

# Generational Consciousness and Global Healing through Humanism, Love and Respect during COVID-19

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Generational consciousness is introduced with special reference to Zulu culture. Both broad and specific views of ancestors are included. A qualitative study using ethnographic observation, cultural immersion, etic and emic researcher perspectives, researcher reflexivity, and interviews with indigenous Zulu community members is presented with specific reference to ancestors' roles in healing and consultations with traditional healers. Discussion centres on the role played by the enactment of traditional Zulu values of humanism (*ubuntu*), love (*uthando*) and respect (*inhlonipho*) in everyday life, and how, through facilitation by indigenous healers, such acts strengthen generational consciousness and interconnectedness of the living, the living dead ancestors and the planet. A global generational consciousness with special references to acts of humanism, love and respect for future generations emerges as recommendation during COVID-19.

**Key words:** *Generational Consciousness; Zulu Indigenous Healing; Humanism; Love; Respect; COVID-19.*

## Introduction

Thandeka, a clinical psychology intern, was working at a public hospital in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) South Africa. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, her grandmother gave her and her mother (a nurse) *mhlonyane* (*Atemesia Afra – African Wormwood*) to protect them against the virus. The herb, indigenous to KwaZulu and a traditional protective plant, drunk as a tea in small quantities, connected Thandeka and her mother through her grandmother to the ancestors and the earth/planet.



The act of love and protection from the grandmother and the act of respect in Thandeka's acceptance of the herb strengthened the family and their connection with the ancestors and the planet. Strength is offered through generational connections in which love and support flow from earlier to later generations, connecting humans to earth and life. In addition to recognition of resilient power of Zulu indigenous healing, this study particularly intends to honour the enduring humanity, dignity and resilience of Zulu people, who despite suffering for many years under oppressive colonial and Apartheid regimes, continue to overcome the ongoing trauma occasioned by COVID-19 (Naidu, 2020; Thwala, Hermann, Edwards, Edwards, & Edwards, 2020).

### **Generational Consciousness, Wisdom Traditions and Indigenous Healing**

Generational consciousness and related practices exist throughout Africa and planet earth (McLoughlin, 2007). Fortes and Dieterling (1965) regard ancestral reverence, especially of famous persons, as the basis of all wisdom traditions. We only have to consider the veneration of self-transcendent personages such as Mandela and Hypatia to appreciate the implicit truth of such an argument. For example, in rural Zululand, generational consciousness still predominates in the awareness of many people and a human psychological interpretation of their healing role is widely recognized (Edwards, Makunga, Thwala, & Mbele, 2009). From a broad, inclusive perspective, ancestral consciousness includes awareness of our total evolutionary heritage, including planet earth and the solar system. For millennia, indigenous peoples throughout planet earth have honoured life as profoundly interconnected. From this holistic perspective, ancestral consciousness always implies generational consciousness, an inclusive term accurately honouring bonds of creation and love that link past, present and future generations.

Indigenous wisdom and healing traditions also typically highlight an underlying non-duality behind manifest diversity (McLoughlin, 2007). For example, in Hindu traditions, the Absolute Brahman unfolds into the creation, preservation and destruction cycle personified by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Abrahamic traditions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam extoll monotheism. Taoism emphasizes *Wuwei*. Buddhist emptiness or *sunyata* transcends everyday suffering, a given which also yields joy and compassion (Richo, 2005). The chaos caused by COVID-19 is an existential reminder that planetary pollution is reaching pandemic proportions. Transcending the chaos requires resilience in healing the complex human-nature interactions that drove the crisis (Zabaniotou, 2020).

In traditional Zulu cosmology, the ancestral subsystem is venerated as closest to the Creator/God, followed by the parental and sibling subsystems. Both family constellations and indigenous cultures emphasize harmony in the system, which can be motivated by both survival and love. In Zulu culture, people are expected to work at maintaining harmony (*ukulungisa*) especially through ancestral reverence and socially coherent relationships as epitomized in the



internationally recognized concept of *ubuntu*, which ultimately implies that all realization is only possible through human relationships (Edwards, Thwala, Mbele, Siyaya, Ndlazi, & Magwaza, 2011).

Providers and purveyors of wisdom traditions and indigenous culture are traditional healers such as the diviner (*isangoma*), doctor (*inyanga*) and faith healer, who synchronizes generational consciousness with Christianity (*umthandazi*). These practitioners have essential functions of restoring individual and social homeostasis as well as effecting healing transformations. Hellinger's special contribution is his unique integration of diverse international elements of healing. Through his phenomenological method of enquiry he identified the orders of love, repeating patterns within families, which when aligned and balanced, allow love to flow. He also described levels of order, those which ensure survival and belonging, where balance and harmony is largely ensured through unconscious mechanisms of including all family members who were previously excluded. He termed this the family conscience. He identified an alternative conscience, a spiritual conscience which, when consciously followed, restores the orders by including and acknowledging those ancestors previously not recognised, permitting restoration of strength through generational connections and the flow of love and life force.

### **Study Objectives**

We promote global generational consciousness and healing for future generations through a recent study undertaken in Zululand, South Africa, aimed at documenting the most meaningful healing roles of the ancestors. The ultimate goal is transformational healing towards humanism, love, and respect so that the future generations will be well positioned to carry the baton of a healthy flourishing heritage. Thus healing essentially involves re-establishment of balance, order or harmony through inclusion of all members and experiences of the historical, generational and ancestral family system, as conveyed in the isiZulu notion of *ukulungisa* (Ngubane, 1977).

In contrast to the individualistic personal orientation of Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) countries; African psychological sense of personhood, agency, and morality has been described as polyvocal, multilingual, multicultural, and pluriversal (Adjei, 2019; Ratele, 2017). Ratele, Cornell, Dlamini, Helman, Malherbe and Titi (2018) have defined African psychology as psychology *in, of, for, from* and *on* Africans, *by* and *for* Africans. Such a definition is based on the view that psychology that works from a distinctly African ontology and epistemology can enrich theoretical visions and methodological strategies to extend the frontiers of the discipline in both African and WEIRD settings (Adjei, 2019). Central to such an African Psychology is social intentionality of agency and morality as epitomized by *ubuntu* consciousness, deeply directed towards the communal good (Adjei, 2019).



In this context, African consciousness always implies an active, communal, moral conscience, transpersonal in direction towards ancestors, family and community at large. From an etymological perspective, as distinct from ordinary awareness (*ukuzwa* in isiZulu), and similar to the French term for consciousness, “conscience”, African consciousness always implies conscience (*unembeza* and/or *isazela* in isiZulu).

### **Generational Consciousness, Social, Transformational and Imaginal Dimensions**

In Zulu culture, in addition to ancestral consciousness, generational consciousness is given particular emphasis via age sets (*ntanga*), as for example, adolescent girls gathering annually for the spring first fruits festival (*umkhosi womhlanga*). In this context Nugin (2010) has emphasized temporal and social dimensions of generational consciousness befitting human and social developmental cycles of children, parents and grandparents. Imaginal dimensions refer to those realms from which images enter consciousness (Bourgeault, 2020), as, for example, the warm image of the smiling face of a dearly beloved ancestor or child appearing in dreams, visions or meditation to caring parents.

Many varied interpretations are possible in relation to the healing role of the ancestors. From an evolutionary perspective, as contemporary creatures, humanity only exist because of their ancestors’ gift of life (Hellinger, Wheler, & Beaumont, 1998). This is a sine qua non of the isiZulu saying: *umuntu umuntu ngabantu*, which literally means that a person becomes a person through people. In addition to ancestors, people become humanized and socialized through their families and communities, as portrayed in the well-known African saying “it takes a village to rear a child”. These are essential survival conditions, preceding many other quality of life issues, including nourishment, health and ecology, all of which have differentiated roles to play in the ongoing illness prevention and health promotion of the dynamic, systemic, whole making, kaleidoscopic process of transformation that constitutes healing.

In local (*isiZulu*) tradition, ancestors are addressed in many ways and various terms are used. Respect (*ukuhlonipha*) is central and ancestors may be given special respectful names. Generically they are referred to as *amadlozi* (spirits), *abaphansi* (those underground), *amakhosi* (chiefs) and *izinyanya*, *izithutha*, *abangasekho* (those who are dead). Various special sacrificial ceremonies (*umsebenzi*) are also performed, for thanksgiving (*ukubonga*), “scolding” ancestors for misfortune (*ukuthetha*), appeasement (*ukushweleza*), homestead fortification (*ukubethela*) and reintroduction of the spirit of a relative to the local ancestral body corporate (*ukubuyisa*). Emphasis is both on recently departed ancestors and the unbroken line that links all ancestors directly to the Creator (*Mvelinqangi*) or God (*uNkulunkulu*) (Edwards, 2011).

In isiZulu culture, love (*uthando*) is understood as a natural function of the original Creator *uMvelinqangi*, working (*ukusebenza*) through the ancestors (*amadlozi*) (Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977). Here the word *umsebenzi*, implies work, love and sacrifice. In this context, love is the evolutionary pinnacle of the creative instinct or life drive. In his autobiographical



study, Freud (1952, p.64) wrote: “I have combined the instincts for self-preservation and for the preservation of the species under the concept of Eros and have contrasted it with an instinct of death or destruction, which works in silence.” Sharing similar views are Jung (1961, p.387), who speaks of Eros as a “*kosmogonos*, a creator and father-mother of all higher consciousness” and Wilber (2000, p.128) who speaks of Eros as “Spirit-in-action” similarly to the way the poet Dante Alighieri sang mystically of “the love that moves the sun and all the other stars” (Assagioli, 1985, p.130).

## **Indigenous Zulu Values for Everyday Life**

### **Love (*Uthando*)**

During the process of the Creator (*Mvelinqangi*) working through the ancestors, love (*uthando*) becomes the connector of human spirit between mother and infant, father, family, community and society. In order for this love to be kept alive, humans need to activate their connection with the median *uMvelinqangi*/Creator who in turn communicates visibly and invisibly with ancestors to pass on love to all humankind. In African culture, this starts with communication through specific forms of rituals (Edwards et al., 2011; Gumede, 1990; Ngubane, 1977).

### **Preparation for the Birth of a Child**

The love of *uMvelinqangi* to people is shown while the mother is still pregnant. Caring for the unborn baby through the mother displays love for the unborn child. Typically, through dreams, the ancestors inform the parents of the unborn baby protection and care requirements for the child. A pregnant woman’s behaviour in family and community indicates their love of the child. Specific symbols of love bond generations together, including; medical preparations (*izinyamazane*) for loving protection and successful birthing (*isihlambezo*). All connect the child with family living dead/ancestors (*abapansi*) through love and care.

### **Caring for the Developing Child**

When the baby is born, a name is given demonstrating how the family feels at the time of birth. Subsequent to that a ritual called *imbeleko* is performed where a goat is slaughtered and a wristband (*isiphandla*) made out of the skin of the slaughtered animal is put around the wrist of the child, and worn by both young and old as a symbol of recognition and love to the ancestors who play the vital role of connecting family members with the Creator (Makunga, Thwala, & Edwards, 2011).

### **Harmonising Love Through Generations**

The Creator (*uMvelinqangi*) communicates directly with ancestors about important matters that bond people as nations. Love plays a vital moral and psychological role especially in early

mother-child love. Without children there is no new generation. The new generation the society creates, is expected to love, protect and care for others. For example, in the marriage ritual (*umshado*), *uthando* is demonstrated requesting direction from ancestors before initiating the whole process. Respect for ancestors is demonstrated by a family elder who speaks to ancestors on the family's behalf to ensure order and direction in the celebration. Gifts and praises are clear symbols of love. Ululations are spontaneous veins of love. At the other end of the developmental spectrum, while a funeral (*umngcwabo*) is a sad occasion, it demonstrates the importance of love given to the family of the deceased.

### **Humanism (*Ubuntu*)**

In isiZulu culture, the concept of *Ubuntu* typically conveys extended selfless unconditional love as in the Greek concept of (*agape*). Zulu people live by the practice of *Ubuntu*, which finds expressions in many isiZulu proverbs and traditions. Zulu people are encouraged to extend *ubuntu* to strangers in the form of shelter, food and care. Tilling of the soil or building a house, becomes a communal activity, community members assisting in what is called *ilima*. During an event community members also assist a host by carrying out various chores such as cleaning, painting and carrying out menial repairs to prepare for guests. Gifts help the host meet material demands of the event. Finally, *ubuntu* implies all PP2 values involved in humanization and socialisation. Humans only exist and become persons through other people. In exalted form, *Ubuntu* implies Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship in communal spiritual consciousness of all past, present and future generations. *Ubuntu* forms the essence of all helping human relationships and related professions (Nxumalo & Edwards, 2020).

### **Respect (*Inhlonipho*)**

If love is an ideal act, then respect is its behavioural attendant (Mbele et al., 2015). Philosophers and poets, as well as various knowledge, wisdom, spiritual, religious and healing systems, extoll perennial love as an ideal supreme virtue. Respect may form a future foundation stone in building a more peaceful world. For Zulu people *ukuhlonipha* provides guidelines for living, including appropriate clan-based inter-generational behaviour patterns, as well as ways to honour and revere ancestors. For example, in Zulu culture the term for respect "*inhlonipho*" has meanings of great breadth, depth and height. According to Mbele et al. (2015) this includes: a) reverence, awe and honour (cf. *hlomusa*). *Kuhlonishwana kabili* implies respect is mutual, e.g. *ukuhlonipha uyihlo nonyoko* means honouring your father and your mother; b) acting respectfully, modestly and covering the breasts or head (according to rules of modesty for married or engaged women), e.g., *ihloniphha lapho ingayukugana/ingayukwendela khona* means that a bride acts with modesty even where she will not go to marry, and c) avoiding in conversation the use of words which contain the name of certain persons to whom respect is due, e.g., substituting a fresh term for a word due to respect according to custom. For example, 'lookers' is the *hlonipha* word for 'eyes'. Respectful action is also prescribed as to how people of different relationships should behave



towards each other during specific events and periods of life. Similar recognition is given to respect amongst many cultural groups across the planet. The purpose is to manage social foundations for global relationships.

### **Indigenous Healing, Generational Consciousness Study**

Liu and MacDonald (2016, p.311) argue the need for greater global consciousness, particularly as concerns interconnectedness and differences in humankind, and the will to take appropriate moral actions. As a follow up to earlier research (Edwards et al., 2009), the following study was undertaken with the aim of appreciating and documenting contemporary perceptions with regard to the most meaningful healing roles of the ancestors.

### **Method**

This study incorporates a macro ethnographic method using the emic and etic perspectives of researchers, cultural immersion and community participant interviews.

### **Study Context and Setting**

The study was conducted in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Indigenous Zulu people of this region ascribe to traditional, ancestral, spiritual practices.

### **Research Questions**

1. What roles do ancestors play as part of the healing process in connecting the living to the deceased?
2. What was the relative importance of the various roles?

### **Data Sources**

Multiple data sources were used over an extended time period as is consistent with ethnographic research.

Two of the authors (JT and SE) also acted as primary data sources for contextual reflexivity in this study (Naidu & Sliep, 2011). JT is an Indigenous Zulu first language speaker, and a professor of psychology who has studied and taught about the interface of traditional Zulu culture and modern psychology at the University of Zululand for 17 years. He provided an emic perspective to data. SE is an emeritus professor and has studied Zulu culture and the interface between Zulu traditional culture and psychology for over 40 years, working and living in the above setting and engaging with the community and traditional sources.



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## **Ethnographic, Reflexive and Observational Data**

All five authors are clinical psychologists. Four of the five have worked predominantly in public health psychology facilities in the KwaZulu-Natal province with the other also having such experience. Four have lived mostly in the province in both rural and urban settings with the fifth also having spent over half of his life there.

The twelve participants were well known to JT for their ancestral/generational consciousness, beliefs and practices. They constituted a volunteer convenience sample, specifically selected for their knowledge, experience, insight, commitment and willingness to explore, articulate, and share their experiences, beliefs and practices. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

In an iterative process of data collection it was noted that asking the participants to discuss the roles played by the ancestors in healing gave the impression that ancestors were healers themselves. This question served as the exclusion rule, “Are you aware of the roles played by ancestors in healing? Yes/No. If the answer was ‘No’, participants were automatically excluded.

## **Interview Participants**

There were 7 female and 5 male participants, with a mean age of 53.8, standard deviation of 18.1, and age range of 25 to 79 years. Seven indicated a rural locality and 5 an urban or township place of residence. They had an average of 12.5 years of formal education. Eight exclusively followed traditional ancestral religion and 4 combined this with some form of Christianity. Ten were employed and 2 unemployed or pensioned.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews**

The structured interview questionnaire facilitated both description and ranking of ancestors healing roles. The twelve participants’ descriptive and ranked data were coded from A to L.

Following establishment of rapport, interviews were conducted in isiZulu by JT. Rapport was facilitated by his existing relationship with participants, the fact that he is a first language isiZulu speaker, and was familiar as a researcher and an insider in the community. The participants were informed as to the aim of the investigation. The researcher began with the statement.

“Ancestors play an important role in a number of areas. Could you think of roles they play in healing and try and rank order them before you discuss them.”



Participants were then simply required to rank order, in terms of their importance, the first, second and third roles played by the ancestors in healing.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview data were analysed using the NVIVO12 Qualitative Analysis Programme. The interview data was open-coded to determine initial themes. Potential themes were created as thematic nodes and the data was then finely coded by one researcher (TN) in NVIVO. The emergent thematic nodes were then verified by two other researchers (CG and SE) and finalised for inclusion and analysis. JT and SE's experience and history within the community and familiarity with African, specifically Zulu, cosmology supported verification. Analysis using NVIVO was run using stem words e.g. Query analysis on the ancestors as guides specified synonyms and stem words such that results included 'direction', leading etc. This allowed for the consolidation of related ideas into themes.

Order ranking of ancestral roles in healing comprised counting the frequency of first, second and third most important healing roles.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study followed ethical standards in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Institutional approval was obtained from the Zululand University research committee, project number S894/97.

### **Results**

When ranking the various healing functions, the most important role mentioned by 9 respondents (Participants numbered A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, L) was guidance, for the healer, clients and community at large. The next most important healing roles were those of protection, according to 8 participants (B, C, D, E, F, G, J, K); direction, noted by 6 participants (B, C, F, G, I, J); advice, as mentioned by 3 participants (F, H, I); and warning, according to 2 participants (A, J). Other healing roles mentioned once were that of presence, communication, mediation and intervention. Participant examples of these themes, healing roles and functions follow.

### **Beneficiaries of the Ancestors**

Participants noted that ancestors act to benefit their living relatives, healers, the Creator and the system as a whole. Number and richness of responses in this group of participants suggests that living relatives benefit substantially from ancestors connecting them to a spiritual system via healers.



“Ancestors form an integral part of our life. Without ancestors a black person has no direction. Ancestors help us from birth until we are buried. They direct us, protect us and they connect us to the Creator. They act as a bridge between us and the Creator because they are closer to Him” (Participant G).

Healers also benefit from the ancestors’ participation in the healing process as they guide, educate, regulate and inform the healer.

“As the herbalist – I have constant communication with ancestors. Due to constant communication with my ancestors I assign my success to listening to them. They reveal things to me. They provide necessary instructions. They guide me through the process of healing my patients. They advise and warn me if something is not right. So, in the whole healing process they are present” (Participant H).

The spiritual system that exists between living relatives, healers and the Creator is supported by the participation of ancestors.

“Ancestors are closer to the Creator and they act as a connection between us and the Creator to ensure that we are protected, directed to good life and ensuring that there is harmony in our families and communities because they are wiser as a result of living a higher life than us” Participant C).

They may also help in regulating and correcting the system.

“Ancestors play a vital role in any form of healing. They advise, guide, direct and protect the patient even if the healer has made a mistake. They can even tell the patient not to go to a particular healer if they suspect he or she is not going to do the good job” (Participant I).

“Shembe himself is the ancestor who in our church is the leader in any form of healing that takes place” (Participant F).

“People who heal are chosen through their profession and calling as in traditional healers but ancestors play the following healing roles” (Participant L).

### **Powers of the Ancestors**

Upon death ancestors have powers that their living relatives do not have which allows them to act in special ways and connect.

They are able to act across systems and ensure that there is stability and cohesion.



“Ancestors form a link between us and the Creator who protects and knows us in the whole world” (Participant K).

“Ancestors are closer to the Creator and they act as a connection between us and the Creator to ensure that we are protected, directed to good life and ensuring that there is harmony in our families and communities” (Participant C).

Ancestors have the power to influence healers on behalf of the living relatives guiding and informing the healer how to heal the living relative.

“In order for us to be healed the ancestors are the ones who guide the healers or inform them on how to heal us” (Participant D).

“While ancestors do not provide actual healing as experienced by patients, they are leading the healing process of all people who consult izinyanga, izangoma and other healers” (Participant E).

### **Roles and Functions of the Ancestors**

According to participants, ancestors served multiple roles in the healing process. It may be viewed on two levels where ancestors firstly played overarching roles which maintain the system and secondly specific roles in facilitating the healing process. The overarching roles included.

#### **Disciplinary/Regulatory**

This role appeared to enforce behaviour that made living relatives and healers comply with the system.

“They can be angry if they are not treated well by the living within the household” (Participant E).

“Constantly remind healers to be truthful in what they do by appealing to their conscience (unembeza), the wish to do right” (Participant L).

#### **Educational and Advisory**

Here the ancestors helped to inform and educate the health on the healing process and how to use medications.

“They inform all forms of healers what needs to be done” (Participant C).



“Any form of medication is screened by ancestors. They educate the healer on what needs to be combined and how to be used” (Participant K).

### **Intervention**

Ancestors were also attributed to act as mediators and facilitators in the healing process, supporting the providing a presence for the living relative and ensuring the smooth running of the healing process within the system.

“Because they know what we do not know and have experience of, they act as medium between the healer himself/herself and us” (Participant A).

### **Guidance**

More specifically ancestors provided guidance. Participants expressed that ancestors offered guidance in all aspects of life at all times provided that the living relative themselves did the right things, suggesting that the relationship was reciprocal. They were able to guide due to their superior wisdom and guidance could come in various ways, through the healing process and in dreams. Guidance subsumed the role of offering direction, leading and giving advice to both healer and living relatives.

“Ancestors play a role of guiding both young and old with regard to what should be done. Guidance from ancestors becomes successful if we respect and honour them. They do guidance through many ways. It can be through dreams where they visit you at night and reveal certain things which will assist you as an individual or as a family” (Participant A).

### **Protection**

Ancestors were seen as offering protection from danger and hard warnings were subsumed under the function of protection. Whilst the majority of participants specified ‘protection’ there was no specification as to what the warnings were cautioning about

“Ancestors also warn us about potential dangers” (Participant A).

### **Presence**

Ancestors were seen being present as an emotional support during the healing process and more commonly as constant support in the course of life.

“Ancestors play a role of being available/present to the family members who do the right things such as appeasing them from time to time” (Participant A).



“Ancestors are part of my life. They protect, direct and warn me of anything that happens in life” Participant J).

“They guide all forms of treatment by being there for the patient during the treatment process” Participant L).

### **Communication**

Emphasis on co-existence and interdependence on all systems through communication via the ancestors. Communication could often come in the form of dreams.

“As the herbalist – I have constant communication with ancestors” (Participant H).

“The advice often comes in the form of a dream where everything is clarified” (Participant F).

“We are unable to communicate with the Creator without the intervention of the ancestors who are closer to Him” (Participant B).

### **Discussion**

Ancestors are not, themselves, normally and typically perceived as healers. However as noted by Participant E they lead the healing process of all people who consult *izinyanga*, and *izangoma* and other healers. If ancestors had played healing roles in life, such as Shembe, a famous African Indigenous Church faith healer (*umthandazi*), by virtue of their closer connection to the Creator/God, as living dead ancestors, they continued to play various roles in healing. Various ancestral ceremonies assure ongoing acts of intergenerational veneration, love and care. For example ancestors may be praised (*ukubonga*), scolded (*ukubethela*), appeased (*ukushweleza*) and requests made for homestead strengthening or fortification against illness, disorder, malicious acts or situations of jealousy and rivalry. In such ceremonies, calls include the continuous line of familial and communal ancestors including the Creator (*Mvelinqangi*), for ongoing provision of care and love for future generations.

Results of this study support the intergenerational connection between love and respect, with specific reference to benevolent healing roles of guidance, protection and direction for healers, clients and general community. Participants B, G and D specifically emphasize the intermediary role of the ancestors with the Creator in this regard. Without this intermediary role there could not in fact be any creation, love and respect. This necessitates constant communication through interconnected acts of love and respect between descendants and ancestors.

Indigenous Zulu people seek to find meaning in the suffering experienced during COVID-19. Zulu indigenous frameworks explain this as the ancestors conveying displeasure or being angry



with living relatives for not appeasing them in the collective purpose of maintaining the integrity of the planet. The warning is severe and comes through the earth or planet in the form of a planet wide pandemic. Human and planetary relationships are misaligned. This was a typical issue presented in a recent study with another local sample of Zulu participants (Thwala et al., 2020).

Genuine traditional Zulu herbal doctors (*izinyanga*), carefully and coherently intuit ancestral communications with regard to indigenous medicinal plants and herbs. For example, medicines could be classified according to colour and given sequentially, with black medicines (*imithi emnyama*) given at night to draw out illness, red medicines (*imithi ebomvu*) at intermediate dawn or dusk and white medicines (*imithi emhlope*) given in the day to purify further after sickness is released. Further botanical studies are needed in this regard (Edwards, 2011; Ngubane, 1977). COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease passed directly from animals to humans. In addition to established international health promotion protocols such as mask wearing, sanitising and social distancing, indigenous Zulu holistically managed COVID-19 as a form of pollution, contagion (*umnyama*) or dangerous track (*umkhondo omubi*), requiring and abstinence (*ukuzila*) and healing for purification (*hlambuluko*), as in any other disorder and bereavement, in a way which minimized stress and enhanced social support (Ngubane, 1977; Thwala et al., 2020).

During divination *izangoma* (traditional diviners) connect with internal ancestral forces via *umbilini* (intuition) which is experienced mainly in the interior abdominal area, especially relating to gut/womb and heart, but also around shoulder area (Edwards, 2013; Ngubane, 1977). During the divination process (*vumisa*), interpersonal, social and global coherence is facilitated by intense emotionally charged atmosphere of successive contractual agreements (*siyavuma*) of the healing group. *Vumisa* essentially integrates aetiology, diagnosis and treatment in an integral, culturally recognized activity.

In addition to forming an essential dimension of the spiritual/communal life of many indigenous peoples, including the Zulu, generational consciousness typically occurs via dreams and visions. Sufi traditions have called this the imaginal world, or that world from which images arise. Bourgeault (2020) has noted that this visionary, imaginal world essentially refers to an intelligible universe or energy field, common to all perennial wisdom consciousness, for which quantum physics is only a contemporary scientific variant. Moreover, wisdom traditions typically converge on the vital role of the universal, human heart as organ of spiritual, social and psychological perception. Bourgeault (2020) has explicated the non-dual reality of this form of seeing through the eyes of the heart. This clairvoyant “seeing” is also the special province of the traditional diviner or *isangoma*, who is called by the ancestors to become an indigenous healer. This calling typically occurs through powerful ancestral dreams and some encounter with a reptile (*ixhanthi*) in water (Edwards, 2011). Accepting the call (*ukuvuma idlozi*) means apprenticeship under a qualified diviner, and a nine month process of being



spiritually reborn (*ukuthwasa*). Various healing and strengthening methods such as dances (*izingoma zokuvumisa*) and sexual abstinence (*ukuzila*) are necessary in order to achieve the unpolluted sacred status of the diviner as medium with the ancestral studies (Ngubane 1977).

In its focus on the ancient wisdom of generational consciousness, this study particularly contributes knowledge related to indigenous psychology. The study also provides examples of ancestral reverence, which, in isiZulu culture, typically occurs through ceremonial rituals to integrate and harmonize communal life on earth with the ancestral, communal, spiritual body. Some examples of loving rituals relating to the developmental psychological phases of birth, marriage and death have been provided above. Generational consciousness implies a continuous communication between the living and the living dead. For example, a burial service/process is called “*umsebenzi wokubuyisa*” which signifies the beginning of a new life as an ancestor who will always be present in guiding the living. The terms “*ukufihlwa*” and “*ukutshalwa*” that are used when referring to burying the dead imply rebirth into the next dimension and/or after-world (Edwards, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

Existential givens such as chaos, realities such as death, and values such as meaning, have become particularly poignant and urgent during COVID-19, which has exacerbated endemic struggles between survival and destruction, coherence and incoherence, suffering and compassion, flourishing and floundering. Studies with indigenous Zulu communities indicate considerable local resilient and healing resources such as generational consciousness, indigenous healers, ceremonial rituals and everyday acts of humanism, love, respect and care that include and transcend suffering. Generational consciousness and reverence have vast implications for preventing illness and promoting health of future generations. This means respect and reverence for past, present and future generations. This includes continuous communication between this world and the next. Self-realization and transcendence extend into vast social and spiritual transformational realms. Rituals and ceremonies provide some assurance of beliefs and practices ranging from holistic, undivided world views, through nondual intuition and healing functions of indigenous healers, to everyday acts of love, respect and care.

## **Author Contributions**

JT conceptualized the study, wrote the initial draft, contributed as a primary data source, analyzed data, co-wrote and commented on successive drafts. TN participated in analysis of the data, contributed to the theoretical perspectives, structured, and wrote revised drafts of the manuscript. CG contributed to theoretical perspective and co-wrote and commented on successive drafts. SE conceptualized the study, wrote the initial draft, contributed as a primary



data source, analyzed data and wrote and commented on successive drafts. DE finalized, edited and submitted the paper.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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