners and to identify key ingredients of those sacrifices. It should be noted as well that these rituals were obtained in the literature they were not identified by respondents of this study.

Miners tend to conduct three rituals namely the Gcaleka beer drink and *umsindleko/ ukubulisa* (to greet)/ *ukubulela* (to thank). All these rituals will be examined further in this section. This section will be concluded by briefly examining the changes in miners' lives that has influenced these practices.

According to Mayer (1980:211-212) "...the general aim of Gcaleka beer drink is to secure good fortune for the homestead from the shades and to prevent misfortune". In preparing to leave for work in the mine a migrant may be involved in many sets of rituals and symbolic activities. These are among others beer drink, a consultation with a herbalist, admonitions addressed to him, the preparation of food for the journey, and appeal to the ancestors in conjunction with washing with *ubulawu* medicine (Ngubane, 1977). These rites are important because they mark the protection from dangers and ensuring safe return (McAllister, 1981:16). Mayer refers to ancestors as shades although this term means different things to different people. Many Africans today argue against the use of this term (shades) to refer to ancestors. However, the rites marking protection and safe return, outline the importance of ancestors in ensuring the migrants' welfare and safety. This beer drink is done to create awareness to the ancestors that the migrant is about to leave the home and also prepare ancestors to accompany him, protect him in the journey, assure good fortune and success at work.

Consulting a herbalist is also important for migrants to obtain medicine that protects against witchcraft and sorcery while they are away. Young migrants are admonished (*ukuyalwa*) by the elderly before they leave for work and told how to behave themselves at work, reminded about their responsibilities at their homes, and reminded of dangers of not respecting ancestors. On the day of departure a migrant wakes up before sunrise and leaves his luggage next to the cattle-byre. He enters the cattle-byre and takes off his clothes and washes himself with *ubulawu*<sup>4</sup>, he then

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<sup>4</sup> Certain varieties of plants and creepers growing near streams or rivers, grasslands and forests that foam when beaten in water. These plants are used for ritual purposes because the foam is said to be a manifestation of the ancestors (Hirst,1990).

speaks to the ancestors calling out their clan praises asking for protection and prevention of misfortune at work.

In addition to *ubulawu* medicine, *intelezi* is also used which is the sap type of aloe, which symbolises the dangers of the journey and the workplace. *Intelezi* is believed to ensure that migrants will escape any dangers and threats (McAllister, 1981:16). According to Ngubane (1977:110) the *intelezi* medicine belongs to the white class of medicines and it possesses a special quality of rendering the evil spirits of sorcery to be ineffective. In most cases it will be sprinkled on a spot where a sorcerer is believed to have buried or placed harmful substances. It is believed to destroy the power to harm in such substance. *Intelezi* is not taken internally rather it is used to either wash with or sprinkle with.

The migrant worker's return home is an occasion for rejoicing, thanksgiving and worship. Before the migrant worker enters a hut he praises the ancestors for their protection and further asks them for protection in the future. A beer will be brewed at home to mark the migrant's safe homecoming. Neighbours and relatives would come to partake in the beer drink. A large beer drink mostly held during the migrant's return from work and the slaughter of a goat or sheep in honour of a guest is known as *umsindleko*. It has become the tradition to honour the return migrant worker by offering an animal. This ritual has different names in different parts of Xhosa areas. Pondos regard it as *ukubulela* (to thank) the ancestors, the Bhacas call it *umbuliso* (the greeting), also a thanksgiving for a safe return from work. This (*Umsindleko/umbuliso/ umbulelo*) sacrifice was also associated with marking a safe return from war or a long journey (McAllister, 1981:19). This suggests the importance of ancestral rituals associated with miners to seek protection and thank their ancestors for their continued protection. Again this also points out the importance of continued ancestral links with their living descendants.

The key elements when performing a ritual are to speak, African beer (*mqombothi*) and blood. In other words when having a ritual you need to speak (*ukuthetha*) the purpose of the ritual to the ancestors and other people gathered in the home and also there must be an animal to be slaughtered. By the time the family is speaking to ancestors, an animal to be offered should be standing near the family members for ancestors and everybody to see and cherish. In most cases it is the elderly of the family that would speak and the family would appoint one family member to slaughter. Important for that ritual to be accepted by ancestors, it is

believed that the animal should bellow when killed. However there are other rituals where there would be beer drunk only without an animal offering. An example of this is found in the mines where drinking together is one of the important rituals signifying brotherhood and friendship (Gordon, 1977:116). It is during these occasions where miners share their problems, achievements and difficulties both from the workplace and at home. Also, you would find these men debating about women they are currently dating or wish to. According to Gordon (1977:118)

“...there are a number of different feasts, the most common being undoubtedly the ‘going home’ feast. Then a worker decided to return home he would often purchase a carton or two of white beer with which to celebrate... This feast can take place at any suitable locale but is usually held at one of the ‘hostels’ or at the compound on a Saturday or Sunday. It is a feast to give thanks to God and the spirits that the migrant has managed to ‘work well’ that is he has stayed out of trouble and made money, and that the contract is finished. The leaver does not sell the beer but uses his discretion in giving it to people who come to greet him and bid him farewell”.

This suggests that rituals are not only important for one to have at home but also in the hostels before they leave for home. In Gordon’s words, safety becomes a crucial issue because the overall purpose of the feast is to thank God and ancestors for providing him with well being and protecting him against troubles and misfortunes.

To conclude this section it is worth noting that these situations are dynamic and they are changing like people. For example nowadays more young people are working in the mines and they prefer to stay in the townships not hostels in order to enjoy more freedom with female partners. There are also more women employed in the mines who are educated to a certain extent and as a result some of these rituals are regarded as outdated. Christianity has also brought major changes in miner’s lives and as such drinking alcohol is no longer the priority. There are other major things that broke down the communalism in the hostels. Among others are introduction of sporting events, churches in the hostels, burial societies, employment of women in the mines, more young men working in the mines, termination of mine marriages, introduction of family hostels instead of single sex ones, changing working conditions for the better, AIDS, union activities e.g. rallies, public holidays celebrations to name few.

## ***2.7. CONCLUSION***

This chapter explored the concept of misfortune, taking as point of departure the various categories and causes. The important concepts used in the dissertation were also conceptualised to familiarise the reader with their use in this study. These concepts among others include diviners, herbalists, rituals, ancestors and witchcraft to name a few. This chapter argued that ancestors are capable of protecting their descendants from misfortune and sicknesses but they can also withdraw their protection if the descendants are disobedient. Witchcraft and sorcery was used interchangeably because it was argued that in African terms there is no distinction made between the two as they often used to refer to the same thing. However, both sorcery and witchcraft are identified as some of the causes of misfortune. Rituals have also been identified as one of the important feature(s) in understanding misfortune and its remedies. The fears of misfortune and witchcraft in the mining industry have also been discussed and as such various mechanisms that are employed to prevent or remedy misfortune. The next chapter deals with the research design used in this study.

## **3. CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### ***3.1. INTRODUCTION***

This chapter provides brief details of the research design. Having learnt about the dangerous working conditions of miners, including the high death and injury rate as well as the high prevalence of occupational diseases among mine workers, mine workers' explanations regarding misfortune became significant. The coping mechanisms and/or preventive measures taken by these miners to avoid death, injuries and diseases in their workplace, were also explored.

The data collection method used is qualitative in nature. The reasons for choosing this research method are discussed in detail in the following section. The focus of this section will be on research methods, target population, description of the research settings, how access was gained, discussion of sampling methods, data collection techniques, data collection, analysis and interpretation, themes that were investigated, ethics and limitations of the study.



#### ***3.2. RESEARCH METHODS***

This study employed qualitative methods to gather data. Qualitative research uses soft data, in the form of impressions, words, sentences and symbols (Neuman, 2000:122-123). Using this method, data is collected through sustained contact with people in settings where respondents normally spend their time. Babbie and Mouton (2002:270) state that in this method "...[q]ualitative researchers attempt always to study human actions from the perspective of the social actors themselves...the primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as describing and understanding (*Verstehen*) rather than explaining human behaviour". This study is therefore interested, in understanding people's perceptions, experiences and definition of misfortune.

The reasons for using qualitative research methods that were applied to this study were:

- (a) Research was conducted in the natural setting of people being studied;

- (b) It aimed at gaining in-depth understanding and insight of actions and events;
- (c) This research method enabled the researcher to see things through the eyes of the respondents in other words one has to try and understand their actions, decisions, beliefs, history, context, behaviour, practices, interpretations and rituals;
- (d) Because the researcher spent time in the research context, it was easy to gain trust and build rapport with the respondents and that led to openness by respondents;
- (e) The researcher became part of the community of which he is studying that led to close relationship with subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2002: 270-273).

### **3.3. TARGET POPULATION**

Harmony Gold mineworkers in Doornkop shaft were used as a case study. The Harmony Gold shaft is on the outskirts of Soweto in Johannesburg. The majority of workers are from Transkei and speak Xhosa. Most of these workers reside in hostels while others live in the Reconstruction and Development Programme houses near the mine, in an area called Tshepisoong. Due to unavailability of respondents, the research sample was extended to include all Harmony Gold miners that were under the medical protection of the Sir Albert Medical Centre, which is the mine-owned hospital in Randfontein.

The majority of miners refused to speak with me alone and requested the presence of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) shopstewards. The only convenient time for shopstewards was over the weekend.

The sample target population included *underground mineworkers* because of their work underground and cultural issues. According to Xhosa custom (*isithethe*), people are prohibited from working underground because of the sacredness of the place. The underground is a place for the dead and going underground symbolises death. Miners working underground are “...regarded as people who shake the bones of the ancestors”. A consequence of working in the place of ancestors is that miners become prone to accidents, illnesses and misfortune (*personal communication*)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> With Zweli Vena, traditional practitioner working at Cory Library, Rhodes University.

In most rural areas, such as Transkei, when village men dig a grave before burial, they are required not to speak while inside the grave. They are expected to take off their hats as a sign of respect for the sacred place they are working in. These men are also aware of the fact that it should be one man in the grave at a time. However, it should be noted that as times change so does adherence to these practices.

Again as indicated by Kejriwal (1994:11) "...mining is undoubtedly a hazardous industry and underground mining...is the most dangerous segment of the industry. There are hazards inherent in underground mining that individually and collectively are not found in any other industry. The mining industry as a whole is characterised by high death rate and injury rate as well as high incidence of occupational diseases." The above argument points out that the belief in misfortune is prevalent when one works under these conditions. Mine workers work everyday in an area where no other person has ever been before. These conditions make one prone to any misfortune, such as accidents or occupational diseases.

The reason for choosing workers with a *rural background* was based on the researcher's view that, people from rural areas have better understanding of indigenous issues, compared to people from urban areas. This is influenced by the continued observation of indigenous belief systems in rural areas while in urban areas very few, if any, people still offer ancestral sacrifices or believe in African traditions.

The study investigates how miners experience and explain misfortune in the context of daily hazardous working conditions and as such is essentially symbolic interactionist in its approach. This approach places emphasis on how people perceive, experience and define misfortune without making any judgements (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). Symbolic interactionists argue that reality exists when people intervene in the world and interpret what takes place there. In most cases people remember, value and base their knowledge of their world on what they regard as useful and important to them. People can either change or modify what they believe no longer works for them. As a researcher engaging with this approach it is important to understand respondents, because it is crucial that we base our understanding on what the respondents practice and value in their world. This study is therefore based on the mineworkers' ability to interpret their own social world. In other words, whatever is regarded as reality by the respondents, has been treated as such in this dissertation. As a researcher I therefore had to put myself in the place of the respondents to better understand the life world of the respondents (cf Ritzer,

1983:299-303). Part of this life world, was the working environment of the respondents. It is therefore important to take into consideration the context of Doornkop shaft.

### **3.3.1. Doornkop shaft: The research setting**

The Doornkop shaft is situated on the outskirts of Soweto, Johannesburg between Dobsonville and Randfontein. In this mine, workers reside in hostels located in the same yard as the shaft.

There are two hostels: one is for males only and the other one is a family hostel where married men stay with their families. Other miners stay in the nearby township of Tshepisong. In the male hostel where most of my interviews took place, about three men share a room which has three single beds. The rooms are approximately 4x4 meters in size. Inside the rooms and in the passage halls, there are notices and posted on the walls written in Fanakalo<sup>6</sup>, stating that women sleeping over in the rooms is prohibited and should men be caught in that situation they will be severely punished.

In this hostel men have a choice of either using the kitchens in their blocks to cook their own food or using the communal kitchen for the food prepared by the private company tendered by the mine. If they are using the mine dining hall a certain amount of money is deducted from their salaries for food. Outside their blocks, you would often see men and women cleaning the hostel.

Almost all South African ethnic groups are represented in this mine and other Africans from other African countries, including Mozambique and Lesotho to name a few. There is a clinic in this hostel that provides medical services to the residents. Each block of flats has about five rooms. During the interviews, other flats were in the process of being renovated. A tour of the hostels revealed posters of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and most of them in English. Other areas have condom containers for workers to help themselves to condoms.

Inside the hostel, NUM has offices that provide information and assistance to miners. The NUM offices operate as information desks for miners. Visitors report to these offices and miners' enquiries about work and hostel and/or accommodation

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<sup>6</sup> Fanakalo is the mine language combining Xhosa, English, Zulu and Sotho.

related matters are handled by their offices. The offices are staffed by full-time shopstewards responsible for maintaining order and peace in the hostel.

In this hostel, nine male miners were interviewed. The researcher also conducted other informal conversations with other miners about the topic. More time was also spent interacting with miners in their rooms, in the communal kitchen and within the hostel under the trees or in the streets.

### **3.3.2. Gaining access to the research /target population**

To gain access to the mineworkers, a presentation was made to the Doornkop Shaft Committee of NUM on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Moreover, a letter from the Chair of the Department of Sociology at the then Rand Afrikaans University (RAU)<sup>7</sup> was submitted to this committee requesting access. The shaft committee granted permission for the research to be conducted at the mine. In addition, a letter was sent to the mine manager who subsequently granted access. A meeting was held at the mine hospital with the hospital manager and the NUM shop-stewards. They both received copies of (a) the formal proposal which was originally sent to the Higher Degrees Committee of the University, (b) a letter for the faculty stating my topic, and (c) consent forms. The hospital subsequently granted me access to speak to the patients.

## **3.4. SAMPLING METHODS**

Non-probability sampling was used for the purposes of this study. This sampling method entails that not everyone in the target population had an equal chance of being included in the study. Two kinds of non-probability sampling methods were used: quota and snowball sampling (Neuman, 2000:199).

During quota sampling the researcher first identified relevant categories of people (e.g. gender, ages, ethnic group and area of work<sup>8</sup>), and then decided how many to include in each category. These categories were considered to be important in investigating different views on misfortune with regard to different ages, gender and

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<sup>7</sup> Now called the University of Johannesburg

<sup>8</sup> The profile of the respondents attached in this mini-dissertation as appendix B

ethnic groups. These categories were also taken into consideration during the fieldwork.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic it was difficult to get the respondents to volunteer as participants. As a result, snowball sampling was used. As explained by Babbie and Mouton (2002:167) “...snowball sampling is implemented by collecting data on the few members of the target population you can locate, and then asking those individuals to provide the information needed to locate other members of that population whom they happen to know”. Snowball sampling is widely used when researching sensitive topics and difficult to reach respondents (Neuman, 2000:199). During the sampling process, I identified one individual who complied with the characteristics to be included into the research i.e. age, gender, place of work, length of employment and place of origin and home language. After requesting him to participate in the study, he was asked to identify those people with similar characteristics that the respondent thought would be useful to interview. During the interview, with the permission of respondents, a tape recorder was used. A note book was used, in cases where respondents refused to be recorded. Non-verbal communication was noted as well.

In the hospital, availability sampling was used, as only those patients that were available and willing to be interviewed were asked to participate in the research. Those with critical health conditions were, however, excluded. This sampling method is widely known as relying on people that are available at the time of interview. Due to its nature, it is mostly regarded as an extremely risky sampling method (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:166). In this regard the decision was justifiable because of the nature of the hospital and that the findings would not be generalised.

The sample size was as follows: In total, seventeen male miners were interviewed from the male hostel and the hospital. In the hostel, nine interviews were conducted and eight in the hospital. As argued elsewhere, there were various informal conversations that were conducted in the hostel with people in smaller groups ranging in size from two to six. There were four informal conversations conducted in this fashion on the topic. In addition, four female nurses from three different wards in the hospital were interviewed as well as one male social worker.

### ***3.5. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES***

A semi-structured interview guide was used to acquire information from the respondents. According to Burns (2000) semi-structured interviews are “...repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and respondents directed towards understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words”. The respondents granted permission for a tape recorder and a notebook to be used. Interviews took place in the hostel and at the hospital and lasted from 20-45 minutes each depending on the respondent’s availability. Other interviews took place in the NUM office, under the tree in the hostel and others inside the hostel rooms.

Some respondents refused the use of tape recorders and as a result written notes were taken during these interviews. The interviews were conducted in the language of the respondents’ choice. The researcher is proficient in English, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho and Tswana languages. Also other informal conversations were conducted with mineworkers on the topic but not recorded as in-depth interviews.

### ***3.6. THEMES INVESTIGATED***

Based on the literature review, a number of relevant themes were identified in relation to the perceptions of mineworkers regarding misfortune<sup>9</sup>. These themes were useful in determining the beliefs, and fears of misfortune in the Doornkop shaft and other shafts of Harmony Gold. These themes emerged from the literature that was explored. The next section provides brief discussion of these themes.

#### **3.6.1. Types of misfortune experienced**

In investigating this theme, I also researched miners’ view and beliefs regarding misfortune. The respondents were asked if they had ever experienced misfortune and most said yes and were requested to provide details about types of misfortune experienced. This was based on the literature indicating different types of misfortune starting from personal safety, health problems to name a few. These types would vary

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<sup>9</sup> The complete interview schedule is attached to this mini-dissertation as appendix A

from personal, family, and work related misfortune. Miners would be requested to justify why they think it was a case of misfortune.

### **3.6.2. Relations between misfortune and ancestors**

As mentioned in the literature review, if living descendants anger ancestors, ancestors can send misfortunes to them or remove their protection. This theme explores the view that ancestors are the cause of misfortune. Respondents were asked to state situations where ancestors had sent misfortune and the reasons for their actions. Respondents were also asked to identify misfortunes that they regard as sent by ancestors.

### **3.6.3. Relationship between misfortune and witchcraft**

As suggested by the literature, this theme investigates the views among miners about witchcraft as a cause of misfortune. This theme also explores why misfortune is seen as caused by witchcraft and why people believe so. This theme is based on the argument by Evans-Pritchard (1937:99) that all misfortune is a result of witchcraft. The argument states that witchcraft is an invisible substance that witches send flying through the night to attack others. It was clear that respondents should firstly believe in witchcraft before they could relate it to misfortune and as all of them did believe in its existence they could easily identify witchcraft related misfortunes, which mostly were linked to illnesses.

### **3.6.4. Body protection mechanisms**

This theme is concerned with the protection mechanisms employed by mineworkers against evil spirits. In this regard the literature argues that protection against the threat of witchcraft is achieved through, amongst other things, application of herbs to incisions in the skin joints (an operation known as *ukuqiniswa*) (Moore & Sanders, 2001:213). The theme also investigated other possible ways that miners use to protect themselves against any possible mine dangers. Protection would only be effective for evil spirits or witchcraft related misfortunes and therefore respondents were asked to identify other possible protection mechanisms for misfortune. Respondents were

asked to identify who (diviners/ herbalists/ faith healers) is good in dealing with what kind of misfortune.

### **3.6.5. Ancestral rituals**

This theme examines ancestral rituals that miners perform in seeking protection from ancestors or to maintain good relations with ancestors. Other rituals that are supposed to be performed by miners for ancestors were also investigated. As the literature suggests, there are migrant rituals that have to be performed in order for one to prevent misfortune and ensure continued ancestral protection. Respondents were therefore asked to identify such rituals. In addition to identifying these rituals, respondents were asked to state the important components of such rituals, i.e. the content and method of the ritual. The timing for such rituals was also asked.

### **3.6.6. Dangerous places in the mine**

As the literature has suggested, working in mines represents a commitment to life or death (when they go underground they can either come out alive or die) this theme will be investigated, because of the association of mines with misfortune.

Jacobson (2003:30) interviewed a female miner who stated that: “these deaths (these women are well aware that in 2000 two shafts at Beatrix mine were closed down while preliminary findings were underway about the cause of an explosion that killed 12 miners) are a grim reminder that we work in a killer industry. Health and safety are a choice between life and death for mineworkers...they take the cage, a mine elevator which lurches us down violently almost two kilometres underground, deep into the earth, as we step into the hot tunnel. The temperature is around 28 °C with humidity. The maximum temperature legally allowed underground is 32, 5 degrees. A team member stops to test the methane gas level. Every miner knows and fears a methane explosion”.

The above corresponds with literature that miners work under conditions that increase the experience of fear and emotional distress, knowing that death is a reality and it could occur any minute. This theme therefore examined feelings of mineworkers with regard to misfortune in these dangerous working places.

### ***3.7. DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSS AND INTERPRETATION***

Data collection was my responsibility as a researcher. The decision not to use a fieldworker was based on the following observations: (a) I knew the literature very well and as such it was easy for me to guide the interview, (b) the topic was very sensitive, (c) I was in a position to correct respondents' misunderstanding of questions, (d) to probe more and lastly, (e) I was able to answer questions respondents posed to me.

All interviews were conducted in a face-to-face situation. Transcriptions took place shortly after the interviews. Question and responses were translated into English during the transcription process. The data was sorted into themes. The process entailed the collection of data from the field, sorting the data into different themes, the formatting of data into a story and writing a qualitative report. The interpretation of the findings is presented in the next chapter.

### ***3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION***

The Rand Afrikaans University ethics committee, after assessing my proposal, approved that the research could be conducted ensuring that human rights and interests are being protected and that the risks faced by human participants are minimal.

Moral ethical issues were considered before, during and after the research as the study was on the perceptions and experiences of human beings. The respondents were assured of their anonymity and respondents were treated with care, respect and awareness of their vulnerabilities. Pseudonyms were used for the purposes of this research. Respondents were included in this study with consent of each individual. As respondents were required to reveal personal information about themselves, information that may be unknown to their friends and families, participation in this research was voluntary. Respondents were assured that accepting and/or refusing participation in this study will not in any way affect their personal lives, family or work live. It was clearly stated that the personal information of each respondent will not be made known to the shaft management and hospital. Respondents were asked not to reveal information they feel embarrassed to talk about or feel uncomfortable with. The respondents were also assured of anonymity of the study in other words

their names were not used for the research. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of responses.

The ethical publishing practices were also adhered to. These include the following: appropriate references of authors of publication used, prohibition and rejection of any form of plagiarism and no simultaneous submission of manuscripts (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:520-526). Respondents were told that as a researcher I have an obligation to report research findings by publications and presentations in conferences. It was also stated to the respondents that the National Research Foundation (NRF) and RAU funded this project and as such, I have a responsibility to these institutions.

### ***3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY***

This study had more limitations than anticipated. Firstly, there is limited academic research that has been conducted on misfortune in the mines per se. Research conducted on misfortune elsewhere were very old and outdated so it is possible that this study has omitted recent findings that could have contributed a lot.

The procedures to gain access to both Doornkop and the hospital took a long time before being granted permission to interview mine workers. It took at least five weeks to three months.

The other major limitation was terminology. Certain terms used in African languages are very difficult to translate into English. Even if one tries to provide explanation of their meaning, they do not make sense, as is the case of their use in the original language.

The study targeted twenty respondents of which only seventeen respondents were reached. Some respondents were secretive about their knowledge of misfortune. Others, because of the setting, (especially in hospital where interviews were conducted inside the wards with other patients and workers listening) made them shy or too scared to talk openly about their experiences. Again all the respondents interviewed refused to talk to the researcher alone due to lack of trust, so that meant that there was a need to have a NUM shopsteward present at all interviews. That limited the study because it meant interviews could only be conducted during the time the shopsteward was available. One example is where a shopsteward had to go home for a week in November which meant that no interviews could take place during his

absence. Workers did not refuse to talk to the researcher alone because of fear, as they were told in the general meeting prior that they should expect someone to conduct his fieldwork in the hostel. It was because they lacked trust as one disclosed that there are people who come with such motives and at the end of the day they will discover money being deducted from their salaries and when they enquire they will be told that they joined a certain organisation or insurance so that is why they wanted their leader to confirm the researchers' objectives.

Workers at Doornkop shaft were available on certain times and days which were very difficult for a researcher to be able to target such times. In other cases workers attended a safety rally in Coeke 2 (another Harmony gold shaft not far from Doornkop). It was learned that timing had a negative impact on this research because, in most cases, miners were drunk during weekends, and some attended other recreational activities. In the hostel, respondents were unavailable to grant permission for interviews because of their working hours/ shifts. Many of them worked at night and during the day they would be asleep and not allow any visitors in their rooms. Some workers who were off duty would visit their relatives in the nearby townships. Some miners were busy cleaning their rooms and doing laundry and refused to be interviewed during that time.

In the hospital the same thing happened in as far as no respondent agreed to be interviewed without the presence of either a NUM shopsteward or a nurse. Again that could have posed an intimidation to workers not to disclose all information as much as they could if we were alone. The timing in the hospital was also a problem for example tea times, lunch times, times for medication, patients being prepared to go to theatre, nurses availability to come to all wards and ensuring that researchers' presence is not interfering with their job.

The study was also limited by the fact that an opportunity to go underground to witness the most dangerous places that are strongly associated with misfortune by workers, was not secured. That means that the study could only mention places like "table", "square", "sides" to name few, - the researcher could only draw a mind picture of them being unable to go underground.

With regard to limitations relating to the characteristics of the sample, it should be noted that the study was also limited or biased in the sense that respondents were males with only female nurses being interviewed.

Financial assistance was another key issue. After the research money that was allocated got stolen, it took about eight weeks before it was replaced and that hindered the research process.

### ***3.10. CONCLUSION***

This chapter provided a discussion of the research methodology that was utilised during the fieldwork. This study chose a qualitative research design. The procedure of gaining access to the target population was also highlighted. In addition sampling techniques were identified and explained in this chapter. Data collection techniques, data collection, analysis and interpretation were also discussed. Themes that were investigated during the fieldwork, as drawn from the literature review, were also discussed.

Research findings are discussed in the next chapter.



## **4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### ***4.1. INTRODUCTION***

This chapter outlines information collected during the fieldwork process. The chapter presents information in accordance with the themes outlined in the previous chapter. As indicated elsewhere, the literature review in chapter two was used as a guide to develop themes. To answer the research question, the interview data was grouped together in terms of the identified themes. It should be noted that it was during data analysis that new themes were discovered and explored. In other words, the themes used in the previous chapter were generated from the literature review and newly developed themes were based on the information collected during the fieldwork.

Data was collected in five South African languages, i.e. Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Setswana and English. Data collected in African languages was later transcribed and translated into English.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the profile of the respondents. The importance of this section is that it familiarises the reader with personal information of the respondents. It explains to the reader the types of people that were interviewed. Section two addresses the themes that were explored during the fieldwork including the new themes which were developed based on the data itself. These themes are discussed in such a way as to answer the research question.

### ***4.2. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS***

The main objective of this section is to provide a clear picture of the different characteristics of the respondents involved in this research. In trying to achieve this objective, readers are provided with respondents' personal details. This section will address the following biographical characteristics of the respondents: occupation, gender, religious and ancestral beliefs, length of employment in the mine, place of origin and residence.

#### 4.2.1. Occupation/ jobs

The target group of the study was mine workers at Harmony Gold mine in the Doornkop shaft. Nine respondents (mineworkers) were interviewed in Doornkop shaft and eight (hospitalised mineworkers) were interviewed at Sir Albert Medical Centre in Randfontein. The respondents interviewed at the hospital were from other Harmony Gold shafts. The sample also included an interview with a mine social worker, Mr. Jerry Zintwana and four nurses in three different wards. The first ward was called medical 2 and admitted patients with TB, Pneumonia and diarrhoea. The second was an orthopaedic ward, admitting patients with back pains and spinal problems resulting from injury. The third is the surgical ward, where patients go for operations. All four nurses were females. Table 1 below represents the descriptive statistics of all the respondents.

**Table 4:1: Descriptive statistics of all the respondents: Occupations**

Mineworkers		Nurses	Social worker	Total
Working	Hospitalised			
9	8	4	1	22

#### 4.2.2. Gender

Gender was not a critical issue to discuss in this study, however, seventeen male miners were interviewed. Female miners were excluded from this study because they were not within easy reach. While they worked in the mines, they tended to live in the township because of lack of accommodation at the mine. Despite these shortcomings, my sample included four female nurses and eighteen (including the male social worker) men.

### 4.2.3. Religious affiliation

The main aim of this section was to determine respondents' religious affiliation. The focus was on their belief systems not the denomination per se. Of the seventeen male workers, one described himself as a born again Christian and was not into ancestral worship. Two respondents were from the Zion Christian religion, while the rest believed in both God and the ancestors. Sixteen respondents stated that they still worshipped their ancestors and prayed to God as well. Table 2 below provides the number of respondents as per religious affiliation.

**Table 4:2: Number of respondents per religious affiliation**

<b>Christian</b>	<b>Zion Christian</b>	<b>God and Ancestors</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	2	14	17

### 4.2.4. Number of years employed at the mine

Of the 17 respondents who were mineworkers, six said that they had worked in the mine for ten years or less. They were also the youngest respondents in my sample. The remaining male respondents' work experience ranges from eleven to twenty-seven years in the mines, and they tended to be oldest as well in terms of age. In terms of the place of work, twelve miners were at the time of the interview working underground, while four were despatched to other areas because of promotions and/or sicknesses.

The reasons for these differences are outlined in the research analysis chapter.

### 4.2.5. Place of origin and mother tongue (home language)

Of the 17 male respondents, who were mineworkers, eleven were from the Eastern Cape and spoke Xhosa, one was from Lesotho and spoke Sesotho, one was from the North West and spoke Setswana. Three respondents were from KwaZulu Natal and spoke Zulu and one respondent was from Mozambique and was also interviewed in Zulu. Home languages are represented in Table 3 below. Although they came from

different parts of the country and different countries their experiences and interpretations of misfortune were all the same or were related. The nurses and social worker profile were not asked, as that was not significant for this study.

**Table 4:3: Representation of the home language and place of origin**

Home language	Place of origin	Number of respondents	Total
Sotho	Lesotho	1	1
Tswana	North West	1	1
Zulu	KwaZulu Natal	3	3
Xhosa	Eastern Cape	11	11
Unknown	Mozambique	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>

#### 4.2.6. Residence

Respondents from Doornkop shaft stayed in the male hostel. There are other hostels in the nearby vicinity where married people stay with their families but the interviews were only conducted in single sex hostel. The regulations of the hostel are that they are not allowed to bring women along for overnight visits. However, other workers reported that if their room mates are on night shifts they do bring women along more especially over the weekends. In each room there are three single beds sized two meters long and 0,8 meters wide, which was almost the size of a door. Each room accommodated three mineworkers. Workers who live in the hostels have no privacy and conditions in these hostels are unfavourable (NUM Housing Booklet, 1999:9-42). They share the bathrooms, toilets and for those workers who prefer their own catering they have communal kitchens in the hostels. Other than that there is a kitchen for the hostel where all workers get their food in certain times and they have to produce certain cards. The money for catering is deducted from their salaries. In this hostel one would see semi naked men going around or doing their laundry. Messages around are still written in *fanakalo* language as a way of catering for all languages. NUM shop stewards stay in hostels as well and workers often visit them for work and/ or

accommodation related problems and advice. There is also a bar in the hostel, and the night before an interview with the NUM shopsteward, he reported that a man had been stabbed and was in a critical condition at the hospital. The shopsteward did not regard this as a serious case. The hostel also has a clinic that transfers people to the Sir Albert Medical Centre which is about ten kilometres away. Hostels look very attractive and beautiful from outside because of its modern building like urban flats and they have two levels.

#### **4.2.7. Conclusion**

This section provided an overview of the profile of the respondents. It should be noted that not every single detail was highlighted here. In order to answer the research question at the beginning of this mini-dissertation the next section discusses the field results in terms of a number of themes.

### ***4.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS: MINeworkERS EXPLANATIONS REGARDING MISFORTUNE***

#### **4.3.1. Introduction**

This section deals with the perceptions of the respondents regarding misfortune. The responses were recorded in terms of themes. There are new themes that have emerged during data analysis and some of these themes are the same as the ones discussed in the previous chapter. These themes are as follows: types of misfortune experienced, relationship between misfortune and ancestors, relationship between misfortune and witchcraft, protection mechanisms against misfortune, ancestral rituals, preferred medical treatment, dangerous places in the mine and trauma and consequences of witnessing mine accidents, poisoning and misfortune in family members.

#### **4.3.2. Types of misfortune experienced**

Respondents expressed different kinds of misfortune as experienced from childhood to adulthood. Almost all these respondents had a bad experience which they interpreted as misfortune. According to their responses any sufferings that they had to

undergo were merely a sign of misfortune. Although the causes of these misfortunes were different (and depended mostly on their background, religion and age) they all believed in the existence of misfortune. Three different types of misfortune will be discussed here as identified by respondents and they are: motor vehicle accidents, poor health conditions and illness and job-related accidents.

#### **4.3.2.1. Motor vehicle accidents**

This subheading discusses misfortunes related to motor vehicle accidents. For example, Ntando<sup>10</sup> a mine worker from the Doornkop mine explained his misfortune in the following manner:

‘In December last year, when I was going home, I was pulled out of the car alone...the car was in motion and the doors were locked but they suddenly opened and I was thrown out by the head and got help from other people in the car who held me back before I could be injured’.

Researcher: What do you think caused that?

Ntando: ‘I am not sure what caused that or to call it a misfortune or what, but after that I just lost my job’.

The respondent believed that he had experienced misfortune because not so long ago he was moved from working underground to the hostel kitchen due to his poor health condition after visiting home.

Cirha, a respondent from the Coeke 2 shaft was also involved in an accident and his explanation is as follows:

‘I was shot in the arm but survived by God’s will... In another incident, I was involved in a accident where the taxi capsized numerous times, but still I survived...I was also involved in an accident that affected my foot’.

#### **4.3.2.2. Poor health conditions and illness**

This subheading focuses on health conditions and illness associated with misfortune.

Ntando (from Doornkop) described his condition as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> The names used in this chapter are pseudonyms as indicated in the previous chapter

‘I had a nose bleed and also bled from the mouth. It started when I was underground, and as times went on it proceeded to the neck and forehead. Then I became dizzy or have fits’.

This man (Ntando) is not sure about the cause of the illness but suspects that it is witchcraft. Senzo (from Doornkop) had a similar experience:

‘...Talking about my health I was possessed (*ndithwetyulwa*) ...at that time I was very weak and I was trying my best but could not succeed. I tried spending money but couldn’t get help...I lost weight rapidly and could not stand straight...I had stomach problems and had to ensure that I did not eat too much or would have stomach cramps. If I skipped a meal, I would have severe stomach pains and feel like I had been poisoned although [I am] not sure how it got into my stomach...when I started realizing my *ukuthwetyulwa* I started losing hair in my head...then if we sitting in a place as two people when third person comes I suddenly lose enjoyment when the fourth come I had to leave because I could not stand company of many people I always preferred to be alone or only two people...then one day I realised that my eyelids are very long immediately I learnt that something is going on in me and my condition was changing, one night it was difficult for me to sleep till the morning’.

The above quote shows that respondents were capable of defining their misfortune experiences as they happened. This as suggested by literature that there are kinds of sicknesses that would be associated with misfortune and the above quotes points out exactly that. The other kind of misfortune again was illness that Joshua (from Coeke 2 originally from Mozambique) had. He said:

‘I have a sickness that started in 2003 where I developed itchy black blisters that resulted in swollen feet and I now can’t walk and my hands are swollen as well and as such my fingers are not working’

#### **4.3.2.3. Job-related accidents**

Tshepo (in hospital, from West rand) was involved in a mine accident while underground in 1999. He expressed his experiences as follows:

‘I was injured here in the ear (pointing to the ear) then I went for [an] operation in my left ear...this accident happened underground

in the mine ...you see the big door, when I was opening it those at the back, when they also opened it made it come so strong then it dragged me and pushed me in that manner my ear was affected and that was in 1999’.

The above explanations indicate the differences or diversity of experiences of misfortune by mineworkers. Lwazi (from Doornkop) has had accidents underground a few times and he expressed his story as follows:

‘...The stone beat me when I was underground. I was not injured but I just had some wounds, then I was booked three days off work. Those are misfortunes that happened to me. In this mine misfortunes that I usually experience are that I work say for three months then in the fourth month I will be beaten by stone...but I am the man that protects himself, you will find out that that stone was suppose to kill me but because I am protected, I survived’.

This quote suggests the vulnerabilities of miners to accidents in such a way that they have accepted their condition and try other means to ensure that they are not hurt badly. People who experienced mine accidents seem to explain them as a kind of misfortune and seem to be more vulnerable to accidents with a minimal assistance from the mine. Another respondent Sphiwo (in hospital from Evanda) described his experience in the following way:

‘I was injured here in the leg (pointing by brushing his leg) in 1990. I was injured while underground by the mine bicycle however I was not critically injured but I was hospitalised for that accident’.

In conclusion and linking the findings reported in this section to the relevant literature, Hirst (1990) has listed various types of misfortune that one can experience e.g. unemployment, lost property, accidents and injury, as well as conflicts in domestic groups or among co-workers. The findings of the project complement the literature. Some miners have experienced one or more of these forms identified by Hirst. Motor vehicle accidents are another type of misfortune that some workers have experienced. Ntando and Cirha were both involved in motor vehicle accidents, which they explain as a kind of misfortune.

Poor health conditions and illness are also identified as another form of misfortune. The last form of misfortune is job related accidents that mineworkers have been involved in. Mine workers believed in different causes of misfortune. As argued by Hammond-Tooke, (1975) and Ngubane, (1977) ancestors, witchcraft and pollution

provide an explanatory theory of evil and misfortune. One or more of these forms were identified as the cause of misfortune experienced by these miners. Swantz (1989:110) indicated that “...regardless of whether misfortune comes in the form of snake bite, a car accident, or a broken arm or leg, the *mnganga*<sup>11</sup> reaffirms the belief that accidents do not just happen, but that all unfortunate events have a cause and that the cause is nearly always the work of sorcery”. This implies that any type of misfortune would in most cases be associated with witchcraft or sorcery. It is also crucial to mention the strong link between types of misfortunes experienced by mineworkers and the categories of misfortune as discussed by Whyte (1997). These categories are failures of health, failures of prosperity, failures of gender and failures of personal safety.

This theme has revealed that the main kinds of misfortune that miners have experienced range from illnesses to accidents. However, accidents differ because some happen in the mine while others happen outside the working environment. In addition, this theme suggests that these types of illness while unique are similar. The explanations of these sicknesses always differed from respondent to respondent, religion, and background played a central role in forming up such explanations. Therefore, in regard to this theme, findings complement the theory that was reviewed in chapter two of this mini-dissertation explaining some types of sickness regarded as misfortune. It also agrees with the fact that mine accidents and any other accidents can and are regarded as a kind of misfortune.

#### **4.3.3. Relationship between misfortune and ancestors**

The literature has suggested that ancestors are believed to take care of their following generations' welfare, but they are capable of sending illnesses and misfortune if angered. Thus an ancestor could bring about sickness and misfortune (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:47). Almost all my respondents had agreed that there is a relationship between ancestors and misfortune. They also believed that fear and respect of ancestors are key for protection against misfortune. To these respondents ancestors can as well protect one from accidents, witchcraft and sicknesses. This theme will be

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<sup>11</sup> Swahili word for medicine man in Dar es Salaam

discussed in terms of two categories i.e. ancestors as initiators of misfortune as a form of punishment and ancestors as protectors against misfortune.

#### **4.3.3.1. Ancestors as initiators of misfortune as a form of punishment**

Tshepo (from West rand mine) who has had many misfortunes, starting from injury in the ear that happened underground, stated that he strongly felt that his experience was misfortune related. That is the indication of experience as a form of ancestral punishment because:

‘It’s a misfortune because if you don’t do the right things to your ancestors then they do send such misfortunes...yes I was not doing for ancestors I did plan to but always failing then postpone it’.

Researcher: So who told you that you have to do an ancestral ritual?

Tshepo ‘I was told by my father that there were people called ancestors which means my grandfathers also I was told in church I attend Zion<sup>12</sup> so when I was there I was told that I am suppose to do the ritual for ancestors’.

This man has lost thirty three sheep that he had bought. He built a new house in Mafikeng leaving his home town Vryburg but never introduced the new house to his ancestors. He was recently supposed to attend the mine training centre when he was supposed to start on a Monday he was admitted to the hospital on Saturday before that Monday. He continued to express himself:

‘I think my ancestors are punishing me, they are not angry with me but they are showing me that I am suppose to do this (ancestral ritual)...so they are punishing me’.

Senzo (from Doornkop) strongly believes that there is a link between misfortunes and ancestors. He explained his thoughts as follows:

‘There is a link between the two because if you have misfortune you would realise that there is something you should do for ancestors. Because if you have survived these mine dangerous places you know that when you get home you need to thank your ancestors’.

Ntando (from Doornkop) also had similar explanations.He said:

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<sup>12</sup> Zion church is an umbrella name often used by different individual churches and/or denominations practising in the similar manner.

‘There is a link because ancestors need to be politely requested, you need to continue doing things for them. If you don’t like doing certain things then you can have misfortune’.

Lwazi (from Doornkop) believes that ancestors are capable of punishing disobedient descendants in his words he stated that:

‘When you don’t care for ancestors they will send you misfortune as a form of punishment. However, if they send you fortunes and you are happy but you don’t want to make them happy like you do they will punish you’.

This suggests that according to some respondents, ancestors can send illnesses and accidents as a form of punishment to their descendants. Ancestors are however, not always considered initiators of misfortune, they are also regarded as protectors against misfortune.

These answers point out that these respondents believed that those ancestors need people to humble themselves before them in requesting and expressing their gratitude. The above also suggests the existence of a belief that living descendants have a responsibility to their ancestors to ensure their continued protection.

#### **4.3.3.2. Ancestors as protectors against misfortune**

Jwarha (from Lebanon) was involved in a truck accident and he believed that his ancestors (*ndasindiswa ngamawethu*) saved him. In his own words, he expressed his feelings the following way:

‘After I fell under the truck and the *Sangoma* revealed to me that I was not suppose to survive under that truck but my ancestors saved me, I was meant to die.’

This illustrates that ancestors are not only believed to be capable of sending illness and accidents but they are also respected for they can save one from accidents. This is the reason why they are regarded as people taking care of their descendants.

Lwazi (from Doornkop) who was nearly stabbed in Durban also gave a similar explanation:

‘After I was nearly stabbed I went to a traditional healer and he told me that the accident I had in Durban was meant to kill me, I was

supposed to be stabbed to death but I was fortunate because my ancestors protected me.’

It seems that when people are not in a good relationship with their ancestors, it makes them vulnerable to the experience of misfortunes and being the target of witchcraft. Maintaining good relations with ancestors is considered as the best method to prevent misfortune [my narration]. According to Mkhize (from Doornkop):

‘...I have a belief that wherever I go I am not alone there is someone next to me that person I call him ancestor (*idlozi*) that means dead person. I believe that if I am not doing well concerning him, he will leave me whatever case it may be other dreams won’t be fulfilled...other people of my age have had many misfortunes because of living carelessly concerning ancestors’.

This suggests that people first have to have a belief in ancestors, respecting their forefathers and they will see rewards which are in this case protection against misfortunes. Andrew (from Doornkop) also shared the same views to a great extent. Below are Andrew’s thoughts:

‘When I look here in the mine, the ancestors can leave you and that makes you vulnerable to tragedies until you decide to go out to the places that you know. Then there they tell you it is your grandfather saying that you do not care, he does not see you. When he can not see you, it means you do not have an input at home, you think wherever you are it is the end of life’.

This respondent meant that people should always maintain good relations with his/her ancestors and when one gets home he should tell his ancestors and if you do not even offer a ritual so that makes ancestors to turn their back on your making you vulnerable to mine misfortunes.

In conclusion, as argued elsewhere, ancestors are believed to be capable of sending illnesses and misfortune if not well looked after and as such a belief in ancestors provides an explanation of sickness and misfortune (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:47). Ancestors have been identified as senders of misfortune as a form of punishment but also as protectors against misfortune as a form of incentive to faithful descendants.

In the literature Ngubane (1977:59) emphasised the importance of *ukukhomba inxiwa* ritual which is slaughtering a goat to show the ancestors the new home before moving in. Tshepo from Vryburg bought a new house in Mafikeng and could not

afford to introduce it to ancestors and as such he has been experiencing misfortunes which resulted in him being admitted to hospital and he believed that they have been sent by ancestors as a form of punishment. This man (Tshepo) was told by his father that he was supposed to do the ritual for ancestors. Lwazi also emphasised ancestors sending misfortune as a form of punishment when you fail to perform your ancestral ritual.

Ancestors are not only responsible for punishing their descendants, they are also believed to offer protection against misfortune. Ngubane (1977:51) indicated that the ancestors are believed to be concerned with the welfare of their descendants and without their protection they (descendants) become vulnerable to all sorts of misfortune and disease. Jwarha who survived a truck accident complements Ngubane when he stated that he believe that he was saved by his ancestors. The other case is Lwazi's story that was nearly stabbed to death in Durban but survived and also holds the belief that he was saved by his ancestors. These two cases provide a clear illustration of the belief that ancestors are always present to ensure safety and maintaining good health for their living descendants (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:63).

The theory also outlined that ancestors are believed to be omnipresent, brooding over the homestead and following their descendants wherever they go (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:63). Mkhize's case is a prime example of this explanation as he indicated that his ancestors are always next to him wherever he goes. This theme can be concluded by adding that ancestors are part of mine workers lives and the continued maintenance of good relations with them ensures protection and prevention of misfortune and diseases. This theme has highlighted important facts about relationship between misfortune and ancestors in the fact that respondents believed that if one is not maintaining good relations with his ancestors then they will send misfortune in the form of accidents and illness and also turn their back on them making them vulnerable to witchcraft and misfortune. It can be concluded that being punished by ancestors for one's careless living and them turning their back on one, is experienced as misfortune.

#### **4.3.4. Relationship between misfortune and witchcraft**

Hammond-Tooke (1989:73) argues that “...although the ancestor are believed to be the cause of some illness and misfortune, there is no doubt that the first reaction of most people to falling ill or experiencing trouble is to suspect witchcraft or sorcery”. The above quote illustrates the belief in a relationship between misfortune and witchcraft. It suggests that although there are ancestral misfortunes people always suspect witchcraft before realising that witchcraft can cause misfortune among them. This theme is presented in four categories: witchcraft creating vulnerability to the experience of misfortune, battle between witches and ancestors, no relationship between witchcraft and misfortune and poisoning.

##### **4.3.4.1. Witchcraft creating vulnerability to the experience of misfortune**

Siphiwo (from Evanda) a patient in the hospital believed that he was bewitched in the workplace by a jealous colleague. Senzo (from Doornkop) stated the following:

‘I would like to think they (misfortune and witchcraft) are the same with the above the way they happen because in most cases we regard misfortune as mainly caused by witchcraft then this witchcraft makes you vulnerable to misfortunes encountering funny things because you are being followed by certain things’.

This points out that witches are believed to be capable of sending misfortunes to people by casting their spells on targeted people. Andrew (from Doornkop) expressed his opinion this way:

‘I would say a relationship between these two is that, out of many people you get injured, that is not misfortune but witchcraft. Seeing that out of many people a big stone fall that was suppose to injure you does not and you get hit by a small one and get injured and see that the stone was not suppose to injure the person. When you look at the stone you see that it couldn’t have injured anyone but the person is injured’.

What this respondent was trying to explain was that misfortune caused by witchcraft can be distinguished from an ordinary accident. The fact that a very small stone can injure one person out of many people while a big stone can just fall and not a single person gets hurt shows that witchcraft was involved. The following respondents have

shared their stories that relate to illnesses they have and that they believe are caused by witchcraft. Ntando (from Doornkop) who was bleeding from the nose while working underground and nearly killed by a car, expressed that:

‘I don’t know what caused that but I would like to suspect that I was bewitched’.

This now outlines the believed capability of witches to send similar misfortunes as ancestors. Siphwo (from Evanda) who was injured underground, while riding underground bicycle, stated the similar experience as follows:

‘A person I was working with bewitched me in the workplace, because as black people we have jealous so that I should not be here he should be left alone. Then I consulted a traditional healer who stated that the problem is with this man and at the time when I consulted a traditional healer my legs and feet were swollen’.

The above two respondents’ responses indicate that people within the working environment are believed to be able to bewitch each other in trying to ensure job security more especially if they feel that they are not doing a very good job as compared to the other colleague. Andrew (from Doornkop) again expressed his experiences as follows:

‘Here at work I had a problem, there were two of us doing the same job (working together) and I trusted myself because I am qualified for the job. But I realised that although I know the job but I was not coping very well’.

Researcher: How?

Andrew: ‘I do not know. So after talking with friends, they told me to go to Midway in Soweto and see a person called Mswazi, he could solve my problem. But because I have good heart and I hate bad things I went there. When I went to this person (Mswazi) he told me that, the person who was bewitching me is from Lesotho. He went to see a traditional healer (*inyanga*) in Lesotho because he wanted the job I was doing to take it to him alone’.

When looking at other types of illnesses that are associated with witchcraft, Joshua (from Coeke 2) who was a patient in the hospital with swollen feet with black itching blisters believed that he walked over harmful substances (*umeqo/unyathelisile*) but is not sure. This links to the literature in as far as Ngubane (1977:26) is of the opinion that:

“The environment is not only polluted by undesirable tracks or by what discarded in healing. It is also made dangerous by sorcerers, who place noxious substances on a particular person’s pathway or scatter them along pathways to harm any passers-by, with a condition of *umeqo*”.

The above illustrates the condition of Joshua (from Coeke 2) who believes that his condition was caused by such noxious substances on the pathways. Sicelo (from Doornkop) also expressed the same story after being injured on the soccer field:

‘I went to a traditional healer (*ixhwele*) who told me that I had *ibekelo* meaning something I went over it’.

*Ibekelo* is the synonym of *umeqo*, in other words Sicelo (from Doornkop) was told by the traditional healer that he had walked over noxious substances. Themba (Coeke 2) has had many misfortunes starting by people bewitching his wife because he provided everything to her in such a way that the community saw her as a person who has everything in the community. The family was so jealous of her and that resulted in them (Themba and his family) relocating to another place and he is now being hospitalised for foot problem. He said:

‘I have not yet seen any misfortune...because of my foot problem I strongly believe that I am bewitched...the main reason why people bewitch me is jealousy they saw that I am prospering and now I can’t walk I have been in the hospital for two days’.

Although this man did not regard his condition as misfortune he believes that it is the result of witchcraft. Cirha (Coeke 2) also in hospital for foot problems stated that not so long ago he was involved in a mine accident during which his foot got injured and in his own words he believes its cause to be the following:

‘I was also involved in a mine accident that affected my foot and I don’t know why but I believe its witchcraft. The reason I believe that this is witchcraft is because God provides good, so bad things are coming from Satan and jealous people who only want good things to come to them only. People are jealous of me because of prosperity in my home’.

This old man who has been sick since 1986 said that the traditional healers said that the cause of his illness is evil spirits (*umeqo*).

The above respondents strongly believed that the illnesses and accidents they have experienced were a result of witchcraft. However, no one among them stated that he was bewitched because his ancestors have turned their back on him. Some of these respondents believe that people who bewitch them are jealous of them.

#### **4.3.4.2. Battle between witches and ancestors**

Mkhize (from Doornkop) states the following:

‘...To be bewitched is because you have a misfortune because the person next to you might be far because my belief is that when this person (ancestor) is next to me their (witches) medicine would not harm me’.

The above quote suggests that ancestors have more power than witches as they can protect their descendants against witchcraft. If ancestors have secured their living descendent it is believed that witches battle to reach that particular individual.

#### **4.3.4.3. No relationship between witchcraft and misfortune**

On a different note Dlamini (from Randfontein) who was a patient in hospital did not believe that the cause of his illness was witchcraft. In his own words he stated that:

‘According to me every bad thing has a name but the most bad cause like the one which led me to sleep here in hospital, if you can ask other people they will tell you that I am bewitched, *Ibhulelo* (the technique of placing harmful medicines and the victims walks over) and such things but when you look at other nations that do not know witchcraft and *umbhulelo* they also get sick for the same sickness and they refer to it with other names’.

What this man was trying to explain was that he was sick of a disease that was mostly associated with witchcraft by black people, but that other people who did not believe in witchcraft, also get sick of the same disease. This, according to him, indicates that his was not a case of witchcraft but just a natural disease. In other words people from different parts of the world could be attacked by the similar illness but attribute it to other causes than misfortune. He concluded by saying the following:

‘...I don’t believe its *umbhulelo* because even those that don’t know *umbhulelo* also get sick of this disease’.

Ngubane (1977:32) says “...the technique of placing harmful medicine is known as *umbhulelo*. This includes the medicines over which people “step”, therefore

contracting a condition known as *umeqo*. It also includes smearing harmful substances on to objects, which the victim is likely to touch, such as handle of a hoe or a plough or a stool. The harmful substances are believed to single out the victim if they have been mixed with his “body dirt” (i.e. his sweat, nails, or hair), or if his name is mentioned when they are placed. In such cases they harm the intended victim only. If there is no specific victim, anyone who is not properly strengthened can be harmed”.

#### **4.3.4.4. Poisoning**

The other form of illness related to witchcraft that most respondents have stated is that of poisoning. Poison could be put on victim’s food because of jealousy by someone you know and trust. Siphiwo (from Evanda) who was a patient in hospital believed that he was poisoned and in his own words he stated that:

‘I am poisoned right now, the way I think about it is I drank wet porridge (*amarhewu/ imbila*) because when I went to medical doctor at home he said I ate poison, at that time I had stomach pains, having continuous diarrhoea. I think I got this poison from that drink. I drank it in one of my family houses. Not sure if it was prepared for me beforehand or was done while I was there I don’t know but it was there I don’t know but it was directed to me because I only drank it no one else was given it. But because I was thirsty I could not notice that I was drinking alone. I think the reason is jealous, because you can’t see what this person wants, the person does not request what he/she wants’.

The interesting part about poisoning is that it is generally associated with women (by respondents) and on its own identified as a form of witchcraft. As the literature suggested, this is the most powerful and quickest way of eliminating the victim. Once inside the victim, anything can happen. People can be poisoned in different ways for different motives but the most popular reason for poisoning according to my respondents was jealousy. Andrew (from Doornkop) also stated that he was poisoned in the same way as Siphiwo (from Evanda), i.e. while drinking *amarhewu*. The other point coming out of the above two respondents is that they are being poisoned by family members that they know and are being threatened by their progress. Vusi (from Doornkop) who was also a victim of poisoning stated that:

‘Poisoning does exist. I remember in 1982 I had stomach problems at home, I started working in 1981 then my father took me to Cape

Town to a spiritual healer (*umthandazeli*) who told me that I was poisoned, they (witches) put grave soil in me...he told me I had ants (*imbovane*). This was done while I was asleep using *tikoloshe*'.

There are other diseases that are also associated with poisoning and as the literature has argued, even when a person is suffering of AIDS and being diagnosed by medical doctor, some people would still associate it with poisoning. Makhura (2004) quoted Moeti (45 years old from Phokeng) a mineworker who is HIV positive stated that in his words:

'...I use the traditional medicines for something I was bewitched with called *sejeso*, before I was bewitched with *sejeso*, I was clean, my blood was clean. After this *sejeso* they told me I had HIV. I think the person who bewitched me with *sejeso* did something again to give me HIV...all I know is that I got sick and I visited my traditional healer who told me I've been bewitched by *sejeso* and she gave me *muthi* and showed me how to use it. My other friend advised me to visit one of our doctors here at the hospital. The doctor just said I've got HIV. It was a shock. Before I had no *sejeso* and no HIV. Right now they tell me I have both. I really don't know. What I know is that there is witchcraft and there is AIDS'.

The above quote is not about showing lack of knowledge relating to AIDS but to indicate the seriousness of the belief in poisoning. To this person HIV came through poisoning and not sex. Some respondents although not yet victims of poisoning do believe in its existence and that it is dangerous.

To conclude: Believing in witchcraft and sorcery provides explanations for illnesses and misfortunes in some traditional societies (Allais & McKay, 1995:232). The literature also indicated that both witches and ancestors can cause illnesses and misfortune (Hammond-Tooke,1974:18). Sipiwo gave a good illustration of the above argument when he stated that he was in hospital because he was bewitched by a jealous colleague at work. It should be noted that it is believed that witches do battle with ancestors in some instances before reaching ancestors' descendants. Where ancestors have employed their protection, witches find it impossible to reach their intended victims. Mkhize (a respondent) complemented that argument when he indicated that to be bewitched is the result of ancestors being far away from you because if you are protected, witches cannot harm you.

The other form of witchcraft identified by the literature is poisoning. Some respondents have been poisoned before so they had first hand experience of this method. Ashforth (2001:130) indicated that poisoning is placed in a victim's food and if the witch is powerful the poisoning will be very strong as well. As much as all these respondents have been poisoned, they were fortunate because they survived it.

It is also crucial to indicate the link between poisoning and HIV/AIDS as identified by one respondent in a study by Makhura (2004).

The above theme has outlined that mineworkers strongly associate their kinds of illness with witchcraft as well as accidents they have had. Although not all of them saw it as misfortune they believed that they have been bewitched. What also came up in this theme is the similarity of all those that are in hospital with a foot problem, which they associate with *umeqo*. The extent of their foot problem of course differs but the explanations, although different, are related to a larger extent. In conclusion this theme has complemented the literature on the relationship between misfortune and witchcraft.

#### **4.3.5. Protection mechanisms**

The literature has suggested that people protect themselves against misfortune, accidents or witchcraft by the operation known as *ukuqiniswa*. Almost all the respondents had their own way of protecting themselves against the vulnerability to misfortune. This section seeks to explore such different mechanisms that miners apply to protect themselves. Three protection mechanisms will be discussed in this section, i.e. traditional medicine, religion and a combination of traditional medicine and religion. The literature has also highlighted that traditional medicine is the most preferred way of protecting one against misfortune.

##### **4.3.5.1. Traditional medicine**

Jwarha (from Lebanon) indicated that traditional medicine is very important for protection. He expressed that:

‘When protecting myself I have to take a man (traditional healer) I trust to do things the way I see them to protect my body and my children using *muthi*’.

This extends the explanation of protection for the miner to include his children as well. Jwarha (from Lebanon) shares the same idea when he said he protects himself by *ukuchazwa/ukuqiniswa* as a protection mechanism helping God. This mechanism is performed by a traditional healer in the form of using razor blade in the skin joints and some black thick medication for protection. Lwazi (from Doornkop) illustrated his protection mechanisms this way:

‘I believe in the Xhosa medicine maybe washing medicine when going to work and also use it to body lotion (*ukuthambisa*). Before going to work I take my *muthi* and seal it in my body and then I have one there (underground) to protect me and I am doing one job I don’t change and the are minor accidents that happen to me while I am underground but they don’t work because I am protected. I get all medicine in the Xhosa healers even in other ethnic groups but as long as it is traditional medicine. The most working one is the one I am using here in the working place because there are many accidents in the mine I take my *muthi* and put it in that place I am working in because that is the most dangerous place. ...At home there was lightning then my sister was affected, then I learnt that it was directed to me but because I am a protected man I escaped it and she died and I was saved’.

The above respondent illustrates that he did not only have medicine to wash with and use it as a body lotion. He also has another kind of medicine underground that works as a watch dog for any accidents or misfortunes. By the way, when he explained this (during interview) he showed passion and confidence in traditional medicine. Senzo (from Doornkop) expressed his protection mechanisms as follows:

‘Like an ordinary black man when you should have a man treating you then it will have some pieces of traditional medicine saying these should always be in your bag, ensure that they don’t leave your bag so you will be safe when inside you bag. When you see that you are encountering a problem or having an argument with someone at work like manager/ supervisor then chew this *muthi* so that your things go smooth...someone uses a belt here in the arm so that if there is something to happen to him the belt should tell the person by being itching then he would realise that in this place there is an accident going to affect me then would leave the place’.

The above respondent illustrates the diversity of protection mechanisms that miners apply. Ntando (from Doornkop) also shares the same views to a large extent. Below are his explanations:

‘I protect myself by traditional medicine by vomiting (*ukuphalaza*) and bath steaming (*ukufutha*)’.

#### **4.3.5.2. Religion**

It has emerged that there are two forms of religion in this subsection: they are Christian related religion and ancestral religious rituals.

##### **4.3.5.2.1. Christian related religion**

This subsection provides findings related to the use of Christianity as a form of protection against misfortune.

Andrew (from Doornkop) also shared the following in relation to misfortune and religion:

‘As a worker here, I trust God, my father and my grandfather are there so I won’t get injured with them watching over and I have put them in a place that they deserve and when I have a problem I go out there even if I am not at home. I take time out and am alone, sit somewhere and talk to them and after that, I usually see the difference in whatever that was bothering me. It changes it becomes better because I have spoken to them and that day I sleep peacefully. I sometimes even dream as if I am at home. What I am trying to say is you can do whatever you do but don’t forget *muthi*’.

The above quote indicate the importance of trusting in God and continued communication with ancestors and it also highlights the fact that one does not always have to slaughter an animal. One could talk to ancestors and seek protection by merely talking to them and believe that things will change.

#### 4.3.5.2.2. Ancestral religious rituals that prevent misfortune

The literature has suggested a number of rituals that are offered in order to prevent misfortune as a result of ancestral anger. As argued elsewhere, if descendants are not offering sacrifices to ancestors, they (ancestors), could turn their back on them and could punish them. This theme will outline various rituals that mineworkers offer as preventive method. It was argued in the literature that when ancestors turn their back on the living they become prone to accidents, witchcraft and misfortunes. These rituals are not only important to prevent misfortune at work but also in their lives in general. When I interviewed Mkhize (from Doornkop) he expressed his opinion this way:

‘I have to thank to live according to my family customs I have to slaughter example when I arrived at home from Johannesburg I have to thank my ancestors for looking after me until I came back, maybe thank them because all my children are still alive, or else they have studied well now its time I should thank ancestors because if I don’t do thanksgiving they might leave me...the most important ritual I have done for ancestors was to bring my father home as he died in a bad manner (during IFP and ANC violence in Natal) by accident, so I did a ritual to wash his wounds (*ukusulwa amanxeba*) to avoid the spear coming back home as my belief, then I did a ritual of bringing him home’.

Researcher: How do you wash wounds?

Mkhize: ‘The way I know it at home we slaughter an animal a goat and then with that goat you take it to the place where the accident occurred then we speak (*ukushweleza*) and sprinkle blood then we take blood to wash the household in that manner then we washed wounds. Wounds should not go on’.

This outlines again the diversity of ancestral rituals that are offered in order to prevent misfortune. As the above respondent has outlined, not offering that ritual might lead to ancestors leaving him, which would make him prone to accidents or misfortunes. According to this respondent this is a valuable ritual and following correct procedures should do it. Senzo (from Doornkop) stated the most important components of such ancestral rituals:

‘The most important thing is to speak (*ukuthetha*) when you do such things, if you can look by the traditional way, speaking solves traditional barriers. Whatever you are going to do if there was no word spoken in that event you are doing then your things will not go right but if you speak for it, it will go according to its intended way in other words in everything we do there should be a speech...this happens in the cattle byre according to tradition...traditional beer should be there as well, the animal to be slaughtered should also be standing there maybe sheep, goat or and cattle, so the speaker will emphasise that you are offering this that is standing there because of protection they (ancestors) have done to you so you are thankful to them by this’.

Mkhize (from Doornkop) emphasised the importance of passing blood in any ancestral ritual he expressed the following:

‘It is very important to slaughter because all rituals need blood even the bible witnesses that you would never inherit heavens’ kingdom without passing in the blood, which is the blood of Jesus in that manner blood is very crucial’.

As literature suggested, there are crucial rituals that miners perform to prevent misfortune and Lwazi (from Doornkop) agrees with that and in his own words he said:

‘When I am about to leave home for the mines I believe that I should not sleep in my room but sleep in the big room (*endlini enkulu*) for ancestors then in the morning I take my bag and put it by the cattle byre (*phambi kwenkundla*) then I will speak. I will tell them that I am now leaving for Gauteng so I would like to request you to protect me as you always protect me. I sleep in that room because I believe when I am about to leave they should look at me. Also when I arrive at home in the first day I will sleep in the same room then on the second day I go back to my own room. I am about to go home and when I get there I will slaughter a sheep to thank my ancestors. Thanking them for finding employment and also getting everything I need’.

Lwazi (from Doornkop) indicated the importance of respecting traditions and doing what one is expected to do for his ancestors avoiding punishment. Andrew (from Doornkop) also agrees with the previous respondents on the importance of ancestral

rituals as a protective and preventive method against misfortune. In his own words, he explained that:

‘For the ancestors to protect you, the most important thing to do is to slaughter a goat for them. A goat to bring them home (*ukubuyisa*) from wherever they are buried, after bringing them home there will be a difference. If you don’t see a difference, do not rush things by slaughtering another goat. Try and make the traditional beer (*umqombothi*) and talk to them from the cattle byre or next to their graves. After the goat and your things are going according to plan, that is getting things that you never thought you would, you must call your family and do *isheshegu*. This calls for all the relatives to be there, because now this does not only heal you but the whole family. This ceremony takes about a week. It takes two days for the beer, and then you go with the elders to where the graves are. When you get there, you must say all your complaints, everyone must ask for whatever the person would like to have. After everybody has asked for something, on the third day a cow must be slaughtered, but before you slaughter you must all get out of the house singing and dancing. The most important thing about the cow is that it must bellow. If it doesn’t, then it means there is something that you did wrong so the ancestors are not accepting the cow. If it does bellow then all the people have to go down and have a bucket of traditional beer to drink. After that the cow can be cut into pieces, and then there is meat meant for family only, that is the forward right limb of the cow (*umkhono*) must be cooked first and be eaten by family members only. There are special tree branches that the meat must be put on. This tree is called *umthathi*. After every family member has eaten the meat, that which is leftover can be taken into the house and people must sing to show that what they are doing is going well’.

Researcher: How many times have you done *isheshegu*?

Lwazi: ‘I have done it two times’.

This seems to be another important ritual that all mineworkers that I spoke to from Transkei seem to perform. Those who have not yet done so are planning to do it very soon. What I realised from these respondents is that after performing these rituals they don’t only believe that they are protected from evil spirits or misfortunes but that they

are also spiritually healed. In other words ancestral rituals are another form of healing to them. Jwarha (from Lebanon) who has recently survived a truck, shares the above views and he expressed his feelings this way:

‘I do Xhosa rituals...its important as I am here survived the truck accident so when I am financially viable I will take my children to go home to thank my home ancestors...its important to pray first and prepare alcohol then tell them what I have for them...it makes me healthy (healed) I had bees at home here then others came as well and I also left bees at home as well then we realised we need to prepare home brewed beer here at home...here in Johannesburg then after we did the beer and drank it the bees came in front of the house (*ebaleni*) then they peacefully left.

Researcher: What is the meaning of bees?

Jwarha: Bees are home people (*ngabantu bekhaya*) because at home they are also there because when I went home I found out that a cattle was slaughtered to apologise (*ukungxengxeza*) to them (bees)’.

The above respondent highlighted the healing that was available in traditional rituals on the other hand; it reveals the bees as symbolises ancestors. In this sense if bees are within the family that means ancestors are not happy about something that is why a ritual would be done to apologise to ancestors. Dlamini (from Randfontein) also highlighted the fact that there are certain rituals that are offered for healing purposes. In his own words he said:

‘When the wife died you need *isidwaba* and to bring her at home and when a man has died its like an ordinary ritual of washing people so it’s the *isihlangu* of the man when he died and be bought home...those are things I am suppose to do to those that had passed away’.

Researcher: How crucial are these rituals in your opinion?

Dlamini ‘It heals and makes your mind not to think that you have a mistake because it is very sad to blame yourself saying there is something I couldn’t do and that alone punishes you in your mind and puts you in a position where you become vulnerable to anything’.

That is another sign of healing which is available in certain rituals. Dlamini (from Randfontein) highlights that such rituals clear you mind and whatever happens to you afterwards you would not blame yourself saying I wish I did this and that maybe this would not have happened.

Siphiwo (from Evanda) stated in his own words that:

‘When I do rituals I slaughter a goat and prepare alcohol. The reason I do that is because of superstitions (*iinkolelo*) because my grandfather said so as a person who believes in traditions I should offer them. I see it better because since I did the ritual I have not yet experienced any misfortune. But I can’t say its God or ancestors’.

Siphiwo (from Evanda) is the example of few blacks that offer rituals as a form of tradition because grandfathers did it so as their fathers so they should as well do them. To him they don’t have a significant role except to do them (rituals) as the family does. Also the fact that he is uncertain about who actually prevents misfortunes: God or ancestors. The above points out that although ancestral rituals are offered their importance differs as per individual. On the other hand Themba (from Coeke 2) expressed his views this way:

‘I always do ancestral rituals and important things to be done are talking to them and I strongly believe in that. I am sure that God and ancestors protect me’.

The above respondent and others highlight the fact that ancestral rituals are not only offered as a preventive measure against misfortune but also as a protection mechanism. This complements with the literature when it argued that ancestors are capable of protecting their descendants and for preventing misfortunes befalling their descendants.

#### **4.3.5.3. Combination of traditional medicine and religion**

Not all mineworkers rely however, on ancestors for prevention and protection. Teboho (from Lesotho, mine unknown) does offer to ancestors seeking protection and also prays to God. But he also goes to traditional healer to get protection medication. This can be said that traditional medicine complements whatever protection ancestors could provide and God. One cannot therefore conclude that Teboho is not confident

enough of ancestral protection and of God when he also uses traditional medicine for the same purpose of protection

Sicelo (from Doornkop) stated his belief this way:

‘The way I protect my self here is by asking my ancestors and God’.

That suggests that it is believed that both God and ancestors are capable of protecting.

Siphiwo (from Evanda) stated that:

‘I protect myself by using *muthi* and praying. If you have *umeqo* you get *iintsizi zomeqo* and I also undergo *ukuchazwa*’.

The only difference with this respondent is that he got all his protective material from the church regarded as *iziwasho* (something to wash with). Another respondent Mkhize (from Doornkop) stated his protection mechanisms this way:

‘...I mainly rely on ancestor protection. By the law before I go underground I have many things that I should do to prevent accidents...if I have psychological problems I need to consult social workers to seek help not to underground with some problems in mind. I use candles, water and twine (*intambo*) to protect myself from evil spirits not to call it misfortune because maybe interpretation might not be the same’.

In conclusion, the Centre for Health Policy (2000) has argued that traditional healers are the best health care choice of the majority of black South Africans because it has been estimated that about 80% of the African population use traditional healers in specific situations. The majority of respondents identified themselves with the continued use of traditional medicine. Mineworkers in this project argued that they use traditional medicine to protect themselves under the difficult and dangerous working conditions. The literature has also indicated that people often protect themselves against misfortune by the operation known as *ukuqiniswa*. Jwarha is a good illustration performing this operation. Traditional medicine does not only protect against witchcraft and misfortune but it is also recommended against lightning.

Religion also plays a crucial part in offering protection against misfortune. Most respondents believe in both ancestors and God with the combination of traditional medicine. The Zion Christian members get washing medication in church to ensure protection as well. As argued by Moodie (1994) that mineworkers always seek any kind of protection mechanism that would complement help from God.

The above theme has outlined different methods that mineworkers apply as a protective measure against misfortune in the form of accidents, illness and or evil spirits. The most important protective mechanism raised to this point is using traditional medicine and *ukuchazwa*. Others also rely on ancestral protection and God in the form of prayer. It also illustrates how mineworkers respect and practice their traditions in the workplace. The above theme has also highlighted that even churches also offer some protection mechanisms although not referred specifically as for misfortune but people get some material for protection purposes. This theme has complemented theory to a larger extent.

#### **4.3.6. Preference of traditional medicine for misfortune related illness**

Respondents identified different preferences when it came to treatment if misfortune related illness. These different forms are traditional medicine, combination of traditional medicine and God and role of traditional healers in healing.

##### **4.3.6.1 Traditional medicine**



The literature suggested that traditional medicine is regarded as a preferred medical treatment for sicknesses in the mine or by black people in general (The Centre for Health Policy (2000)). Most of my respondents reported that it has been their tradition to believe in the power of traditional medicine in healing any disease. Of course if its ancestral misfortune they would offer sacrifices as indicated in the previous theme. What was most interesting even the patients in hospital seem to have more confidence in traditional medicine than in hospital treatment. Cirha (Coeke 2), who is in hospital and has been diagnosed with something under the nail of his big toe and had to undergo an operation stated that:

‘Traditional healer said its evil spirit *umego* and the traditional healer said I should not agree to undergo an operation in my nail because his medication can cure this. I am not prepared to agree then’.

This outlines the importance of traditional healers among black miners and the fact that they believe that their medication is more powerful than western medication. Teboho (from Lesotho) does not only go for traditional healers for medication but he

stated that he also get protection medication from traditional healers. Themba (from Coeke 2) who is also in hospital stated the same views as follows:

‘The medication I am getting from this hospital is ineffective while I was using traditional medicine my feet were not sore and I had no blisters’.

These respondents have agreed to be admitted to hospital because they get official sick leave. However, when they attend treatment with traditional healers they do not qualify for leave. Some of the respondents strongly believed that there were illnesses that could not be cured by western medicine.

For example, Sicelo (from Doornkop) had *ibekelo* and he believed that it can not be cured by western medication. Joshua (from Coeke 2) who had black itching blisters and swollen feet expressed the same views as follows:

‘I first went to a traditional (woman) and I think that [the] medication I got from her was working better but I didn’t have enough time to get the full treatment’.

This respondent believed that if he did get the full treatment he would have been well by now. It is clear that mine workers are very confident about traditional medicine and they seem to feel the difference immediately they consult traditional healers. Sipiwo (from Evanda) who had a problem of swelling legs and feet stated that:

‘When I use traditional medicine I always get well’.

The above respondents stated undoubted confidence in traditional medication and some of them even regret coming to hospital because they have not yet seen any difference. Some mineworkers do not only rely on traditional medicine but also combine it with God’s healing powers.

#### **4.3.6.2 Combination of traditional medicine and God**

The powers of God seem to play a big part in healing for some mine workers.

Andrew (from Doornkop) who had a strong feeling about traditional medicine also believes in God. In his views traditional medicine is the main belief among black people, in his own words, he indicated the following when asked about his medical preference:

‘There is no other place, except going to *‘inyanga’* because I see them as the places that can help and if you believe in God, you can use *‘muti’* but tell the truth. Ask God for forgiveness, tell him that you know he created us and the people that do bad things were created by you and you know that he created the church, but ask him to help you in your problem. If you do it this way, your things will go your way. What is important is that when you are in a place, be there, if you believe in *‘muti’* trust it that it’s going to make you win. All things belong to God not us but we do them because we are forced to’.

These respondents suggest the belief in both God and traditional medicine as the key in his life. However, he states that belief in God is central but as the literature suggested you need other forms of protection to supplement whatever God could provide. Although people believed in God but no one has stated he relied on God’s protection only because even those that attend the church still believed in getting other things like candles, water and twines as a protection mechanism. That indicated that none of them believed purely on God except that man who has now repented to Christ. Even this man who is now saved had once strongly used the traditional medicine.

#### **4.3.6.3 The role of traditional healers in healing**

Traditional healers seem to play a bigger role in healing and some mine workers preferred them over the western healing systems. The preference for traditional healing seem to pose a challenge for hospital staff when encountering a patient refusing the treatment because the traditional healer ordered him so. Mkhize (from Doornkop) believes that traditional healers can’t heal him so he relies on ancestors and spiritual healers. However traditional healers do have a critical role to play in his life and according to his words he indicated that:

‘They do work, (traditional healers) they help me during times I need to raise my ancestor because ancestors differ sometimes you might not know your ancestor, then a traditional healer should raise your ancestor because it can’t heal you when your ancestor is not there...it should give me ways to raise my ancestor not to heal me...what I do is to go to Zion where there are prophets and

spiritual healers (*abathandazeli*) those are the people who help me...they tend to foresee things to happen in my life, they advise me on things that I can't see but about to happen to me'.

According to this respondent traditional healers have a duty to raise his ancestors only and if he is sick he prefers to go to spiritual healers who would not only heal him but also prophesy his future. According to this respondent they don't only predict his future but they warn him against dangers that would happen to him and his families and in that manner they advise him on how to avoid such dangers.

Preference for traditional medicine is very problematic to hospital staff because they have to work very hard to convince patients to abide by the treatment more especially those that are told by traditional healers not to accept certain things from the hospital. Sisters I interviewed at medical 2 wards that have patients with TB, pneumonia, and diarrhoea to name few stated that:

'Mostly these patients that we are treating because they are mine patients they are very ...primitive they believe more in culture than anything else most of them we struggle to get them to consent to a specific treatment because they will tell you that everything that they have to do even if they have to go for an operation they tell you we still have to go and discuss that with the ancestors or go to a *sangoma* so that *sangoma* can decide if the operation will be successful and if ancestors allow him to go to the operation so we are very patient and the doctors understand that they have to go through such things...'

I asked the nurses what happens if the patients believe in traditions and like Cirha stated that his traditional healer told him to refuse an operation in his big toe and as such he is not prepared to agree, the nurses responded that:

'No we do respect a patients right to accept or refuse treatment but depending on the mental status if the patient is mentally stable he can actually consent for himself its his belief we just get him sign we have a form which state refuse hospital treatment there you clearly indicate that the patient has been admitted here and the patient was suppose to go for such operation but the patient because of cultural belief or whatever is refusing to undergo that operation...'

According to these nurses it is not only the case where traditional healers have ordered their patient not to agree on certain hospital requirements . Ancestor belief also plays a major role in that some patients refuse this process because they want to go for an ancestral ritual first and after they have done that they become psychologically boosted and after coming back from home they become more positive that they will get well or healed. Because the hospital has accepted their cultures and the importance for them doing rituals, it now s workers go home to do such rituals and according to these nurses:

‘Yes we do state that the patient has left maybe we give them two weeks it depends because most of them are from Mozambique and its quite far so depending on the severity of the condition we do allow them to go to Mozambique for two weeks and then come back we would explain to them that this kind of operation needs to be done urgently or it can take time it does not matter, if its urgent then what we do we organise that maybe you would explain to us that who is it that you want to talk to. The mine at its expense will organise with the hostel the compound and then they can coordinate a family member to be sent from Mozambique at the mine cost to come over this side to come and talk to the patient’.

The problem of patients wanting to go home to perform rituals seem to be regular according to Mr. Zintwana the mine social worker. The social worker stated that miners who have witnessed tragic mine accidents always want to go for rituals and in his words, he stated that:

‘Other workers would want to go home for ancestral rituals because maybe their mother, father, siblings died and they didn’t attend their funerals and that makes them feel bad so I respect that and request a special leave for them because what is the use of sending someone expecting him to work while his mind is somewhere. Depending on his work record and supervisor, I do request that’.

In conclusion, as argued elsewhere that the majority of African population stills prefer and have faith in traditional medicine. This theme complemented that view (The Centre for Health Policy (2000)). Traditional mechanisms of combating misfortune were identified to be the first choice of many respondents in this research. In some instances traditional medicine would be combined with western medicine from the clinics or hospitals. Based on these findings it can be concluded that traditional

medicine and belief systems (in dealing with the phenomenon of misfortune) were at the heart of the majority of the respondents.

Mr. Zintwana stated that beliefs in witchcraft are prevalent in the mine and one patient he was counselling after surviving a mine accident stated that he suspects his wife for bewitching him. When Mr. Zintwana probed this worker he stated that few days before the accident in Lesotho he had an argument with his wife and the wife swore at him that something tragic will happen to him soon and the accident did occur. To this man the main cause of the accident was his wife and it was very hard for him to accept counselling.

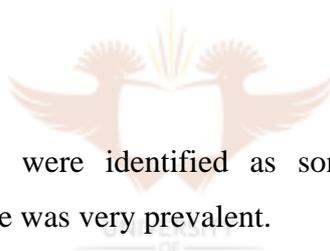
Other problems experienced by nursing staff are when patients want to abide by their cultural belief and refuse to follow hospital treatment. A nurse working in orthopaedic ward stated that sometimes patients refuse to remove *isiphandla* on their arms before going to theatre because to patients that would be breaking a tradition that can alone send a misfortune. According to hospital rules and procedures before a patient goes to the theatre he has to remove anything on his body. To Zulus who mostly use this *siphandla*, one is not supposed to remove it until they die or it just gets lost. The nurse in this ward revealed that other patients would even prefer to go to traditional healers for broken bones with belief that they will be fixed and it actually takes too much time and patience in convincing patients that broken bones can only be fixed by medical doctors not through traditional methods. The other nurse working in the surgical ward expressed that some patients come to the hospital drinking traditional medicine and they are supposed to convince them to stop drinking, as it is not allowed in the hospital. What is important in this whole debate is the policy that the hospital has on respecting patient's cultural beliefs and not forcing them to western medication.

#### **4.3.7. Dangerous places in the mine linked to misfortune**

Due to the nature of mine working conditions there are dangerous places that are strongly associated with misfortune. Most of the mine workers I spoke to have identified some places as very dangerous to work under and as such through their responses one could learn that these workers are working under fear. My respondents had expressed that working in the mine in general is very dangerous and is a risk to

life. As the literature has argued elsewhere that when mine workers go underground they give up their lives not knowing whether they will come out alive and if they did survive in that day they express continued thanks. One of the main reasons why they always offer ancestral rituals at the end of the year is because they express their gratefulness for being protected against the dangers of the mine. Sides and square are the main places identified by miners to be very dangerous and that is where many respondents who have been victims of mine accidents were affected. Those who have still survived such accidents have witnessed tragic accidents in those places. Witnessing such accidents has traumatised many workers and according to the mine social worker there is no counselling service available to workers that have witnessed such accidents unless per request. It is only offered to the accidents victims. The reason not all workers get counselling is because the social worker has expressed that there are only two social workers for more than ten thousand workers so it is very difficult to offer such service to everyone.

#### **4.3.7.1 Sides and square**



These places among others were identified as some of the dangerous places underground where misfortune was very prevalent.

Senzo (from Doornkop) expressed his fears of this place by indicating that:

‘In the mine there is a place called the ‘side’ (*esayidini*) or it’s called the “square” that are the places that have more accidents in the mine. Which if you are a person knowing that there are things following you (evil spirits), you always live in fear to get there and wish to have protective equipment when you get there’.

When Senzo was asked on what actually happens in this place or for him to draw a mind picture of this place he stated that:

‘The condition of that place is it always falls in most cases because that is the place where gold is found, now it likes to fall that is when we realise that if you are being followed and you getting to that place it makes you vulnerable to such spirits, you become at risk in that place because this has accidents every time, it always falls...that is the most dangerous place in the mine’.

This respondent expressed his concern of working in this place but like others this is the place where gold is available so they have to risk their lives to dig the gold. A very concerned respondent (Mkhize) who felt very touched by this question of danger in the mine expressed his concern this way:

‘Going underground is dangerous on its own by lift and getting inside to the sides, *mahobasi*, *mastick* you get in there just because you looking for money other than that if you can be given a chance to see these places prior you would refuse to go there again, this is the very risky job. In the mine there is a place that can only accommodate two or three people to move in or stay there. Firstly life in there is different, air you breathe is different from the natural air that makes your body and brain to change, again by getting used to it you end up not paying attention to the dangerous places otherwise it becomes a good place to work. To show that earth does not have truth they never show it in the movies, they show bold and beautiful and days of our lives, generations and how things happening in New York but they never show the deepness of mine and working conditions. Working in the mine is very dangerous but it is not shown they only show beautiful gold... I have seen accidents to people like falling of a table...it would be better if I take you there...a table is a place where you dig up and down and it becomes a stone from up and down and a table is the upper part or lower part...the upper part called handle wall sometimes does fall while you working underneath because by the time you are drilling it its shaking and you will find that its too far at the back its like 45 meters. When it falls, it injures people’.

Lwazi (from Doornkop) who has stated that he use *muthi* to protect himself before going underground and he also has medication underground that protects him also indicated that in his words:

‘When you are in the mine, brother [referring to me], you are always scared because you are not familiar with the place at all. Even the person who has worked for 25 years is still scared for the mine because it is an unfamiliar place. You always fear and you can’t tell what causes that fear but because you have to go to work you don’t have a choice’.

The above respondent points out the strenuous working conditions of workers working underground without hope that they will come out alive. To them when they go to work, death becomes a reality. The social worker, when I interviewed him about services offered to support these underground workers to overcome fear, he stated that he was not aware that there was such fear and as such they don't provide any counselling to them. To this social worker the interview was an eye opener about the realities of miners' experiences in the workplace. Andrew (from Doornkop) reported that the dangers of the mine and risks they are working under are not taken into consideration by their bosses. In his own words he expressed that:

'Yes, there are dangerous places here and places like these have gold. It's the places that the bosses want to reach. They have tried supporting and when you look at the support you would trust it, but it just blows up. There's a place called square, when this place blows up everything just get scattered. The bosses say that there's a lot of money there and they don't give up even if it's going to need a lot of people. They keep on trying to open it. That is the problem in this mine, when they want a place they don't give up even if the place is very dangerous, it doesn't matter to them...one of the things that I have seen here is when a person got hit by a stone and broke both his ankles. That is the most tragic thing I ever saw, that if you get injured like this I don't think you will ever walk properly. Another thing that I saw is a stone just rolled and squeezed someone. They tried everything to get him out, when he got out we thought he was dead, but he was not, his backbone was broken. The tragic accidents that happen in mines happen because they want to get gold'.

According to this respondent the most important thing for mine management is to get gold no matter how dangerous and risky the process is. To them it does not matter. This raises the concern on why there is no daily emotional and psychological support available for these workers. Another place identified to be very dangerous that misfortune is always expected is the table, Siphiso (from Evanda) stated that if you work in the table and it's not tightened enough it can cause misfortune if it's not solid or support is not strong. In that table Siphiso witnessed a tragic accident when a rock fell and he was also a victim of an injury underground. Themba (from Coeke 2) has

lost confidence in any equipment they are using in the mine against these dangerous places, he indicated that:

‘Danger is everywhere in the mine from the lift, you will be grateful for going down, working and surviving because you cant trust the ropes you are using. It is only God and ancestors that saves you’.

The above respondent expresses their lack of confidence to the so-called safety measures in the mine because to them they are not reliable because they are the risk themselves. Teboho (from Lesotho) was also a victim in 1999 and according to his words:

‘It is very dangerous to work in the sides, *jobhas*. I was a victim in the mine when a rock fell into my leg and I wore a plaster’.

Seemingly each respondent had his own place that he regards as very dangerous and misfortune being prevalent, Cirha (from Coeke 2) stated that:

‘Mine is dangerous but these places *makaranyana* and *magesi* are exceptional inside there, there are accidents. It is also very hot and that hotness affects the brain. I always pray in the morning for protection’.

This respondent suggests another fact now that they do not only need emotional and psychological support because of the fear and accidents they witness but the environment or working conditions on their own does affect the brain which is why counselling is crucial.

Jwarha (from Lebanon) also identified mine tunnels as dangerous as well but according to him its much better than sides and square. Like other workers, he did witness tragic accidents and in his words he stated that:

‘In the square I have seen accidents people dying...I survived because I was at the *skobhini* [inside the square], of the square from the station then when I was about to get into the square it fell down by the time we got inside we were only there to rescue victims...we were very scared that it might fall again because while you rescue we were carefully watching the square, when it shoots you run away...after that I wanted to go home to express my gratefulness to my ancestors for saving me but my employer refused. I wanted to go home because after I witnessed this tragic accident my fellow brothers dying in front of me...I wanted to go and get fortunes...’.

Dlamini (from Randfontein) stated a different place which he regards as the most dangerous places he stated that:

‘Here at Randfontein its *perali* there are things called perali where you work in old places where you do repetitions, places that were not used for a long time, they are called perali...what type of accidents occurring there? Falling of the table, you would hear them saying someone has been pressed down and killed or other body parts are broken’.

To conclude, this theme has outlined the fears that miners are working under due to their dangerous working conditions. It has also outlined the lack of support from management to ensure that although they work under risky environment they are more valued than the gold they are digging. It seems as if workers think management is only interested in gold no matter how dangerous it is to mine it. Management do not seem to be concerned about their safety as long as they produce the gold. Because of poverty these workers have given up on life to die if necessary in their workplace. As one mine worker suggested elsewhere, death in the mine is so real that it is always expected. Above all, the trauma they are dealing with after witnessing their fellow workers dying tragically or being critically injured in the mine, is the saddest part. Mr. Zintwana has stated that counselling for those that are traumatised after witnessing such accidents is available but it is voluntary. Considering the fact that there are only two social workers it is difficult for them to cope with the number of workers so they only counsel those that come forward. Their counselling also involves family, health, personal and job problems. With what I could gather during interview there is less emphasis on dealing with fear of working underground and provision of emotional and psychological support. After the discussion on dangerous places in the mines that are associated with misfortune, the next theme argues that not only mine workers experience misfortune but their family members as well.

#### 4.3.8. Misfortune of family members

During a personal conversation with Dr. Nokuzola Mndende<sup>13</sup> (11/09/2003) she stated that misfortune come in different ways. Sometimes misfortunes affect family members mostly children as a form of a wake up call from ancestors if they are angry with the intended person. Many respondents have stated that their close family members have experienced misfortune. When they visit traditional healers they would be told that such misfortune were directed at them but because they are protected it affected the nearest family member. The most common form of this misfortune affecting family members, was lightning although there are other forms as well that were raised by respondents. Siphiso (from Evanda) states that lightning did strike at home and killed the younger brother of his father. Although he did not state that it was directed at him. Andrew (from Doornkop) also had a similar experience when his sister was struck by lightning but not badly injured. Andrew took his sister to the traditional healer where he was told the cause of that was someone in the family but the identity was not revealed. The motive behind that according to Andrew (from Doornkop) was jealousy so they (witches) were doing this to hurt him.

Lwazi (From Doornkop) came out clearly about his experience and he stated that:

‘At home there was lightning then my sister was struck then I learnt that it was directed to me but because I am protected I escaped it and she was beaten and killed and I survived. This happened in 2002. At home they were jealous because I have my own house when I was cementing it then such things happened. The problematic person is here in the family. She is the woman’.

What I failed to enquire further from the respondents and/or even include females was why women are mostly associated with this form of witchcraft. Mkhize (from Doornkop) stated that her daughter was being bewitched because she was doing very well at school so jealous people want to jeopardise her future, he went to spiritual healers who gave her washing material (*iziwasho zabathandazi*) and she got better. Again Andrew (from Doornkop) believe that he and his wife were bewitched because they could not bear children for six years in marriage. What has also prevailed in this

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<sup>13</sup> The director of Icamagu Institute in Idutywa, Eastern Cape and a leader of indigenous tradition also presenter of Umhlobo Wenene FM's Ukhohlo Lwemveli programmes.

theme is that when people do not accept their responsibilities towards their ancestors, they can become more vulnerable to things like lightning, poisoning and accidents.

In conclusion as argued elsewhere that not only miners experience misfortune but also their family members do as a way of hurting the miners. The difference in this regard is that it can be witchcraft or ancestral sent misfortunes. According to mineworkers witches would resort to family members if they experience difficulties in reaching the miners because they are well protected. The victims have to consult traditional healers or diviners to be able to detect the exact cause of their misfortune or illnesses. According to the research findings mineworker's family members experience this misfortune because of jealousy. Lwazi identified the person who sent lightning to his sister as a family member who is very jealous of his progress. Sipiwo and Andrew also had similar lightening experiences directed at their families by people who wanted to hurt their family members. Mkhize argued that her daughter was being bewitched by community members again because of people who wanted to jeopardise her future at school. There are three forms of witchcraft used to effect misfortune and these are lightning, poisoning and accidents. In other words witches would use any of the three to hurt their family members. None of the respondent believed that his family had ancestral sent misfortune to his family. As argued by the Centre for Health Policy (2000) traditional healers play a central role in both identifying and providing assistance to the affected members. There was not much literature on the misfortune affecting family members however few things of great importance have been raised. For example the three forms used by witches to hurt miners family members. Respondents believe that only witches are responsible for this misfortune and not ancestors, and are being driven by jealousy to engage in these actions. Traditional healers or diviners are believed to be able to provide assistance in this regard.

#### ***4.4. CONCLUSION***

This chapter has attempted to make the reader familiar with respondents interviewed for this research, and not only that but it outlined the responses they gave as part of this research. This chapter also discussed different themes used in trying to answer research question. As indicated earlier some of these themes were drawn from the literature review and were therefore used for data collection and some of the themes

were developed during data analysis. All these themes outlined mine workers' explanations of misfortune and how it can be rectified. In most of the themes the findings complemented the theory that was reviewed in chapter two.

Three types of misfortune were identified and/or experienced by these mineworkers and they are: motor vehicle accidents, poor health conditions and illnesses and job-related accidents. In motor vehicle accidents mineworkers identified their involvement as a form of misfortune either caused by ancestors or witchcraft. The second form of misfortune which is poor health conditions and illness was identified by mineworkers who have had strange diseases that were cured by diviners or traditional doctors. Various types of poor health conditions and illnesses were identified; they are bleeding in the nose and the mouth, spiritual possession, black itching blisters and swollen feet to name but a few. Most miners have either been victims of job-related accidents or witnessed those types of accidents. Mineworkers believed that other accidents were witchcraft related while others were ancestral sent accidents. Religion, background and age of the respondents always determined the different causes of these types of misfortunes. In general, witchcraft was identified to be the best explanation of these types of misfortune.

The other theme explored was the relationship between misfortune and ancestors according to respondents. Ancestors were believed to play a crucial role in this subject of misfortune. They can send misfortune as a form of punishment but they can also protect their obedient descendants against misfortune. As literature has suggested ancestors are believed to take care of their descendants' welfare, but they are also capable of sending illness and misfortune if moved to wrath (Hammond-Tooke, 1974). Most respondents argued that there is a strong relationship between misfortune and ancestors.

After exploring the mineworkers' explanations about the relationship between misfortune and ancestors, the next theme explored was the relationship between misfortune and witchcraft. The majority of respondents has expressed that they believe that there is a link between misfortune and witchcraft. As literature has suggested witches are capable of sending misfortune to people by casting their spells to targeted individuals to make them vulnerable to misfortunes. According to some respondents it is very difficult to explain witchcraft related misfortunes. For example one respondent explained that he had a misfortune in that he alone was selected for a

fight while in a group situation. Another respondent stated that witchcraft related misfortunes are very strange. For example in the mine situation a big stone might fall but not injure any one while a very small stone would injure someone critically. Some respondents have explained that they have experienced being bewitched in the workplace by their colleagues because of jealous. One respondent stated that his colleague went to a traditional healer to get a *muthi* to bewitch him so that he could be changed in that place and the other person be left alone. The motive behind that according to this man was jealousy as he was qualified to do the job and coping very well. The victim went to a traditional healer to learn about that. Another respondent also shared the same experience of being bewitched in the workplace by jealous colleague.

Many respondents could easily identify the witchcraft related sicknesses that they either have or had in the past. The respondent who had *umeqo/ unyathelisile* clearly believed that was witchcraft and he has been told that he has walked over harmful substances and judging by the nature of his sickness it was exactly what Ngubane (1977) stated as *umeqo*. The other respondent who was told by the traditional healer as well that he has *ibekelo*, which is something similar to *umeqo*, believes that he is bewitched.

Poisoning was identified as another form of misfortune through witchcraft. People who stated that they were victims of poisoning stated that it came from people they knew who were jealousy on them.

Having discussed the relationship between misfortune and witchcraft the next theme respondents were asked to identify and explain, related to their protection mechanisms. As indicated elsewhere the most popular form of protection against misfortune is *ukuqiniswa*. Other respondents rely mostly on *muthi* to protect themselves and their households. Other people as indicated earlier combine God, ancestors and *muthi* to protect themselves and according to them that are the best combination that one could ever have. Some respondents identified different kinds of ancestral rituals that are believed to prevent or remedy misfortune. Respondents have also highlighted the importance of ancestral ritual for prevention of misfortune. The key rituals mostly on Zulu respondents were *ukushweleza*, which is asking the ancestors for forgiveness (*this* is normally done when things are going wrong in a family and the diviner would say ancestors are angry for something). One Zulu respondent explained that for him when things go wrong and he wants to prevent

misfortune he goes to *emsamu*. This is place away from the door (especially in Zulu huts) they believe the ancestors live. Men are allowed access to that place if the father of the house has died but women are not allowed near that place). *Ukusulwa amanxeba* involves apologising by slaughtering an animal depending on whether they believe the ancestors are angry. If they are believed to be angry they slaughter a cow. If it's just an issue it would be a goat or sheep. If it's a woman it is important to have *isidwaba* meaning cow skins that old married Zulu women wore before skirts. And if it's a man *isihlangu* meaning a shoe should be there.

In Xhosa they also offer *ukungxengxeza*, which is *ukushweleza* (to appease), in Zulu. The other crucial ritual stated by many Xhosa mine workers that prevents misfortune was *isheshegu* which is also an important ancestral ritual which does not only prevent misfortune but also spiritually heals the family and sometimes it is offered as a thanksgiving to ancestors.

This theme of preferred medical treatment emerged during the analysis of the findings. The Centre for Health Policy (2000) suggested traditional medicine to be the preferred choice of Africans. Respondents argued that there are diseases that western medicine cannot treat effectively example if one is suffering from *umeqo* (to walk over harmful substances). Some respondents that were in hospital also recommended traditional medicine for their conditions. Nurses disclosed that some patients refuse hospital treatment and prefer traditional medicine.

There are various places in the mine identified to be dangerous and associated with misfortune. As literature has suggested that mineworkers feel that working in the mine is a terribly painful experience and death is so real, most of the mine workers I spoke to have identified some places as very dangerous to work under by their expression one could learn that they are working under a lot o stress, pain and fear. All respondents agreed that working in the mine is very dangerous and risky but there are exceptional places. The importance of this theme is that accidents are the key element in our classification and understanding or exploring misfortune among underground mineworkers (Green, 1997:13). Respondents strongly believed that from the lift going underground, you are already in danger. Places called sides and squares were the most identified as dangerous and associated with misfortune. These are the places according to mine workers where gold is found and management does not care on how dangerous or risky these places are as long as they deliver what is expected of them. Some respondents identified places called *mahobhasi*, *mastick* as another kind

of dangerous place. One could learn again from respondents that they are not happy working in these places but because they have to put bread in the table they have developed courage to face death with hope and faith that they will conquer it. Some respondents identified *makaranyana*, *magesi*, *skobhini*, *jobhasi* as dangerous as well. The explanation that these miners provided to differentiate between these places was similar so one could argue that they only differ by terminology. Another respondent has identified *perali* as another dangerous place and according to him this is the place that was not used for gold digging for a long time now they are re-starting work in such place.

These mineworkers have witnessed tragic accidents in these dangerous places and some have even been involved in surviving accidents there. One respondent who survived an accident stated that after surviving the accident they were required to rescue their fellow brothers. This respondent stated that he was much traumatised and emotionally distressed that he wanted to go home to get fortunes from his ancestors and the management refused to grant him a special leave. These mineworkers have witnessed people dying in front of them while they were helplessly there with nothing they could do to save them. Others had been pressed down and certain body parts were broken.

Many respondents stated that because they personally are protected against misfortunes, witches would send misfortunes to their close family members to hurt them. One respondent indicated that his sister was struck by lightning and when they went to a traditional healer they were told that it was directed to him (miner) but because he was protected, his sister was a victim.

The next chapter provides summary, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION**

### ***5.1. INTRODUCTION***

This mini-dissertation concentrated on the issue of misfortune manifesting in ill health, death of mineworkers or close family members and/or witchcraft as experienced by mineworkers at a specific mine. In reviewing the literature on misfortune, it has been learnt that different authors agree on four major origins of misfortune within the African context namely ancestors, witchcraft, pollution and river people. The literature has highlighted that misfortune does exist in the life world of some people and that it affects people in different ways.

In this chapter the following, by means of an overview, will briefly be discussed: problem statement, research design, main findings, findings and the research question, recommendations, limitations of the study and conclusion.

#### **5.1.1. Problem statement**

After identifying ancestors, witchcraft, pollution and the river people from the literature as possible instigators of misfortune, the research problem was developed to be investigated. The research question of this study arose as a result of a combination of issues raised in the literature and unexplained issues surrounding the concept of misfortune. The research question read as follows: **How do mineworkers perceive and experience misfortune and if they do, how do they explain it and deal with it?** This question aimed at investigating their perceptions with regard to causes of illness, accidents and misfortune. Following from the investigation of the perceived causes of misfortune, the study also aimed at understanding the various mechanisms employed to prevent misfortune. In order to answer the research question, an investigation of perceived causes and preventive mechanisms in order to provide a fully-fledged research answer to the research question, was initiated.

### **5.1.2. Research design**

This project used a qualitative methodology. The research was conducted on the basis of a case study at Harmony Gold mine at Doornkop shaft and at Sir Albert Medical Centre, a nearby situated medical facility for specifically mine related injuries and health issues. Seventeen miners were interviewed as well as four nurses and one social worker associated with the mine.

These mineworkers were asked questions, during in-depth interviews, based on six themes, which were drawn from the literature on misfortune. During the data analysis, new themes on misfortune were developed, which were derived from the respondents' responses.

The newly developed explanations of misfortune included poisoning as another form of misfortune, misfortune experienced by family members, and preventive mechanisms of misfortune. The next section presents the main findings.

## **5.2. MAIN FINDINGS**



### **5.2.1. Introduction**

This section aims at providing a summary of the main findings. It is critical to understand the various mineworkers' perceptions and experiences of misfortune. This section argues that misfortune is perceived to be real by most respondents and as such various actions are being taken to prevent and/or remedy it. There are other explanations of misfortune that presented itself during data analysis that were incorporated into the findings. To be exact, these were the following: preference of traditional medicine, protective measures and the relationship between misfortune and witchcraft.

### **5.2.2. Types of misfortune experienced**

Mineworkers have identified certain types of misfortune that they have experienced in their life. The identification of types of misfortune in most cases differs because of religion, background and age of the respondent. The most common types of misfortune were motor vehicle accidents, poor health conditions like illnesses and

job-related accidents. In most incidents, the job-related accidents occurred underground. According to respondents, these accidents were not random events, but rather a case where “some one was behind it”. The same can be said about motor vehicle accidents. Miners believed that someone caused these accidents. Different kinds of illnesses were explained and different types of strange illnesses were also identified by the researcher on basis of information from respondents. The findings complemented both Hirst (1990) and Whyte’s (1997) research which identified categories of misfortune. Those categories are: unemployment, loss of property, accidents, injuries, failures of health, failures of prosperity, failures of gender and failures of personal safety.

### **5.2.3. Relationship between misfortune and ancestors**

The second issue that is worth noting is the relationship between misfortune and ancestors. As suggested by the literature, many people believe that ancestors are not only capable of protecting their descendants against misfortune but also capable of removing their protection from disobedient descendants. Ngubane (1977) argues that without ancestral protection descendants become prone to all sorts of misfortune and illness. All the respondents’ views complemented this argument by outlining that ancestors can also be initiators of misfortune as a form of punishment. This is also complemented by Hammond-Tooke (1989) who indicates that ancestors are understood to look after their descendants, but that they are also capable of sending illness and misfortune if moved to wrath. This view was also supported by Tshepo, one of the respondents, who stated during the interview that: ‘I think my ancestors are punishing me, they are not angry with me but they are showing me that I am supposed to do this (ancestral ritual)...so they are punishing me’. This man was in hospital and believed that his ancestors are linked to his hospitalisation. It should also be noted that ancestors are also believed to be protectors against misfortune. It is at times when living descendants fail to perform the rituals that ancestors remove their protection and make them prone to witchcraft, illnesses and accidents. In other words, the maintenance of continued good relations with ancestors is regarded as crucial by mineworkers in *inter alia* preventing the occurrence of misfortune.

#### **5.2.4. Relationship between misfortune and witchcraft**

Allais and McKay (1995) argue that believing in witchcraft provides reasons for illness and misfortune in traditional societies. This argument was complemented by the findings of this study. The relationship between misfortune and witchcraft was also investigated and four categories emerged from the findings. These categories are: (i) witchcraft creating vulnerability to misfortune, (ii) the battle between witches and ancestors, (iii) no relationship between witchcraft and misfortune and (iv) poisoning. Hammond-Tooke (1974) states that both witches and ancestors are believed to cause illness and misfortune. The majority of miners maintained the belief that most misfortunes are caused by witchcraft because of jealousy. However, respondents were also of the opinion that witches normally had to engage in a battle with ancestors before reaching their victims. Mkhize, when interviewed, argued that one becomes bewitched because ancestors have removed their protection, otherwise if ancestors were protecting that person, it become difficult for witches to succeed in their plans. Other respondents believed that there is no relationship between misfortune and witchcraft. They argued that accidents can occur at anytime to anybody, whether you believe in witchcraft or not (People can fall ill but apply different meanings and names to it).

As illustrated by Ashforth (2001) poisoning is another form of witchcraft. Poisoning was identified to be the most dangerous and quickest form of killing. One respondent (Siphiwo), who was in hospital, indicated that he was poisoned by a jealous family member and because of the seriousness of the poisoning, he was admitted to hospital. Siphiwo pointed out that poison was placed in wet porridge that he subsequently drank without knowing about the presence of the poison. Most respondents who mentioned being victims of poisoning, believed that women were behind it. The other important issue relating to poisoning is the association between poisoning and HIV/AIDS. Ashforth (2002:129) argue that in Soweto this form of witchcraft is the most important cause of death even in a situation where symptoms suggest AIDS. Even if the AIDS diagnosis has been made by a medical doctor, it is still regarded as poisoning. In Makhura's (2004) research, a respondent was diagnosed to be HIV positive but believed that he was poisoned.

### 5.2.5. Protection mechanisms against misfortune

As argued elsewhere, most people protect themselves against misfortune, witchcraft and accidents by using traditional medicine. This in fact was confirmed by the findings. Moodie (1994) indicates that due to miners working conditions they need maximum protection against misfortune, accidents and illness. To secure this protection, miners resort to traditional medicine. Most miners had confidence in traditional medicine for protection against misfortune. Other miners indicated that they put traditional medicine in their bags when going underground while others put traditional medicine in the places where they are working underground.

Some of the respondents believed that traditional healers could not prevent and/or rid one of misfortune. They rather preferred using *iziwasho* (water that is prayed for as practised by Zionists). Some respondents believed more in prayer, and argued that it is through the blood of Jesus that we can be healed. To them a misfortune represents a form of a test of their faith so prayer is the key. Other workers believed in traditional medicine. To them it is the key to healing witchcraft related misfortunes.

The other important factor about traditional healers was the fact that they could supposedly inform the victims about the name of the person causing their misfortune. The respondents that were in hospital stated that the medication they were receiving from traditional healers were effective and that they did see a difference in their lives. In contrast to this they viewed the western medication ineffective. Hospital nurses also witnessed that some patients come to hospital with *muthi* and insisted in continuing to use it. Although the hospital does not allow the use of *muthi*, workers still have more confidence in it. Diseases like *umeqo* or *ibekelo* was believed to be cured by traditional medicine only. Some patients also believed in combining both western and traditional medicine for misfortune related illness.

Religion also plays a crucial role as a protection mechanism. Most miners who are members of the Zion church<sup>14</sup> obtain some protection equipment from the church that helps to prevent misfortune. Other miners believe in both God and their ancestors as a source of protection. Other miners combine traditional medicine and religion. In other words they trust in God's protection but complement it with

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<sup>14</sup> The denomination of that Zion church was not asked.

traditional medicine to enable efficiency. Miners do not only rely on traditional medication and religion for protection but some also put their faith in their ancestors. They perform special and important rituals for their ancestors to thank them for their protection and also seek continuation for such protection. These miners maintained that offering to ancestors ensures the well-being of the descendants. The moment however they ignore their ancestors, they (ancestors) turned their backs on them and that could make them prone to accidents, illness and witchcraft. In these rituals it is crucial to speak to the ancestors before slaughtering with the animal standing. The animal must bellow as a sign that it was accepted by ancestors. In other words, miners identified speaking, traditional beer and blood as the main components in any ancestral ritual.

Some respondents believed mostly in *ukuqiniswa* (to be strengthened) as the most important form of protection against misfortune, especially underground. Those who perform *ukuqiniswa* stated that they at least do it twice a year. The second time the ritual is performed, is regarded as *ukuhlaziya intlanga* (to reform the protection). *Ukuqiniswa* is not only capable of protecting one from misfortunes but also against mine accidents, illnesses and witchcraft. People who get their protection medication from traditional healers stated that they also have other medication that they use before going underground. Some respondents believe in using both traditional medicines and a prayer as a form of additional assistance to God's protection. The Christian respondents indicated that only God protects them and not ancestors. One respondent stated that he uses *iziwasho* as a protective measure. He also wears *izintambo* (normally red and black twisted twines from Zion for protection against evil spirits) and candles with different colours to pray and all are used as protection mechanisms. However, it should be noted that ancestors are stated to be the key protective measure alone if not combined with others.

Some respondents do not only protect themselves, they also try to protect their homestead against misfortune. One respondent has indicated that traditional medicine alone cannot help him if he has a problem. He, therefore, consults traditional healers to raise their ancestors so that they could be the ones offering help. According to this respondent, ancestors enable the efficiency of any healing process performed by the traditional healer. This points out the importance of the traditional healer to consult the ancestors before the performance of the process. Niehaus (1995) argues that traditional healers are not only crucial for giving advice or providing protection

but they are also consulted if one experiences misfortune. This points out the importance of traditional healers in the African context and as such the findings complemented the literature. The other interesting part to note was that when respondents were saved from an illness or accident they do not see that as powers of *muthi* but they express their gratitude to their ancestors.

#### **5.2.6. Preference for traditional medicine**

During times of sicknesses, traditional medicine tends to be the preferred choice for most miners. This concurs with the work of Freeman and Motsei (1990) who argue that traditional healing does not only involve curative intervention but is also applied in relation to the prevention of illness, accidents and misfortune. Miners who were in hospital put their trust more in traditional medicine, than in the hospital medication. The nurses in the mine hospital agreed with this argument and they (nurses) also indicated that most miners even reject hospital medication, opting for traditional medicine. Traditional healers were regarded as crucial by most miners for healing and protection against misfortune. Some miners, more especially those affiliated with the Zion religion, also get some medication at church.

#### **5.2.7. Dangerous places in the mine associated with misfortune**

As indicated in the literature by theorists such as Ralushai (2003), working underground is very tiring, difficult and dangerous. The findings complement the literature largely. Moodie (1994) argues that working in the mines is an agonising and sad experience. Whenever miners go down the shaft they are not sure that they will come out alive. Most miners identified certain places inside the mine that they associated with accidents and misfortune such as sides, squares, *mahobhasi*, *mastick*, *makaranyana*, *magesi*, table and *perali*. The working environment on its own is said to be stressful and causes a lot of fatigue which may result in more accidents. It is in these named places where most accidents are said to take place. Most miners had witnessed tragic accidents in these places, and others have been victims in these places themselves. Misfortune is said to be more prevalent in these areas. Miners have pointed out that in these places it is very hot and that heat has a direct and a dangerous impact on the brain. Most of these miners have argued that accidents that they had

experienced underground were associated with misfortune, witchcraft and ancestral anger. Miners stated that witnessing serious accidents happening underground has traumatised them, for which they never received any counselling service. Some miners preferred to go home and offer to their ancestors after witnessing such horrible accidents.

Despite the fact that mining industry generates millions of rands in the economy, it (mining) is and will still continue to be regarded as a very dangerous working environment. Most miners work in fear of their lives in this industry but because of poverty, they expose themselves to these poor working conditions.

### **5.2.8. Family members experiences of misfortune**

It has been argued that, in most cases, misfortune can affect one's family too. This can act as a so-called "wake up call" suggesting that ancestors are angry. In other words this form of misfortune is strongly associated with angry ancestors and witchcraft. One of the respondents, Andrew, indicated that his sister was struck by lightning. He believed that the lightning was directed at him, but because he was protected against misfortune, his sister was struck. Siphiso and Lwazi also had similar experiences where their family members were killed by lightning as a way of hurting them. The cause of these lightning accidents was identified by traditional healers as witchcraft related according to these respondents. Mkhize argued that jealous individuals trying to hurt him bewitched his daughter.

## ***5.3. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION***

This section aims at providing a brief summary of the findings as it relates to answering the research question. The research question was as follows: how do mineworkers perceive and experience misfortune and if they do, how do they explain it and deal with it? The findings indicated that some mineworkers interpret accidents and illness as being caused by ancestors and/or witchcraft. The findings revealed that ancestors are believed to take care of their descendants, but they are also capable of sending illness and misfortune if moved to wrath. Thus, an ancestor could bring about sickness and misfortune (Hammond-Tooke, 1989). Hammond-Tooke (1989) argues that "...although the ancestors are believed to be the cause of some illness and

misfortune, there is no doubt that the first reaction of most people to falling ill or experiencing trouble is to suspect witchcraft or sorcery”. This points out that the research findings have confirmed the literature with regard to ancestors and witchcraft as the mere causes of misfortune. Misfortune manifests in the form of illness and accidents.

In trying to answer the research question: “how mineworkers perceive and experience misfortune and if they do, how do they explain it and deal with it?” The argument of Fortes and Dieterlen (1965:201) is complemented when they argue that “Africans in the main continue to interpret their misfortunes in ‘personal’ terms but the final meaning they attach to the misfortune must be of a type which allow them to take effective action”. That outlines that if it is witchcraft-related misfortune (being poisoning, pollution, and lightning) they will go to traditional healers and if it is ancestor related, they will offer a sacrifice to appease the ancestors.

In short, based on the perceptions and experiences of the respondents, misfortune is any bad experience caused by witchcraft or ancestors. In order to identify the exact cause of a particular case of misfortune, the person has to visit a herbalist or traditional healer and/or diviner. The actions necessary to remedy misfortune, will be the outcome of that visit. If its witchcraft related, a person has to undergo an operation known as *ukuqiniswa* (to be strengthened). If the misfortune is believed to be ancestor related, an appropriate ritual would have to be performed to appease the ancestors. It was also indicated that if one is a protected, a witch could target family members as well. The most important protection mechanism against misfortune is maintaining good relations with ancestors, be strengthened by the traditional healer or diviner, protect the homestead and close family members and use of different traditional medicine and/or church water, twines and candles.

Having analysed and interpreted the main findings of this research project the following section focuses on the recommendations to the mine hospital and recommendations to other scholars or future researchers in this field. These recommendations are aimed at helping those interested and affected parties to better the mining industry.

## **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following section provides recommendations to the hospital, mine management and scholars in this field of study.

### **5.4.1. Recommendations to the hospital**

It has been outlined that mine workers work under conditions that induce fear, stress and the pain of not knowing when misfortune or accidents could occur. This challenges the mine to extend their counselling services to all miners to overcome this fear. The danger is not only the working conditions they are working under but also being emotionally distressed as this may compromise their level of productivity. For these workers, the danger of the digging of gold in dangerous places is not taken into account by management, as yet they are expected to deliver what they are paid for. This hold negative implication for the mine, in the sense that management's attitude is perceived to be: gold first then human beings. All necessary support mechanisms for workers should be in place and easily accessible i.e. counselling.

The integration of traditional medicine with hospital medication is also critical in this regard. As the majority of mine workers preferred *muthi* rather than western medicine means that there should be a strategic method developed by the hospital to try and complement the two. (Refusing patients to use *muthi* in hospital also alienates them from their right to choose which is why there should be a mechanism to convince the workers of the importance of the two equally and why they should use the one in certain circumstances rather than the other or vice versa). The challenge posed by this practice is the question: who will accept responsibility if the patient's health deteriorates or dies? More especially in the cases where the medical doctor is aware that the illness could result in death and is faced with the situation where the patient wants to go and perform rituals for ancestors before undergoing an operation or refuse hospital medication. The hospital should broaden its policy to allow mineworkers to go home to perform ancestral rituals before being operated on as this may bring healing and peace with self. If the patient's condition is critical, nurses indicated that they contact the patient's relatives to perform the ritual within the hostel. Doctors could let patients sign indemnity forms if they choose to use

traditional medicine in combination with western medicine. This would indemnify doctors if patients died while being treated by them.

#### **5.4.2. Recommendation to the mine management**

The mine should introduce certain motivational strategies for workers to ensure that they do not only work to earn money and take care of their families but they should also realise or see the importance of their contribution towards the country's economic growth and fight against poverty. When reading the statement of the miner who associated poisoning and HIV one wonders as to what the mine is doing to provide HIV competency initiatives (HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns) among their workforce. Believing in witchcraft as the cause of HIV means that some miners are HIV incompetent. The mine should consider organising cultural activities where different cultures will be showcased enabling people to learn more about other cultures and traditions. This could help the management when faced with cultural dilemmas for instance when a worker wants to go home to offer for his/her ancestors. Some efforts should be considered in order to address the mental trauma of miners who work underground not knowing whether the next rock fall will kill them and/or injure them. It is also crucial for the mine management to consider the following:

- i. Respecting and accepting all people's religions and beliefs in the mining industry is critical as that will eliminate discrimination against people who prefer other kinds of treatment than western medicine.
- ii. Acknowledgement that witchcraft does exist according to a number of people. Many black people do believe in witchcraft and as such they deserve respect and acceptance as well.
- iii. Provision of emotional and psychological support systems to all mineworkers and thus recognising them for their hard work and dedication.
- iv. Treating human beings as more important than the gold they are digging and as such ensuring that safety measures are taken to minimise misfortune

### **5.4.3. Recommendations concerning scholars in the field and the significance of the study**

The first of the problems encountered during this study on misfortune is that there is little written on the topic, more especially relating to belief systems and indigenous knowledge systems. There is a limited body of literature on misfortune and mine workers in particular. To address the gap the general limited literature on misfortune was used and was related to mineworkers. Collapsing mine roofs, and sides, risks of fires, explosions, and inundation are daily expectations of mine workers when they work underground and as such they believe they need strong protection both from ancestors and traditional healers. The types of injuries that mostly occur are hand injuries, foot injuries, head injuries and knee injuries and death could be the worse of all to happen. On the other hand taking that limited literature to relate it to mineworkers was a good starting point for this study more especially in formulating research questions and basing the arguments on. It should be highlighted that more scholars are needed to explore this topic further and it is hoped that this mini-dissertation has opened up new areas for future researchers in other words that it has added some new and valuable information to the body of knowledge.

This project has posed a question to scholars and future researchers about the issue of miners who either refuse to accept hospital medication or want to offer to ancestors before undergoing an operation. The question worth studying is: What should medical staff do? Because there are two contradictory voices speaking to the patient (traditional route and/or western medicine) and they cannot obey both, one has to be chosen. The question once more to researchers is: Who should accept the responsibility of patients' death should it occur in this process? Who should be blamed for poor service and recklessness? Can the department of Health be blamed for granting patients the right to choose between traditional medicine and western medicine? Can the doctors be blamed for denying patients the right to choose (between traditional and western medicines) if they have refused to grant the patient the permission to complete their ancestors call? Can the patient's family be blamed if the patient died in the process of ancestral ritual, and refusing hospital medication?

After this research it was revealed that most miners, based on the interview data, are working under horrible conditions in the mines always fearing the loss of their lives. It was also indicated that counselling services in this mine are inadequate

and need serious attention for the sake of miner's well-being. Importantly, it can be argued that misfortune is a reality and not a myth or a barbaric belief. For miners to remedy misfortune it is very important that they maintain good relations with their ancestors not only to remedy misfortune but also to gain protection against accidents, illnesses and witchcraft. Miners seem to be very committed to their work despite the dangers involved. Traditional healers and traditional medicine are identified to be the preferred choice of miners. As it was indicated that there is limited literature in the topic this research has hopefully added something new to close that gap and as such, it could be useful for future researchers in this interesting field of study.

The major contradiction of the study that future researchers should attempt to address was about the river people. Hammond-Tooke (1974) argues that river people are not ancestors. Bernard (1999) who is also a diviner indicated that river people are ancestors and they play a major role in the African cultures' healing systems. The other important distinction that should be pointed out is the difference between misfortune and bad luck. These two terms mean the same thing in the African languages used in South Africa while they are used in English to refer to different events. It is recommended that scholars consider both the differences and the similarities of the uses of these terms.

In conclusion, the results of this research project may therefore contribute to a better understanding and embracing the African traditional religion and indigenous knowledge systems in the African context.

### ***5.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY***

The limitations of the study were alluded to in chapter three. This section will provide a brief summary with regard to such limitations that hindered the research process. It was indicated that the academic literature on this topic is very limited and that this needs more attention. Terminology, as argued elsewhere, posed a major limitation to this study. The translation of African language terms to English was problematic hence meaning was lost during the interpretation and/or explanation process. English has been discovered to be so narrow in this subject that it does not capture the essence of the terms used and their meanings. There are concepts that mean different things in English while in African languages they mean the same thing. For example, witchcraft and/or sorcery. There are also terms that that imply different things in

African languages whilst meaning the same thing in English i.e. ancestors/ shades/ living dead. This research could not have any focus groups as intended due to unavailability of respondents in a group form. The majority of respondents were available for a one-on-one interview.

The fieldwork and data analysis took longer than the eighteen months it was initially planned for. The consequence of this was the negative financial implications in the sense that personal resources were utilised as the budget of the project was already exhausted.

## ***5.6. CONCLUSION***

High levels of mine accidents and illnesses pose a serious threat to this important mining industry that generates millions of rands for the economy of the country. Misfortune is a feared word by many people working in South African mines and they are spending a lot of money in trying to apply effective preventive measures. “There is an African belief system that indicates that when someone died by an accident the family should visit the place of an accident to take the spirit of the dead home. It has been indicated that it is believed there are so many accidents in mines because when somebody dies nobody from the family bothers to go and take the spirit of the dead from the underground. It also tell the dead that this is the process of removing you from here and taking you home. This, it is believed, leads to lots and lots of accidents because the dead who resides in those mines think that they have been neglected. Therefore because they do not know where they are and they do not know how to get home they try to find means but in finding means those means injure those people that work in those mines. This indicates that until the issue of the dead has been sorted out you will keep on having those same accidents. People should watch the patterns of these accidents because the deceased has identified the pattern”<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005 with Lindi Mbanjwa.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Where do you come from?
2. How many years have you worked here at this mine?
3. What is your religious affiliation?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your home language?
6. What is your place of work in the mine?
7. What kinds of misfortune have you personally experienced in your life while working at Harmony Gold?
8. What do you think caused these misfortunes in your life?
9. How did you cure misfortune when it happened to your life?
10. What do you consider the cause of misfortune you were suffering from?
11. Do you have any preventative strategy for possible misfortune? If so, please elaborate
12. What made you realise that you have misfortune?
13. What were the consequences of this misfortune?
14. What is a misfortune?
15. Do you have any personal/ work/ family experiences of misfortune you would like to share with me?
16. Which specific locations do you mostly associate with misfortune here in the mine?
17. What rituals generally prevent or cure misfortune?
18. What is the relationship between (a) misfortune and ancestors, (b) misfortune and witchcraft
19. What are the avenues you explore to rectify/ cure/ fix misfortune?
20. Do you go to different people/ practitioners for different kinds of misfortune?  
Explain who is good at what? / Who handles which type of misfortune?
21. How do you protect yourself against misfortune?
22. Are there any ancestral rituals you offer to prevent misfortune? If they are, what are they and what is the best place and time for offering?
23. Are there any misfortunes that have happened to your relative, something evil?
24. Have you ever been poisoned in your life? If yes please elaborate

25. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me related to this topic?





## APPENDIX B: PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Home language</b>	<b>Religion Christian/ African traditional religion</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Length of employment</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Place of origin</b>
<b>Teboho</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Sesotho</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>16 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Lesotho</b>
<b>Ntando</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>6 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Luyolo</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>14 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Senzo</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>16 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Vusi (NUM Shop steward)</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>16 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Tshepo</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Tswana</b>	<b>Zion/Christian</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>26 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>North West</b>
<b>Dlamini</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Zulu</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>27 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>KwaZulu Natal</b>
<b>Lwazi</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworkers</b>	<b>5 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Siphiwo</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworkers</b>	<b>22 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Cirha</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>21 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Joshua</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>15 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>Jwarha</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>14 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Mkhize</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Zulu</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>17 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>KwaZulu Natal</b>
<b>Andrew</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>3 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
<b>Sicelo</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Xhosa</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>6 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>

<b>Themba</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Zulu</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mineworker</b>	<b>19 years</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>KwaZulu Natal</b>
<b>Jerry Zintwana</b>	<b>Male</b>	-	-	<b>Mine Social worker</b>	-	<b>Black</b>	-
<b>Bomikazi Sithole</b>	<b>Female</b>	-	-	<b>Mine hospital nurse</b>	-	<b>black</b>	-
<b>Irene Mukwevho</b>	<b>Female</b>	-	-	<b>Mine hospital nurse</b>	-	<b>Black</b>	-
<b>Bridget Phillip</b>	<b>Female</b>	-	-	<b>Mine hospital nurse &amp; (NUM Shop steward)</b>	-	<b>Black</b>	-
<b>Tshepang Zondi</b>	<b>Female</b>	-	-	<b>Mine hospital nurse</b>	-	<b>Black</b>	-

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Kanyiso Walaza is a Masters student at RAU Department of Sociology. He is currently undertaking a research entitled exploring mineworker's explanations/perceptions of misfortune at Harmony Gold as part of his degree requirements. Part of the research process is to conduct in depth interviews with the respondents to gather information about the topic. The information disclosed by the respondent would not harm the respondent in any way e.g. losing the job. He would like to request you to please participate in this study by sharing your own experiences in an open and honest manner.

I.....willingly agree to participate in a study being conducted by Kanyiso Walaza entitled 'Exploring mineworkers perceptions/ explanations of misfortune'. I am aware that this study is anonymous and information disclosed is confidential. We have agreed that if I feel uncomfortable with anything in the process of interview we will stop the interview. I have also agreed for the use of tape recorder in the condition that no one will have access to the tapes except the researcher. Failure to abide by the above agreements I can take legal actions against the researcher or withdraw any information I shared with him.

Signed.....at .....on  
this.....of.....2003