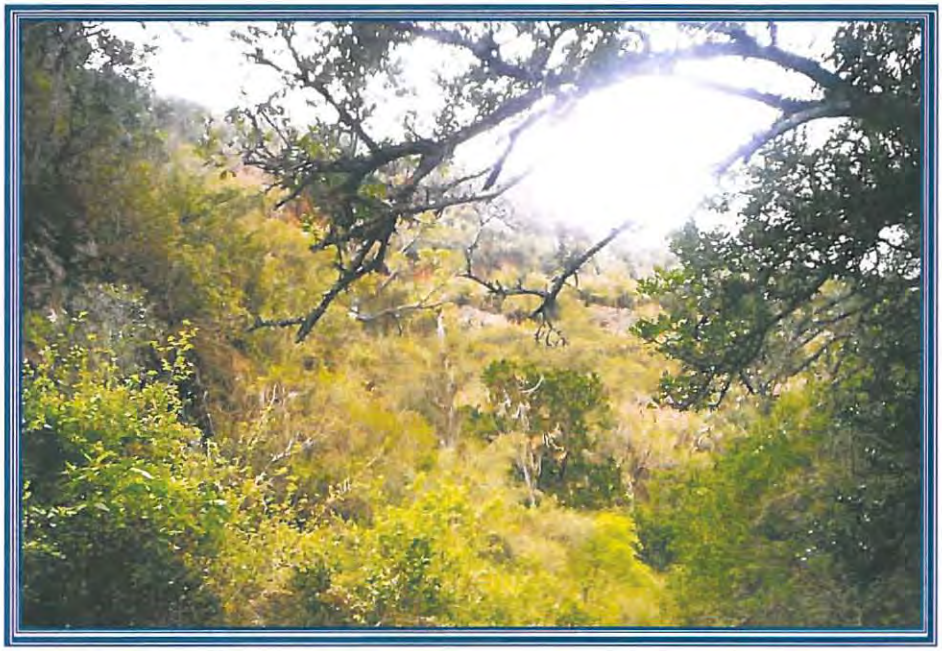
Unearthing the essence of nature and the perception of the natural landscape among the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape: An exploratory study



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ABSTRACT

The recognition of the close link between the lifestyles of 'indigenous' and 'local' people and biodiversity is widely acknowledged as crucial, not only for the survival of biological diversity but also for the protection of cultural diversity. Most discussions centre on the argument that cultural diversity can, through a wide variety of uses and practices, sustain and conserve biodiversity, particularly in many developing countries.

However, local people's relationship with natural landscapes and the extent to which they value biodiversity has not been fully explored and is in most cases misunderstood, which in fact undermines the bio-cultural diversity link. This misunderstanding exists primarily because the majority of environmental or ecological research conducted so far has been oriented towards economic valuation, in quantifying the estimated value of plants and fauna utilised by local people. As a result, biodiversity is primarily treated as a commodity, with wild harvested plant products being classified as either having subsistence, or commercial and medicinal value. This approach is narrow and conceals the critical, profound non-economic values of biodiversity among local communities in everyday life.

Literature indicates that biodiversity and natural landscapes also include less tangible values such as spiritual, cultural, psychological and social values (e.g., sense of place, place attachment, and psychologically restorative effects) which are crucial to human well-being. This suggests that human-nature interaction is complex, and that the meanings and values that people ascribe to natural landscapes cannot be solely reduced to economic values. Nevertheless, to date, studies investigating these less tangible values have received little attention in South Africa. As a result, we have very little understanding of what local and indigenous communities value or appreciate with regard to natural landscapes, beyond their general economic significance.

This study seeks to address this particular limitation by exploring non-economic values of natural landscapes and their significances to local people while illuminating the complexities inherent in human-nature interactions. I argue that the purely economic valuation of natural resources is simplistic and biased, and therefore does not represent the complete meaning and significance that natural resources may hold for local communities and households. Therefore, this study takes an innovative psychological approach to explore in detail the

everyday lived experiences of the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. It seeks to investigate the cultural, spiritual, and psychological values that ordinary people attach to natural landscapes in the peri-urban and urban communities of Ndlambe Village[1] and Grahamstown respectively. This research also aims to study the general perceptions of and meanings ascribed to the natural landscape (referred to by the amaXhosa as *ihlathi lesiXhosa*). In addition, it carefully integrates the Phenomenological and Transactional approaches to investigate how the amaXhosa engage, interact, and find meaning within the natural landscape. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of such landscape experiences on local people's spiritual and psychological well-being, demonstrating it link to bio-cultural diversity and conservation. The major findings in this study reflect that *ihlathi lesiXhosa* provides a place for peace and tranquillity to enhance psychological restoration. Moreover, *ihlathi* contributes towards redefining and strengthening personal and cultural identity; and provides spiritual satisfaction in everyday life. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that *ihlathi lesiXhosa* plays a profound role in both the personal and social lives of many amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape in that it appears to improve their lives.

Therefore, the evidence in this study suggests that, among the amaXhosa, biodiversity and natural landscape management processes should not aim to address and promote ecological/biological and economic values in a compartmentalized manner independent of other social, cultural, psychological, and more specifically the spiritual values of these features. An increased understanding of these more intangible values and local people's value system of biodiversity could help towards implementing improved biodiversity conservation and landscape management strategies in South Africa. These insights would not only help us to address the challenges of the previous conservation framework but would also encourage a more inclusive, mutual benefiting process that respects local people's values and needs.

[1] For the purpose of this study, Ndlambe Village is known Ndlambe in short and will thus be used interchangeably.

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LIST OF SELECTED ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Programme for Indigenous Resource Extraction
CBC	Community-Based Conservation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DP	Descriptive Phenomenology
EC	Eastern Cape Province
ECSER	Eastern Cape State of the Environment Report
EP	Environmental Psychology
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IP	Interpretative Phenomenology
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KNP	Kruger National Park
LEAP	Local Environmental Action Plan
LGHS	Local Government Handbook Survey
MDG's	Millennium Development Goals
PA	Protected Areas
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA Yearbook	South Africa Yearbook
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

For most of the 20th century, many solutions to biodiversity conservation were perceived as lying solely within the biological sciences. It was thought that biology provided the necessary analytical tools for identifying ecological 'hotspots' (rare and threatened species and ecosystems which required protection) and for developing the necessary management practices (Mascia *et al.*, 2003). As a result, the preservationist approach to conservation emerged and was significantly influenced by conservation biology of the 1960s and 1970s (Orlove & Brush, 1996). This preservationist approach largely considered humans' extractive and transformative interactions with biodiversity as the primary threat to the environment (Maffi, 2007). From this perspective, ceasing these destructive and transformative activities by 'taking human hands off' what were perceived as the last remaining pristine environments was thought to be the best solution to the world's ecological problems (Maffi, 2007). This exclusive approach was achieved through the establishment of Protected Areas (PAs), which involved erecting fences around designated areas, in the hope that biodiversity, would at least be protected from further harm, or at best be restored to its original state (Orlove & Brush, 1996). This approach was predominantly adopted in southern Africa (Fabricius *et al.*, 2001) and to a lesser extends in other countries in Africa (Brown, 2002) and Asia (Anderson & Grove, 1987).

During this time, biodiversity conservation became strongly associated with the establishment of state-controlled PAs managed by professional ecologists or conservationists in a top-down approach. Consequently, this preservationist approach led to the separation of people from natural habitats because it permitted only non-consumptive uses of national parks and exclusive nature reserves. Unfortunately, this often resulted in a myriad of hardships for the local and indigenous communities living adjacent to PA's as they were often excluded from using the biodiversity on which they had previously depended (Colchester, 2003; Singh & van Houtum, 2002; Wilkie *et al.*, 2006). The preservationist approach often prioritized the conservation of biodiversity while ignoring the social needs and values of local people living in and around these areas.

In more recent years, the preservationist approach has been questioned in achieving its core objective of conserving biodiversity for example by 1989 less than 5% of PAs in South Africa had completed inventories of all groups of fauna and flora within their boundaries, and over 50% had no checklists whatsoever of any group (Siegfried 1989 in Shackleton 2000). Coupled with increased reports of the poor conservation outcomes that have followed decades of governments' ineffectiveness in managing biodiversity, scholars and policy makers have been forced to reconsider the role of the community in resource use and conservation (Fabricius, 2004; Twyman, 1998). Studies are increasingly drawing attention to the ecological and social problems that have emerged because of such exclusionary approaches (Lele *et al.*, 2010). Researchers and policy makers are now beginning to recognise that an effective conservation approach requires a collaborative framework among scientists, policy makers, and local people and all stakeholders must be actively involved in the management and sustainability of natural resources (Ladle & Jepson, 2008; Pfund *et al.*, 2006; Pfund, 2010). To facilitate this process multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches between the natural and social sciences are being called for (Harmon, 2007).

Due to the failures and social injustice of the preservationist approach, scholars and policy makers have been compelled to re-evaluate the role of the community in resource use and conservation (Maffi & Woodley, 2010; Mathez-Stiefel *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, social scientists have been drawn in and they have begun to have an influence on biodiversity management debates. They have promoted a more people-centred (bottom-up) approach. The primary contribution of the social sciences has been to inform ecologists and conservationists about the diverse knowledge and ways in which indigenous people practise traditional forms of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), for instance, through their common property management systems (Berkes, *et al.*, 2000; Berkes, *et al.*, 2003; Berkes, 2004; Berkes & Davidson-Hunt, 2006; Berkes, 2007; Fabricius, 2004; Fenton, 2008). Through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, the international community was able to develop its dedication towards maximizing biodiversity conservation efforts by identifying the need to acknowledge the values that indigenous people and local communities attach to biodiversity. Moreover, it also recognized the need to incorporate these values into the development of conservation initiatives that were locally context-specific (Berkes *et al.*, 2003). This approach contributes towards stimulating involvement of local communities in conservation, which is based on the notion of focusing conservation on bio-

cultural diversity values rather than on biodiversity only (Wiersum & Cocks, in pre.). Through the CBD, it is internationally recognized that cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge systems and practices in fact sustain a wide variety of use practices, which promote biodiversity conservation (Carlson & Maffi, 2004).

Counter arguments have been citing such notions as being overly romantic and thus questioning the ability of 'ecologically noble savage' to conserve biodiversity (Ellen, 1986; Berkes, 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Milton, 1996; Posey, 1999; Redford, 1990). In response, numerous examples have also been cited to demonstrate how TEK and practices have effectively served to protect as well as maintain natural environments (Berkes, 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Posey, 1999; Wiersum, 2004). Nonetheless, the claims that indigenous and local people are by nature conservationists can be easily undermined by counter-examples of species extinction due to human hunting in the prehistoric past, indigenous people who grant large timber cutting or mining concessions on their lands, etc. Furthermore, indigenous and local people "have a variety of reactions to these claims" (Cunningham, 2001, p. 6). Writings that are more recent adopt a more pragmatic stance that stresses the "practicality and urgency of coordinating local communities and conservationists" (Orlove & Brush, 1996, p. 329). For example, Infield argues (2001, p. 801) that "promoting conservation in the context of local culture would endow protected areas with significance that an emphasis on biological diversity, landscape, or economies does not".

In response to the growing recognition of the interconnections between biological and cultural diversity, the concept of bio-cultural diversity has been formulated to acknowledge this link. Diversity is now recognised as comprising the diversity of life in all of its manifestations from biological, cultural and linguistic, which are interconnected within a complex socio-ecological adaptive system (Maffi, 2007). The concept also gives recognition to those values – practice systems of not only traditional and indigenous societies, but also more 'modernized' societies adapted or hybridized by changing social, material and geographical contexts (Cocks, 2006; Cocks & Wiersum, in prep.). Despite this acknowledgement of the importance of integrating local and indigenous communities, cultural practices and values into conservation initiatives and planning, we have insufficient understanding of what these may entail, particularly within the South African context.

South Africa is commonly recognized as an immensely diverse country with regard to its people, cultures, landscapes, biological resources and ecology. It has been identified as the third most biologically diverse country in the world, with an estimated 250,000 to 1,000,000 species, many of which are endemic (Wendy, 2006; Wynberg, 2002). However, the main focus of research regarding this remarkable biodiversity has to date been primarily oriented towards utilitarian and subsistence values (Cocks & Dold, 2004; Cocks *et al.*, 2006; Dovie *et al.*, 2007; Shackleton, 2005; Shackleton & Shackleton, 2000; Shackleton *et al.*, 2002; Shackleton *et al.*, 2007; Twine *et al.*, 2003). It was believed that assigning a monetary value to biodiversity and its use would facilitate effective biodiversity management. While these studies have contributed valuable insights in this respect, more recently, many researchers have argued that reducing biodiversity purely to economic values is simplistic and does not adequately convey the complete (holistic) value of biodiversity for local people (Anthony & Bellinger, 2007; Cocks & Dold, 2004; Cocks *et al.*, 2006; Kepe, 2008). More specifically, I argue that such economically focused research fails to delve deeply into the core of the diverse cultural, psychological, spiritual, and social values of biodiversity for local people as well as the relationships they have with natural landscapes in everyday life. These more intangible and intrinsic value of nature often provide enrichment in the intellectual, emotional, and creative aspects of human existence and well-being (Harmon, 2004) and are more difficult if not impossible to quantify.

To date Environmental Psychologists predominantly in developed countries (primarily in Europe and the USA) have carried out extensive research to illustrate that the way people interact with natural landscapes and the values they attach to these landscapes stretch far beyond utilitarian and economic values. For instance, in these countries natural landscapes have been identified as contributing towards human health and well-being (intangible values). It has been scientifically proven that contact with such landscapes has restorative psychological effects on humans (Bell *et al.*, 2001) and elicits positive psychological and spiritual effects (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Maller *et al.*, 2005; Saunders & Myers, 2003; Schroeder, 2002). For instance, these studies vary significantly from those that are economically oriented because they were founded upon a fundamental Environmental Psychology framework that posits that humans are in states of on-going reciprocity and interrelationship with their environments (Racher & Robinson, 2003) and any behaviour is best understood within that context or relationship. In such research, biodiversity

is not approached at a species level or as a resource per se, but as a landscape or setting (dynamic and rich with information or meaning) in which meaningful interactions with the natural environment occur and/or are determined (Bell *et al.*, 2001). For instance, it has been acknowledged that as individuals interact with the natural landscape certain relationships, memories and meanings develop over time and with these experiences, certain indirect values such as recreational, aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values are formed (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Kelly & Hosking, 2008; Kyle *et al.*, 2004). Individuals often develop special bonds with landscapes, giving them great personal significance. Aspects such as place attachment and sense of place (Hunziker *et al.*, 2007; Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Lee, 2011; Pretty *et al.*, 2003) exemplify such relations. Thus, landscapes do not only consist of objective physical attributes or entities but are also subject to cultural perceptions and/or worldviews (Verschuuren, 2006).

Aspects of landscape research have been illustrated to have relevance to the conservation debate. For instance, Vining and his colleagues raise concerns pertaining to the weakening global ecological state, arguing that the increasing loss of biodiversity may result in people being further separated from the natural environment (Vining *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, people would tend to perceive themselves as separate or disconnected from nature and this may have implications for subsequent environmental values, attitudes and behaviour (Miller, 2005; Vining *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, it has been theoretically and empirically demonstrated that individuals who develop bonds with a place or natural setting tend to develop attachment and pro-environmental behaviours (Gosling & Williams, 2010; Halpenny, 2006; Hernàndez *et al.*, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). Therefore, studying the human-nature relationship through the landscape approach can be useful for facilitating an improved understanding of local people's values of biodiversity (Vaccaro & Norman, 2008), and concurrently facilitate effective biodiversity management as there is an increasingly recognition of the need for conservation to also occur outside of professionally designated and created conservation areas (Wiersum & Cocks, in prep).

In the review of literature below, I explore the origin of the preservationist approach and demonstrate how historically Western worldviews and perceptions of nature have influenced the adoption of conservation policies and management strategies both globally and in South Africa. Despite more recent trends to incorporate local communities' values into such

policies and strategies local communities' values of biodiversity and natural landscapes are not well known or understood.

Several studies have documented the importance of cultural values of particular species but not at a landscape level. An exception includes an attempt by Anthony and Bellinger's research on the importance of landscape, flora, and fauna to the Tsonga communities in the Limpopo province of South Africa (2007) although having some methodological limitations, (see further discussion in section 1.3.). Such an understanding of cultural values is highly significant if local communities' values are to be actively incorporated into conservation policies, and management plans. Finally, I demonstrate the capacity and contribution of the social sciences within the biodiversity conservation process, arguing that social science approaches and methods are actually the cornerstone for successful conservation practices. Such studies should not be overlooked in improving policy making processes around biodiversity conservation and management strategies. I end this chapter with a statement of the aims, objectives, and conclusion of the study.

1.2. Literature review

1.2.1. The historical background to the adoption of the preservation approach towards biodiversity conservation

The way in which nature has historically been perceived in western societies has had a significant impact on how nature is treated and conserved. For example, during the 18th and 19th centuries, nature[2] was largely conceptualized as a 'wilderness,' which was defined as any area (small or large) which had not been the subject of human influence or interaction (Bell *et al.,* 2001). This wilderness was believed to contain unpredictable natural forces and wild animals that could threaten human lives (Bell *et al.*, 2001). Thus, nature was perceived as wild, disordered, cruel, feared, and uncivilised and a place to be avoided (Bell *et al.,* 2001). Privileged city dwellers, therefore, believed that humans needed to be separate from nature

[2] It should be noted that the words 'biodiversity', 'nature' or 'natural landscapes' are used interchangeably in this study as the amaXhosa do not make the same distinctions as they only refer to nature as *indalo*.

(Bell *et al.*, 2001). It's important to note that humans were not perceived as an integral part of nature/biological diversity.

This distorted perception of viewing oneself as separate from nature can be demonstrated further by the negative and even hostile attitudes and values adopted towards the wilderness. For example, in medieval Europe words such as 'terrible', 'horrible' or even 'disgusting' were used to express attitudes toward nature (Bell *et al.*, 2001). In fact, the Europeans so 'abhorred the wilderness that travellers sometimes insisted on being blindfolded so that they would not be confronted with the terror of untamed mountains and forests' (Bell *et al.*, 2001, p. 26). Nature, during this time, was something that needed to be subdued, dominated, and tamed to ensure that civilization flourished (Bell *et al.*, 2001). This mastery perception, together with the forces of modernization and industrialisation, resulted in massive urbanisation and the continuous demand for the extraction of natural resources to feed the demands of the ever-increasing world population.

During the period of Enlightenment, European attitudes towards nature began to change. This shift was influenced by scientific discoveries as people began to view natural phenomena as complex and marvellous manifestation of God's will (Bell *et al.*, 2001). European intellectuals became increasingly fascinated rather than repulsed by nature. Nevertheless, this 'new' attitude was primarily a luxury enjoyed by (minority) elite city dwellers rather than those who were forced to contend more intimately with the 'dangers' of untamed wild lands (Bell *et al.*, 2001).

Later in the 19th century, Western perceptions and attitudes towards nature changed once again. This time they were largely influenced by the Romantic view of nature as pleasing and beautiful. An aesthetic appreciation together with the realisation that nature is a limited resource ultimately triggered a drive towards nature conservation (Bell *et al.*, 2001). This led to the establishment of the first PA, the Yellowstone National Park in 1872 (Pfund *et al.*, 2006). The need for PAs was strengthened when alarms were raised concerning the threat to biodiversity posed by increased industrialisation, deforestation and habitat loss (Carlson & Maffi, 2004; Pfund *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, protective environmental campaigns began to flourish (Bell *et al.*, 2001). The preservationist approach to nature conservation became the

dominant approach. It was characterised by a 'fines and fences' attitude which considered people a hindrance to the essential preservation of important ecological areas (Carlson & Maffi, 2004). Over the past century, the world witnessed large-scale expansion of protected areas in the form of national parks, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries (to protect and maintain intact ecosystems).

As much as these events were primarily culturally inspired, the preservationist approach was also significantly influenced by the conservation biology movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Orlove & Brush, 1996). Biology became seen as providing the necessary analytical tools for identifying ecological 'hotspots', rare, threatened species and ecosystems (Mascia *et al.,* 2003). Consequently, for most of the 20th century all solutions to conservation were globally perceived as lying predominantly within the sphere of the natural sciences (Büscher & Wolmer, 2007).

1.2.2. The problem with the preservationist approach

Since the late 1980s, the principles behind the Preservationist Approach have been widely criticised. They have been described as ethnocentric, favouring western ideas of nature (Anderson & Grove, 1987); elitist, as they often overlook resource management strategies adopted by indigenous inhabitants (Colchester, 2003). Moreover, it has been criticized for being ecologically outmoded, since they fail to acknowledge that the human-nature inter-relationship is considered to be in a state of flux; and self-defeating, because outside pressures inevitably impinge on protected areas and generate conflict (Adams & McShane, 1996; Adams & Hutton, 2007; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997). For example numerous cases have been reported whereby PA were established in areas that had had long-established human populations (Orlove & Brush, 1996) and invariably resulted in the involuntary resettlement and displacement of people from their land (Lele *et al.*, 2010). Often no alternative forms of livelihood were offered or provided resulting in aggravated poverty for the communities concerned (Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Kaimowitz & Sheil, 2007). In response, researchers have argued that the success of PAs should not be solely defined by an assessment of their biodiversity outcomes while ignoring the social implications of the creation of the PA (Agrawal & Redford, 2006; Bawa *et al.*, 2004; Lele *et al.*, 2010; Pfund, 2010).

1.2.3. The influence of the historical western scientific traditions on South African conservation practices and research

In South Africa, biodiversity conservation has largely been influenced by the ideologies and principles that predominate in the west. For example, the Kruger National Park (KNP) established in 1898 adopted policies aimed at developing landscapes which were 'wild' protected areas, devoid of people and where animals could be observed in 'pristine environments' or wilderness (Fabricius *et al.*, 2004; Neuman, 1998). The ideal of a 'pure' wilderness resulted in the human depopulation of the national park (Beinart, 2000). Simultaneously, the political processes of the previous regimes resulted in the dislocation of hundreds of thousands Black-African families. These families were moved to various parts of the country in order to form Bantustans or so-called 'independent homelands'. These relocations largely benefitted the privileged elite, while people on the periphery were often denied access to the natural resources they needed to survive (Wynberg, 2002). Conversely, in Anthony and Bellinger's study (2007) a particular sample of the Tsonga local people (in Limpopo) were relocated closer to KNP, which is perceived as 'beneficial' by some community members. However, it is important to point out that this example is an exception rather than the rule.

In reaction to the many failures and social injustices of the Preservationist Approach, towards the latter part of the 20th conservation planners realised that the only way PAs could be managed successfully was with local support and approval. This was after social scientists (particularly from Sociology and Anthropology) pushed for a more people-centred approach within biodiversity management debates (Büscher & Wolmer, 2007). As a result, conservation policies were revised, resulting in a shift towards community-based conservation initiatives. Such initiatives included policies such as allowing communities access to natural resources, and actively involving local communities in the management of PAs (Fabricius & Collins, 2007; Fabricius *et al.*, 2001; Fabricius *et al.*, 2004). This paradigm shift has ultimately led to the rise of community-based conservation (CBC) initiatives (Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997; Jeanrenaud, 2002). Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe pioneered the CBC movement (Child, 1996; Duffy, 2000; Hasler, 1999; Murombedzi, 1999; Murphree, 2001).

Chambers and Leach (1987) were among the first researchers to recognise the importance of biodiversity, in the form of NTFP's (Non Timber Forest Products), to rural livelihoods as sources of cash and or as forms of savings and assets. Their work gave considerable attention to the role played globally by forest products in generating rural livelihoods through food production and household welfare (Wollenberg & Ingles, 1998). Consequently, various disciplines in Southern Africa embarked on valuation exercises (primarily economic) to quantify the estimated value of plants utilized by people in particular areas (Campbell & Shackleton, 2001; Campbell *et al.,* 2008; Shackleton *et al.*, 2002; Twine *et al.*, 2003). As a result, wild harvested plant products were classified as having either subsistence or a commercial value (Campbell & Luckert, 2002; Goebel *et al.*, 2000). Most of these studies have aimed at providing some expression of resource value and have improved our understanding in this regard (Cocks, 2006).

While the objective of community-based conservation may have been to generate economic benefits through conservation, such programmes have not always generated the anticipated results (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). There are several reasons for the still less than anticipated results of community-based conservation efforts, including a lack of organizational collaboration and communicative capability between conservationists and local people (Orlove & Brush, 1996). More fundamentally, it has also gradually become clear that there often exists a difference in values between local people and professional conservationists concerning the role and significance of natural resources (Sheil *et al.,* 2006). For example, professionals (as outsiders) often do not fully understand the belief systems of local/rural people and erroneously assume that profits alone will lead to resource conservation (Fabricius, 2004).

Despite the contribution of studies into economically oriented values over the past decade, a number of authors have emphasized that economic valuation does not necessarily represent the complete value and significance that natural resources hold for communities and households (Cocks & Dold, 2004; Cocks *et al.,* 2006; Kepe, 2008; Sheil & Wunder, 2002).

1.2.4. Recognising the link between biological and cultural diversity

The significance of less tangible values such as spiritual, cultural, and social values in sustainable biodiversity conservation and management has been demonstrated and acknowledged internationally (Verschuuren, 2006). In tangent to these developments over the past decade, there has been increasing evidence revealing that human societies have interacted with nature for many generations and that this relationship has resulted in unique sets of cultural knowledge and practices. Such knowledge and practices are often, in turn, dependent on elements of biodiversity for their continued existence and expression (Maffi, 2005; Maffi & Woodley, 2010; Posey, 1999). Under this framework, social and ecological systems are perceived as being interconnected and co-evolving across spatial and temporal scales. This is reflected, for example, in cultures which have long histories of regimes and rules to protect or preserve natural places – often manifested in the form of sacred sites, pools and related places (such as caves and mountains), or sacred species (Posey, 1999; Pretty *et al.*, 2009). Diversity of life is now, therefore, considered to be a product of specific historical processes of co-evolution between nature and society (Loh & Harmon, 2005; Mathez-Stiefel *et al.*, 2007; Maffi & Woodley, 2010; Norgaard, 1995). Thus, cultural diversity can be interpreted as 'humankind's accumulated reserve of learned responses to the environment that make co-existence (i.e., harmonious and sustainable relationships with nature) and self-recognition possible' (Posey, 1988). This understanding of cultural diversity has resulted in the identification of what the Declaration of Belem calls an 'inextricable link' between biological and cultural diversity (Posey, 1988). The term bio-cultural diversity has been introduced to denote this link (Posey, 1999). Harmon (2004) posits that this interrelationship of bio-cultural diversity is the basic condition of life on earth and this is what makes us human.

This official recognition of bio-cultural diversity has resulted in an escalation of institutions internationally, which have adopted approaches that connect humanity with its origins. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) calls on parties to:

> "...respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices, and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising

from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices" (Maffi, 1998, p.12).

The successful conservation of biodiversity is in many cases now seen as being dependent on the conservation of certain cultural practices (Maffi, 2004; 2007). Therefore, indigenous knowledge systems are increasingly recognized as contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and ecological processes and to sustainable use in general.

Despite this enormous international acknowledgement towards the significance of integrating local and indigenous communities, cultural services, values, and perceptions into conservation initiatives and planning mentioned above, we have insufficient understanding of what these may entail specifically with reference to the South African context. In light of these findings, suggestions have been made to improve our understanding of the interrelationship between rural/local people and biodiversity (Fabricius, 2004; Goebel *et al.*, 2000). Today biodiversity conservation is seen as understanding and working with people (Sheil, 2000) more than it is about working with nature. Therefore, an increasing understanding of the significance, meaning and value that local people attach to nature will go a long way in bridging the identified gap between local people and professional conservationists.

1.3. Landscape research

Issues surrounding landscapes and landscape perception have been a subject of interest to Environmental Psychology — the study of interactions and relationships between humans and their natural and built environment (Bell *et al.*, 2001; Saunders, 2003; Saunders, *et al.*, 2006). This has resulted in a considerable amount of research being conducted in various aspects including landscape preference, wilderness experience, visions of nature, human-nature relationships and sustainable development, primarily in Europe and United Stated of America (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002; Bell *et al.*, 2001; van den Berg & Koole, 2006). However, many of these studies of human environmental perception have focused on scenic aspects of landscapes (Macpherson, 2005) such as aesthetics and scenic evaluation (Zube, 1987; 1991). Consequently, such studies have primarily relied on individuals' cognitive and visual abilities to interpret certain elements of the landscape. Landscapes have not been studied holistically

but in a detached or fragmented manner. For instance, Macpherson (2005) argues that this scenic (detached or distant) way of perceiving landscapes "can be understood as characteristic of an ocular-centrism central to western thought" (p. 97) which implies a privileging of knowledge gained through sight and an objectifying way of seeing associated with modernity. This predominant approach to landscape perception tends to overlook the holistic, subjective, and other non-visual (embodied) perceptions and interactions with the natural landscape (Macpherson, 2005).

More recently, it has been acknowledged that the concept of landscape and landscape perception goes beyond the ideal or imagined perception of scenery and includes concrete actuality of everyday social life in a certain cultural context. This point is exemplified in Zube's (1991, p. 322) landscape definition depicting "humanized, outdoor, environments that are endowed with meanings and values that derive from the personal experiences of residents of and visitors to these places." Accordingly, context, subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings become important components of landscape research. Therefore, a more holistic approach appears the most appropriate when studying local people's perceptions and experiences of natural landscapes from their own point of view. In order to capture these perceptions and experiences of nature this entails a shift from conceptualising nature as simply a resource for local communities but rather to conceptualise nature at a landscape level which can be endowed with meaning (from local people's perspective or emic).

In view of this, both the Phenomenological and Transactional Approaches suggest that local (or lay) people tend to assume a non-positivistic view (the Cartesian human-nature split) and holistic worldview and lived experiences in everyday life events (Giorgi, 2007; 2009; Werner *et al.*, 2002). According to Altman (1992) and Werner *et al.* (2002), lay people's automatic perception, and description of any event or phenomenon is typically made in an integrated, mutually defining and interdependent way (or with what they call the 'holistic eye'). This worldview assumes that a phenomenon can be perceived from various aspects such as the physical, time and temporal qualities, the social context, and psychological processes, which are all important in everyday life (Werner *et al.*, 2002). Each aspect respectively provides accurate and useful understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A more comprehensive description of this framework follows in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 2). By adopting a transactional approach, the person-environment relationship is

conceptualised as a dynamic, interactive system and people are seen as active agents in their environments, with the person and the landscape mutually influencing one another on all different levels (Kyttä, 2003). These various levels range from personal, through interpersonal or social, to cultural. This approach is appropriate for facilitating a comprehensive investigation and understanding of local people's values, interactions and relationships particularly in a complex society such as South Africa.

What makes the transactional approach distinct from conventional psychological approaches is that it embraces both unique events and common features of the phenomenon. That is, it assumes that events change and that there is value in understanding this uniqueness (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). Secondly, it supports the holistic view of the landscape rather than focusing on isolated species. Although reliant on the transactional worldview, this study is not solely restricted to this worldview, but instead draws from it and other perspectives due to the specific research questions presented below. Compatible with the transactional worldview, phenomenology does not conceptualize natural landscapes and/or its perception from within the human-body, human-nature, human-behaviour (Cartesian) split approach, but focuses on the lived experience of ordinary people in everyday life context holistically, which is contrary to the fragmented, expert-based comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation (see further discussions in chapter 2) (e.g., Wilhelm-Rechmann & Cowling, 2010). Therefore, these approaches are suitable to this study in that they facilitate a holistic understanding of the human-nature relationship in its complexity. The transactional and phenomenological approaches offer an improved, innovative combination and complementary way of understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

1.4. Research Aims

Cocks also highlighted that a novel approach to conservation would draw from the effects of globalization and give extensive attention to today's modern adaptations of cultural relationships with nature and its components (2006). Thus, this study aims to acquire an in-depth understanding of the everyday lived experiences of the 'non-expert' amaXhosa with regard to their natural landscapes and environments, and the meaning they attached to natural landscapes and environments. This will be achieved, firstly by clarifying what we mean by the natural landscape called *ihlathi lesiXhosa*. The term *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (the Xhosa forest)

which was discovered as the term used to describe locally used indigenous forests (Dold & Cocks, 1999). The term did not only apply to the natural occurring vegetation type but also referred to the importance of culturally important sites which occur within *ihlathi lesiXhosa*. The importance of these sites was attributed to their association with the ancestors (*izinyanya* – ancestral spirits, hereafter referred to as 'ancestors') who act as benevolent guides, mentors and protectors, are venerated and are very much considered to be part of people's daily lives. Unlike the western dichotomy between 'pristine nature' versus 'transformed nature', even heavily transformed *ihlathi lesiXhosa* was still appreciated for its recreational and spiritual value (Cocks *et al.*, 2012).

This study aims to carry out an in-depth exploration of the psychological, cultural and spiritual values that local people attach to *ihlathi*, as well as the role of natural landscapes in relation to their spiritual and psychological well-being, including sense of place and identity. The study also aims to investigate the relationships between various aspects of these perceptions and experiences across various socio-demographic and geographical factors within a peri-urban and urban. The study through the transactional applied approach attempts to allude to the complexities of aspects that form part of local individuals and communities' experience and meaning of *ihlathi lesiXhosa*.

1.5. Research questions

This study, in line with the identified aims, seeks to answer the following research questions:

a. What is the meaning of the term *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (the Xhosa forest) among the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape?
b. What is the amaXhosa's experience of *ihlathi* and what impact does this have on one's cultural, psychological, spiritual well-being, sense of place and identity.
c. What is the relationship between these various aspects across various socio-demographic and geographical factors within a peri-urban and urban setting?
d. How can these new insights contribute towards improving conservation and management of bio-cultural diversity and natural landscapes in South Africa?

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the history of the mainstream Preservationist Approaches and their global and national implications. It is clear that the use of Preservationist Approaches alone is insufficient in bringing about effective conservation, and therefore there is a pressing need for alternative and collaborative efforts between disciplines from the social and natural sciences, local communities and other stakeholders to achieve collective benefits. I have also illustrated the need for a holistic understanding of the value of biodiversity for local people in everyday life, rather than a purely economic valuation. Beyond the economic and utilitarian valuation of biodiversity lie other intangible values which are personal and yet significant in people's everyday lives and such values are largely ignored in biodiversity research and policy in South Africa.

1.7. Thesis Structure

This study provides a panoramic (non-linear) view of the cultural, psychological, and spiritual values attached to *ihlathi* by the amaXhosa in everyday life, so that it is seen as a cohesive whole instead of a series of unrelated stories. Thus, in this synthesis report, the results from both the qualitative and quantitative phases are presented concurrently. The rest of the thesis is structured as follows (comprising three additional components): the study sites and research methodology (Chapter 2); four main empirical results (Chapters 3-6); and an integrated discussion of results and conclusion (Chapter 7) (see figure 1 below).

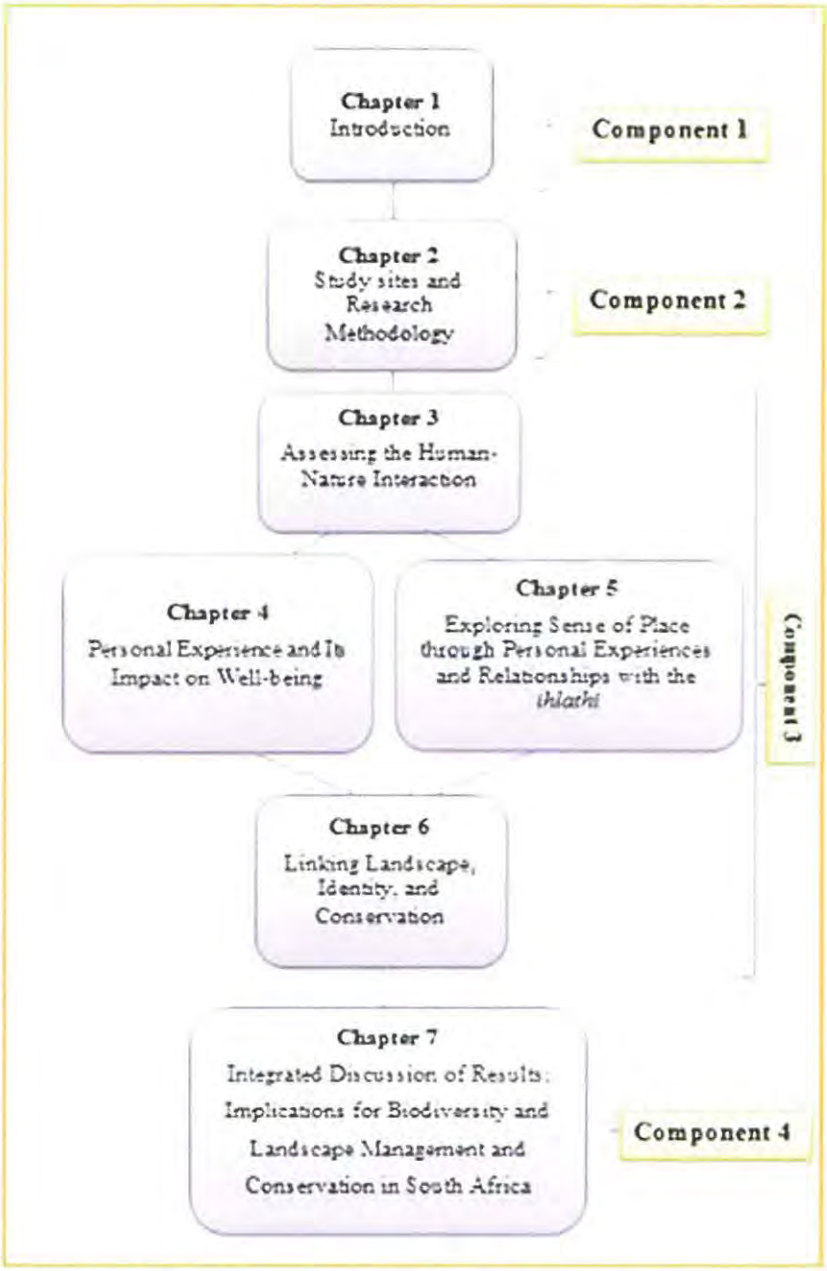

Figure 1: The thesis structure

In Chapter 2, I present the description and classification of the study sites and the theoretical framework upon which this research is founded. In Chapter 3, I introduce the definition of *ihlathi*, the experience of *ihlathi,* and all its values, to facilitate an enhanced understanding of the human-nature relationship of the amaXhosa in everyday life. This is followed by Chapter 4 which includes an investigation of the participants' personal experience of *ihlathi* and its impact on their well-being. In Chapter 5, I study the sense of place among the amaXhosa, through personal meanings and relationships they have towards *ihlathi.* In Chapter 6, I present a more general, socially constructed meanings of *ihlathi* on the cultural identity of the

amaXhosa and assess their general awareness of the landscape and related conservation issues of *ihlathi*. All the themes and subthemes in the empirical chapters are interdependent and contribute to the unfolding of the final chapter, chapter 7. Included in Chapter 7, is also an integrated discussion of the main themes arising from the results chapters, in relation to previous studies regarding biodiversity management and conservation. In the second part of the chapter, I present policy implications, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY SITES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main components, namely, a general description of the study areas, and the research methodology applied in this research. In this section, I illustrate the complexity and dynamics inherent in the social, historical, economic, and ecological context of the study areas in order to facilitate a better understanding of how the human-nature relationship unfolds among local amaXhosa living in the Eastern Cape Province (EC). In particular, attention is focused on the interplay between the cultural, socio-economic, historical and environmental features in which local people are already embedded, in order to improve our understanding of the meanings and relationships that are formed towards *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (the Xhosa forest). As understood by Altman (1992), these contextual factors may sometimes act as constraints and sometimes as reinforcements to how individuals interact with their environment.

Two main study sites were included in this study, a urban locality named Grahamstown and a peri-urban village called Ndlambe – both located within the EC, South Africa. More specifically, these areas were included because of the variation in their landscape features (such as forest intactness and deforestation) and for their socio-economic development, livelihood, and lifestyle characteristics, as discussed below. Despite the divergences in the biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of these two areas, they share a common cultural and political history.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, the study sites are introduced, covering (a) a general overview of the Eastern Cape including its rich biodiversity and its socio-economic and historical background; and (b) a description of the specific geographical, historical, biophysical/topographic, socio-economic and socio-demographic features of each study area. Thereafter the research methodology is extensively described.

2.2. Study sites

2.2.1. An overview of the Eastern Cape

The EC is geographically situated on the south-eastern coastline of South Africa. It covers an area of 169 580 km^2, constituting 13% of South Africa's total land mass and making it the second largest province in the country (CSIR, 2004; Stats SA, 2008). The EC is one of the richest provinces in terms of biodiversity since it is home to the highest number of biomes and vegetation types (Cowling & Pierce, 2009). The EC has many rare and endangered species and numerous conservation areas including subtropical Thicket, wetlands, river systems, coastal areas and cultural sites (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2004). The EC is also known for its gradient landscape of mountains, caves, hills and streams. Many of these elements of landscape are not purely biophysical in nature, having been greatly endowed with cultural significance by the amaXhosa both historically and currently.

The EC also has a wealth of cultural diversity, with a number of ethnic and cultural groups speaking various languages. IsiXhosa is the predominant language, although other official languages such as Afrikaans, English, and Sesotho are also spoken. In terms of population, the EC is South Africa's third largest province, with over 6 million (6 829 958) people residing there, representing 13.5% of the South African population (Stats SA, 2011).

Despite its biological and cultural wealth, the Eastern Cape is ranked one of the poorest provinces in the country with respect to its average monthly expenditure (Stats SA, 2008). The province's provincial Gross Geographical Product (GGP) per capita is significantly less than the national average. Its major challenges emanate primarily from the relatively large proportion of people living in rural localities, where literacy and employment rates are extremely low, especially among the young.

2.2.2. History of the EC

Historically, the EC was always renowned as a frontier where nations encountered each other in battle. From the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, nine different frontier wars, between Dutch trek Boers and amaXhosa and between the British and amaXhosa, were fought in this area. Each of these wars ended in significant dislocation of the

Xhosa-speaking people, effectively expelling them from the area then known as the Zuurveld (between the Sundays and Great Fish Rivers) (Beinart, 1980) to areas east of the Great Fish, Keiskamma and Kei Rivers.

The terrain played a significant role for the amaXhosa during the Great Frontier wars. For example, aspects of the landscape such as forests, mountains, and caves were used to advantage by the amaXhosa when escaping or sometimes when charging against the Frontier war commandos (Dold & Cocks, 2012).The local amaXhosa's intimate knowledge of the forest also allowed them to lure the British soldiers into the forest for ambushes. The thick, unfamiliar forest made battle difficult for the British soldiers as they tried to make their way through harsh and thorny terrain. Sometimes pieces of fabric from their uniforms left traces to guide the amaXhosa in their pursuit of them. Caves in the forest were also used to hide women and children during the wars.

Over the past two decades, many rural areas in the EC have continued a long history of struggles over land, cattle and natural resources (Lotz-Sisitka *et al.*, 2010). This history includes the racial segregation policies of the apartheid era, when Black people were not allowed to own land and were forcibly removed to unfavourable conditions in designated homelands including the former Ciskei and Transkei (Lotz-Sisitka *et al.*, 2010). Poor infrastructure, expanding informal settlement, high population densities, high poverty levels, a heavy dependence on urban earnings and welfare payments, and poorly managed environments continue to characterize such localities (Møller, 2008; Møller *et al.*, 2001). At the same time, just like other parts of South Africa, the EC has experienced rapid urbanization, an escalating western lifestyle, and increasing modernization over the past 50 years (South African History Online, 2010). Despite these changes, however, biodiversity still plays a significant role in maintaining the cultural and traditional values of many urban and rural amaXhosa living in the EC (Cocks & Dold, 2004; Cocks & Wiersum, 2003; Cocks *et al.*, 2006).

2.2.3. Study sites

This research study was carried out in two sites situated within the EC, namely, Grahamstown, and the village of Ndlambe, as shown in Figure 2.2.3 below. Grahamstown represents an urban location as it has a Central Business Centre (CBD) and its own municipality. Despite this, it is also of importance to note that sections of the town represent informal settlements and these are located on the fringes of the township many of which are adjacent to the town's commonage. In comparison, Ndlambe is located in a rural area and has no CBD and no local municipality. Despite its rural location on the on the banks of the Fish River it is peri-urban in nature as it situated 10 kms away from the key national road, the N2, which links it the CBD of Peddie and Grahamstown, which are located 20 kms and 60 kms away respectively and most households subsistence needs are met through commercial outlets.

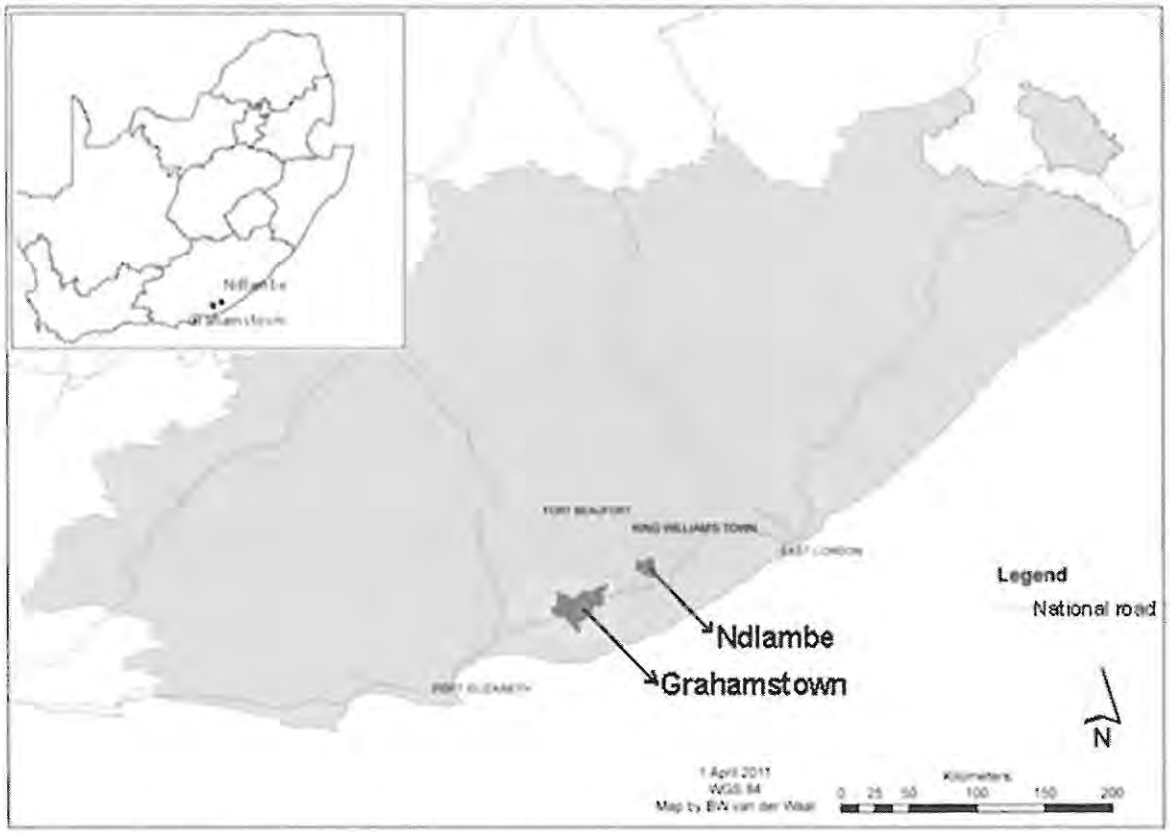

Figure 2.2.3: A map of South Africa highlighting the EC with both Grahamstown and Ndlambe Village.

2.2.3.1. Study area 1: Grahamstown

2.2.3.1.1. Geographical location

Grahamstown is located in the Makana local municipality under the Cacadu district municipality of the EC. The Makana region has an area of 4 376 km^2 (Makana Municipality IDP, 2010) and Grahamstown (the seat of the district) is situated about 120 km to the west of Port Elizabeth, a major South African city. The population size of Makana municipality currently stands at 80 390 people with a population growth of 0.65% per annum (Local Government Handbook Survey, 2011). There are approximately 21 388 households in Grahamstown each containing on average 3.8 household members.

Specifically, the study was carried out in ten different localities (which included a suburb, townships, and informal settlements) within Grahamstown and Grahamstown East/Rhini. These included amaXhosa households within: Market Street, York Street, Vukani, Thembeni, Zolani, Xolani, Joza, Phumlani, and Extension 5. Most of the clusters are geographically located in the out-skirts of Grahamstown, while only a few is located in the middle of Grahamstown as depicted in the pictures below.

Figure 2.2.3.1a: An overview of the landscape of Grahamstown, taken from the Settlers Monument looking towards Grahamstown East.

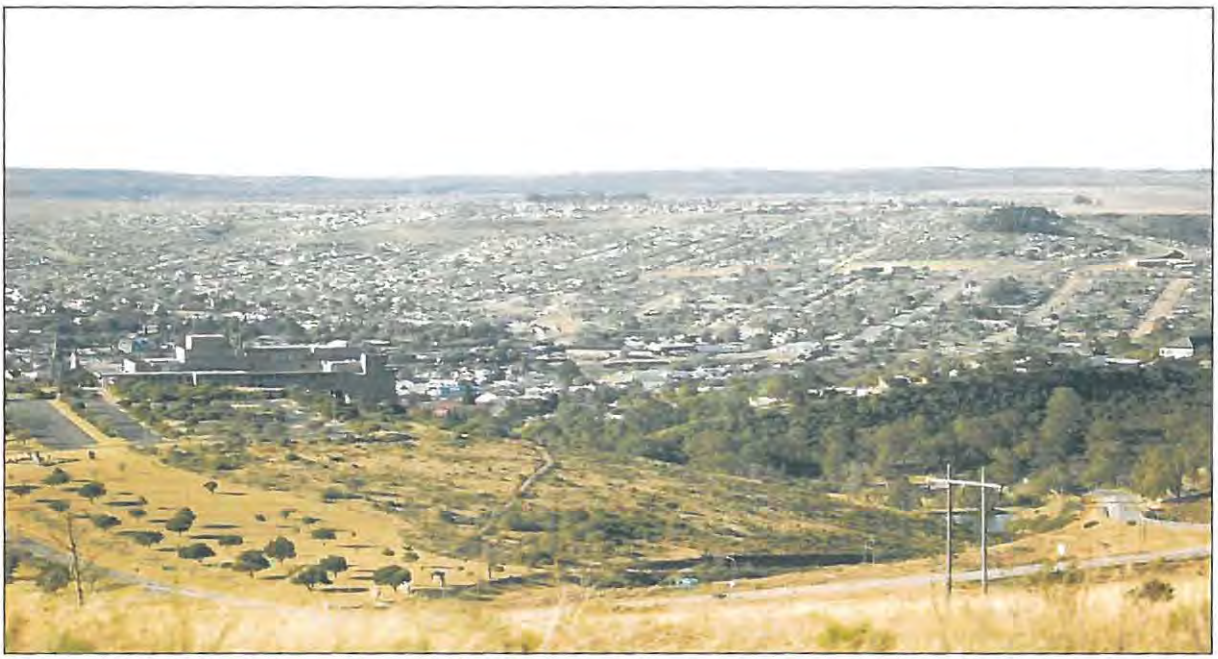

Figure 2.2.3.1b: An overview of the Grahamstown landscape revealing Grahamstown East, taken from above the Settlers Monument.

2.2.3.1.2. Biophysical/ topographic features and protected areas

The terrestrial ecosystem of the area consists of various biomes such as Albany Thicket, Fynbos, Grassland, Nama-karoo and Savanna and within these 10 vegetation types occur (Makana Municipality IDP, 2008). Currently, there are 27 endemics of which 17 are vulnerable, five are endangered, and five are critical. Major threats to the biodiversity of the area includes unsustainable resource use (e.g., overgrazing by domestic livestock) and collection of indigenous species for medicinal purposes (Dold & Cocks, 2002; Cocks & Møller, 2002), urbanisation, and encroachment of invasive alien plants (Makana Municipality IDP, 2008; Palmer, 2004). The Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP) and Makana municipality are working together to monitor and control these trends. In this region, there are primarily formal, land-based PAs or reserves covering about 16 610.7ha (Biodiversity GIS, 2013) as well as municipal PAs few of these are accessed by local communities on a regular basis.

2.2.3.1.3. Historical background

Grahamstown used to be a military fort in the early 19th century; as a result, many amaXhosa and Khoi settlers who were living nearby were attracted to Grahamstown for labour (Møller,

2008; Møller, *et al.*, 2001). The main ethnic subgroups (as stated above) residing in this study area had come to the colony as refugees from Shaka's wars. A group of the Mfengu were relocated in Peddie district but because of its aridity, many of them moved into Grahamstown to seek better opportunities (Møller, 2008; Møller *et al.*, 2001). Other groups were drawn to Grahamstown by railway construction. By the end of the 19th century a number of the Nguni and coloured people inhabited slum areas of the town where living conditions were extremely poor (Møller, 2008; Møller *et al.*, 2001).

2.2.3.1.4. Socio-demographic and socio-economic background

The age group 15 to 35 dominates (38%) the population of Makana, while females dominate the 35 to 64 age group. This is primarily due to men seeking better job opportunities in other larger urban centres (Makana Municipality IDP, 2008). Grahamstown is an inland centre and is considered "a 'University Town' which supports a large student base and academic staff" (Cacadu Municipality IDP, 2010, p. 21). It also serves stock farming enterprises that operate in surrounding rural area (Cacadu Municipality IDP, 2010).

Research indicates that in 2005, about 51.5% of the Makana population live in poverty (Makana Municipality IDP, 2010). These figures illustrate that the majority of the population (particularly the African community) is still poor. The prevalence of poverty in the region has forced many to be heavily reliant on social grants. Generally, households in Makana use electricity and paraffin as the primary source of lighting and cooking; wood is used relatively irregularly for recreational purposes such as braaing and for traditional beer brewing at traditional ceremonies (Makana Municipality IDP, 2008).

2.2.3.2. Study area 2: Ndlambe Village

2.2.3.2.1. Geographical location

Ndlambe Village falls under the Ngqushwa local municipality, which is located within the former Ciskei region (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). The Ngqushwa municipality covers an area of 2 245km^2 representing about 10% of the district (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). The total population of the Ngqushwa local municipality is 72 190 who reside across 118 villages within 21 384 households (Local Government Handbook Survey, 2011).

Ndlambe Village is situated 60kms northeast of Grahamstown on the banks of the Great Fish River (Nxuba), where steep river valleys and inter-basin ridges of the river catchment area are prominent. The area is characterized by dense, semi-succulent, thorny Thicket and renowned variations in topography and elevation. The village is sandwiched between Great Fish River Reserve on the north-western side and and the Nxuba River. The municipality is predominantly rural with 95% of the population living in rural areas, while 5% reside in urban areas (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). This study was carried out in five localities within Ndlambe Village, namely, eReyini, eSingqumeni, eMagwanisheni, Kwamkhalase, and eLalini.

Figure 2.2.3.2a.: An overview of the landscape facing towards *eSingqumeni* area.

Figure 2.2.3.2b: An overview of water features within the landscape from eLalini area.

Figure 2.2.3.2c: An overview of the mountain or escalation features within the landscape of Ndlambe Village.

2.2.3.2.2. Biophysical/ topographic features and protected areas

About 189 262.2ha (84.5%) within Ngqushwa municipality still consist of unspoiled natural habitat while about 34 599.3ha (15.4%) have been transformed (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). Seven formal land-based protected areas (reserves) covering 1 583.4ha (0.7%) are found within the municipal area. The terrestrial ecosystem of the area predominantly consists of the Albany Thicket and within it, 10 vegetation types occur (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). These areas are predominantly under communal tenure, and villagers have relatively open access to this resource (Ainslie, 1999). The Albany Thicket has proven to be particularly vulnerable to grazing by goats, whose intensive grazing habits disallow the recovery which would be possible through grazing by wildlife (Hoare *et al.*, 2006). These factors are aggravated by unsustainable use of trees for domestic purposes such as firewood, construction and medicinal use; encroachment of invasive plant species; and overall lack of environmental regulation (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009).

2.2.3.2.3. Historical background

The Ndlambe community is under the leadership of Chief Makinana, who is named after the eldest son of Chief Ndlambe, a popular leader who was banished from the Zuurveld (between Port Elizabeth and the Fish River) in 1812 (Open Africa, 2010). The Albany Thicket played a

significant role during the Frontier wars. For example, the famous Amankazana caves (meaning maiden's caves) are located within the surrounding Thicket and were utilized as a refuge to conceal the Xhosa women and children during the wars (Open Africa, 2010). A terrible history resides within the caves because many women and children who hid there were discovered and executed by the British soldiers during the wars.

2.2.3.2.4. Socio-demographic and socio-economic background

The population of the Ngqushwa municipality was measured as 84 233 by the 2001 census and 90 482 by the 2007 census. This indicates a 1.2% annual growth (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). Almost all (99%) of the population is categorised as Black and 1% are Coloured, White and Indian (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009). The municipality's literacy and education levels are poor (Stats SA, 2001), with about 31% of the population lacking formal schooling and only 21% having had the opportunity to achieve a primary education. About one quarter (26%) have some secondary education level, while only 10% have completed matric (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2009).

Communal land ownership under traditional leadership prevails on the eastern side of the Fish River, in the former Ciskei, including the Ndlambe Village. The population is mostly peri-urban as most families are reliant on state grants and sources of informal income with some households being dependent on agricultural and natural resources for their livelihood. The latter forms of livelihoods are often difficult to sustain during unfavourable environmental conditions (flooding and dry seasons) (Cacadu Municipality IDP, 2010). Most inland areas in the province, including Ndlambe, have limited employment opportunities are available. Few schools are available and only poor transport facilities exist. The majority of the houses are traditional mud structures (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2010). Thus the area still suffers the Apartheid moulded legacy of all former homelands; which are characterised by high levels of poverty, lack of infrastructure, high population densities and inferior education opportunities. Families continue to be divided though rural-urban migration (Bank, 2002; De Wet & Whisson, 1997). Fifty five percent of the population remain unemployed and 77 % are categorized as living in poverty.

The tourism potential of the area is considered immense (both eco-tourism and heritage tourism) and other municipalities have listed nature or heritage-based tourism development as the main programme to drive economic and social advancements in their Integrated Development Plans (Ngqushwa Municipality IDP, 2010). There are several initiatives in the Ndlambe community that aim to conserve both the ecological and cultural-historical heritage of the area.

2.2.4 Conclusion

In this section, I have presented an overview of the EC and of the two areas selected for this study. The history and legacy of apartheid has shaped the lives of many local people in these societies. Consequently, even though much change has occurred since the dawning of the new South Africa in 1994, many people are still living in poverty and unemployment remains high in the both study sites. In addition, extensive environmental and ecological pressures have exacerbated these challenges and damaged the quality of life in these communities. As the rest of the study will show, biodiversity still plays a significant role to many amaXhosa living in both rural and urban areas in the EC (Cocks, 2006).

2.3. Research methodology

2.3.1 Introduction

In the previous component of this chapter, I presented the context of case study sites. In this component, I describe the methodology this study adopts. The methodology of a study specifies the details of how the research has been practically undertaken (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). In other words, it is the strategy or plan of action that ties methods to outcomes (Cresswell, 2003). Thus, this section of the chapter presents and discusses the methodology applied to obtain the desired results. Transactional studies generally employ mixed-method designs, where various research methods are used to illuminate the meaning of a particular phenomenon, in order to achieve as holistic an explanation as possible (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). In this study, various approaches and methods have been applied in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the everyday lived experiences and the meanings that ordinary amaXhosa attach to natural landscapes and environments.

This component begins with a description of the paradigms that inform the study. The design of the study is then revealed, through a discussion of the methodological approaches, in order to explain the rationale of the method selection. This is followed by a description of the procedures adopted in the sampling, collection, and analysis of data. The limitations of these methods are also outlined.

2.3.2. Research paradigm

A paradigm can be defined as the basic belief system or worldview and its associated assumptions that guide the researcher or the research action (Broom & Willis, 2007; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, according to Anfara and Mertz (2006) paradigms equate with theory and hold the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological foundations which direct the conduct of a researcher (Racher & Robinson, 2003; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 1999). These fundamental assumptions (namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology) play a crucial role in shaping how the researcher views and acts within, and upon, the world (Broom & Willis, 2007). Ontology is concerned with the nature of the reality under investigation and what can be known about it. Epistemology indicates the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known; while methodology specifies how the research process may be practically undertaken to obtain the desired results (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). The research paradigm also guides the methods selection (Ashworth, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; 2000).

In this study, the constructivist or interpretative paradigm is adopted within a naturalistic setting (everyday life environment). Within this paradigm, the nature of reality is subjective, which means that it focuses on people's subjective experiences of the external world (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). Its basic premise is that humans have the capacity to interpret and construct reality (Patton, 2002). In other words, individuals are regarded as actively or consciously engaging, experiencing, and making meaning with their surroundings. The researcher also adopts an inter-subjective or interactional epistemological stance towards that reality which makes him/her an instrument of data collection in an empathetic manner. In line with this stance, researchers use methodologies such as interviewing or participant observation, which depend on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subject (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 1999).

Under this particular paradigm, this study is founded on a transactional worldview within Environmental Psychology to study the everyday life human-nature relationships that exist among amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. Understanding a phenomenon in its complexity as a whole, as well as the relationships among the various aspects and how they work collectively, is an important purpose of a transactional approach (Altman, 1992; Bechtel & Churchman, 2002; Werner *et al.*, 1992). That is, under the transactional framework "the person-environment relationship is seen as a dynamic, interactive system, the components of which should not be taken out of context" (Kyttä 2003, p. 20). Kyttä (2003) goes on to argue that in this approach, people are regarded as active agents, perceptive in their (natural) environments, and that the environments and people simultaneously influence one another on all different levels. This underlines the premise that the relationship between people and their environment is interrelated.

A fundamental assumption of the transactional worldview is that phenomena should be treated as holistic unities rather than combinations of separate elements (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). People, their psychological processes, the physical environment, and the temporal qualities should be apprehended simultaneously. It is important to mention here that psychological processes include a multifaceted array of human actions, emotional and affective experiences, cognitions, and the ratification of and response to social and cultural rules and norms (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). These psychological processes define relationships among different participants, as well as connections between participants and their physical environments. In other words, all these different aspects are mutually defining and lend meaning to one another. They are so intrinsically interconnected that understanding one aspect requires the concurrent inclusion of all other aspects.

Another important assumption is that time and temporal qualities form an integral part of a phenomenon, rather than being regarded as separate "markers" of an event (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). Time is not seen as a static background that isolates a certain point in time, but is seen as dynamic, changing, and intrinsically contributing to the meaning and definition of the phenomenon under investigation.

The final, guiding assumption of the transactional approach is a unique philosophy of science that includes a search for formal causes *within* events (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). This implies that understanding the meaning of a phenomenon requires a holistic view of all

aspects and how they fit together to form coherent or meaningful wholes (transactional unity), instead of a sequential, deterministic relationship between cause and effect. However, Werner *et al.*, (1992) emphasized that transactional research is not easy to conduct; and they including Bechtel and Churchman (2002) underscore the fact that no single transactional study can capture all of the aspects of the investigated phenomenon. Nonetheless, by studying the amaXhosa's meaning and experience of *ihlathi lesiXhosa,* this study attempts to capture a holistic and multi-faceted understanding the local people's human-nature relationship to highlight the complexities inherent in these aspects in everyday life.

2.3.3. Research design

Any research process is embedded within a research paradigm. Paradigms are further simplified into two main methods: qualitative and quantitative research. Many research studies successfully employ a single approach (either qualitative or quantitative) but in some instances, both are used simultaneously and such studies are referred to as using a mixed methods approach. Usually transactional studies involve a mixed-method design where various research methods are employed to try to illuminate the meaning of the phenomenon as much as possible, to achieve that holistic meaning (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002). Thus, based on the aims and objectives of this research study, a mixed method design is appropriate.

Mixed methods are sometimes referred to as multi-method approaches or triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This type of design involves an incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in one research study. The use of the two approaches has been historically polarized mainly because of their respective epistemological and ontological worldviews (Ashworth, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The use of mixed method research design in both human and natural science research has recently received more attention (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Mixed methods can be used in two main ways. In some instances, mixed methods are employed as a form of triangulation so that the results elicited through one set of research can be tested or confirmed through another set in the same study. Another way is to employ several methods in order to have access to an improved understanding of the results, to

discover new perspectives, or generate new measurement tools and minimize the weakness/limitation of a research study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In sum, mixed methods are utilized for confirmatory, complementary purposes and for an improved comprehension of results. The design of this study is thus founded on the mixed method technique to fulfil the later purpose.

2.3.4. Methodological approach

Since this study incorporates various methods from both the quantitative and qualitative approaches, this section is divided into two main phases, viz., qualitative and quantitative phases. For each phase, all the constituent methods are discussed separately below. The research process of this study was therefore organized in a sequential manner such that the results from the qualitative approach/phase are subsequently used to construct quantitative measures for the quantitative approach/phase. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the two approaches/phases in this study do not function independently, but concurrently, to achieve a holistic understanding of the subject matter.

2.3.4.1. Qualitative phase

The qualitative phase of the research process is guided by a predominantly interpretative paradigm in that it deals with people's subjective experience of the external world (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006) and is primarily context-based (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, its ontological stance is relative. For interpretivists, what the world means to the person or focus group is part of what is studied (Broom & Willis, 2007). Interpretative and constructionist studies employ an inductive approach, which does not force the research to begin with theory but instead encourages it to start with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). Researchers informed by this framework employ a hermeneutic and dialectic methodology, which may involve the use of interviews, focus groups, or participant observation, all of which rely on a subjective relationship between researcher and subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). In this phase, phenomenological interviews, qualitative (one-on-one) interviews, and focus groups were selected.

2.3.4.1.1. Phenomenological interviews

Phenomenological interviews primarily focussed on the research participants' embodied experience of *ihlathi lesiXhosa*. This entailed unlocking the contextual meaning of what *ihlathi lesiXhosa* means to different people by focussing on personal experiences that they may have had in such areas, and the impact (effects and/ or value) that such an area has on individuals' well-being. The first objective dealt with the value of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* and what *ihlathi* means to local amaXhosa. This was achieved by unpacking how factors such as gender, age and other related external factors form part of the amaXhosa's experience of *ihlathi lesiXhosa*. Following this, respondents provided a general description of the experience of *ihlathi* lesiXhosa and how significant *ihlathi* is to them as amaXhosa. These two goals were not achievable through a single phenomenological approach but two distinctive phenomenological approaches were used and they are discussed below.

Phenomenology is based on the premise that man lives in and is related to the world, and that all knowledge is grounded in human experience (van Manen, 2003). Thus, phenomenology rejects the positivistic view (the Cartesian human-nature split) in favour of Husserl and Heidegger's concepts of intentionality and being-in-the-world (respectively). Proponents of this framework share the goal of understanding the complex world of the lived experience from the standpoint of those who live in it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). van Manen (2003) refers to this approach as the study of the lived experience or the study of consciousness, or things as they appear. This goal is sometimes referred to as a concern for the life world of the subject, or a concern "for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, for *verstehen* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 118). Phenomenology has two main approaches, namely, descriptive and interpretative. These approaches have similarities and differences, which are epistemological and ontological in nature. However, they are not mutually exclusive. In this study, both the descriptive and the interpretative/hermeneutic approaches were used in a complementary manner.

Descriptive phenomenology is primarily epistemological with regard to its focus on the essential structures of consciousness. Phenomenology rejects the Cartesian split between mind/body and man/world. According to Husserl, consciousness is intentional in the sense that consciousness itself is always consciousness of something (intentionality) (van Manen, 1997). By focusing on this consciousness, one can always grasp the essence of what the

research participant experiences or experienced through description. In descriptive phenomenology, a researcher is able to illuminate precisely the research participant's experience without bias from the investigator (Giorgi, 2009). The aim of reducing this bias as much as possible is to capture what is experienced through the eyes of the participant. This process is referred to as phenomenological reduction or 'bracketing,' which involves bracketing (or putting aside) presuppositions or biases to prevent them from affecting the study (Giorgi, 2007; 2009). This was the approach used in investigating how *ihlathi* is experienced and what its effects are on the participant's well-being. The common-sense knowledge of *ihlathi* is not necessarily considered instead, strict attention is given on the actual unfolding of the experience of being in *ihlathi*. The primary focus is on the experience of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* and the effects on psychological and spiritual well-being. We should remember that the crux of phenomenology is to study the taken-for-granted world (life-world) that it usually overlooked by social reality and common-sense knowledge.

Interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology, as developed by Heidegger, is ontological in nature (Giorgi, 2007; 2009). Heidegger agreed with Husserl on intentionality but did not believe in his concept of phenomenological reduction. He argued that complete phenomenological reduction (that allowed 'pure' descriptions of the phenomenon without interpretation) is impossible. Instead, he argued that every knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon is an interpretation of what it is. Hence, he described his approach as hermeneutic phenomenology. In contrast with Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, where the emphasis is on 'description', in hermeneutic phenomenology the emphasis is primarily on 'interpretation'. In hermeneutic phenomenology, understanding or interpretation implies understanding of context, both historic and contemporary (Broom & Willis, 2007). Moreover, the focus is on the subjectivity and relativity of reality, recurrently calling attention to the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them (Broom & Willis, 2007). Instead of using reduction, it employs 'hermeneutic turn' (Giorgi, 2007; 2009). This process suggests that bracketing of one's preconceptions is sometimes not achieved completely; one has to engage in cyclic reflective practices, constantly reading and making sense of the text back and forth, to arrive at a holistic comprehension of the meanings (Smith *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the objective is to investigate the value of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* and what it means to amaXhosa through their interpretation and understanding. This investigation

is achieved by delving into the participants' personal lives and understanding their worldviews in relation to their socio-economic situation and demographic factors.

By using both phenomenological approaches, this section of the study will bring to the surface the lived experience in its entirety, which is the personal description of the experience of *ihlathi* and the interpretation of people's understandings of their relationship with *ihlathi,* with reference to contextual features that may affect this relationship. Phenomenological approaches therefore provide a framework that enables a holistic view of landscape perception and human-nature relationships.

2.3.4.1.2. Qualitative interviews

The type of qualitative interview used in this study was in-depth and semi-structured. Interviews were conducted in an individual, face-to-face manner. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data-collection strategy in which the researcher engages participants on a succession of predetermined and quite particular topics (referred to as interview guides), but which may include open-ended questions (Ayres, 2008; Bryman, 2004). In-depth interviewing is prominent when attempting to comprehend the experiences of other individuals and the meaning they make of those experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The qualitative interviews are therefore more informal, conversational, and flexible in nature, while also maintaining a degree of structure as prompted by the research guides (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Each interview lasted about 45 minutes to an hour.

2.3.4.1.3. Focus groups

Focus groups can be defined as an interview method that involves informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the subject matter, characterized by a collective discussion (Vaughn *et al.*, 1996). Focus groups are sometimes confused with small group interviews, mainly because they do not include a single research participant but multiple members. What differentiates focus groups from small group interviews, however, is that focus groups are more organized, more formal, and they produce findings that come from careful analysis of the transcribed interview data, whereas small group interviews are generally used for consensus building or problems solving (Vaughn *et al.*, 1996). Focus

groups are best used for exploratory research purposes (Vaughn *et al.*, 1996) and can be conducted in a spontaneous (natural) or a controlled setting. Although focus groups are not significantly different from individual qualitative interviews, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) indicate that focus groups present unique challenges that emerge from the increased complexity of social dynamics among more than one research participant. Some of these challenges include avoiding domination by one group member, trying to give every group member an equal chance to share their opinions and experiences, and having the ability to control and involve deviant participants. The advantage of using group interviews is that they are generally inexpensive to conduct and often yield collective and elaborative results (Denzin & Loncoln, 2000). In this study, focus groups were used to elicit discussion of the role of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* in processes of identity-construction among Xhosa people.

2.3.4.2. Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase was a continuation from the qualitative framework. The themes that emerged out of the qualitative measure were used to generate the set of questions asked in the questionnaires. The questionnaires included a mixed type of questions, i.e. both closed and open-ended. This combination of questions was used to facilitate further exploration into the meaning of *ihlathi* landscape across the various socio-demographic and geographic factors. The survey measure is primarily descriptive and focuses mainly on establishing associations between variables (independent and dependent variables) in each study site (Fields, 2009). The surveys were administered to individuals in both study areas, Ndlambe and Grahamstown.

2.3.5. Sampling and sampling procedure

This study is designed to suit a specific population, which is the amaXhosa and it consisted of two phases, i.e., the qualitative and quantitative phases (explained in section 2.3.4.). Due to the complex historical and social-political processes that marked all rural and urban centres a cluster sampling method was used to ensure that households across different social and economic statuses were included as specified in the main research aim of the study. Grahamstown was divided into ten subsections and Ndlambe village into five (see Sections 2.2.3.1.1. and 2.2.3.2.1. for details) as indicated in Table 2.3.5.a.

Table 2.3.5.a.: Cluster samples in Grahamstown and Ndlambe village

Sampling Sizes	
Study Areas	Clusters
Grahamstown	10
Ndlambe Village	5
Total	16

2.3.5.1. Qualitative phase

The qualitative phased was conducted first a total of 28 interviews were carried out. A purposive sampling technique was used in this phase. This included obtaining referrals from participants who knew other individuals who visited *ihlathi* in both study sites. The ages of the participants ranged between 18-73 years to allow cohort comparisons between the participants. Both male and female individuals were included in both research areas. The interviews conducted in this phase included: 16 Phenomenological interviews, 4 focus groups and 8 in-depth interviews in the 2 study areas (see Table 2.3.5.2 a.).

For the 16 phenomenological interviews eight individuals (four in each study site) were selected for the descriptive phenomenological method and eight (four in each study site) for the interpretative interviews (see Table 2.3.5.a. above). Follow-up interviews were carried out with those participants taking part in the interpretative phenomenological approach, for clarification purposes. This was necessary to grasp in detail the more contextual and embodied personal meanings of the individuals (e.g., age, gender, position in household, etc.); to see how these shape the personal relationships that local people develop with the landscape over time. In addition, this approach focuses heavily on interpretation rather than description of the phenomena provided by the research participants. The way in which interpretative phenomenology was used was to focus on how place attachment develops between individuals and their natural environment on a personal level. Only people who had had encounters or experiences with *ihlathi* at least within the past three years were eligible for the phenomenological interviews, to obtain first-hand experiences of the phenomena under investigation.

Four focus groups (i.e., two in each study site) and eight qualitative interviews (i.e., four in each study area) were also conducted. The composition of each focus group was age and

gender-based in order to facilitate the diversity of opinions, meanings, and perceptions across genders. The qualitative interviews included individuals who had stopped going to *ihlathi* and individuals who had never been to *ihlathi,* so as facilitate a better understanding of the underlying factors of such choices or behaviours.

2.3.5.2. Quantitative phase

Phase 2 consisted of a survey administered to a total of 80 respondents from both Grahamstown and Ndlambe village, i.e., 40 in each study site. The number of respondents from each cluster (as indicated in Table 2.3.5.a.) was obtained through systematic random sampling technique. In Grahamstown, 40 households were selected from a total of 10 sub-locations, which resulted in 4 households[3] being selected from each sub-location on average. Forty households were selected from five sub-locations in Ndlambe, resulting into eight households/respondents per sub-location.

The individuals who were eligible for the survey were classified into four main categories: (1) those who were born in either of the study sites (Grahamstown and Ndlambe), or (2) relocated there, (3) those who had been to *ihlathi* before and, (4) those who had never been to *ihlathi* before. This made it possible to gather information about how participants' experiences of *ihlathi* varied between individuals who had spent more time in *ihlathi* compared with those who interacted with *ihlathi* less frequently, and those who have never been to *ihlathi.*

[3] Please note that one individual was interviewed per household. That is, in this study each household equals to one individual.

Table 2.3.5.b: A summary of the breakdown of the qualitative and quantitative approaches used in both study sites

Study Areas	Qualitative Phase				Quantitative Phase
	Phenomenology		*Focus groups*	*QI*	*Surveys*
	DP	IP			
Grahamstown	4	4	2	4	40
Ndlambe Village	4	4	2	4	40
	16		**4**	**8**	**80**

2.3.6. Data collection

The data collected through the phenomenological interviews and the focus group interviews was used to design and develop the questions for the questionnaire. Data collection first took place in the peri-urban study site and later in the urban study site. The age of participants for both the qualitative and quantitative phases ranged from 18 to 73 years. Both females and males where included in the interviews. Due to the comparative component of the study, equal numbers of participants were included in both study areas. It is important to note that it was difficult to find eligible participants for the Grahamstown sample since many people were not available for interviews, and most of those who were available had never been to *ihlathi* or had not been to *ihlathi* for many years.

2.3.6.1. Qualitative phase

Semi-structured interviews were used for the qualitative phase in order to allow flexibility and freedom of expression to each of the participants. The phenomenological interviews were less structured to facilitate thorough descriptions as required by the phenomenological approach. All research interviews were exploratory in nature and were conducted face-to-face with the assistance of an isiXhosa first language interpreter/translator. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by an isiXhosa speaker for back-up purposes and for further exploration and analysis of the collected data. All recordings were subsequently destroyed.

In the phenomenological interviews, only one person was interviewed at a time. The duration of these interviews ranged from 45 minutes to just under two hours. Each individual was

interviewed at least once. Participants who were interviewed using the interpretative approach were given additional interviews, to clarify what may have been unclear in the first interview and to establish rapport between the researcher and the participant, since what was being investigated was in some instances highly idiographic, personal and sometimes sensitive. With regard to focus groups, multiple participants were interviewed in a conversational manner. These interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour and a half and were also recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

2.3.6.2. Quantitative phase

The data was collected using a standard quantitative questionnaire. The themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews were used to generate the questionnaire, which consisted of 30 questions. The questions covered topics such as the socio-economic background of the participants; definition of *ihlathi*; experiences of *ihlathi* and the effects on psychological and spiritual well-being. It also covered the cultural significance of *ihlathi*; the usefulness of *ihlathi*; the significance of *ihlathi* in identity construction and sense of place; and attitudes towards the sustainability and conservation of *ihlathi*. Most of the responses were measured through open-ended questions and by asking respondents to rate something on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was then piloted to avoid bias. The questionnaire was carried out between May 2009 and September 2010. The researcher and a Xhosa-speaking research assistant administered the questionnaires in both study sites. Each survey took between 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Data was captured on data sheets and entered into spread-sheets for further analysis.

2.3.7. Data analysis

2.3.7.1. Qualitative phase

The data analysis methods used for the phenomenological interviews included Giorgi's Phenomenological analysis for Descriptive Phenomenology (Giorgi, 2009) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for Interpretative Phenomenology interviews (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

When applying the descriptive phenomenological method, one is aiming to elucidate the meaning derived from the transcribed data and this comprises several stages. Firstly, bracketing or eidetic reduction is used which involves removing all preconceptions and possible biases from the data (Giorgi, 2009; Lopez & Willis, 2004). This is followed by reading each transcript repeatedly (more than twice) until the researcher is fully immersed in the data to obtain an intuitive/holistic understanding (raw data) of what is experienced according to participant's worldview (Holroyd, 2001). The raw data is then organised into related clusters (known as constituent profiles) to identify the natural meaning units, so as to arrive at central themes, called a thematic index (Holroyd, 2001), for each participant. This is followed by searching through the thematic indices (to allow the comparison of all referents, central themes and constituent profiles) to form a set of Interpretative themes in the process, called free intuitive variation, so as to arrive at a set of general descriptions (essence or essential structures) of the experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 2009).

IPA is primarily concerned with an individual's experience of a particular moment or significance in life (Smith *et al.*, 2009). It is therefore intended to produce results that consist of idiographic/personal meanings for each research participant. Under this approach, each participant's experience of *ihlathi* is individually considered within the context of the particularities of the participant's life history (contextual factors that include gender, age, position in household, level of education, occupation and source of income, etc.). IPA does not use bracketing or reduction during analysis and it focuses more on the interpretation of the experience rather than the description of it. The participants' experiences are therefore treated as text and in this study; the Hermeneutic Circle method was used. This process is concerned with the dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole at a series of levels (inherently circular rather than linear). For example, the meaning of a word or sentence is dependent on the participant's interpretation of the collective meanings of his or her historical, current, and embodied contexts, while simultaneously being incorporated with the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the focus group interviews. Codes were used to arrive at various themes identified through this interview method.

2.3.7.2. Quantitative phase

The quantitative data was imported into the software programmes in Statistica and SPSS packages, to perform a descriptive analysis of the survey responses. Both statistical packages were used; Statistica was used in the initial descriptive analysis, it was later discovered that SPSS was performing associations between nominal, categorical or thematic data sets and this proved invaluable. Descriptive methods are suitable for exploring new phenomena; particularly there is no need to infer causality to generalise the findings to other settings (Steg *et al.*, 2003). Preliminary analysis indicated that respondents were not evenly distributed. Moreover, because ordinal (Likert-type) questions were used in the survey, the Pearson Chi-square test was conducted to analyze the data (Fields, 2009). The Pearson Chi-square analysis is used only to identify difference in responses within the study samples, and not to extrapolate to a larger population. Only variables that displayed significant associations were included in the report. Only three questionnaires contained two missing values regarding the socio-demographic variables and they were systematically treated as average scores.

2.3.8. Ethical considerations

Human Science is sensitive to the welfare of humans as subjects and as a result, precautions were taken into consideration. All ethical standards in this study were guided by the Rhodes University research ethical standards from the Psychology Policy, Procedure, and Ethical Guidelines booklet (2005). For instance, the contents from the qualitative phase, especially from the descriptive and interpretive Phenomenological interviews may contain sensitive issues, which form a critical role in enhancing our understanding the context and realities in every-day life in which personal relationships and interactions are formed or how and why they relate to *ihlathi* in the way they do. Additionally, the participants' experiences are all voluntary and retrospective and most of them have become mentors in their communities as a result. Accordingly, all the participants have agreed to share this information. Moreover, all the participants in this study were given pseudonyms instead of their original names to maintain anonymity of the participants.

That is, before an interview took place, each participant was approached with a consent form stipulating the aims, terms and conditions of this research study, as well as explaining the role of the research participants. Written consent was obtained from each participant. Each

participant was assured anonymity and confidentiality. This was deemed necessary, as participants had to confide their personal experiences within *ihlathi*. Walks into *ihlathi* were also undertaken with the participants to facilitate rapport between them and the researcher. The recordings for all interviews were destroyed shortly after the analysis as specified in the consent form. A copy of the consent form is provided in appendix A[4].

Once the research was completed, each community was revisited and presented with the research findings. These were given at a community meeting and articulate by local translator. During the feedback meeting, community members were given the opportunity to give comments and suggestions.

2.3.9. Limitations and Constraints

Generally, transactional research is complex and often time consuming and being novice on this approach has not make the research process any simpler. However, previous research (e.g., Altman, 1992; Bechtel & Churchman, 2002; Kyttä, 2003; Werner *et al.*, 1992) has been used as guides to this study. Moreover, the use of the mixed method design adopted in this study was time-consuming and costly, but necessary, to ensure that all aspects were thoroughly investigated. The advantage is that it provided more comprehensive results, which could not have been achieved through a single method approach.

The size of the sample drawn for the survey is relatively small, which made it impossible to generalise the research findings. The survey did, however, provide some insight into how values, attachments and meanings that people have towards *ihlathi* amongst both peri-urban and urban amaXhosa communities.

2.3.10. Conclusion

This study was designed to illuminate the neglected and hidden or intangible values of *ihlathi,* in order to facilitate the understanding of these aspects among the amaXhosa. A

[4] Please note that although the consent form was written in English, it was explained at the start of every interview by the researcher together with the translator in isiXhosa.

collaboration of the transactional and phenomenological worldviews makes it possible to investigate perceptions, experiences, and meanings that individuals attach to *ihlathi* and the effects that these experiences have on spiritual and psychological well-being. Such a holistic approach is necessary in the context of bio-cultural diversity, since previous studies have separated them in their narrow investigations. In the next four chapters, I present the results of this study, containing the empirical evidence to demonstrate the intangible meanings and significance of the natural landscapes among the amaXhosa in everyday life. For example, in Chapter 3 I present an overview of how the amaXhosa define *ihlathi,* and describe the dynamics inherent in the interactions between the amaXhosa and *ihlathi* in everyday life, before proceeding in Chapter 4 to an in-depth exploration of the actual experiences and effects of these interactions.

CHAPTER 3

ASSESSING THE HUMAN-NATURE INTERACTION

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the human-nature interaction among the amaXhosa in everyday life. I seek to describe a backdrop against which the amaXhosa living in Grahamstown and Ndlambe Village interact with the natural landscape. This is done in order to improve the understanding of how local people relate to the natural environment and how certain experiences and relationships unfold over time. I introduce this chapter by providing socio-demographic information of the participants interviewed in the quantitative phase of this research. This is followed by a description of the general meanings and perceptions attached to *ihlathi lesiXhosa,* as well as a description of the types of interactions and their outcomes (gathered through the qualitative methods in the qualitative phase (see Chapter 2). The chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the results of both of these elements of the research.

3.1.1. Socio-demographic attributes of the respondent households

Four variables were used to investigate the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents interviewed, these being gender, age, marital status, and level of education. The distributions of these variables are presented in figures and tables below.

3.1.1.1. Gender

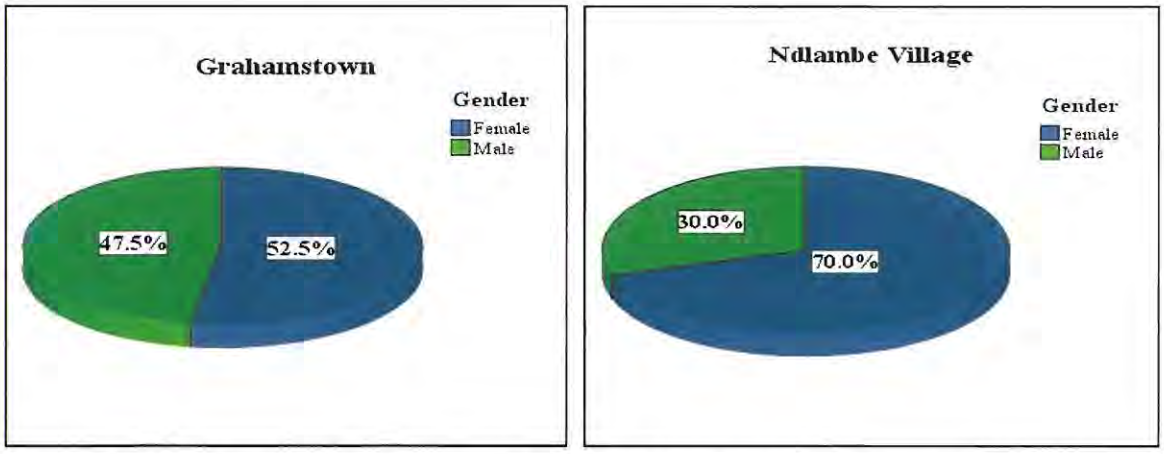

Figure 3.1.1.1: Gender distributions of the respondents in Grahamstown (n=40) and Ndlambe Village (n=40).

In terms of gender, within both Grahamstown and Ndlambe more female than male participants were interviewed. Of the two samples more females, were interviewed in Ndlambe village (70%) versus 52.5% in Grahamstown.

3.1.1.2. Age

The age distribution of the urban sample ranged between 18 and 64 years, with an average (mean) age of 35, while the mean sample age in Ndlambe was 42 years, ranged between 18 and 67 years. On average the Grahamstown sample were younger than the Ndlambe group (see figure 3.1.1.2., below).[5] Most of the female participants in both Grahamstown and Ndlambe were older than their male counterparts.

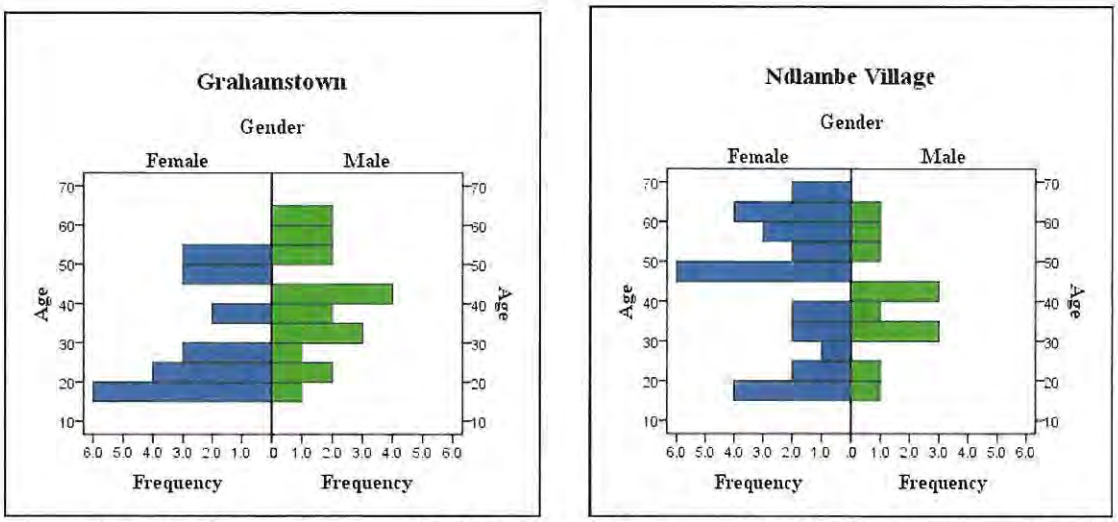

Figure 3.1.1.2: Gender vs. age distributions of the respondents in Grahamstown (n=40) and Ndlambe Village (n=40).

[5] NB: the age distribution for the qualitative interviews ranged from 18 to 73 years in Ndlambe and 18 to 68 years in Grahamstown.

3.1.1.3. Marital Status

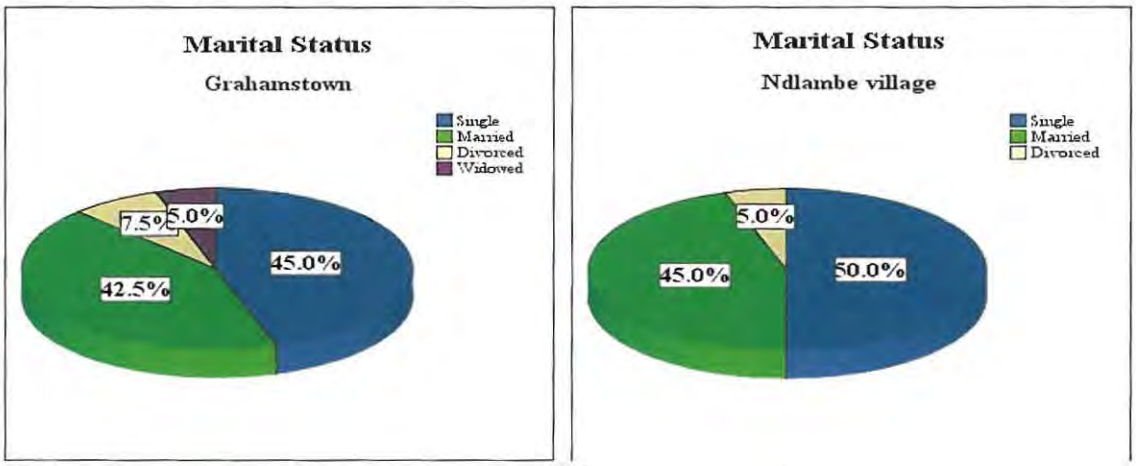

Figure 3.1.1.3: Marital status proportions of the respondents in Grahamstown (n=40) and Ndlambe Village (n=40).

The trends in the marital status of peri-urban and urban samples were more or less similar. For example, just less than half of the participants in both samples were married 42.5% in Grahamstown and 45% in Ndlambe. In Grahamstown 45% were single while in Ndlambe slightly more were single, (50%). Five percent were widowed in Grahamstown whereas no widows were interviewed in Ndlambe.

3.1.1.4. Education

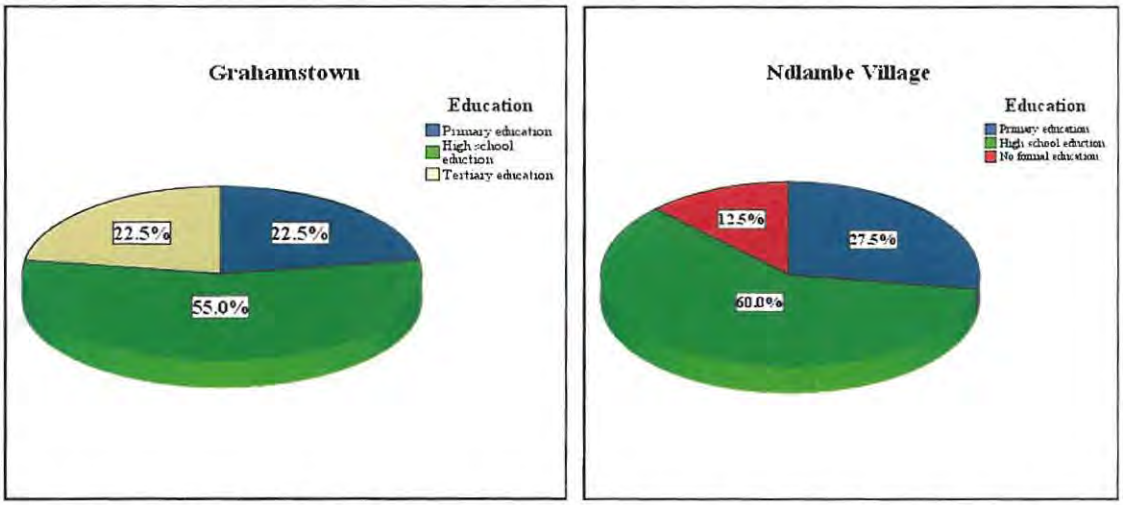

Figure 3.1.1.4: The level of education of the respondents in Grahamstown (n=40) and Ndlambe Village (n=40).

The majority of respondents, in both Grahamstown and Ndlambe, had obtained a high school education (55% and 60% respectively). Based on the descriptive statistics, the participants in the urban sample were on average more educated than those in the Ndlambe, with almost a quarter (23%) having attained some form of tertiary level (or post-matriculation) education and training. In contrast, none of the respondents in Ndlambe had obtained such qualifications and thirteen percent had had no form of formal education.

The next section unpacks the meaning and perceptions *ihlathi* has for the people living in the two communities.

3.2. The general social meanings and perceptions of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* among amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

Two main features were identified by participants in the qualitative interviews as being central to the definition of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (direct translation – Xhosa forest). For example, it is strongly believed that the forest/*ihlathi* is made by God; and is not man-made but natural. *Ihlathi lesiXhosa* also contains culturally significant natural features, such as caves, rivers, streams and mountains; these features are perceived as representing places where ancestors and clan animals reside. Thus, it is not only the vegetation composition of *ihlathi* that is important but also the elements that are culturally significant to the amaXhosa. This varies significantly from the botanical classification given to the natural vegetation in the study area which is Albany Thicket (Hoare *et al.*, 2006). The biome is classified as "supporting short, medium and tall thicket types....where both the woody trees and shrubs and succulent components are well developed, with many spinescent shrubs" (Hoare *et al.*, 2006, p. 561). Thickets show great species diversity with many locally endemic species.

Ihlathi is also believed to be characterised by its ability to be infinitely resilient. It is strongly believed that its regeneration is possible because it has been made by God. In contrast, plantations are considered fragile as they are man-made and need continuous human intervention (this was revealed during the qualitative interviews). The survey was used to

assess how widely this perception was shared between the two communities (see Table 3.2.1. below).

Table 3.2.1.: Describing *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (Xhosa forest)

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	% Grahamstown	% Ndlambe
How would you define *ihlathi lesiXhosa?* (Q.6)	Trees and plants not planted by man (indigenous plants)	100%	100%
	Trees and plants planted by man (exotic/non-indigenous plants)	0%	0%
Which trees constitute *ihlathi lesiXhosa?* (Q.7)	*Umnquma, Umthathi, Umsenge*, etc.	100%	100%
	Gum tree, tree plantations, etc.	0%	0%
		n=40	n=40

All the participants (100%) in both study areas identified *ihlathi lesiXhosa* as comprising of indigenous vegetation (*umthathi* and *umnguma*) and not exotic timber species. On a superficial level, the term *ihlathi* is used to describe the type of landscape and vegetation that the amaXhosa identify with, by virtue of its uniqueness to a geographical locale (primarily the Eastern Cape). More fundamentally, the participants use the all-encompassing term *ihlathi lesiXhosa* to refer to their enduring co-existence that they have had with *ihlathi* for many generations. This association is discussed in more details in sections 6.3.3 and 7.2.2.1.

3.3. Assessing everyday interactions with *ihlathi* in both study areas

Local people's everyday interactions with *ihlathi* were investigated by first measuring how many people in Grahamstown and Ndlambe were still going to *ihlathi* and how frequently. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 3.3.1.: Frequency of visits to *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE	GROUPING	F		%	
		Grahamstown	Ndlambe	Grahamstown	Ndlambe
Have you ever been to the forest before? (Q1)	Yes	35	38	87.5	95
	No	5	2	12.5	5
				n=40	n=40
Do you still go to the forest? (Q2)	Not anymore	20	15	57	39.5
	Occasionally	10	15	29	39.5
	Frequently	5	7	14	18
	No response	-	1	-	3
				n=35	n=38
What is the frequency of forest visits over the past year? (Q3)	Not at all	19	5	54	13
	A few times	6	5	17	13
	About once a month	1	2	3	5
	2-3 times a month	1	4	3	10.5
	About once a week	4	6	11	15
	More than once a week	4	15	11	39.5
	No response	-	1	-	3
				n=35	n=38
Total		N= 80		100%	

Note: The sample sizes for Q1-Q3 differ since Q1 represents a group of respondents who have been to the forest before, while Q2 & Q3 exclude respondents who have never been to the forest/*ihlathi* before. That is, only five and two respondents have never been to *ihlathi* before in Grahamstown and Ndlambe, respectively, hence n=35 and n=38.

Table 3.3.1., illustrates that the majority of the participants in both areas have been exposed to or interacted with *ihlathi* (i.e. 95% in Ndlambe and 87.5% in Grahamstown). Forty three percent of the respondents in Grahamstown still go to *ihlathi* and of these 14% go on a frequent basis. In Ndlambe over half of the respondents (57.5%) still go to *ihlathi* and of these 18% go on a frequently basis. In Grahamstown 17% and 11% of the respondents indicated that they go between a few times and once a week, while 11% goes more than once a week. In Ndlambe 13% and 15% of the respondents indicated that they go between a few times and once a week, whereas 39.9% go more than once a week.

One of the most striking differences between the two samples is the rate at which visits to *ihlathi* have decreased. Of those respondents who have been to *ihlathi* before, more than half (57%) in the Grahamstown sample are no longer going, whereas only 39.5% in Ndlambe

have refrain from going. The same proportion (39.5%) of participants in Ndlambe do still go occasionally, while in Grahamstown only 29% still go occasionally. Only a small percentage (14% and 18%) in Grahamstown and Ndlambe are still going frequently to *ihlathi*.

3.4. Investigating the motives for interacting with *ihlathi*

3.4.1. Motives for going to *ihlathi*

In addition to wanting to know if respondents were still going to *ihlathi,* we also wanted to know what their reasons for visiting *ihlathi* were. From the qualitative interviews conducted, ten reasons were identified as motives for going to *ihlathi.* These included (as presented in Table 3.4.1.1) livestock herding, harvesting wild fruits, harvesting medicinal plants, harvesting aloe sap, recreational hunting, aesthetic purposes, going when one needs to be alone, going when one feels lonely, for stress relief, achieving physical fitness, and for initiation purposes. Due to the interrelated nature of many of these motives (and for the sake of clarity and enhancement of understanding), these have been further divided into two categories namely, obligatory motives (cultural or traditional) and voluntary motives (recreational, social, psychological, or spiritual) (see Table 3.4.1.1 below[6]). Some individuals' interactions were as much personal and voluntary as they were obligatory in nature. For example, an individual may choose to go to *ihlathi* voluntarily for personal reasons (indirect values) and at the same time be fulfilling a household chore or obligation (direct values). This was illustrated by women confessing that they would take their harvesting axes (*iminxeba*) to collect firewood but their real reason for going to *ihlathi* would be to escape from the tensions they were experiencing within their households. Or in some instances as revealed by male respondents, they would go to *ihlathi* to herd livestock and while doing so they would enjoy the personal benefit of feeling restored and revitalized. It was also revealed in some instances, less frequently, that respondents' would voluntarily visit *ihlathi* to simply appreciate its beauty and to reconnect to past memories. It is therefore of importance to acknowledge that people usually go to *ihlathi* to fulfil more than one purpose (both direct and indirect).

[6]This table was composed out of all the results or themes which emerged from all the results chapters put together. Consequently, some of the activities and practices provided in the table will not be covered in this chapter but in the subsequent chapters.

Table 3.4.1.1.: Motives for going to *ihlathi* classified into two categories

Activities and practises	**Obligatory Motives**	**Voluntary Motives**
Herding livestock	•	•
Firewood collection	•	•
Hunting	•	•
Harvesting traditional medicine and aloe	•	
Collecting raw material used for traditional ornaments	•	
Wild fruit and vegetable harvesting		•
Cultural and spiritual activities (e.g., initiation and ritual performances)	•	
Recreational purposes (forest walks and aesthetic appreciation, stick fighting)		•
Psychological and spiritual purposes (e.g., stress relief and obtaining inner peace or redefining oneself)		•
Social purposes (Socializing, love and courtship)		•

The following section discusses the various motives for visiting *ihlathi* and to determine how people associated with both the more tangible and intangible benefits. In order to achieve this both samples were asked to respond to the number of statements outlining their motives for going to *ihlathi*. The results are depicted in Table 3.4.1.2 and discussed below.

Table 3.4.1.2.: Reasons for going to *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe Village

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F Grahamstown	% Grahamstown	F Ndlambe	% Ndlambe
I go to the forest to herd livestock (Q8.1)	Not applicable	24	68.6	14	36.8
	Sometimes	10	28.6	17	44.7
	Often	-	-	2	5.3
	Always	1	2.9	5	13.2
I go to the forest to harvest wild fruits (Q8.2)	Not applicable	15	42.9	6	15.8
	Sometimes	20	57.1	28	73.7
	Often	-	-	3	7.9
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest to harvest medicinal plants (Q8.3)	Not applicable	20	57.1	23	60.5
	Sometimes	14	40	14	36.9
	Often	1	2.9	1	2.6
	Always	-	-	-	-
I go to the forest to harvest aloe (Q8.4)	Not applicable	26	74.3	17	44.7
	Sometimes	9	25.7	18	47.4
	Often	-	-	3	7.9
	Always	-	-	-	-
I go to the forest for hunting (Q8.5)	Not applicable	26	74.3	30	78.9
	Sometimes	9	25.7	6	15.8
	Often	-	-	1	2.6
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest to view the beauty of nature that is there (Q8.6)	Not applicable	24	68.6	23	60.5
	Sometimes	9	25.7	12	31.6
	Often	2	5.7	2	5.3
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest when I need to be alone (Q8.7)	Not applicable	25	71.4	18	47.5
	Sometimes	9	25.7	18	47.5
	Often	2	2.9	1	2.6
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest when I feel lonely (Q8.8)	Not applicable	26	74.3	23	60.5
	Sometimes	8	22.9	13	34.2
	Often	1	2.9	1	2.6
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest to relieve stress (Q8.9)	Not applicable	23	65.7	13	34.2
	Sometimes	12	34.3	22	57.9
	Often	-	-	2	5.3
	Always	-	-	1	2.6
I go to the forest to achieve physical fitness (Q8.10)	Not applicable	21	60	12	31.6
	Sometimes	11	31.4	18	47.4
	Often	3	8.6	6	15.8
	Always	-	-	2	5.3
			n=35		n=38
Total		N=80		100%	

Note: The sample sizes for Q8.1-Q8.10 comprise a group of respondents who have been to the forest before, and exclude those who have never been to the forest/*ihlathi* before.

Amongst the urban sample, visits to *ihlathi* included harvesting wild fruits (57.1%), harvesting medicinal plants 42.9% (which includes 40% of those who sometimes and who often harvest 2.9%), herding livestock (28.6%) and for hunting purposes, (25.7%). Forty percent acknowledged going to achieve physical fitness. In addition to these more tangible benefits just over a third, 34.3% also acknowledged going to *ihlathi* to relieve stress and 31.4% went to appreciate its beauty. Only 28.6% acknowledged going to *ihlathi* when they needed to be alone and 25.8% when they felt lonely.

The percentages received for the peri-urban sample were significantly different. For example, significantly higher portions in Ndlambe went to harvest resources. For example, 84.2% went to harvest wild fruits and 55.3% to harvest aloe sap. In contrast, a slightly lower number of Ndlambe respondents, (39.5%) cited harvesting medicinal plants. Twenty one percent went for hunting purposes. Sixty three percent cited herding their livestock as a motive.

When observing the responses for the less tangible values of *ihlathi*, just over a quarter of the peri-urban sample, 39.5%, slightly more than urban respondents, also go to view its beauty. Significantly, more peri-urban respondents citing going to *ihlathi* when they need to be alone 52.7% and 39.4% go when they feel lonely. Over sixty five percent go when they wish to relieve their stress. Again, 68.5% also go to achieve physical fitness.

In summary, while both the Grahamstown and Ndlambe participants' interactions with *ihlathi* can be seen to be utilitarian, a higher proportion of Ndlambe respondents regard *ihlathi* as a place for attaining intangible values (such as psychological and physical well-being). The urban sample's interaction with *ihlathi* is lower than that of the peri-urban sample. As we shall see later, interactions with *ihlathi* and their frequencies play an essential role on one's felt sense of connectedness/attachment to natural landscapes because the participants in Grahamstown acknowledged that their detachment from *ihlathi* creates a loss of touch or intimacy with *ihlathi* (see Section 4.3).

Inferential statistics analyses were undertaken to see if the independent variables (i.e. gender, age, marital status, and level of education) influenced the participants' responses regarding their motives for going to *ihlathi.* A statistical significance was found in the peri-urban sample only with regards to gender, as 47.4% of the males compared to none (0%) of the females go to *ihlathi* to harvest aloe sap: χ^2 (1, N = 35) = 10.202, p = .001. A statistical significance was also found between the responses received from the male and female respondents in the village sample to Q8.7 (going to the forest when there is a need to be alone): χ^2 (3, N = 38) = 13.059, p = .005. For example, most of the female respondents in the village (65.4%) did not go to *ihlathi* to be alone, whereas 83.3% of the males responded positively to this question. Similarly, gender significantly influenced how the respondents from the peri-urban sample responded to Q8.8 (going to the forest when one feels lonely): χ^2 (3, N = 38) = 22.893, p < .000. Here again 84.6% of the peri-urban females do not go to *ihlathi* when they felt lonely, while 83.3% of the village males tend to go to *ihlathi* when they felt lonely.

The associations described above indicate that several types of activities or interactions with *ihlathi* are gender specific. For instance, we see that more males in the peri-urban sample tend to go occasionally to *ihlathi* for harvesting aloe, while no females do. From the peri-urban sample, most males are more inclined to go to *ihlathi* when they need a private space (solitude) and even when they experience loneliness. *Ihlathi* seems to play a more significant role in the peri-urban sample than in the urban, in providing a space or place for the expression and fulfilment of emotional and psychological needs. The dominate motives for going to *ihlathi* appear to be more utilitarian based.

3.4.2. Motives for not going to *ihlathi*

The results in Table 3.3.1., indicate that not everyone has been or are still going to *ihlathi*, Table 3.4.2.1., depicts the reasons for this.

Table 3.4.2.1.: Reasons for not going to *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
I don't see any reason why I should go to *ihlathi* (5.9)	Strongly agree	3	-	12	-
	Somewhat agree	1	1	4	5.9
	Somewhat disagree	2	-	8	-
	Strongly disagree	14	3	56	17.6
	Not applicable	4	13	16	76.5
	No response	1	-	4	-
The forest is too far (5.2)	Strongly agree	11	2	44	11.8
	Somewhat agree	10	3	40	17.6
	Strongly disagree	3	11	12	64.7
	Not applicable	-	1	-	5.9
	No response	1		4	
The government restricts me to use forest materials (5.1)	Somewhat agree	1	1	4	5.9
	Strongly disagree	23	15	92	88.2
	No response	1	1	4	5.9
It's not safe for me to go to the forest anymore (5.5)	Strongly agree	21	8	84	47.1
	Somewhat agree	2	3	8	17.6
	Strongly disagree	1	6	4	35.3
	Not applicable	1	-	4	-
Times change, what people do in the forest is outdated (5.6)	Strongly agree	5	2	20	11.8
	Somewhat agree	4	2	16	11.8
	No opinion	-	1	-	5.9
	Strongly disagree	12	10	48	58.8
	Not applicable	2	2	8	11.8
	No response	1	-	4	-
There is no one of my age who still goes to the forest to collect firewood (5.4)	Strongly agree	4	1	16	5.9
	Somewhat agree	1	3	4	17.6
	Somewhat disagree	1	1	4	5.9
	Strongly disagree	18	12	72	70.6
	No response	1	-	4	-
I hire someone to collect wood for me (5.7)	Strongly agree	14	12	56	70.6
	Somewhat agree	4	2	16	11.8
	No opinion	2	-	8	-
	Somewhat disagree	1	1	4	5.9
	Strongly disagree	1	2	4	11.8
	Not applicable	2	-	8	-
	No response	1	-	4	-
Wild animals have become scarce for hunting (5.11)	Somewhat agree	1	3	4	17.6
	No opinion	1	2	4	11.8
	Strongly disagree	6	1	24	5.9
	Not applicable	16	11	64	64.7
	No response	1	-	4	-
				n=25	n=17
Total	N= 80			100%	

Please note that the sample size for all the responses in Table 3.4.2.1., above represents the group of participants who have never been to *ihlathi* before as well as those who are not going there anymore. It excludes those who are still going to *ihlathi*.

In Grahamstown, more than half, 56%, disagreed with the statement that there is no need to go to *ihlathi*. They did however feel that *ihlathi* is not easily accessible for them (84%). This access was not seen as being restricted by governmental rules and regulations, 92%, or age (76%), and 64% did not regard scarcity of resources as a factor rather personal safety was cited as the main restricting cause, 92%. Many were now hiring labour to harvest wood/resources for them, 72%. In terms of changes in peoples lifestyles affecting their reasons for not going to *ihlathi*, more than half (56%) of the respondent in Grahamstown disagreed that what people do in *ihlathi* is out-dated.

In contrast a significantly higher proportion in Ndlambe, 76.5%, felt that the statement that there is no need to go to *ihlathi* was not applicable to them and significantly more, 65%, strongly disagreed with the statement that *ihlathi* is not accessible to them. The majority (88.2%) strongly disagreed that the government restricted their access to *ihlathi*. Safety was however perceived as restricting access by 64.7%. This was significantly less than those were in Grahamstown (92%). Similarly, 82.4% in Ndlambe acknowledge that they hire someone to harvest wood for them. More respondents in Ndlambe, 70.6% disagreed that what people do in *ihlathi* is out-dated. The majority (64.7%) of the peri-urban sample felt that the scarcity of resources was not applicable to them.

Generally, there are more similarities than differences regarding what prevents many individuals from going to *ihlathi* in both study areas. For instance, the results indicate that the most common reason in both Grahamstown and Ndlambe (72% and 82.4% respectively) is an emerging trend among the participants to hire other people to collect wood on their behalf. The majority of participants strongly disagree that they felt restricted by government laws (92% in Grahamstown and 88.2% in Ndlambe) or age (76% and 76.5% respectively). Again, 56% in Grahamstown and 70.6% in Ndlambe strongly disagreed that social change has made them interact with *ihlathi* less. It is interesting that this motive was strongly rejected by both groups despite the variation in the challenges and privileges presented in their everyday

contexts and lifestyles. The last question (wild animals have become scarce for hunting) was not applicable to about 64% of the participants in both samples.

There were no significant association between any of the independent variables such as gender, age, marital status or level of education of the respondents in relation to their motives for no longer *ihlathi* in both samples.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have learnt that the both peri-urban and urban respondents' description of what constitutes *ihlathi* is different from that of the western tradition or scientific classification. *Ihlathi* is not only defined by its biological/vegetation composition but is also culturally defined. For example, *ihlathi* is defined partly by its aetiology origin of its trees and plants (as created by God), as well as by the socially constructed meanings and beliefs endowed upon it by past generations. Therefore, these results suggest that it would be misleading to assume that professionals, particularly biologists or conservationists grounded within the natural sciences, and local people share the same perceptions and meanings about natural landscapes or the values that certain aspects within the natural landscape hold.

Secondly, this chapter also presented an overview of the human-nature interaction in ordinary setting amongst urban and peri-urban respondents. For example, we have seen that not all the interactions with *ihlathi* are strictly utilitarian; many of their interactions include psychological and spiritual benefits. Such indirect or intangible values of *ihlathi* are often overlooked. A number of intriguing insights and questions emerged from this introductory results chapter and it is thus pivotal to explore further into the depth of the meaning of the intangible values in *ihlathi*. Thus, in the subsequent chapters, I capture the actual interactions and experiences through phenomenological interviews, to bring to the surface these intangible values of *ihlathi* and investigate, in detail, how significant they are to the amaXhosa in their everyday lives.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON WELL-BEING

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter was primarily descriptive and it set the scene for the reader to grasp the generic human-nature interactions among the amaXhosa in both study areas. This results chapter is largely devoted to an in-depth exploration of the essence of the experience of *ihlathi lesiXhosa,* and its impact on both the psychological and spiritual well-being in the everyday lives of the amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe Village. In this chapter, I seek to answer the following research questions: What is it like being in *ihlathi lesiXhosa* (as a natural landscape), and what effect do these experiences have ones' psychological and spiritual well-being? The Descriptive Phenomenological Approach is used to arrive at the description of each participant's experience of *ihlathi.* The surveys were used to determine how widespread these associations were across the peri-urban and urban divide in this study. Consequently, this chapter begins with a description and discussion of the emergent themes, followed by the survey results. The chapter ends with a summary of the results.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Themes and Discussion

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the eight descriptive phenomenological interviews from Grahamstown and Ndlambe (see data analysis process in Chapter 2). The results indicated that experiences with *ihlathi* did not only elicits positive emotions such as a sense of connectedness and peace (as we shall see below), but also provoked some negative feelings such as fear and reluctance. The following descriptions of experiences of *ihlathi* are therefore divided into positive and negative experiential meanings. The positive experiential meanings are presented under the themes: *In the midst of ihlathi* and *At peace with nature,* while the negative experiential meanings include *Snake in ihlathi* and *Times have changed.* The effects each of these experiences had on the psychological and spiritual well-being of the individual are discussed concurrently.

Each participant in the eight interviews has been given a pseudonym (P1 to P8)[7]. Four participants (P2, P3, P7 and P8) are from Grahamstown and four (P1, P4, P5 and P6) from Ndlambe. Each theme is thoroughly described and explicated below. Additionally, the reader will notice that some of the themes contain underlined and bold texts in this chapter. These texts draw attention to the participants' use of language and are worth keeping in mind because they play a crucial role in facilitating comprehension of the results presented later in the thesis and in the final chapter. The significance of these texts will be unearthed in the later stage of the analysis process after spending more time with the data.

4.2.2. Positive experiential meanings and effects

4.2.2.1. In the midst of *ihlathi*

> *P1. "It is peaceful there. I also like the cool atmosphere that is there. There is cool water that is clean and fresh because it comes from the rocks underneath the shade of ihlathi. I love to just view the botanical features (e.g., growth, structure, complex patterns, colours, etc.) of the trees and the different smells of the flowers from different plants; listen to the songs of the birds. I also carefully observe and admire the flowing and splashing of the water while I sit and watch the water flow down into the streams. You are aware that you develop peace as you are busy watching and listening to all that. You feel peaceful.... You feel the difference because you are in a distinctive place or environment. That is nature! You begin to feel some changes and at the same time you feel a particular happiness from within because you are alone and you feel that everything blends together to create that internal happiness. It is a pleasant feeling; you feel peaceful and happy. This is a unique place (atmosphere) by itself; that's how it is."*
>
> *P2. "It's a peaceful and quiet place where I interact with ihlathi only and I won't be disturbed by anything."*

[7] In this study, P stands for participant and it is used to identify the descriptions and expressions of all the participants to secure anonymity and confidentiality to fulfil the ethics protocol. Not every participant's description was included, to reduce redundancy and to limit the level of detail, because of the nature and size of the study. Only those whose descriptions were adequately articulated were included in this chapter. The researcher probed very little, in order to listen more extensively to the participants' experiences.

P3. "It's pleasantly peaceful...while you are just there listening to nature so well..."

P8. "I often see birds and I get to view their beautifully woven nests. Sometimes I could hear them sing from the other side and I am always curious about which animal it may be and what it may be doing. I am always excited when I see new animals for the first time and those I haven't seen in a long time. It is just impossible for me to ignore them! That's how it is in ihlathi; you often get a chance to see something fascinating."

All the participants placed a strong emphasis on appreciating and enjoying the natural environment and atmosphere within *ihlathi*. From the expressions above, it is clear that they enjoy the moment of pure silence and stillness, which they described as experiencing while in *ihlathi*. They also enjoy a time of seclusion where they can do nothing but appreciate these qualities of *ihlathi*. This particular experience, which *ihlathi* offers, made their visits worthwhile.

Reference was also made to enjoying listening to the various natural sounds within *ihlathi*. For example, i*hlathi* bird songs were perceived as blending with the sounds of other *ihlathi* animal sounds. An emphasis was also placed on enjoying the sound of falling leaves as the wind blew through the trees, and the sound of gently splashing water. An appreciation was also expressed for the freshness of the air and the smell of flowers while sitting under the shade of trees. What is apparent from these descriptions is that *ihlathi* is not simply appreciated for its aesthetic/visual beauty only. It is also appreciated through sense of smell, hearing and touch (all aspects of embodiment). This reflects an awareness of the various elements within *ihlathi* environment. More importantly, this awareness of the 'blending together' of the various elements draws specific attention to the participants' conceptualization and experience of these elements as holistic and harmonious.

4.2.2.1.1. Effects of the experience

During the analysis process, it became apparent that the participants were also actively and spontaneously aware (without any prompting) of the positive psychological effects, these experiences elicited. These effects are exemplified below:

> *P1. "It is the flowing and the splashing of the water, the smell of the flowers and other plants, the nice sound of the birds and everything; all of these things revive your mentality and you feel refreshed. Now you are happy, energized, and fresh. You feel that you can do anything and you can face any challenge because you know that you are refreshed."*
>
> *P6. "I feel very free, because everything that was worrying me is left right there. I leave everything there and I come back very free. I feel happy and my spirit is free."*
>
> *P3. "Once I arrive there, I'm not going there to collect firewood, I'm just going to walk around and view the beauty of ihlathi, I feel relieved when I am there and my mind cools down. It's nice, I feel free from what I felt at home."*
>
> *P5. "You can go out there and have a good time, even if you have nerves (stress); maybe if you have something that worries you. When you are in the house, you can think about going to ihlathi to collect some firewood. If I decide to go, I wander around in ihlathi while listening to the birds and other animals so that the nerves may be relieved."*
>
> *P4. "If you wish to relieve the nerves (stress), you just have to wonder around and you may see the perfect firewood and then you start collecting them. That's how you relieve those nerves. You feel very peaceful during that time because there is no one to disturb you with some noise or people talking to you for some reason. You can feel the breeze hit you gently while you are there....your mind starts to cool down, your worries start disappearing or fall away after a while. If you had nerves before, you start to feel them disappear... It brings you health and it gives you life from within."*
>
> *P7. "...that thing that sometimes comes to my mind, which suggests that it is lonely here in the house. I think to myself that sitting here at home will not change the situation; I then often decide to go to ihlathi. This is because you*

are happy when you are in ihlathi and there are no worries there that might cause you to think of things like, I do not have money and things like that or what am I going to drink for tea. You don't ever think about such things in ihlathi. You forget everything while you are in there. You only think about such things when you are in the house. While at home, you are always worried asking yourself how you can get tea or sugar and so on and so forth."

P.8. "On my way home, I have this thought that I am approaching my house and that the situation here at home is difficult. I also think maybe someone would make me talk asking me many questions, but none of this interrogation takes place when I'm in ihlathi."

P2. "But you'll notice that when you are in a green area, you are attracted by it and it inspires life in you because it's green all around. You can see that that place is beautiful and appealing and you are happy..., you can rest there. Your heart will be at peace. Even all the bad things you were thinking about like...if someone angered you and you want to hit him/her or if you were emotionally hurt badly, to a point where you think of ending your life. But your mind changes when you are in ihlathi, that place tells you that there is life ahead. You feel revived, refreshed and inspired. The atmosphere and that green place change how you feel and eventually you change your mind as well...; that's how you find a way to console yourself. Ihlathi gives you peace and forgiveness (Ihlathi ikunika uxolo)."

The following key observations can be drawn from these descriptions. Firstly, most participants reported having their stress relieved or their "*worries disappearing*" in *ihlathi*. They articulated feeling revived, revitalized or energized after appreciating the environment's positive natural qualities. It is also apparent that they are consciously aware of the positive psychological effects resulting from their active engagement with *ihlathi* which included collecting firewood, climbing, simply strolling in *ihlathi,* or hunting (see more examples in Table 3.4.1.1.).

The participants also perceive *ihlathi's* green, healthy and lush vegetation as a primary embodiment of the life of *ihlathi* and this 'life' they saw as playing an important role in their

own personal well-being. For example, they perceived the lush, green health vegetation of *ihlathi* as providing one with a sense of hope, restoration, and consolation in their own lives. They described coming away with such feelings when they spent time in *ihlathi* (restorative psychological effects). This they felt made their visits to *ihlathi* valuable and meaningful and provided them with a sense of peace and "*impilo*" (healing) within both the mind and the inner being (spirit) as described by the participants (see sections 4.2.2.2 and 4.2.2.2.1). Thus, the experience of *ihlathi* is also seen to be spiritually fulfilling. It is important to note that visits to *ihlathi* are not only of significance to people experiencing stress.

When the participants were asked what was distinct about their experience of *ihlathi*, they mentioned that their time spent there also provided them with the space for active introspection, self-reflection, and the opportunity of redefining themselves (see excerpts below).

> *P8. "When I'm in ihlathi...; there are places to sit and I sit there. There are high mountains in ihlathi; I climb them and I sit right on top and I look at everything that is there, I mean I can see everything below me from up there. You can actually see the entire village at once. Those are the things that soothe my heart."*
>
> *P4. "The reason why I choose to go to ihlathi is that there is no one that will disturb me there. There are nice things that I think about while I'm sitting maybe on top of a big rock looking at everything around me. There is no baby that will disturb me because I will be sitting there quietly and alone."*
>
> *P2. "Whenever you encounter a challenge in life, you may go there and listen to the sounds of the birds and everything. This changes your focus from what you have been worrying about and what you were constantly thinking about. It changes the very same moment you encounter nature. It gives you a 'bounce back' to that problem because your mind is cleared and you can see a way out. Nature helps you. It helps you to change a problem into a challenge."*
>
> *P1. "When there is a problem, you think about ways of solving that problem. It becomes complicated and overwhelming when you are in the house. I mean, when you consider that you don't have anything—you don't have any coin in your pocket and you frustrated; then you go to ihlathi to get some fresh air.*

What is important to me every time is, ***to build myself to be "umtu" (being human or a person)*** *and a man among others. Just like now,* ***I don't spoil my reputation and humanity by drinking myself to death****. I'm not doing anything self-destructive; I'm just always sober like this. I look after my health cautiously. That's what I like about ihlathi and that's important to me as a Xhosa man. One of the greatest objectives is to build from and maintain your health that you were created or ordained for. You shouldn't waste it or play with it. Instead, you should maintain it by treating yourself well."*

P4. "The things I think about are my dreams..., dreams about myself being successful one day; being a right (prosperous and independent) person in life like other women... I can say that there is nothing wrong with that (prosperous) person and that she is not suffering because that person found a job easily. Maybe that person has money or that she is an entrepreneur and she runs her own shop. I also think about my kids that things may go well in their lives until the end; things like that. So I don't see any place that is suitable for all these good thoughts. Ihlathi is the only quiet place for me."

Certain places within *ihlathi* were perceived to elicit other positive psychological effects such as inspiration, a fresh perspective, and self-introspection/reflection. These included elevated places (such as hills or mountain cliffs within *ihlathi).* It was felt that from such places one could obtain a broader perspective of one's surroundings (or landscapes), which would automatically place everything else into perspective and make life seem more manageable. For the participants, this helped to facilitate a sense of control and offer a fresh perspective over common and personal challenges. From the descriptions received it is also apparent that such experiences also provided the opportunity to locate oneself "who they are" (i.e., a clarified sense of identity) in their community. For example, the participants would use the opportunity (while being alone in *ihlathi*) to ask themselves questions pertaining to who they are, what dreams they wish to aspire to and what they felt was necessary to maintain good health and character. Such opportunities for self-reflection were considered pivotal for maintaining good health (physically, psychologically, and spiritually) and becoming responsible members of their communities. It is clear that *ihlathi* is appreciated and perceived in various ways. As we shall see below, the participants' experiences of *ihlathi* may also include more profound spiritual experiences.

4.2.2.2. At peace with nature

P1. "You feel at peace with nature knowing that everything around you is harmless; for example the birds which are singing around you do not even convey a message of threat to you. This atmosphere provides an opportunity to appreciate the splendour of God's nature."

P8. "You feel at peace and you just have joy inside of you when you are there in nature. You are at peace with nature when you know that you are not there to harm any animal. Even the animals would sense no harm from you because you are just sitting and watching them.....I do not even have to carry a sling or any weapon especially during their breeding season because their offspring need their caregivers or mothers."

P4. "You see, while you are seated, a rabbit just suddenly appears from behind the trees and jump around and play with you, going from this place to the other. Perhaps it does that when it sees a stranger or because you are alone without dogs. .... the rabbit can see that I'm not taking any action to harm it because I'm just simply sitting there. It usually starts running when it sees someone with dogs because it's afraid of being chased or attacked because it understands that it is going to be killed or something".... at that time I don't have that thought of taking it for a meal. But I become sad when it runs away from me."

P2. ".....as I'm sitting under the shade of the tree, I can hear the birds singing in the trees...the sound is not too loud and not too soft but it's pleasing to my ears. It is never irritating or annoying because that's how it (nature) is."

*P6. "**You feel connected with nature because we (both humanity and nature) were all created like that.** You feel at peace when you are there and you have joy when you are in nature... It was established in people since the creation and existence of human kind."*

P.3. "Sometimes you feel like just listening to nature, so you would go and listen to the different kinds of sounds from the birds. I strongly feel like that's how God created us. ....when you come back, you can feel that you are happy and your heart is at peace. It's beautiful when you just view nature. That is God's nature! Those (animals) are unique things that God created which cannot utter words. Amazing! You'll feel very happy when you are around them. Nature is beautiful.

I'm familiar with many trees such as isiphingo (Scutia myrtina), but nature also has this thing...., like when you watch some flowers you can see that there is a special or complex way in which they are growing. You ask yourself many questions and wonder how that came to be. You ask yourself some questions that you can't answer yourself ultimately."

P7. "The dam is very big and you can swim nicely in it. The best part is being further deep in the water, right in the centre because it feels very good (appropriate); you feel like mamlambo (a mermaid). Like, you feel like you belong there in the dam, serious! It's not the same water that has chemicals like here (in the community). But it is water from nature; it naturally comes from the rain. So the water is health to us (ayimpilo kuthi). If you wash with it, ***you feel human or like a person (Xa u vasa ngawo, uyaziva nje ngomtu),*** *....it's as if it provides healing deep within you. For example, it's like the water that has been prayed for like (blessed water) at church."*

At first glance, one would think this theme has to do with a simple admiration of nature but, on further analysis of these descriptions, it is apparent that a sense of spiritual harmony (oneness) with *ihlathi* is also experienced. There is a great sense of feeling among the participants that this rich sense of harmony is exclusive to *ihlathi*. For instance, the participants reported that it is fitting and appropriate to feel at peace in *ihlathi* because this is where nature resides in its fullness. These deep emotions are seldom felt on the outskirts of *ihlathi* they tend to be rather experienced where the vegetation is denser. Such experiences were associated with bring about a sense of peace in both the mind and spirit and this they would feel while immersing themselves in the peaceful environment and listening to the songs of *ihlathi* birds, feeling the fresh cool breeze, and observing the lush green vegetation and presence of other animals (described above).

4.2.2.2.1. Effects of the experience

From the descriptions above, when the participants felt a sense of harmony with nature, they would readily feel no need to cause damage or harm to *ihlathi* or any other form of life within it as they wished to perpetuate the sense of harmony their felt with nature. This reflects a

sense of total belonging, connectedness, or oneness with *ihlathi*[8] and this experience was greatly appreciated. The participants' fascination with nature and the sense of connectedness was also expressed towards other natural features such as rivers and pools. For instance, water within the landscape has perceived as being symbolic and spiritual significance as it is seen as providing healing properties and a sense of fulfilment or being made complete (e.g., you feel human or like a person). Dams were also included as having these qualities (see last interview excerpt). The emotions attached to these experiences were described as symbolically returning to, or being in, a state of origin (cosmological belief of creation), where humanity and nature were in perfect harmony.

The sense of harmony was also often conceptualized and defined as the 'beauty of nature'. As a result, the participants shared a great sense of awe and reverence at the beauty and splendor reflected in *ihlathi,* which they sometimes felt could not be fully expressed in words. They felt that such an experience of awe at the beauty of nature often helped to facilitate further questioning of their own existentiality (for instance, who am I and what am I doing here on earth?). For this reason, ihlathi is often perceived as the only place worth visiting after one has been away for some time, or when one is experiencing emptiness in one's life, or when one needs to reconnect with oneself. An appreciation of the beauty of *ihlathi* is also perceived as making one feel more inclined to act as stewards of *ihlathi* (or nature), this is because one has more of sense of your dependence on it for your existence. This particular understanding is explored further in subsequent chapters. *Ihlathi* is therefore perceived as providing the space for spiritual fulfilment, a sense of connectedness or interdependence, and completeness in one's life.

The last two themes discussed below indicate that experiences of natural landscapes may also be negative.

[8] These emotions are picked up on aspects of place attachment, which will be explicitly explored in the next chapter.

4.2.3. Negative experiential meanings and effects

4.2.3.1. Snake in *ihlathi*

> *P7. "When you are there, you think about snakes as the only potential for danger. It is a dangerous animal because it is poisonous."*
>
> *P5. "But I was scared at the same time because it was summer and we know that there are snakes and other animals which are active in ihlathi. I didn't know how to hunt at that time Even though I didn't see any snakes at that time; my mind would tell me to be aware of the snakes*
>
> *P.4. "What I don't like is to see a scary animal. It may be a snake, which I don't like because it scares me. I don't like the uncomfortable feeling of being frightened."*
>
> *P2. "I can sleep very well in ihlathi but I just have to be watchful of the snakes..."*

Although a strong reference was made to the positive qualities of *ihlathi,* it is important to acknowledge that fears were also expressed towards *ihlathi*, in particular to the presence of snakes. Snakes usually emerge during summer, when certain trees are flowering and when cold-blooded animals start emerging from hibernation. It is during this particular season when participants feel anxious about going to or being in *ihlathi.*

4.2.3.2.1. Effects of the experience

This fear persists despite the fact that most of them have never actually encountered a snake in *ihlathi.* Nevertheless, there was also a general feeling among them that this fear did not necessarily cause them to hate snakes or other harmful animals or vegetation within *ihlathi.* This is best reflected in the description of one of the participants:

> *P1. "It's impossible to hate nature... It's impossible to hate scary things in ihlathi like snakes because they were created to live in ihlathi. That's their place of origin. Perhaps the only thing that may irritate you in ihlathi is exhaustion or some issues which you brought from home. But it is highly impossible to hate the nature!"*

Ihlathi is perceived as the rightful 'home' for snakes and other animals, although they may be dangerous. There is therefore a general sense of respect of territory for wild animals in *ihlathi.* This theme therefore suggests that the beauty of nature may also paradoxically include fearful/dangerous animals such as snakes. Another negative emotion experienced by participants in *ihlathi* is a fear of criminals (see below).

4.2.3.2. Times have changed

> *P3. "Ihlathi is contaminated by bad people....all the bad stuff people do in nature is not right."*
>
> *P5. "It was nice in those days/times (past). There was no one who could rape. But nowadays, it's possible that a stranger may appear all of a sudden; there are criminals these days. You cannot always have that kind of peace because you know that someone could harm you. It is even worse because you can never get an accurate idea of a human's (the criminal's) thoughts and capabilities."*
>
> *P1. "...snakes can be manageable but these days the only thing to fear the most is a human being."*
>
> *P4. "It's bad. Time is very bad now compared to the past... It's wrong! And we don't really know what might be causing this! I suppose it's because most young people haven't performed their rituals. These days children are saying that they don't need to perform rituals but these children are wrong. It is wrong and it makes things (society) worse."*

This theme also touches on the issues of harmony, as criminals were perceived as disrupting this sense of peace and harmony, not only within *ihlathi* but also within the participants' communities[9]. The participants mentioned that even though *ihlathi* can still be peaceful, it is no longer as peaceful as it used to be because of crime. The types of crime that were perceived as most likely to occur within *ihlathi* included rape[10], livestock theft, and possibly

[9] Their communities are understood as also being inextricably linked to *ihlathi*, since these are composed of a number of individuals who are also inextricably linked to *ihlathi* through many cultural processes, ceremonies, or activities.

[10] Crimes such as rape are perceived as equally likely to occur in *ihlathi* and within the community.

assault if you happen to witness such crimes taking place. In the past, crime was not considered a factor that one had to worry about. Most participants were saddened by this fact. It is important to note that crime was considered more as a factor by urban female participants then their peri-urban female counterparts (also see Table 4.3.1).

It was also felt that the people moral values and obligations to perform certain rituals had declined within their communities (see Chapter 5) and these changes they felt negatively impacted on people's interactions with *ihlathi*. This reflects the non-static context of their communities as illustrated by the following quote received from P4, ("*time is now bad compared to the past*").

4.2.3.2.1. Effects of the experience

Even though, the fear of crime was more common in Grahamstown than in Ndlambe, most females (in both study areas) were more likely to refrain from going to *ihlathi* because they were beginning to feel more vulnerable and defenceless. It was also generally perceived (most especially among the female participants in Grahamstown) that their fear of crime has threatening their ability to engage in certain cultural practices and traditions, such as collecting firewood in *ihlathi*. Many women are as a result now hiring local labourers (particularly male) to carry out these activities on their behalf. This saddens them, as many of them believe that fuel-wood collection plays an important role in the identity of a Xhosa woman. Most of the female participants (in both areas) also acknowledged missing the freedom they used to have in *ihlathi*. This they felt affected their well-being in a negative way.

A strong sense of nostalgia was also generally felt towards the positive interactions they used to experience within *ihlathi*. These feelings of nostalgia would often triggered feelings of longing for to restore harmony in their communities so that they could continue to enjoy *ihlathi* and engage in various cultural practices that are specific to them as amaXhosa women.

4.3. Assessing the psychological and spiritual effects of *ihlathi* on amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

It was important to determine how widespread these perceptions and experiences were towards *ihlathi* amongst other members of communities[11] of Grahamstown and Ndlambe as well as determine if differences exist between the peri-urban and urban communities. The results are presented in the table below.

[11] Of those who responded with a "not true for me" response in this table, five (12.5%) of the Grahamstown and two (5%) of the Ndlambe participants have never been to the forest before. Also, over half of the urban participants (57%), compared with just more a third (39.5) of the peri-urban participants, have begun to refrain from going to *ihlathi* (see Table 3.3.1. in the previous chapter), hence the urban group responds to "not true for me" more frequently than the peri-urban participants do.

Table 4.3.1.: Assessing the significance of the experience of *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
The experience of *ihlathi* makes me feel inspired and revitalised (Q9.1)	Not true for me	9	2	25.7	5.3
	True to some extent	15	14	42.9	36.8
	Very true	11	22	31.4	57.9
Being in *ihlathi* provides an opportunity for self-reflection/redefining oneself (Q9.3)	Not true for me	16	6	45.7	15.8
	True to some extent	15	13	42.9	34.2
	Very true	3	19	8.6	50
	Unsure	1	-	2.9	-
Being in *ihlathi* stimulates and motivates me to establish new goals (Q9.5)	Not true for me	16	4	45.7	10.5
	True to some extent	11	12	31.6	31.6
	Very true	8	20	22.9	52.6
	Unsure	-	2	-	5.3
I feel like there is a spiritual satisfaction that I get when I'm in *ihlathi* (Q9.7)	Not true for me	14	5	40	13.2
	True to some extent	10	13	28.6	34.2
	Very true	9	16	25.7	42.1
	Unsure	2	4	5.7	10.5
I would feel as if something is missing in my life if I don't visit *ihlathi* (Q9.6)	Not true for me	10	8	28.6	21.1
	True to some extent	11	11	31.4	28.9
	Very true	13	18	37.1	47.4
	Unsure	1	1	2.9	2.6
Being in *ihlathi* makes me anxious because of my fear of wild animals (Q9.4)	Not true for me	14	14	40	36.8
	True to some extent	16	15	45.7	39.5
	Very true	5	9	14.3	23.7
Being in *ihlathi* makes me anxious because of the fear of being a victim of crime (Q9.2)	Not true for me	12	17	34.3	44.7
	True to some extent	18	14	51.4	36.8
	Very true	5	7	14.3	18.4
				n=35	n=38
Total		N= 80		100%	

Note: The sample sizes in Q1-Q10 comprise a group of respondents who have been to the forest before, and exclude those who have never been to the forest/*ihlathi* before.

From Table 4.3.1., it is clear that the majority of respondents in both Grahamstown and Ndlambe related to the intangible values for visiting *ihlathi*. For example, Grahamstown (74.3%) and Ndlambe (94.7%) acknowledged that visiting *ihlathi* can be inspiring and

revitalizing. More than sixty eight percent of the urban respondents felt that something would be missing in their lives if they did not visit *ihlathi*, and these sentiments where shared by 76.3% of the peri-urban sample. Just over half of the respondents in the urban sample related to more personal development and/or self-actualization in relation to *ihlathi*. For example, 51.5% acknowledged that *ihlathi* provides them with an opportunity for self-reflection; 54.5% felt that *ihlathi* stimulated and motivated them and 54.3% acknowledged feeling spiritually satisfied after being to *ihlathi*.

In comparison, a significantly higher proportion of the respondents in Ndlambe related to these values. For example, 84.2% acknowledged that *ihlathi* provided them with an opportunity for self-reflection; 84.25% felt that *ihlathi* stimulated and motivated them and 76.3% acknowledged feeling spiritually satisfied after being to *ihlathi*.

Both the peri-urban and urban sample identified with the negative effects of *ihlathi*. For example, 60% in Grahamstown acknowledged feeling anxious about wild animals while they were in *ihlathi*; the majority 45.7% related to this as only being partly true. Similarly in Ndlambe 63.2% feared coming across wild animals while being in *ihlathi* and of this majority, 39.8% reflected this statement as being partly true. 65.7% of the urban respondents felt anxious about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime while in *ihlathi*. Of these, the majority (51.4%) felt that this was only partly true. Just over half of the peri-urban sample, 55.2% related to this fear, and the majority 36.8% felt this was only partly true.

It is important to note that the participants from both Grahamstown and Ndlambe could relate to most of the positive psychological effects of *ihlathi*. However, a significantly higher proportion of the peri-urban respondents related to these effects more than urban sample. This observation is best explained by the results in Chapter 3, which demonstrate that most of the urban participants had fewer interactions with *ihlathi* than there peri-urban participants (see Section 3.3). Now we can see by implication that urban respondents' relationship with *ihlathi* appears to be weakening. Most participants in both peri-urban and urban sample did however recognise the significance of going to *ihlathi* in their lives. Factors including safety or the fear of crime were perceived as curtailing their interaction with *ihlathi*. The next few chapters

explore whether this altered interaction between them and *ihlathi* may have further implications for other aspects of their everyday lives.

4.4. Conclusion

In sum, the results in this chapter have demonstrated that the experience of *ihlathi* among the participants plays an important role in their everyday lives. Firstly, the experience of *ihlathi* is recognized as being pleasant and valuable as it not only provides recreational or psychological fulfilment but also spiritual fulfilment. For example, *ihlathi* is considered a place in which one can relieve stress or worries in everyday life. It is also perceived as offering a space for inspiration. The healing properties of *ihlathi* are seen as restorative, promoting introspection and connectedness, and offering one a place for self-definition and completeness. Many felt the spiritual oneness in their (active but indirect) engagement with *ihlathi*, which they believed helped them to foster feelings of not wanting to harm or destroy nature.

Moreover, the beauty of nature is not only appreciated for its aesthetic appeal (even though this does play a significant role), but also for reflecting the harmonious order between plants, animals and humanity, which forms part of amaXhosa's worldview, see sections 4.2.2.1.1, 4.2.3.2, 7.2.2.1 and 7.6 (at the end). Consequently, there is a respect for the territory of wild animals in *ihlathi*.

Ihlathi is also perceived as representing an entity that they could not feel separate from as it forms part of their identity as amaXhosa. From the descriptions given by the participants it is clear that *ihlathi* has the ability to allow individuals to find meaning in life and to realise who they are. This is reflected in the use of words describing *ihlathi's* ability to develop ***umtu*** and ***ungumtu*** (a person or human), which forms part of pivotal traditional African philosophy of *Ubuntu* which reflects a profound awareness of a system of interconnectedness among individuals. When translated, the word *Ubuntu* means, "I am because you are," which highlights the significance of interdependence. In this study, this concept of *Ubuntu* is demonstrated beyond social relationships into the natural world (on pages 64, 66 and 116). As will be illustrated in subsequent chapters, the participants strongly believe that they cannot be who they are without access to *ihlathi lesiXhosa*. Such findings reveal how profound the

interactions with *ihlathi* are for local the participants. From these findings, we can see that *ihlathi* and society are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent. Crime and changing society were perceived as severely altering these interactions. This reveals the non-static nature of both the natural and social contexts that people live in.

In conclusion, this chapter presented a general description of the unfolding of the experiences within *ihlathi,* and their effects on the psychological and spiritual well-being of the respondents living within both peri-urban and urban communities. The following chapter investigates how the human-nature relationship (and more explicitly its contributing factors) influences people's place attachment and sense of place in both Grahamstown and Ndlambe.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING SENSE OF PLACE THROUGH PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH *IHLATHI LESIXHOSA*

5.1. Introduction

This chapter investigates sense of place among the participants by exploring the personal meanings and relationships[12] they have with *ihlathi* in their everyday life. It aims to answer the following question: What personal meanings and relationships the participants attributed towards *ihlathi*? This chapter is strictly committed to focusing on the interplay between the various contextual features embedded within the lives and identities of the participants, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how these factors form part of the meanings, attachments and relationships they develop towards *ihlathi*. In other words, the participants' life-world (consisting of the personal, social, cultural, economic, historical/political and physical/environmental aspects that constitute their everyday living) is meticulously delved into, to capture and understand their worldviews and their interpretations of their experiences and connections with *ihlathi*. To achieve this I conduct a detailed analysis of each case study, strictly adhering to the inductive and idiographic assumptions of the IPA approach (see Chapter 2).

The following discussion section assesses and identifies the key themes (Smith *et al.*, 2009) that emerged from the IPA case studies. The meanings for each individual are then related to the general or collective cultural significance of *ihlathi* among the amaXhosa. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

5.2. Discovering the personal meanings and relationships with *ihlathi lesiXhosa*

Ihlathi plays an important and unique role in the participant's existence in everyday life, as we shall see below. Eight IPA interviews were analysed and each has been identified by a theme. The themes include (1) a place of prayer and refuge; (2) a place for consolation and a new meaning in life; (3) a place to strengthen pride and passion for *ihlathi*; (4) a place for

[12] In this study, the words 'relationship', 'connection' and 'attachment' are used interchangeably.

freedom of expression; (5) a special place in one's youth; (6) the ecological conditions of *ihlathi* discourages one; (7) a favourite place of inspiration; and (8) *ihlathi* is the same as my community. The first six themes emerged from Ndlambe Village while the last two were derived from Grahamstown[13]. All the participants' identities were kept anonymous and pseudonyms were provided, since the nature of the content from the individual case studies was personal and confidential.

5.2.1. A place of prayer and refuge

Aviwe is a 73-year-old man who grew up in Ndlambe Village. In his youth, he spent most of his time in *ihlathi*. He fondly remembers collecting wild fruits, harvesting honey and hunting with his friends. Aviwe also made special reference to the caves that he discovered in *ihlathi,* where his cattle would hide for shelter particularly in the rainy season. He also has fond memories of sleeping in the enclosed caves, as this made him feel safe and secure especially during rain storms with lightning and thunder. Ultimately, the caves became one of his favourite places to visit in *ihlathi*. Aviwe is proud of the discoveries he made in *ihlathi* and the knowledge he acquired from being there, as they added value on his reputation especially among others hunters in his community.

As an adult, Aviwe continued to go to *ihlathi* to harvest poles for repairing and rebuilding his kraal and his garden, and to harvest fodder for his livestock. He considers these activities as central to his identity as a Xhosa man, because a well-built kraal complemented by a growing number of livestock commands respect and dignity in his community. It appears that his identity is an important aspect of his life.

He continues going to *ihlathi* to harvest *amayeza* (traditional medicine) for his physical and spiritual health, especially now in his old age. He also strongly believes that as a father and the head of his family according to the amaXhosa culture, it is his responsibility to perform and facilitate rituals in his household. The performance of these rituals, he believes, will

[13] The reason for the uneven proportion of the participants was due to the unavailability of eligible individuals for such interviews in Grahamstown. It should also be noted that the participants included in this chapter are not the same individuals included in Chapter 4.

ensure the prosperity and well-being of his family. He therefore finds it imperative that he should live long enough to perform these rituals.

> *"I am the only person in my family who has this responsibility and it is a huge burden on my shoulders."*

Without being prompted, Aviwe emphasized that a couple of years ago he and his wife experienced conflicts in their marriage. These conflicts eventually resulted in them separating and him losing contact with his children. This has caused him great pain, suffering and loneliness. He lives by himself in his house and visits his friends sporadically. To find relief and peace, Aviwe goes to *ihlathi* because he experiences a strong connection with God and his ancestors when he is there.

> *"I would go to ihlathi to pray and I would come back with a peaceful heart. In ihlathi I would feel as though I was more connected to God and my ancestors and I still do."*
>
> *"I sometimes go to ihlathi on my own accord. However, there are times that I feel it is God who urges me to go to ihlathi so that I can pray and seek solutions to my challenges, and to find traditional medicines that will help me live longer."*

Recently, a swarm of bees made a hive inside his kraal. This was interpreted by a traditional healer as a sign from his ancestors indicating that he needs to perform a particular ritual to appease then so that he can find peace in his heart. Aviwe believes it is important for every Xhosa family to pay attention to such calls and perform the necessary rituals. Nevertheless, he fears that he may not be able to gather his family together in time because of the conflict that still exists between him and his wife.

Aviwe also believes that he needs to do everything possible to correct the mistakes[14] he made when performing the last ritual for his ancestors.

> *"During the last ritual I performed for my family, I did something wrong and now I need to settle my ancestors' grievances. I should have*

[14] Failing in his ritual had a negative effect on his reputation as a Xhosa man, most especially of his age, since he is expected to have gained enough knowledge pertaining to the rituals, particularly in a traditional and patriarchal society such as the one in which he lives.

slaughtered a goat first but I sacrificed a cow instead. The entire ritual cost me about R9 000 and now I only have about R150 left in my savings account. This failure has been one of my greatest troubles this year. The bees in my kraal are a sign that I need to perform another ritual relating to ihlathi. I also had a certain lizard, crab (associated with the river-related ritual) which came, and visited me in my house. This is a sign that I also need to perform another ritual at the river."

Aviwe continues to go to *ihlathi* when he needs to pray to appease the misfortune that has fallen upon him. He now believes one of the evident effects of this misfortune is reflected in his livestock's ill health, as well as an incident that included a suspected intrusion into his home with an aim to end his life. He explains below:

"At the moment I only have a few goats (about 3-5) and I have put all my hope in them because I do not have enough money left to perform the next set of rituals. One of my goats gave birth earlier in the year but her offspring got ill and died. I am now waiting for another one of their offspring to mature so that I can perform the outstanding ritual."

"Some time ago some people came looking for me at my house to end my life (relating to the conflicts he had with his wife) and God led me to a place in ihlathi to hide safely until they were gone. I find ihlathi to be safer than my own house that often confines me. In ihlathi, I can easily and freely hide and protect myself. In this way God provides me with life."

The extracts above appear to capture something of Aviwe's experiences of frustrations and feelings of being trapped or stuck, both in circumstantial and literal terms. The reason being he finds himself caught in an unfortunate circumstance where he has to wait until his livestock mature enough to perform the outstanding obligatory rituals, as he is currently financially unable to carry out this activity. In a more literal sense, he feels his physical confinement to his house makes him feel unsafe since the strangers' intruded into his house. During this difficult time, he has found that *ihlathi* has given him a place of safety and refuge from the threats to his life and well-being.

When evaluating the significance of *ihlathi* in his life, Aviwe was asked if he could relocate to a different place outside the Eastern Cape, conceivably in a foreign country. He strongly stressed this would be impossible for him as it would then not be in a position to perform his rituals and other related traditional activities that all need to take place within *ihlathi lesiXhosa*.

> *"I need to perform rituals and I cannot do them elsewhere. That would be like killing my family! Doing so would cause more suffering to my family; how much pain would they endure in the future if I did not perform these rituals for them? We are suffering so much already. I need to perform these rituals before I die. I need specific plants to perform these rituals and they can only be found in ihlathi lesiXhosa."*

Summary

There are several important issues to note within Aviwe's case study. Aviwe has spent his entire life in a place that was surrounded by *ihlathi* and it has become a significant part of his life. For example, he developed a close connection with *ihlathi* through recreational and cultural activities when he was young (e.g., harvesting wild fruits and honey, livestock herding and hunting). In his adulthood, Aviwe continued to interact with *ihlathi* on a regular basis and he ascribes the harvesting of poles for maintaining his kraal (*ubuhlanti*) and this being a central component to his identity as a Xhosa man. The reason being kraals are not simply kept to enclose livestock but are primarily used as venues/shrines to carry out traditional ceremonies. Kraals are perceived as providing the family with direct access to communicate with their ancestors. His discovery of the caves in *ihlathi* has contributed to his identity. Caves are often regarded (in the amaXhosa culture) as sacred places within *ihlathi* landscape, where rituals are also performed. His discovery of the caves helped to increase his reputation within his community and at the time, he gained respect from the elders in his community.

However, his recent marital misfortune has compromised the healthy, prosperous and dignified life he had in his community. To rectify his misfortune he feels obliged to perform a set of rituals to appease his ancestors' grievances. This he believes will ensure that his family are blessed and that there well-being will be restored, even after he has passed on. Failing to do so he believes will be like 'killing' my own family, as his family may potentially be

placed in more disarray and misfortune. This would deprive them of an opportunity for a prosperous future.

What also emerges from the extracts above is that Aviwe feels his sense of identity is being undermined by his failure to perform the outstanding ritual[15]. The mistake he incurred during the last ritual he performed had a negative impact on his reputation as well as left him with financial difficulties. The latter has made it impossible to performing his outstanding ritual. In order to carry out the necessary ritual he feels he needs to have certain natural resources that are only obtainable from *ihlathi lesiXhosa,* making *ihlathi* even more important to him. This suggests that the rituals he needs to perform are central to his personal identity, as they assist him in restoring his dignity, regaining respect from members of his community, and re-establishing a positive relationship with his ancestors. *Ihlathi* has also provided him with access to medicines which he believes are necessary for his *impilo* (i.e. good health – physically, mentally and spiritually, long life and blessings). His lifelong interactions with *ihlathi* have also had a significant impact on the close relationship he has with *ihlathi.*

Aviwe has also found great comfort in going to *ihlathi,* to pray, recuperate and seeking solutions to his marital challenges. This is because, as he stated, he experiences a strong connection with God and his ancestors when he is in *ihlathi* and this makes him feel a sense of peace. The descriptions above illustrate how significant *ihlathi* is in Aviwe's life, as a place of security and refuge as well as a source for his psychological and spiritual well-being. He also considers *ihlathi* to afford him with the resources and opportunities to carry out *certain* recreational and cultural activities. The carrying out of these activities he considers to be central to his personal and social/communal identity, and to secure a positive future for his family. *Ihlathi* therefore forms a fundamental component of who he is as a Xhosa man and as head of his family.

[15] Rituals are often performed collectively and in public, and this has social implications for the individual performing the ritual (e.g., acceptance, belonging and respect from others). Failure may have negative implications for an individual's integrity more especially when he is older, as he is expected to be knowledgeable already.

5.2.2. A place for consolation and new meaning in life

Andiswa is an unemployed married woman in her late 40s and is a mother of three sons (aged between 17 and 26 years). She currently lives with her husband and her youngest son. Her two older sons have relocated to Cape Town in search of education opportunities and employment. She is currently not receiving financial support from them. To make ends meet Andiswa owns and runs a small backyard tavern and sometimes harvests *ikhala* (*Aloe ferox*) sap to earn an extra income. She also grows vegetables in her garden to assist with food in her home.

Before she began to run her own tavern, life was financially difficult for her as her husband (the only breadwinner) was retrenched from work a few years ago after he was diagnosed with a chronic illness. She has been looking after him ever since.

During this difficult period, access to natural resources in *ihlathi* assisted her greatly as she had to provide for her family without any source of income.

> *"It was hard. I used to take a bucket with me to ihlathi to harvest wild fruits so that my family could have something to eat. I also had to go there to collect firewood for cooking, as I would often find myself stranded when there was no money to reload my (prepaid) electricity card when it ran out. I would also go to ihlathi to harvest aloe sap to earn some income."*

Andiswa found it difficult to make a profit from the sale of aloe sap as the market was not lucrative. She sometimes had to wait for weeks before she could sell her harvested aloe sap. Andiswa also found that *ihlathi* helped to sustain her family's livestock, which they occasionally slaughtered for meat and for ritual purposes.

Faced with these challenges and responsibilities, Andiswa mentioned that she often felt overwhelmed and alone. This situation was exacerbated by her husband's unfaithfulness to her. As a result, she felt betrayed and emotionally abused by her husband.

> *"This thing is painful because I am married and I did not expect such behaviour from him. He knew all along but he never bothered to tell me. This is abuse! Now I have the same chronic illness. Because of that,*

many thoughts flooded my mind as I've thought about how poor my family is (in case they had to take care of her when she could not)."

She was concerned about how her mother and children were going to react to the news. Andiswa was also afraid that people in her community would spread bad rumours about her if they found out about her illness. It was devastating for her as she felt she could not share these confidential issues with anyone.

"I could not open up to my mother as she was also sick at that time and I did not wish to burden her further."

Andiswa was also in constant conflict with her son at the time, as he had started drinking and dropped out of school. She felt it was important that her son should continue with his education so that he could provide for them when they would no longer be able to do so. However, she found it difficult to communicate and discuss such issues with her sons since she feared being rejected by her family once she discloses her illness to them. There was a time when she felt depressed about all these issues and developed a negative attitude and perception towards life.

"I thought that instead of facing these problems, it was better for me to end my life. I thought of poisoning myself in the house at first, but I eventually decided to take a rope with me to ihlathi to perhaps end my life there."

Andiswa is eternally grateful, as she found that each time she went to *ihlathi* to end her life, she would always be distracted and return home.

"On many occasions a rabbit or a buck or even a person would suddenly appear in ihlathi to distract me. Sometimes beautiful sounds of the birds would distract me. These random events would cause my evil thoughts to vanish."

"My interactions with ihlathi did not completely eradicate my problems but helped me cope with my challenges and depression. I used to cry a lot in ihlathi by myself. I remember praying to God so that he may end this tribulation for me."

Andiswa enjoys collecting wild flowers and plants from *ihlathi* to use as pot plants in her house and ornamental trees in the yard. She finds this helpful when coping with the stresses she is dealing with. There are certain trees that she especially loves viewing within *ihlathi*

landscape, such as *umnqonci (Trichocladus ellipticus)* and *umthi welitye/umlitye*. She enjoys seeing these because she finds their evergreen appeal attractive and she feels inspired by the complex physical structures of these trees and their leaves.

> *"These trees were always green; it is amazing how this persists in all seasons. It is as if the trees were encouraging me to persevere and live healthier and longer. They helped me to think about myself and restore my hope in my life after the betrayal and ordeal I had experienced."*

Andiswa also appreciates the historical heritage embedded within *ihlathi*.

> *"This may not always be positive but it is a part of my history. There is a stone in ihlathi demarcating the Settlers War that took place there in some nearby caves (more than two centuries ago). AmaXhosa women were massacred in these caves while hiding from the British soldiers. Sometimes I am frightened when I am there alone, especially when I'm near those caves. I am afraid that what happened to those women might recur and happen to me."*

In times that are more recent Andiswa has been discouraged about going to *ihlathi* alone, as she fears becoming a victim of crime. She also added that there is generally nothing she dislikes about *ihlathi*, except maybe encountering a snake or a criminal there.

> *"Sometimes I am afraid of snakes or that criminals may attack me while I'm alone in ihlathi. The way ihlathi is made with its many inclines and hills does not help, because if a criminal comes he can easily see me from the hilltop as I'm entering ihlathi or he can hide behind the trees. Sometimes I wish ihlathi could be cleared[16] to make things better."*

Her fear of becoming a victim of crime has resulted in her hiring someone to harvest fuel-wood for her household. Consequently, she no longer has enough wood to build an *igoqo* (woodpile). This saddens her, as she believes that collecting wood for her *igoqo* is an activity that is central to her personal and cultural identity as a Xhosa woman.

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[16] She implies that she wishes *ihlathi* could be trimmed or cut back to create a clear view, to make her feel safer as a woman.

"AmaXhosa women must have amagoqo (plural for igoqo[17]) and I used to have one for myself."

Despite her fears, Andiswa still loves *ihlathi*. She strongly believes she would not have coped or survived without the interactions she has had with *ihlathi*. She is eternally grateful to God for creating *ihlathi* for her.

"Eventually I understood that everything happens for a reason. I believe that ihlathi was created with the knowledge that people like me, and definitely others, would need it. I also believe that everything that happened to me also took place so that I can help someone who may find themselves in a similar situation as me because I have survived the odds through the help of ihlathi."

Summary

Andiswa is a married and unemployed woman who has experienced personal challenges at different stages of her adulthood. At each of these stages, *ihlathi* has taken on different meanings for her. For example, when her family lacked a source of income after her husband was retrenched and she would go to *ihlathi* to harvest resources to sell and eat.

Her husband's betrayal had the most significant negative impact on her psychological well-being and it was her intention to commit suicide in *ihlathi*, as a result. When delving deeper into this particular event, however, it becomes clear that at the time Andiswa was confused and needed answers as she could not understand why this tribulation had fallen upon her and she felt undeservedly mistreated by her husband and lost all meaning in life. In order to deal with these difficulties she asked God and her ancestors to assist her in ending her tribulation, as she wished to end her life by poisoning herself. She therefore felt that *ihlathi* offered her a place where she could communicate with God and/or her ancestors and seek their guidance, as she did not know what to do and she felt she could not share her challenges with anyone else in her family or community.

[17] See section 6.2.2 for details on *igoqo*.

In hind sight, Andiswa strongly believes that the persistent distractions (e.g., wild animals), which initially appeared random to her, were deliberate signs from God and/or her ancestors indicating their disapproval of her suicide attempts. She felt that she also received additional confirmatory signs from the green appeal of *ihlathi*, which she interprets as providing her with a sense of hope, perseverance, and inspiration to lead a healthy life. She strongly believes that these qualities of *ihlathi,* together with her engagement in other recreational activities such as picking certain plants and flowers, were psychologically restorative, as they assisted her in relieving her stress and frustration.

Despite these positive encounters, she also feels that the historical landmarks that she sometimes encounters in *ihlathi* carry negative connotations and these provoke fearful emotions within. Nevertheless, she feels these features represent part of her cultural and historical heritage. With her attempt to start her life afresh, Andiswa would have loved to build herself an *igoqo,* to signify her status as a hard working woman in her community. Unfortunately, she no longer goes to *ihlathi* as frequently as she used, as she fears for her safety. These two aspects have had a negative impact on her interaction with *ihlathi* and on her well-being.

Andiswa also acknowledges that she would not have successfully coped (most particularly psychologically) with her depression and other related challenges without the interactions she had with *ihlathi*. For example, she said, "Eventually I understood that everything happens for a reason. I believe that *ihlathi* was created with the knowledge that people like me, and definitely others, would need it... I have survived the odds through the help of *ihlathi*." In this way, she was able to console herself and regain a new meaning in life. Through this process, Andiswa holds no bitterness instead; she is grateful and feels empowered to share her experiences and the significance of *ihlathi* with other people in her community who may be facing similar challenges, by assisting them with advice and support. She has managed to rebuild her life and family successfully.

5.2.3. A place to strengthen pride and passion for *ihlathi*

Mandla is a 17-year-old high school boy and he is the youngest son of two. He is currently staying with his parents in the village of Ndlambe and his elder brother is in Cape Town

seeking employment. Mandla will be going to *ihlathi* for his initiation later in the year and this is an important moment in his life, as it involves his transition into manhood. Mandla grew up herding his parents' livestock. He remembers that when he was younger he was scared of going into *ihlathi*. However, he learned to overcome his fear on his own.

> *"When I was younger my friends and cousins used to leave me behind in ihlathi while I was herding my father's livestock. I was scared but was forced to overcome my fear on my own. This helped me to learn more about ihlathi and I became familiar with it. I am brave now."*

After school, Mandla still spends most of his time in *ihlathi*. He believes it is his responsibility as the only son currently in his household to take care of his father's livestock. He sometimes takes an axe with him to harvest branches to make pens for his father's livestock (e.g., for young goats which are not ready to graze in *ihlathi*) and for repairing his father's kraal. He strongly emphasizes how much he enjoys spending time in *ihlathi* alone:

> *"The first thing I notice when I enter into ihlathi is the difference in the atmosphere. The air in ihlathi is full of different aromas that emanate from the plants, flowers, and trees. There is always a cool breeze in ihlathi that is different from the one at home."*
>
> *"Sometimes I will dig the ground and drink the cool water. I like this water because it is clean, chemical free and has a distinct taste."*
>
> *"I also sometimes like drinking the sap from the roots of a certain tree."*

Mandla cherishes the times that he is alone in *ihlathi*. He also enjoys listening to the different sounds of various birds and animals while he is there.

> *"I prefer going to ihlathi alone because if I go with a companion, they may distract me and may alter my flexibility to explore and enjoy ihlathi to its fullest, as they may not be as enthusiastic as I am. I want to be able to listen to the sounds of the birds and other animals clearly while I'm in ihlathi."*

For Mandla, *ihlathi* is a peaceful place of rest and solitude.

> *"Ihlathi has a peaceful environment wherein I can rest very well because no one will disturb me while I'm there. This is the only preferred place that eases my worries and frustrations. There was a*

time when I had an argument with someone and instead of fighting back I decided to go to ihlathi so that I can face them feeling more calm and peaceful in my heart."

Ihlathi plays an important role in assisting Mandla to overcome and cope with certain issues and challenges relating to the poverty his family is currently experiencing.

"I also go to ihlathi when times are difficult like when there is no food in the house. In the forest, I always find something to eat like wild fruits such at imiqokolo and tolofiya. I would rather do this than wait for my parents' next monthly payment. All these benefits are exclusive to ihlathi and that's why I appreciate ihlathi so much."

Apart from the practical and psychological benefits, which *ihlathi* provides for him, he also has a favourite big tree that is deep inside *ihlathi*. He likes to climb it when he goes there.

"I love this tree because from it I can almost see everything that is happening in ihlathi and the village, and this pleases me. It is my favourite place."

Mandla acknowledges that everyone in his community does not always understand his passion for *ihlathi* (and his family's livestock).

"...they (mostly his peers) like teasing me as they call me names such as "Umntu wemXhosa" (i.e. a staunch traditional young person). They often ask me why I love spending most of my time in ihlathi instead of doing what they are usually doing, like playing soccer or engaging in more modernised activities such as social media. They think that they are brighter than I am. Sometimes I struggle with their questions and jeering. They unfortunately do not understand the significance ihlathi has in my life. This saddens me, as I sometimes cannot fully explain how special ihlathi is to me. I strongly believe that the very same thing they tease me about is my special gift."

"Usually when I am in my favourite tree I wish I was high enough for everyone to see me so that they could understand how significant ihlathi is to me."

"I never see other boys or girls of my age in ihlathi, except during the initiation period or when they need to harvest something from ihlathi."

Mandla feels encouraged by the compliments he often receives from the elders in his community. The knowledge he has gained from going to *ihlathi* has taught him hunting and self-defence skills against the predators of *ihlathi*. These are attributes of a brave Xhosa man, which he considers essential for his initiation later in the year. He also feels proud and encouraged by the good grades he obtains at school and he relates these to the knowledge he has gained by going to *ihlathi* on a regular basis.

Mandla is concerned about his imminent relocation to a bigger city like Cape Town[18] after his matriculation, to find employment. He is afraid that the current connection he has with *ihlathi* may be threatened because he may not have access to *ihlathi* in the city.

> *"I strongly wish if something was done for me to expose how much I love and enjoy ihlathi so that I may not lose heart in what I love doing."*

Summary

Mandla is an example of a young Xhosa man who passionately loves *ihlathi,* as he believes it to be central to his identity. He also enjoys *ihlathi* for its recreational, aesthetic, psychologically restorative, and practical benefits (e.g., food at times when his family could not provide). The passion he developed for *ihlathi* from his childhood has grown stronger in his teenage years. He believes his interaction with *ihlathi* has taught him wisdom, bravery and self-discipline, and these characteristics he feels are important for a young Xhosa man to have. Self-discipline and taking good care of livestock are desirable traits, and these responsible attributes come as a surprise to his friends, as he has not yet gone his initiation process. Young men who have not been initiated are generally perceived as behaving in a foolish or irresponsible manner. Hence, he is jeered at by his peers.

His primary concern is that when he relocates to Cape Town he will not be able to maintain his close connection with *ihlathi,* as he will not to access any kind of *ihlathi* while he is there. For the moment, Mandla spends most of his free time in *ihlathi* to reinforce his passion for *ihlathi* and his love for his culture. He also gains a sense of pride and affirmation from the

[18] Cape Town is one of the biggest metropolitan cities in the country.

elders' in his community who approve of his love for *ihlathi*. His friends however fail to understand this and sometimes mis-conceptualize him as living in the past and "being backward". He however believes his connection with *ihlathi* may in fact be a special gift that he wishes to nurture. Traditionally, according to the Xhosa culture, such a gift may imply that he may receive a calling to become a traditional healer or herbalist. Given his connection and strong emotions he has toward *ihlathi*, it is not surprising that leaving the village is problematic for him. He hopes to enjoy *ihlathi* while he still can.

He is also concerned that the city may spoil his good character. This he feels is probable because currently when he needs to address conflicts or challenges, he goes to *ihlathi* to gain perspective, and this he feels he will not be able to do when he is in the city.

In sum, we can see that Mandla finds himself in a constant struggle of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and more importantly from leading a traditional to a more modernised lifestyle. For Mandla leading a more traditional lifestyle appears difficult if not impossible at the moment, as he has relocated to Cape Town to earn an income. He is also concerned that by moving to city he will lose some of his traditions but more importantly that he may lose his special gift or connection with *ihlathi*. It is clear that *ihlathi* is vital to Mandla's sense of identity, as his concerns and preparations for his transitions revolve around maintaining continuous access and familiarity with *ihlathi*.

5.2.4. A place for freedom of expression

Nobuhle is a 38-year-old unemployed and unmarried mother of four children. She still lives with her mother and has a three-month-old baby boy, two male toddlers and an 18-year-old son who is going to be initiated later in the year (2010).

Nobuhle has an intimate connection with *ihlathi* as she enjoys observing and being absorbed by the positive qualities of *ihlathi*.

> *"I feel happy and free when I'm resting under a tree. I watch the bees pollinate the flowers and other animals too such as rabbits. I just love to look at "ubuhlebendalo" (the beauty of nature) particularly in*

summer, as this is when it is most beautiful. I also enjoy smelling the different aromas of the flowers in ihlathi because I love to distinguish the different scents I can smell. It is difficult to express this phenomenon in words because the scents and the experience itself are so natural and unique. I also like to pick flowers, plants, and stones while I'm in ihlathi. I love being carried away by all the qualities of ihlathi."

Nobuhle is a traditionalist at heart and still enjoys collecting fuel wood for *igoqo* (women's domain), *isigwamba* (wild vegetable), and reeds to make *umchayelo* (traditional brooms) and mats for her household. She also collects cow dung for smearing on the floor in her house. She collects most of these resources from *ihlathi*. She considers engagement in these activities as desirable for good Xhosa woman. However, according to Nobuble, her friends perceive her as not fitting into their social group (being more modernised), as she still enjoys carrying on traditional activities.

There is widespread fear of snakes within her community but this fear does not necessarily prevent Nobuhle from going to *ihlathi* because she knows *ihlathi* very well.

"There are dangerous animals like snakes in ihlathi which frighten me, but it is never a big issue because I am familiar with ihlathi."

Personally, Nobuhle is confronted with many challenges of unemployment and she often expresses her concerns in prayer when she is in *ihlathi*. She prefers to go to *ihlathi* to pray, as she does not find her home an environment conducive to doing so.

"Sometimes it is difficult to pray about my problems in my home because I'm afraid the neighbours may interrupt me with their random visits. Sometimes my children frustrate me and my friends gossip a lot so I end up going to ihlathi."

Nobuhle also goes to *ihlathi* to reflect and plan for her future. For example, she hopes to be a successful woman who owns a shop and no longer has financial difficulties. She also hopes for a better education and future for her sons.

Nobuhle's eldest son will be going to *ihlathi* for his initiation later in the year. She considers this an important rite of passage for the Xhosa youth.

> *"Ihlathi played a very important cultural significance for past generations and it is still important to our generation. It has taught young amaXhosa women and men responsibility and respect."*

Nobuhle hopes that her son's rite of passage will transform her son's life and he will become responsible and have a successful future. His initiation ritual will also teach him to become independent and responsible enough to support his family.

Summary

Being an unemployed single parent and raising her four sons while living with her mother has at times been challenging for Nobuhle. During the challenging times she has found great comfort in going to *ihlathi* as she felt while being there she could freely express her concerns through prayer. She felt she could not do this at home as her "home" did not offer her the space to fulfil such a sacred activity. Prayer has offered her great comfort during her family's financial difficulties. Nobuhle also recalls valuing the experience of observing the intricate physical qualities of *ihlathi*. She felt that these experiences were sometime so overwhelmingly beautiful that she could not find words to express how they made her feel. This illustrates the magnitude of these experiences and her connection with *ihlathi*. She also appreciated the positive psychological effects these experiences had on her well-being.

Nobuhle also gains immense pleasure and pride when she is carrying out traditional activities in *ihlathi* (for example, collecting firewood, cow dung, and wild vegetables). These activities she believes are central to her identity as a Xhosa woman. Her enjoyment in carrying out these traditional activities motivates her to visit *ihlathi* regularly, despite the widespread fear of snakes particularly amongst other women in her community. She also believes that these activities and the various traditional/cultural interactions with *ihlathi* have contributed significantly towards shaping the amaXhosa's lives and characters for generations. And by continuing to carrying out these activities, she is ensuring that she is bestowing herself with constructive social values such as responsibility and respect for your elders and ones 'culture. This particular claim is concurrent with the hope she has in *ihlathi's* capacity to facilitate the transformation of her son's life when he undergoes his rite of passage. The process is perceived as assisting men in becoming that are responsible and she is hoping that it will

mean that her son finds employment to support Nobuhle and her mother, which would be the right thing to do as a "new man".

5.2.5. A special place in her youth

Nontsikelelo is a married unemployed woman in her late 50s. She is currently staying with her husband and their youngest daughter. She provides for her family by selling traditional beadwork. She receives enough financial assistance from her eldest daughter who is working in the army. It appears that she is better off than other women of her age are in her community.

Nontsikelelo is an active community member. She is responsible for imparting the Xhosa culture to the youth, particularly young women in her community, by facilitating numerous cultural activities during heritage celebrations. Through her teachings, she promotes celibacy among young women until they are married, and she strongly believes that *ihlathi* plays a significant role in bridging the gap. How *ihlathi* achieves this goal is reflected in her previous experiences and memories, which are presented below.

Ihlathi has several meanings for Nontsikelelo, one of them being that in her youth she and her friends would go to *ihlathi* to collect firewood. They actually used these opportunities to meet up with their boyfriends[19] in *ihlathi.*

> *"Ihlathi means a lot to me because ihlathi was the only place where we could meet our boyfriends and have fun."*
>
> *"Ihlathi brings back memories of love and courtship. These were some of the most joyous and significant periods of my life. I remember the forest being tranquil. We would prepare cushions with the soft branches and twigs to rest on under the shade of the trees during a sunny day and listen to sounds of birds. Sometimes we would go at night and look at the stars. This was very precious! This is the kind of permitted pleasure we had with our boyfriends."*

[19] A Xhosa custom of showing respect to elders, since courtship was forbidden within their homesteads or community.

> *"We listened to our elders and did not partake in sexual relationships and this protected us from many things like sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies. I would like young women of today to respect their elders and follow their traditions."*

Ihlathi was the only suitable place, in those days, where they could meet with their boyfriends in privacy and still respect their parents and their customs. She wishes that young people could savour their traditions and celibacy. This issue has become of great concern for her since her teenage daughter unfortunately disappointed her earlier this year by falling pregnant.

> *"I am disappointed by the increasing levels of teenage pregnancy in my community as this is an indication of our disrespectful and reckless youth. They (including her daughter) are forsaking their parents' guidance and traditions and are no longer performing the necessary traditions and rituals."*

Nontsikelelo's second memory includes the fact that in the past they used to perform a maiden's ceremony called *intonjane*. This ceremony was carried out by the maiden's parents to secure both the physical and spiritual well-being of the young women, by both physically and symbolically/spiritually purifying their bodies and spirits to ensure blessings, fertility, and protection from the ancestors. The ceremony also promoted virginity, celibacy and healthy lifestyles among young women. An additional important aspect of *intonjane* was that it involved a large communal celebration whereby almost everybody in the community contributed with their various offerings, including livestock, to ensure solidarity and goodwill among members of the community. There is another important but ceremony that is more private called *intambo* (a modified version of *intonjane*) that is performed after marriage. Its significance is to introduce the bride to the ancestors of the groom's family. Most importantly, the link between these ceremonies and *ihlathi* is that there are specific plant species that are only obtainable at the river (in *ihlathi*), that play an important role in all these rituals. With regard to *intonjane*, certain plants were placed at a designated space (out of sight) in her home as cushions to spiritually absorb and purify the maiden's infinities, bad spirits or curses. On the other hand, plants such as *umnquma (Olea europaea subsp. africana)* and *umthathi (Ptaeroxylon obliquum),* having spiritual significances, were used as platters to carry meat at the *intambo* ceremony. This knowledge of plants forms part of what Nontsikelelo teaches in her community, so that they may value the cultural and spiritual

significance of *ihlathi*, as well as the rituals in their culture and how they all relate to their lives. Nonetheless, she was concerned that access to these essential plants is now becoming scarce.

Nontsikelelo also feels that it is becoming increasingly difficult to perform the *intonjane* ritual because it has become unsustainable for her community to own enough livestock in order to engage in such traditional ceremonies.

> *"You see, ihlathi plays an important role in sustaining our livestock to make these rituals possible. Our livestock are suffering these days because of the environmental changes we are experiencing like more droughts and floods. We no longer have livestock and we don't have money to buy them."*
>
> *"As a result, mentioning the name of the ritual (intonjane) has become taboo. People in the community (including her) do not even mention the name of this particular ritual anymore because we fear that we will be obligated to perform it should the ancestors hear[20] us from their resting place in the yards or elsewhere, although we don't have the livestock or money to do so. This would be a huge problem!"*
>
> *"But it is very difficult to forget the intonjane ceremony because it was a big jubilant celebration in the community. Sometimes you could be carried away by daydreaming about it. You may even find yourself (subconsciously) singing some of the famous songs related to the ritual. But now, there is always someone who will pinch or slap you to silence you if you were caught daydreaming about the ceremony. It is now a forbidden word!"*
>
> *"Abandoning these rituals will eventually create a 'shortage', which means that the women may experience bad luck (e.g., infertility, ill health and family problems) in the future."*

[20] Ancestors also form part of the amaXhosa's everyday life. They are found almost everywhere but their typical point of contact (or communication) may be established in the physical landscape in *ihlathi* or within the homesteads).

Nontsikelelo acknowledges that because of this environmental anomaly the youth, particularly females, find excuses to overlook the value of practising these rituals.

The lack of safety in *ihlathi* has become an issue for Nontsikelelo as well, as she no longer feels that it is safe for her and her daughter to carry out some of their traditional activities pertaining to *ihlathi,* despite their cultural significance.

> *"Going to ihlathi to collect firewood showed that you were a hardworking woman and that you had respect for your culture. However, the increasing numbers of rapes that are happening in ihlathi recently are deterring us from performing our traditions and other related activities in ihlathi."*
>
> *"...as a result I am afraid to send my daughter to collect firewood in ihlathi because it is not safe. The fear of putting my child at risk is unbearable. However, by not sending my daughter to ihlathi I feel that she is being deprived of her culture."*

Summary

Nontsikelelo has numerous special memories of courtship and entertainment that she has had in *ihlathi* in her youth. These she experiences she feels have form an important component of her identity. For example, collecting firewood and other related activities demonstrate that she is a hardworking 'mama.' A mother of a relatively successful family and a responsible and active member of her community, Nontsikelelo utilizes her experiences to offer a cultural role in her own community. With her leadership influence, she teaches young women how to respect and value *ihlathi,* and which plant species and rituals are important for woman's physical and spiritual well-being. In this context, fertility, blessings, and protection from the ancestors she believes are fundamental for ensuring successful marriages/families in the Xhosa culture.

It is also important to highlight that she finds herself in a dilemma that appears to be far beyond her control. The practices that she believes are central to curbing sexual misbehaviour and instilling respect for culture in young amaXhosa women, such as collecting firewood,

traditional courtship in *ihlathi,* and performing the rituals specific to amaXhosa women, is progressively being lost. In the past *ihlathi* was a place for privacy, and cordially levels of fun were held between lovers. This however was no longer the case as demonstrated by Nontsikelelo's disappointment in her daughter's recent teenage pregnancy. She admits that this outcome is to some extent her daughter's choice, or possibly her ignorance; she nevertheless believes that the recent environmental changes and the family's financial challenges have played a significant role in the matter, and the interdependence of these factors is important. For instance, she believes that *ihlathi* can no longer sustain their livestock, a valuable cultural, spiritual and economic resource for the carrying out of ritual ceremonies and this is making it impossible for families to carry out important rituals such as *intonjane* for their daughters as families have become progressively poor and have lost moral obligation to perform these rituals. This has reached level that to even mention *intonjane* has become taboo. She believes that these changes, together with the lack of safety in *ihlathi,* is to the detriment of many amaXhosa women as they are being deprived of their rights to certain cultural rites of passage, as well as instilling opportunities to respect their culture. She also believes that the carrying out of these rituals helped to maintain solidarity within the community. Nontsikelelo strongly feels that *ihlathi* is an integral part of the amaXhosa's' everyday life, and she grieves the way this relationship is being eroded.

5.2.6. The ecological condition of *ihlathi* discourages him

Nkosi is a 33-year-old unemployed man who lives with his mother. He occasionally harvests medicinal plants/herbs to earn income for his family, which supplements his mother's pension. He is the only son in his family. His father recently passed away and it has become his responsibility to carry out the necessary rituals for his family. In the past, he did not take rituals seriously. However, since his father's death he has learnt how crucial these rituals are for the current and future success and well-being of his family. Nkosi has inherited his father's livestock and he wishes to increase their number to add value to his father's inheritance. Doing so would reflect responsibility and loyalty, and would increase his integrity.

In the past, Nkosi particularly enjoyed going to *ihlathi* during the spring season because he finds it aesthetically appealing. In recent years, however, he only goes there when he is

obliged to collect firewood or search for his stray livestock. He no longer enjoys going to *ihlathi,* as he strongly believes that the policies implemented by the previous apartheid regime had a significant negative impact on the well-being of *ihlathi* and his community.

> *"There is no ihlathi here. We don't have ihlathi anymore. Our livestock's survival is heavily dependent on ihlathi. You can't even sustain your livestock in such an environment. I always thought I would start my own business of livestock farming or something. I would keep goats, sheep and cattle and sell them. It's however impossible because there are no grazing camps for our livestock in this village."*
>
> *"One of the reasons why many trees like the prickly pear and many others are not growing in our area is because in the past regime many people were relocated to non-fertile environments. As a result, it is difficult to keep our livestock. Besides, long ago, some people (believed to be informed by the same regime) came in helicopters to spray toxic chemicals at our plants and this is why you don't see many trees growing in the surroundings. It would have been better if grazing camps had been provided for us instead."*

Nkosi also mentioned that it troubles him how his own community also contributed to the deteriorating state of *ihlathi* and the landscape around his community. He strongly believes that it is impossible for *ihlathi* to sustain itself.

> *"I also think our land is the way it is because it has also been overused by many people when they needed it. In the past, people in the area built most of their houses with the materials they harvested from ihlathi. This has also resulted in the deterioration of our ihlathi. Our ihlathi is not as dense as compared to other amahlathi (plural for ihlathi) in other places. Our ihlathi has a lot of visible furrows and footpaths in it. Soil erosion is bad here. Ihlathi is suffering!"*
>
> *"Our livestock are suffering too because they have to wander for long distances to search for food. Sometimes they get lost, fall off steep cliffs, or fall prey to the predators of ihlathi. This is why it is no use to try to increase my cattle in numbers. Becoming a livestock farmer in this area is useless."*

Nkosi is aware of the practical significance of the trees within the ecosystem and acknowledges how these benefit his community in many ways.

> *"The trees play a very important role in the ecosystem. They help to provide shade and clean air for us. They protect us from the strong winds and lightning. You can also get traditional medicine from them. They are also a source of food for us and other animals too."*

Nkosi also emphasized the importance of harvesting sustainably and in knowing the cultural and/or spiritual meanings that trees may hold. He felt this knowledge is being lost, particularly among many young people in his community.

> *"People shouldn't carelessly harvest ihlathi. You have to be very cautious when you harvest trees in ihlathi because certain trees bring bad luck. So you cannot just harvest any tree! Every tree has its specific meaning. There are trees that attract lighting and the umhlontlo tree shouldn't be harvested or touched because it can cause death in the family or the community. It is therefore necessary for people to know the significance and the possible effects of the trees before they harvest them."*

> *"Other trees provide health because they are used for medicinal purposes for people and livestock. It is important to spare such trees. There are other trees around the settlement that have no value whatsoever and I wouldn't be concerned if these were damaged or removed."*

Nkosi also made reference to the environmental messages and initiatives he heard over the radio. However, he feels helpless to respond because of the environmental challenges in his community.

> *"I usually hear people on the radio encouraging communities to plant vegetables or (exotic) trees. I doubt that that would be possible here. The state of our land here discourages me. It is very hard for trees to survive in this arid environment."*

He continued to share his concerns about the sustainability of *ihlathi*:

> *"Even though ihlathi is not completely destroyed yet, I am afraid that it will soon diminish, and something must be done about this situation."*

Summary

Nkosi is a young Xhosa man who is concerned about the state of the natural environment in his community. Recently, since his father's death, he has learnt the significance of the cultural practices, which he had initially overlooked. This has made him more aware of the cultural and spiritual significance of *ihlathi* to his culture. However, unlike other amaXhosa men, he does not find fulfilment (as demonstrated in the other case studies) in going to *ihlathi*. He strongly believes that *ihlathi* has been greatly destroyed and this saddens him. Even though the precise reasons for its deterioration are not known, he does feel that the previous apartheid government had a role to play in destroying their landscape[21] as many destructive policies were introduced during this time.

Local perceptions (either positive or negative) have also had a powerful influence on how individuals interact with their environment. He acknowledges that his community is also responsible for *ihlathi's* deterioration, through their unsustainable harvesting methods of resources over the years. He believes that this unsustainable harvesting is a result of decreasing traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the area. In the past TEK guided us to preserve certain plants and trees in *ihlathi* that were cultural significant to our community.

Nkosi has an understanding of how ecosystem operates, and recognises the importance of biodiversity conservation. He however feels discouraged to participate in any community conservation initiatives that are disseminated regularly through the media. He is concerned that if the deterioration of the natural landscape in his area continues at its current progressive rate it *ihlathi* will be lost forever. He feels he has personally exhausted his thoughts on possible solutions to the environmental challenges in his area. He is however still hopeful that something could be done to protect *ihlathi,* as he is of the opinion that *ihlathi* cannot look after itself.

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[21] It should be noted that this perception about the environmental outcomes of apartheid is a general belief persistent within this community. This is based on what most of participants shared in their interactions with the researcher. Moreover, the EC and particularly Grahamstown still reflect the legacy of the previous regime in the physical, spatial manifestations and developmental challenges of these communities (Møller, 2008).

5.2.7. A favourite place of inspiration

Jabulani is a young unemployed man in his mid-20s. He grew up on a farm and recently relocated to the outskirts of Fingo Village (Grahamstown). He is currently staying with his mother and his baby daughter.

While he was growing up on the farm, he spent many hours in *ihlathi* herding his family's livestock and collecting firewood with his peers on a regular basis. He is proud of the knowledge he gained from going to *ihlathi.* He feels that many young people in his community (in Grahamstown) did not have the same privilege of interacting with *ihlathi* as much as he did since they had difficulty accessing *ihlathi.*

However, Jabulani is currently not going to *ihlathi* as often as he used to because his family has hired someone to herd their cattle. In the past, he would cover great distances to find suitable grazing for his family's livestock. The reason for the land's deterioration is, in his opinion, that *ihlathi* is being overharvested for firewood, livelihood and subsistence purposes, largely as a result of the proliferating informal settlement in his community. Despite this, *ihlathi* remains an important place in his life. For example, Jabulani was pleased to discover a place in *ihlathi* that was in a healthier condition than most of the other parts. He found this place some time ago when he was searching for better grazing for his cattle. It has become one of his favourite places to visit in his community's surrounding. He likes to go there, sit, and unwind when he gets a chance to go to *ihlathi.*

> *"What I enjoy the most about that place is its beautiful green scenery, which I always find beautiful and fascinating. There is also a stream of water nearby and I like to watch the water as it runs down the stream... I notice that when I am there I automatically become relaxed, comfortable, peaceful, happy, and inspired."*
>
> *"What I like the most about this particular place is that no one will disturb me while I am there, as it is quiet and secluded. While I am there I become happy in my heart because my cattle are also being well fed in that healthy environment... This place is particularly beautiful in spring and early summer."*

Jabulani finds that he has enough time and space to think carefully through some of the challenges he is currently facing when he is in *ihlathi*.

> *"Sometimes I go to that place because I've had an argument with someone or maybe when I'm feeling frustrated by the challenges of life. Being a single parent is not easy and sometimes it's difficult to share this with anyone because most of them don't understand. In such cases, you end up thinking of committing suicide, but somehow you become inspired when you are in such a place. That place allows me to think through my problems and feelings. I am able to think positive things about myself when I am there. I forget many things for a while and focus on what is important in life. Actually I want to be a medical doctor one day."*

He strongly believes that it is the green environment and the quiet atmosphere in *ihlathi* that are psychologically restorative and these help him to develop hope for the future and a positive outlook on life. This particular place has become an important part of his life. Hence, he wishes to bring his family to it one day so that they can get to know it and enjoy the experience with him.

Summary

What emerges from the above extract is that Jabulani spent most of his childhood in *ihlathi* while herding his father's livestock. It was during this time that he acquired a substantial amount of knowledge about *ihlathi* and developed an emotional connection with *ihlathi*.

It is of importance to note in Jabulani's case study that he is in a process of translocation from a farm where he grew up on to Grahamstown which represent a new natural environment and community. Since his relocation to Grahamstown, he does not go to *ihlathi* as much as he used to, because of the difference in his lifestyle demands. He also finds the environmental conditions in Grahamstown disheartening as he grew up in an area which was surrounded by a health natural environment. That is until recently when found a less degraded area on the Grahamstown commonage.

He is also passionate about his cattle and will go to great lengths to ensure that they have access to good grazing. He finds peace when he knows that his cattle are well fed. Traditionally, having livestock as a Xhosa man commanded respect and dignity in one's community. Cattle also play an important cultural role, as most rituals require the slaughtering of livestock as a sacrificial offering to the ancestors.

Although he is currently not going to *ihlathi* on a regular basis, Jabulani still finds that when he is facing difficulties in his life he enjoys visiting his favourite place in *ihlathi* to relieve his stress. He feels spending time in *ihlathi* has assisted him in dealing with many of challenges he has had to face efficiently. For example, he believes his interactions with *ihlathi*, have allowed him to avert some of his frustrations, and this has inspired him to focus on what is valuable to him (such as achieving his dream). These experiences and emotions which he can attach to a particular place in *ihlathi* have had such a profound impact on him that he revisits this place with his family to show them, in the future.

5.2.8. *Ihlathi* is the same as her community

Ntombi is a single parent and a widow. She is in her early 60s and has three daughters. She is currently looking after her grandchildren and her eldest daughter, who is in her late twenties and is deaf and pregnant. Ntombi lost her husband in a car accident a few years ago and her family is currently living off her pension and a few casual jobs she does in the community.

When she was younger, Ntombi loved going to *ihlathi* to collect firewood. She feels that her passion was reflected in the massive *igoqo* (woodpile) she used to have. These days she seldom goes to *ihlathi* because of age-related illnesses, but most particularly she fears becoming a victim of crime if she goes to *ihlathi* alone. Crime has become a major concern for her within both her community and *ihlathi,* such that it affects her generic attitude towards life. As a result, she constantly conceptualizes the state of *ihlathi* as parallel to that of her community. For example, she mentions how unsafe it has become in her community, even if her neighbours are around, and how vulnerable she feels when she is in *ihlathi* on her own.

> *"My neighbour was once allegedly raped by a friend. Thieves have also broken into my house several times. Recently they stole my new gas*

heater which I bought as we did not have enough money to pay for electricity for heating purposes."

In response to the recent burglary, Ntombi now relies on her grandchildren to collect firewood for her, especially during the winter season.

"Even though my grandchildren do it out of love and sympathy for me, it is a risk and it bothers me a lot."

"I hate always being anxious and pre-occupied with what could go wrong when I am in my house or even in ihlathi. This is why I cannot stay alone without my grandchildren and daughter."

Ntombi made another comparison between *ihlathi* and her community.

"Our communities currently have no services such as proper water and sanitation and no electricity. Our ihlathi is metaphorically in a similar state as it is bare and can offer us nothing. My community is just as unsafe as walking in ihlathi alone at night."

Ntombi occasionally has to collect cow dung and mud to fix cracks in her house especially during winter and the rainy seasons because of the unfavourable living conditions in her community. All of these items are often accessible in *ihlathi* and this is what has maintained her interactions with *ihlathi*, which may sometimes make her feel vulnerable when she is obliged, go to *ihlathi* to collect them to improve her and her family's quality of life.

In contrast, she still has fond memories of going to *ihlathi* when she was younger, also because they used to take part in cultural stick fighting gatherings. At these events, there used to be lots of singing and people were happy. Today, she believes, times have changed and such events are no longer held. Even though there are still a few rituals and events that take place in *ihlathi*, for instance, the male rite of passage, she feels it can sometimes be unsafe for her and other women to go to *ihlathi,* particularly during this period. She explained that during the initiation period, many initiates sometimes lodge around the areas where the women would normally collect firewood. This behaviour is to an extent influenced by the occasionally volatile and unauthorized practices of such cultural events, but more specifically, it is due to the increasingly diminishing natural resources that *ihlathi* has to offer. This at times forces the women to search for firewood in new areas that are often further away.

"This is a huge inconvenience and it is often problematic for us as according to our custom[22], women are not allowed to be seen anywhere near the initiates' lodges. Unfortunately, as part of our custom, the initiates or their guards have the right to assault any woman if she is seen or found near the initiates' camp during this seclusion period. So we really have to be cautious when we go to ihlathi."

Summary

Since Ntombi's husband died, her life has been difficult without him as he was their provider and protector. Since his death, she feels vulnerable as an elderly woman, and having to look after her daughter and her grandchildren has not been easy either. She also no longer feels safe living alone as well as going to *ihlathi* on her own. In the past, she used to collect firewood in *ihlathi* but now she seldom goes to *ihlathi.* Instead, her grandchildren collect firewood for her. This however makes her feel anxious as she feels they are risking their lives in assisting her.

Ntombi's case study also reflects how difficult it is to collect and source natural resources in her community. This becomes particularly problematic when community members compete for the same resources and locations. For example, she has found that she has to walk further to find the resources that she needs and this becomes particularly problematic for her when the males initiates are undergoing their initiation ceremonies as they initiation lodges are lodged in the same area where they would normally access her fuel wood from in *ihlathi.* During this time it customary for all women to avoid contact with the initiates and she feels she needs to respect this custom. In response, she walks long distances to find alternative sources of fuel wood (most especially during the initiation period). She fears failing to do so may possibly cause her harm, if not death.

[22]According to the Xhosa custom pertaining to young men's initiation, older women, in particular, are restricted near the initiation lodges as they run the risk of serious assault from the initiates or their guardians. This practice is performed as a protective measure to avoid interference with the healing of the initiates' circumcision wounds or possible death. Their presence in such restricted areas is also associated with witchcraft.

Ntombi's case study did not necessarily reflect a close relationship with *ihlathi* but rather one of dependence on its resources. She makes the analogy that her community is the same state as *ihlathi* its resources are depleted and this dissatisfies her. She is also dissatisfied with the 'careless or irresponsible' lifestyle that her community has adopted.

She is however proud of whom she is and how safe their traditional lifestyles were in the past. Her overall experience brings an interesting element to the study as it reveals that not all community members feel connect or interact with the *ihlathi* in the same way.

5.3. Discussion

This analysis has demonstrated that a detailed study can successfully reflect the interplay between the various contextual features embedded within the lives and identities of a participant. It also illustrates how these factors contribute towards the meanings, attachments and relationships that people develop towards *ihlathi.* The eight core themes (represented by the eight case studies) can be further summarized into two key recurrent themes and these can be evaluated in relation to their contribution towards one's sense of place. The two key themes are access to and communication with God and/or the ancestors and the quest for meaning and identity.

Before these themes are unpacked, it is important to highlight that *ihlathi* has value and meaning for both men and women across different age groups. All the participants had been exposed to *ihlathi* through various activities and cultural practices, this includes collecting firewood, hunting, cattle herding, and harvesting wild fruits and traditional medicine. It was through these activities that they develop personal relationships or attachments to *ihlathi.* These relationships were never static but took on different meanings for each individual, depending on what circumstances were playing out in their lives at the time. For example, cases 5.2.1 (Aviwe), 5.2.3 (Mandla), 5.2.5 (Nontsikelelo), 5.2.7 (Jabulani) and 5.2.8 (Ntombi) all had fond childhood memories of carrying out the various traditional and cultural activities in *ihlathi.* In most instances, these interactions together with the relationships they had formed with *ihlathi* assisted them through difficult life events. It is also important to note that the personal relationships that the participants had with *ihlathi* are reflected both overtly and covertly. For example, they developed a direct connection with *ihlathi* while carrying out

certain cultural activities/practices and they reported by carrying out of these activities they felt an improvement in their psychological and spiritual well-being and sense of belonging as reflected in cases 5.2.1 to 5.2.5 & 5.2.7. It should also be noted that the owning and maintaining of cultural artefacts such as an *igoqo* (woman's domain) and a *ubuhlanti* (kraal) in the yard (i.e. by-products of *ihlathi*) was also identified as contributing to their sense of identity as amaXhosa as reflected in cases 5.2.2 and 5.2.4 as well as 5.2.1 and 5.2.6 respectively. These connections have also had personal and social significance (at community level).

5.3.1. Access to and communication with God and/or ancestors

For most of the participants' their interactions with *ihlathi,* has been is valued for its capacity to offer them a space for communicating to God and to seek guidance from ones ancestors in making significant life decisions. It was felt by most of the participants that this was best attained in *ihlathi*[23], as the ancestors are mostly believed to reside in *ihlathi* (in a sacred place). For example, Aviwe would go to *ihlathi* to find solutions to his problems and the mistakes he has made, Andiswa would go to seek confirmatory signs to make her lifetime decisions, Mandla would go to seek discover of his special gift, and Nobuhle would go to pray.

5.3.2. The quest for meaning and identity

From the case studies it is also clear that most of the participants gained a sense of self-worth or purpose in life from their interactions in *ihlathi* as almost all the participants believed that *ihlathi* played a significant role in who they are and who they may still become in the future.

[23] Connection to the ancestors is often related to connecting you to your roots or genealogy; they inform you who you are and who you are meant to be. Thus, critical life decisions cannot be taken independent of the ancestors. Although individuals may live in the physical realm, they are very much influenced by the spiritual realm of the ancestors, hence people are always conscious of what they say or do (see the fear of mentioning a ritual by name in case 5.2.5).

5.3. Discussion

This analysis has demonstrated that a detailed study can successfully reflect the interplay between the various contextual features embedded within the lives, everyday life events and the identities of a participant. It also illustrates how these factors contribute towards the meanings, attachments and relationships that people develop towards *ihlathi.* In other words, we cannot extract the meaning and value of *ihlathi* without considering these various contextual features that are covert (e.g., financial and family statuses and challenges) and overt (e.g., physical landscape conditions) because they are integral to the participant's everyday life. Moreover, it would become very difficult to manage the natural landscape (e.g., in this study, *ihlathi*) successfully by isolating one of these aspects and values from the others because they are all at play in real life situation.

The eight core themes (represented by the eight case studies) can be further summarized into two key recurrent themes and these can be evaluated in relation to their contribution towards one's sense of place. The two key themes are, access to and communication with God and/or the ancestors and the quest for meaning and identity.

5.3.1. Access to and communication with God and/or ancestors

From most of the participants' their interactions with *ihlathi,* has been valued for its capacity to offer them a space for communicating to God and with their ancestors. For example, Aviwe would go to *ihlathi* to find solutions to his problems and the mistakes he has made, Andiswa would go to seek confirmatory signs to make lifetime changing decision, Mandla would go to seek discover of his special gift, and Nobuhle would go to pray. For each of them the ability to communicate with God, and access their ancestors' guidance in making significant life decisions, they felt was best attained in the *ihlathi*[24], as the ancestors are mostly believed to reside in *ihlathi* (in a sacred place).

[24] Connection to the ancestors is often related to connecting you to your roots or genealogy; they inform you who you are and who you are meant to be. Thus, critical life decisions cannot be taken independent of the ancestors. Although individuals may live in the physical realm, they are very much influenced by the spiritual realm of the ancestors, hence people are always conscious of what they say or do (see the fear of mentioning a ritual by name in case 5.2.5).

5.3.2. The quest for meaning and identity

The word 'meaning' in this context implies a sense of self-worth or purpose in life. In this light, almost all the participants believed that *ihlathi* played a significant role in who they are and may still become in the future. For example, Aviwe believed that his continued interaction with *ihlathi* would assist him in finding ways to become a responsible Xhosa man and father, to ensure that his family is prosperous in the future. He also hoped that by carrying out his outstanding rituals, he would regain his dignity and respect from the other men in his community. In Andiswa's case, we saw that after she discovered the psychological and spiritual benefits of *ihlathi,* she overcome many of the challenges she was facing, and this helped her to regain a sense of purpose in her life and she eventually became motivated enough to assist other members in her community who were dealing with similar challenges. Even though Mandla is still to discover his calling, he strongly believes that *ihlathi* is significant to his identity, because it constitutes an important aspect of his cultural transition from childhood into manhood later on in the year. Nobuhle still largely maintains her culture or traditional lifestyle as she still frequently goes to *ihlathi* to collect firewood, traditional vegetables, and cow dung for her home, even when other women have refrained from going or maintaining such customs. In the latter two cases, both Nobuhle and Mandla believe that by going to *ihlathi* has helped defined and shaped their characters and personalities/identities significantly. Nontsikelelo's appreciation of her past experiences and activities in *ihlathi* she believes has contributed towards her wanting to be a role model to young women in her community. She feels that it is important that she transfers her traditional wisdom of the cultural significance of *ihlathi* to the younger generation. Jabulani's discovery of the green or healthier environment in *ihlathi* (after his relocation to Grahamstown) helped him to adjust to his new living environment, as he was able to reconnect with self. Even though in the case of Ntombi's she no longer has a strong connection with *ihlathi*, she does have fond past memories of being in *ihlathi* and carrying out certain ritual activities. She feels that these experiences did reflect positively on her personal identity and lifestyle at the time and she no longer feels a sense of belonging because she can no longer take part in these rituals.

From these two key themes above, we can evaluate their contribution to the participants' attachment to place or sense of place. For all the participants, it is clear that they felt it was necessary to engage in both overt and covert interactions with *ihlathi* so that they could be accepted into their families and their communities. For example, both Aviwe and Mandla felt

it was necessary for them to perform certain cultural rituals (e.g., peace rituals and the initiation ceremony) to gain respect in their communities and too no longer feel discriminated against. Similarly, all the women felt they needed to have *amagoqo* (plural for *igoqo*) to gain respect in their communities. Both Nonstikelelo and Ntombi made reference to how, in the past, attending certain communal rituals had played a significant role in contributing towards solidifying their role within their communities. The fact that these rituals were no longer being performed together with high levels of crime in their communities, they now both felt their sense of place had been negatively impacted upon.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have investigated the contextual features of each participant to evaluate how these factors have helped shape the personal relationships and meanings that they have towards *ihlathi.* In other words, I have shown how different aspects of the life-world, presented by the psychological processes and social, temporal, and environmental contexts of each of these eight individuals, has influenced the personal interactions, values and meanings that each of them had towards *ihlathi.* These contextual features were not necessarily presented as constituting elements of an independent background for each experience per se, but rather forms part of the participants' actual lived experiences and meanings. Through the Interpretative Phenomenological interviews, I have been able to unearth the personal experience of what it was like to live in and go through challenges and opportunities that the participants living in Grahamstown and Ndlambe have been confronted with in their everyday life. *Ihlathi* was shown to play a critical role in the participants' instrumental, emotional/psychological and spiritual functioning both in their personal lives and within their communities. This is reflected in various direct and indirect interactions that they have had with *ihlathi* and this has contributed to each participant's sense of belonging and place (personally and socially). These personal and social dimensions are further explored and demonstrated in the subsequent chapters.

This chapter closes with one participant's[25] expression of *ihlathi's* significant role in the amaXhosa's sense of identity, purpose, or meaning in life, and sense of place.

[25] This includes one of the participants in the preliminary interviews of this study.

"...many people always come back to the rural areas (where there is more exposure to ihlathi or nature) because it is wonderful to come back to a place you grew up in. There is not much change except that our generation does not have to fetch water from the rivers and dams; there's not much playing in ihlathi and people collect firewood less often. We have running water and things like that in our homes. But I miss all of those traditional things.....even though you cannot physically return to those days; you can still clearly remember that thick, rich nature which you grew up in and other related things you used to do in ihlathi. What you remember the most about the past is nature, and I still have a vivid memory of all the things I used to do too and this is very important to me!"

CHAPTER 6

LINKING LANDSCAPE, IDENTITY AND CONSERVATION

6.1. Introduction

In Chapters 3 and 4, we saw how individuals experienced and appreciated *ihlathi* in their everyday life, specifically with relevance to its intangible values. It has become evident from Chapter 5 that their interactions with *ihlathi* has also contributed towards their identity as amaXhosa men and women, but this has as yet not being determined how widespread these associations are within each of the two communities, studied. This is necessary to ensure we have holistic understanding of the significance of *ihlathi* among the broader communities within which each of the participants are based, namely Grahamstown and Ndlambe. Simultaneously an attempt will be made to determine local perceptions of the state of the local natural environment in relation to issues of conservation and management of *ihlathi.* This seems highly relevant based on the huge significance attached to *ihlathi* within the previous chapters.

This chapter therefore seeks to investigate how significant the influence of the *ihlathi* is on the general cultural identity of the amaXhosa, and to assess their awareness and concerns for their surrounding natural environment. The first component seeks to unpack the role the *ihlathi* has in the local amaXhosa's identity, and to assess the variation that may or not exist between the peri-urban and urban divide. The second component is devoted toward investigating local levels of awareness of the state of the local natural environment and what changes they perceive as having taken place over time. This is necessary in order to understand their present and future concerns, perceptions and beliefs that they may have about the natural environment in which they are embedded. These components will together facilitate a better understanding of how local everyday meanings and values of *ihlathi* could contribute to biodiversity and landscape management and conservation in the area (this link is further explored in Chapter 7). This chapter then concludes with a summary of the main findings.

6.2. The significance of *ihlathi* lesiXhosa to the cultural identity of the amaXhosa

This section presents an outline of the main perceptions of the significance of *ihlathi* in local amaXhosa's identity. From the qualitative analyses, there was a general belief among the participants that *ihlathi* played a pivotal role in their identity as amaXhosa's as access to *ihlathi* enables them to carry out many of their cultural traditions. The results presented in this section have emerged from the qualitative interviews, the focus groups interviews and the survey.

The responses from the survey have included the responses received from the respondents, who had been to *ihlathi* and those that have never been to *ihlathi*. It is important to note that, although there were respondents who were no longer going to *ihlathi*, as often as they used to, they could still relate to the cores issues or themes identified in this chapter.

6.2.1. The role of *ihlathi lesiXhosa* in the cultural identity of the amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

Both male and female participants in this study strongly believe that *ihlathi lesiXhosa* plays an important role in the construction and expression of their cultural identities both at a personal and social level. For example, *ihlathi lesiXhosa* means a great deal to the amaXhosa men, when they are undergoing their rite of passage (initiation period), their transition from boyhood to manhood (see Chapter 5 for more details). Undergoing this rite of passage is also perceived as providing young men with a sense of belonging, social acceptance, and solidarity within their community. This is because a man who is not initiated is usually alienated, ridiculed, and perceived to command no respect or dignity within his own community. *Ihlathi* therefore plays a very significant role in this as it within *ihlathi* that this transition takes place and no other place is considered acceptable for this process.

Generally, women in the study area do not perform rituals in *ihlathi* to mark their rite of passage into womanhood. Despite this *ihlathi* still plays an important role in the construction and expression of their identity as amaXhosa women. For example, the size and structure of a woman's *igoqo* is generally regarded as an expression of her ability to provide for her household and thus is a symbol of her gendered cultural identity (see Chapter 5).

6.2.2. The significance of rituals among the amaXhosa

Before I present the data for this section, it is important to note that no variation exists between the responses that emerged from the Grahamstown and Ndlambe participants as presented in the results below[26]. For this reason, the results are presented in a generic sense as opposed to differentiating the urban from the peri-urban samples.

6.2.2.1. Rituals which are performed in the yard

Most traditional rituals take place within a kraal (*ubuhlanti*), which is commonly situated in the front or to the side of the homestead. It was generally felt that performance of rituals, grants one the opportunity to secure personal well-being and a prosperous future for one's households (see Chapter 5). The key rituals which are performed in the study area include when a child is born they introduced to their ancestors to ensure that they receive blessings and protection from their ancestors. Similarly, a ritual is preformed when a bride is brought (officially) into her groom's family after marriage, as she has to be introduced to her ancestors (as a new member of the household) to ensure that she is integrated into the new family. At the ritual, she receives a new identity and she is given a new name. This ritual also serves to ensure prosperity, blessings, good health, and protection, not only for the new family but also between the families. Other rituals which are preformed include those that are given to give thanks and pay homage to the ancestors. It is therefore considered necessary to preform rituals regularly if one wishes to secure a sense of well-being and a prosperous future. The relevance of this to the study is that each of these rituals are dependent on accessibility to specific plants such as *umnquma (Olea europaea subsp. africana)* and *umthathi (Ptaeroxylon obliquum),* which are only obtainable from *ihlathi.*

6.2.2.2. Rituals that are performed in *ihlathi*

There are various places within *ihlathi* that are considered sacred. These include caves and rivers, as they provide specific spaces and opportunities for various individuals to perform specific rituals. For example, traditional healers are often required to perform their own initiation rituals in *ihlathi,* or they will facilitate special rituals for households within *ihlathi.* Certain localities within i*hlathi* are exclusive to male initiates when they undergo their rite of

[26] This is most likely the case as research participants in both areas share the same cultural background.

passage. Usually the localities for these various rituals are selected according to the instructions of the healers.

What is important to understand is that these places are considered suitable because *ihlathi* is perceived as containing purity[27]; this is perceived as being necessary when carrying out such activities. These qualities are also perceived as existing in water (e.g., see Chapter 4, Theme 4.2.2.2) and in certain plants. For example, cleaning plants are often used in traditional cleansing remedies for women and their children after birth. These include, a plant called *iroyivater* (*Bulbine latifolia*) which is boiled in water and drunk by women to clean the womb. I*sicakathi* (*Apaganthus africanus L.*) and *inkunzane* (*Emex australis*) are used to cleanse babies' stomachs (equivalent to gripe water) after birth. Specific reeds call *imizi* (plural for *umzi*), which are collected from the river and woven into a mat. The mat is then used by the maidens to lie on during the *intonjane* ritual (see Chapter 5). It is believed that the reeds help to cleanse the young woman's health because they have been collected from the river.

It is also of importance to note that historically, the amaXhosa used to engage in various cultural celebrations and traditional games such as dancing, singing and stick fighting (*umtshotsho* celebration). These all used to take place within *ihlathi*. Such activities are currently abandoned in both communities due to lifestyle and environmental challenges they face.

The significance of *ihlathi* on the identity of the amaXhosa is further substantiated in Tables 6.2.3., and 6.2.4., below.

[27] *Ihlathi* is believed to have cleansing properties because it is sacred.

Table 6.2.3.: Assessing the significance of *ihlathi* for the identity of amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
Without *ihlathi* we cannot perform our rituals (Q15.1)	Strongly agree	35	38	87.5	95
	Somewhat agree	3	1	7.5	2.5
	No opinion	2	-	5	-
	Strongly disagree	-	1	-	2.5
Ihlathi is important in connecting us to our ancestors (Q15.2)	Strongly agree	35	35	87.5	87.5
	Somewhat agree	5	2	12.5	5
	No opinion	-	1	-	2.5
	Somewhat disagree	-	1	-	2.5
	Strongly disagree	-	1	-	2.5
Without *ihlathi* we cannot be amaXhosa (Q15.3)	Strongly agree	31	29	77.5	72.5
	Somewhat agree	7	6	17.5	15
	No opinion	1	1	2.5	2.5
	Somewhat disagree	1	-	2.5	-
	Strongly disagree	-	4	-	10
				n=40	n=40
Total	N= 80			100%	

Note: The sample sizes for Q15.1-Q15.3 comprise all the respondents who were included in the survey. The same applies for Tables 6.2.4, 6.3.1.1, 6.3.2.1, and 6.3.3.1.

The majority of the respondents in both areas agree that they cannot perform rituals without access to *ihlathi* (97.5% in Ndlambe village and 95% in Grahamstown). Hundred percent of the respondents in Grahamstown felt that *ihlathi* provided them with the place and space to connect with their ancestors, whereas 92.5% in Ndlambe agree with this statement. In Grahamstown, 95% of the respondents felt that they could not be *amaXhosa* without access to *ihlathi* while 87.5% felt this way in Ndlambe.

Table 6.2.4.: Measuring the strength of the sense of identity through access to *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
To what extent do you think that people who live in the cities are not real amaXhosa due to lack of access to *ihlathi*? (Q16)	Strongly agree	19	21	47.5	52.5
	Somewhat agree	13	9	32.5	22.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	1	2	2.5	5
	Somewhat disagree	-	2	-	5
	Strongly disagree	7	6	17.5	15
To what extent do you think that people who live in the villages are real amaXhosa due to access to *ihlathi*? (Q17)	Strongly agree	24	31	60	77.5
	Somewhat agree	14	6	35	15
	Strongly disagree	2	3	5	7.5
				n=40	n=40
Total	N= 80			100%	

There was greater clarity and consensus in the responses to the questions around whether access to *ihlathi* influences the amaXhosa's sense of identity. For example, a large majority (80%) of respondents in Grahamstown, and three quarters (75%) of the Ndlambe villagers agreed that individuals who live in the cities are not real amaXhosa because they lack access to *ihlathi*. By the same token, 95% and 92.5% in Grahamstown and Ndlambe respectively felt that those who live in villages are authentic amaXhosa because they have access to *ihlathi*. The results from the two tables above clearly support the assumption that *ihlathi* is perceived to play a crucial role in the process of identity construction and expression amongst both urban and peri-urban communities, as these sentiments were shared across the two study areas.

The following extract from one participant captures the role of *ihlathi* in in amaXhosa identity:

Extract 6.1: "...trees are very close to our lives. It's already in the blood and that is why you feel happy inside as ***ungumtu o right*** *(a good or dignified human/person). This is why we need to take care of these precious trees. If you don't care about them like people in town and the townships, you are going to lose your own humanity. Even if you may think of yourself as* ***ungumtu***

(dignified human/person), you find that that's long gone. You are just like an empty book that is blown away by the winds in all directions. You just exist among others in the community but you are weak and you lack ***isidima esimilileyo sobuntu*** *(a dignity inherent to your humanity). You do not even know who you are. You may not be aware of it but it is visible to us."*

6.3. Environmental concern and conservation

This section attempts to unpack local people's attitude towards the natural environment (also known as environmental concern) (Kaiser *et al.*, 1999) by investigation what peri-urban and urban communities perceive as being threats to the sustainability of *ihlathi,* and who they consider to be responsible for the management of *ihlathi* or as identified by the participants' who is responsible for "caring" for *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe Village. The results are presented below.

6.3.1. Environmental awareness and perceived threats in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

Using qualitative interviews and focus groups, research participants were asked whether they thought local people cared about *ihlathi.* Their responses are presented below.

Most of the participants in Grahamstown felt that people within their community did not care about *ihlathi,* this is because they felt that most areas that used to have a visible *ihlathi* had disappeared over the years. They also mention that most people in Grahamstown did not know how to harvest sustainably because they lacked the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to do so. It was felt that when individuals lack this knowledge they would engage in recklessly harvesting methods and remove rare and culturally significant trees. Participants interviewed in Ndlambe also believe that people are harvesting form *ihlathi* in large quantities, they stressed that this was not a matter of concern since most people in their community generally knew how to harvest sustainably (i.e. knowing which trees to spare, and not cutting down a whole culturally significant tree). A survey was used to establish how widespread these perceptions were among the respondents in both communities. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 6.3.1.1.: Assessing the perception of threats towards *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
Harvesting of natural resources has always occurred and is not a threat (Q25.1)	Strongly agree	8	18	20	45
	Somewhat agree	14	14	35	35
	No opinion	4	-	10	-
	Somewhat disagree	10	1	25	2.5
	Strongly disagree	4	7	10	17.5
These days people are overharvesting *ihlathi* materials (Q25.2)	Strongly agree	8	13	20	32.5
	Somewhat agree	11	11	27.5	27.5
	No opinion	1	5	2.5	12.5
	Somewhat disagree	15	4	37.5	10
	Strongly disagree	5	-	12.5	-
These days weather patterns are bad and it's a threat to *ihlathi* (Q25.3)	Strongly agree	4	15	10	37.5
	Somewhat agree	14	11	35	27.5
	No opinion	11	5	27.5	12.5
	Somewhat disagree	9	1	22.5	2.5
	Strongly disagree	2	8	5	20
				n=40	n=40
Total	N= 80			100%	

NB: The first and the last questions in this table consist of double-barrelled questions because they emerged from the qualitative phase as they are as (i.e., forming part of the perception of the themes/concepts in question) and they are being initially explored statistically here. However, such questions are revisited, clarified and confirmed in table 6.3.3.1 below.

Just more than half of the respondents in Grahamstown (55%) agree with the statement that the community's previous harvesting activities were not a threat to *ihlathi*, of these 20% agree strongly and 35% agree somewhat. The respondents in Grahamstown had mixed feelings on whether the current weather patterns posed a threat to the future sustainability of *ihlathi*. Less than half (45%) agreed that the weather patterns did pose a threat to *ihlathi* and of these, 10% strongly agreed and 35% agreed somewhat. The responses of the other half of the urban sample were split between those who had no opinion on the matter (27.5%) and, those who disagreed (27.5%).

On the other hand, most of the respondents in Ndlambe (80%) agreed that the previous harvesting activities did not pose any threat to *ihlathi* future sustainability. Of these the majority, 45% strongly agree while 35% somewhat agree. In contrast to the urban sample, more than half (60%) of the sample agreed that people are currently overexploiting *ihlathi's* natural resources, and of this majority, 32.5% strongly agree and 27.5% somewhat agree.

There were also more consensuses around the statement that current weather patterns did pose threat to *ihlathi* as 65% of the respondents agreed with this statement.

From the results above, we can see that both the urban and most of the peri-urban respondents perceive previous harvesting patterns as non-threatening to *ihlathi*. In contrast significantly less in the urban sample felt that current harvesting levels where a threat *ihlathi's* current physical condition. Forty five percent of the urban sample had mixed feelings about whether current climatic conditions had an effect on the condition of *ihlathi*. In contrast, most of the peri-urban respondents claimed that current harvesting practices were a threat to *ihlathi* current physical conditions and a higher percent also acknowledge that current climatic conditions posed a threat to *ihlathi's* biophysical conditions. It is interesting to note when discussing perceived threats to *ihlathi* during the qualitative interviews (in section 6.3.1.), the Grahamstown respondents felt that the general community were not concerned about the physical state of *ihlathi* and they felt that the local people lacked the necessary TEK to harvest sustainably. This was resulting in the deteriorating state of *ihlathi*. However, when the broader sample was interviewed in Grahamstown the majority felt people were not overharvesting from *ihlathi* (see Table 6.3.1.1 (particularly on question 25.2). Thus, the quantitative results are inconsistent with those from the qualitative results. The following section seeks to unravel this paradox through assessing the usefulness or level of dependence of both amaXhosa communities upon *ihlathi*.

6.3.2. Assessing the significance of *ihlathi* in the lives of the amaXhosa

In order to address the paradox identified in the previous section, I assessed how much the participants are currently dependent on *ihlathi,* in order to investigate whether their previous responses to question 25.2 would remain more or less the same and to see if the respondents from Grahamstown were denying the responsibility to *ihlathi's* biophysical state. To this end, Table 6.3.2.1 is presented below.

Table 6.3.2.1.: Rating the usefulness of *ihlathi* in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
I find the forest useful for cultural purpose, when performing rituals (Q14.1)	Very Useful	31	39	77.5	97.5
	Somewhat useful	7	1	17.5	2.5
	Not useful	1	-	2.5	-
	No idea	1	-	2.5	-
I find the forest useful for earning a living (Q14.2)	Very Useful	25	29	62.5	72.5
	Somewhat useful	14	9	35	22.5
	Not useful	1	2	2.5	5
I get firewood for cooking from the forest (Q14.3)	Very Useful	17	23	42.5	57.5
	Somewhat useful	19	14	47.5	35
	Not useful	4	3	10	7.5
I get peace and quietness when I'm in the forest (Q14.4)	Very Useful	14	28	35	70
	Somewhat useful	12	6	35	15
	Not useful	6	2	15	5
	No idea	5	4	12.5	10
	No response	1	-	2.5	-
I think better when I'm in the forest (Q14.5)	Very Useful	18	28	45	70
	Somewhat useful	11	4	27.5	10
	Not useful	5	5	12.5	12.5
	No idea	5	3	12.5	7.5
	No response	1	-	2.5	-
The forest provides materials for home decoration (Q14.6)	Very Useful	10	16	25	40
	Somewhat useful	22	20	55	50
	Not useful	7	4	17.5	10
	No idea	1	-	2.5	-
I get traditional medicine from the forest (Q14.7)	Very Useful	18	17	45	42.5
	Somewhat useful	10	14	25	35
	Not useful	11	8	27.5	20
	No idea	1	1	2.5	2.5
I feel healthier in my spirit when I'm in the forest (Q14.8)	Very Useful	13	22	32.5	55
	Somewhat useful	12	11	30	27.5
	Not useful	6	2	15	5
	No idea	8	5	20	12.5
	No response	1	-	2.5	-
				n=40	n=40
Total		N= 80		100%	

NB: It is important to note that all the participants considered in this table are those who have been, no longer going as well as those who have never been to *ihlathi* but could still relate indirectly through their general perceptions as opposed to their personal experiences.

The table displayed above contains the respondents' ratings on the various variables describing the usefulness of *ihlathi*. The majority of the participants from Grahamstown find

ihlathi useful for fulfilling various purposes. For instance, the majority find *ihlathi* useful for harvesting resources, to earn an income (97.5%), for performing rituals (95%), and for firewood (90%). These numbers drop when looking at resources used for home decorations (75%), and traditional medicine (70%). Seventy two percent find *ihlathi* useful as a place for thinking better (72.5%) and 70% go to *ihlathi* for peace and quiet (70%), and 62.5% for spiritual health (62.5%).

In Ndlambe, the percentages were generally higher for each of the categories. For example, 100% found *ihlathi* useful for performing rituals (100%) and 98% for earning a living (98%) and 92% for obtaining fuel wood for cooking purposes. In contrast to the urban sample, 90% obtain resources for *ihlathi* for home decorating purposes and for traditional medicines. Similarly, a higher proportion of the peri-urban sample went to *ihlathi* to obtain peace and tranquillity (85%), to thinking better (80%), and for spiritual health (82.5%).

In addition, the following differences are also worth noting. For example, in both the urban and peri-urban samples, of those that find *ihlathi* useful for performing rituals 77.5% and 97.5% strongly agree (Grahamstown and Ndlambe respectively). Of those that regard *ihlathi* as useful for firewood cooking, less than 47% in Grahamstown somewhat agree while more than half (57.55) in Ndlambe strongly agree. Moreover, of those that find *ihlathi* useful for obtaining peace and tranquillity, 70% of the peri-urban sample strongly agreed with the statement while 35% of the urban sample somewhat agreed and 35% strongly agreed. Similarly, of the majority (80%) of those in Ndlambe who find *ihlathi* useful for thinking better 70% strongly agree, while only 45% of those in Grahamstown strongly agree. Finally, of those that agreed that *ihlathi* is useful for obtaining spiritual health only 32.5% of the urban sample strongly agrees whereas slightly more than half of the peri-urban sample (55%) strongly agreed.

From these results above, we can see that the extent of use or the level of dependence among the urban respondents is less than that of the respondents in Ndlambe. Furthermore, when considering only the high response rates for both areas, it becomes clear that the urban respondents' primary use of *ihlathi* is to fulfil cultural and utilitarian needs. In comparison, the peri-urban participants use *ihlathi* for both cultural and utilitarian purposes as well as for

its psychological and spiritual values more so than the urban respondents do. This may imply that the peri-urban sample have more of an emotional bond with their surrounding *ihlathi* then the urban counterparts. Nonetheless, *ihlathi's* usefulness remains high in both the urban and peri-urban areas. In the next section, I investigate the participants' perception of the possible outcomes of their persistent use of *ihlathi* over time. The results are presented below.

6.3.3. Perceptions about *ihlathi*'s sustainability in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

During the qualitative interviews, the participants were asked about their perception of *ihlathi* sustainability in relation to their continued use. There was strong consensus between both the participants in Grahamstown and Ndlambe that *ihlathi* would last forever, despite their persistent dependence on it. Reasons for this common belief are provided below.

Ihlathi is created by God and this gives it the potential to be resilient and sustain itself over many generations. Many of the participants justified this belief by saying that if one area showed signs of degradation, they would move to the next area and this would give enough time for area to regenerate. It is also believed that *ihlathi* infinite capacity to generate itself ensured that each generation had continues access to their ancestors. It was therefore felt that complete destruction of indigenous forest, *ihlathi* was not possible.

This belief they believe is reinforced by the fact that their culture as the amaXhosa is still strong and perception exists that their culture is still very much dependent on *ihlathi* for its resources and the places and spaces it provided to carry out cultural and spiritual needs. Since *ihlathi* has served this purpose since time began and is still with us the perception exists that it will remain so. Since these results were obtained from qualitative interviews, it was also important to investigate how widespread these perceptions were in a broader sense. Survey results are presented in the table below.

Table 6.3.3.1.: Assessing perceptions about *ihlathi*'s sustainability in Grahamstown and Ndlambe

VARIABLE (Questions)	GROUPING	F		%	
		(Town)	(Village)	(Town)	(Village)
Ihlathi will never diminish no matter how much is used (Q26.1)	Strongly agree	35	33	87.5	82.5
	Somewhat agree	4	3	10	7.5
	Strongly disagree	1	4	2.5	10
If *ihlathi* is not taken care of, it will diminish in the long run (Q26.2)	Strongly agree	3	14	7.5	35
	Somewhat agree	9	7	22.5	17.5
	No opinion	1	-	2.5	-
	Somewhat disagree	6	4	15	10
	Strongly disagree	21	15	52.5	37.5
				n=40	n=40
Total	N= 80			100%	

The results reveal that the majority of the respondents (97.5% and 90%) in Grahamstown and Ndlambe respectively agree that *ihlathi* will never diminish no matter how much it is utilised. However, more than half of those in Grahamstown (67.5%) disagree whereas 52.5% in Ndlambe agreed that *ihlathi* would diminish if it was not taken care of. In other words, the majority of the urban sample strongly believe that it will never diminish whereas, the peri-urban sample still acknowledged the need for *ihlathi* to be taken care of to ensure its sustainability. It is of importance to point out that these responses appear to contradict those in the previous section discussed for the Grahamstown sample.

The responses in table 6.3.3.1 do affirm the results in Table 6.3.1.1 (especially on questions 25.1 and 25.2) about each community's perception of risk despite their use or high dependence on *ihlathi's* resources in relation to the peri-urban sample. In that the peri-urban sample continue to support the notion that caring for *ihlathi* is necessary to ensure its sustainability[28]

6.4. Discussion

In this chapter, we have seen how significant *ihlathi* is in the broader social construction and expression of identity among the participants. For example they consider performing rituals

[28] The participants' meaning of *ihlathi*'s sustainability is implied by saying in their own words that "it would never diminish". It also implies the participants' belief in *ihlathi*'s resilience over time.

essential as it is the means through which they can communicate and connection with their ancestors. This helps to ensure that they secure positive well-being and prosperity. Rituals are also preformed to introduce new members of the family to the ancestors. Rituals are also perceived as facilitate respect, dignity, and solidarity within the community. *Ihlathi* is perceived as providing the necessary resources to carry out these rituals. *Ihlathi* also provides sacred spaces for performing other related rituals among the participants' in this study as it is perceived to contain qualities of purity. With regard to the amaXhosa's awareness and sustainability of *ihlathi*, the participants, especially the urban sample unanimously held the belief that *ihlathi* will never diminish or will always remain resilient regardless how much it was used. This claim as we saw earlier (in section 6.3.3) was founded upon the premise that *ihlathi* is indigenous and natural (created by God) and thus resilient. Interestingly this perception is held despite the deteriorating biophysical features of the landscape as presented in Chapter 2 as well how in, for instance, case studies 5.2.1 to 5.2.8 (presented in chapter 5) had a profound effect on their personal and spiritual well-being. This presents a paradox. Although both samples share this common belief, respondents in Ndlambe agree that *ihlathi* should be taken care of by making use of local TEK.

6.5. Conclusion

Various interesting insights have emerged from this chapter. Firstly, the findings reveal that *ihlathi* plays a significant role in the construction and expression of the participants' cultural identity at both a personal and social level (i.e., individually and collectively). This is achieved through their engagement in in traditional and cultural practices in their daily lives such as collecting firewood, herding livestock, etc. and by attending rituals (e.g., males' rite of passage, introducing a bride into the groom's family (*intonjane*) and a baby into the family (*imbeleko*). Essentially, the participants felt that they could not be amaXhosa without access to *ihlathi*.

The participants in both study areas are also dependent on *ihlathi* in their everyday life. From the results presented the Grahamstown sample are more dependent on *ihlathi* for its access to resources while in addition to these values more participants in the Ndlambe also acknowledge the importance that access to *ihlathi* had on fulfilling their psychological and spiritual well-being needs.

Despite people's heavily reliance on *ihlathi* for its resources the this acknowledgment of the importance of *ihlathi* in the participants lives, the majority of participants in Grahamstown strongly believed that *ihlathi* would never diminish despite its perceived threats and people's perceived lack of concern/care for *ihlathi*. They therefore felt that no matter how much material is harvested *ihlathi* is resilient enough to persist as it has done so for generations. An integrative discussion and conclusion is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

INTEGRATED DISCUSSION OF RESULTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

7.1. Introduction

In recent years, biodiversity has been acknowledged as fulfilling an important cultural role in people's lives (e.g., Cocks & Wiersum, 2003; Cocks *et al.*, 2006, Cocks *et al.*, 2008, Cocks *et al.*, 2010, Cocks *et al.*, 2012). This study adds to this growing body of literature and more importantly, adds substantially to our understanding of the depth and spectra of local people's values of biodiversity specifically, natural landscapes. More specifically, this chapter aims to achieve an integrated analysis of the relations and interplay between all the various factors and aspects (e.g., geographic and environmental, socio-economic, -demographic and – historical, cultural, spiritual factors influence the type of interaction, relationship and experience, sense of place and identity one has with *ihlathi*, just to name a few as investigated upon in this study) to enhance our understanding of the human-nature relationship between black communities living within both urban and peri-urban communities and the relationship they have with their surrounding natural landscape - *ihlathi* in order to improve biodiversity conservation and landscape management practices. Some of the key findings reveal that natural landscapes continue to be an important and integral part of the participants' everyday lives and contributes to local people's well-being and identity (direct and indirectly) at both a personal and social level (see Figure 7.2.1.2). *Ihlathi* was perceived by many as slowly diminishing. It is important to note that despite the intimate and integral relationship that many participants expressed as having towards *ihlathi* this does not imply or result in attempts to conserve or sustainably use *ihlathi*. The peri-urban sample in particular highlighted this claim timeously in this study by asserting that *ihlathi* needs to be taken care of for it to remain sustainable.

The results of this investigation have also shown that local people's human-nature relationship is dynamic and complex. In order to make sense of how the various factors may influence this relationship I have made use of transactional approach to identify the "formal cause," which aims to demonstrate how the various aspects in this research fit together to form a coherent or meaningful whole. These aspects include those of the transactional worldview (environmental, temporal, social, and psychological processes) forming part of the

context in which this relationship is formed and those that emerged in this study (experiential meanings, sense of place, identity, and environmental awareness) concurrently. The later represents the outcomes of this human-nature relationship. The process of synthesizing these aspects is guided by Werner *et al.*, (2002) guidelines of the Transactional Worldview. For instance, because the four aspects of the transactional worldview are holistic, mutually defining and are embedded in and inseparable from one another, "they are so intermeshed that understanding one aspect requires simultaneous inclusion of the other aspects in the analysis" (Altman, 1992, p. 269). Therefore, each outcome of the human-nature relationship viz., environmental awareness, sense of place, place attachment, experiential meanings, identity and nature will be analysed through the four transactional components identified to reflect on the inter related nature of the relationship that local people have with *ihlathi*. In this way, I aim to illuminate the essence[29] of *ihlathi* among amaXhosa as indicated in the title of this study. I begin by providing two diagrams (Figure 7.2.1.1. and 7.2.1.2.) that depict the interconnectedness of the various aspects inherent within the human-nature relationships of the amaXhosa in everyday life. This is followed by providing a systematic discussion of the key findings under each of the identified components as well as the contribution that engagements with *ihlathi* has on local communities' spiritual fulfilment and well-being in their everyday life. A deeper understanding of local people's values, norms, institutions, and human well-being has been identified as providing both opportunities and constraints for effective implementation of conservation action (Cowling & Wilhelm-Rechmann, 2007; Knight & Cowling, 2003). In response, recommendations based on the study findings will be made towards biodiversity management and conservation, and landscape planning policies in the study area.

[29] The word "essence" is a Phenomenological term means the essential or core structure of meaning immanent in human lived experiences (Giorgi, 2008). In Giorgi's method, idiographic analysis may form part of the process of analysis but the ultimate aim is to explicate (eidetically) the phenomenon as a whole regardless of the individuals under investigation. Thus, idiographic details and redundant content are thus discarded or generalized (see chapter 2). As a result, the essence of *ihlathi* sought in this study draws meaning from Giorgi's Phenomenological approach as described.

7.2. Main research findings and discussion: Achieving a formal cause

7.2.1. The interconnectedness inherent in the human-nature relationship

Drawing from each of the key aspects uncovered in each chapter, I have identified six main overlapping aspects. These include: (1) contextual features (CF); (2) experiential meanings; (3) sense of place; (4) identity, and (5) environmental awareness. Each of these aspects has the potential to influence the essence of *ihlathi*[30](6) among the participants in Grahamstown and Ndlambe. The patterns of the relationships among all the aspects are interlinked or interdependent and non-linear. They are intricately connected in concrete and subtle ways and are organized in such a way that they mutually define one another (see Figure 7.2.1.1). That is, a change in one aspect may affect all the others. It is also of importance to note that the relationships depicted in the diagram do not imply causality but rather the interconnectedness of the various aspects (Altman, 1992; Werner *et al.*, 1992; Werner *et al.*, 2002). This is in line with the understanding that 'actions do not 'cause' one another, but rather unfold in meaningful and coherent patterns' (Werner *et al.* 1992, p. 300).

[30] This final aspect represents the core value or thread that holds all the key aspects (or threads) together to form a meaningful whole.

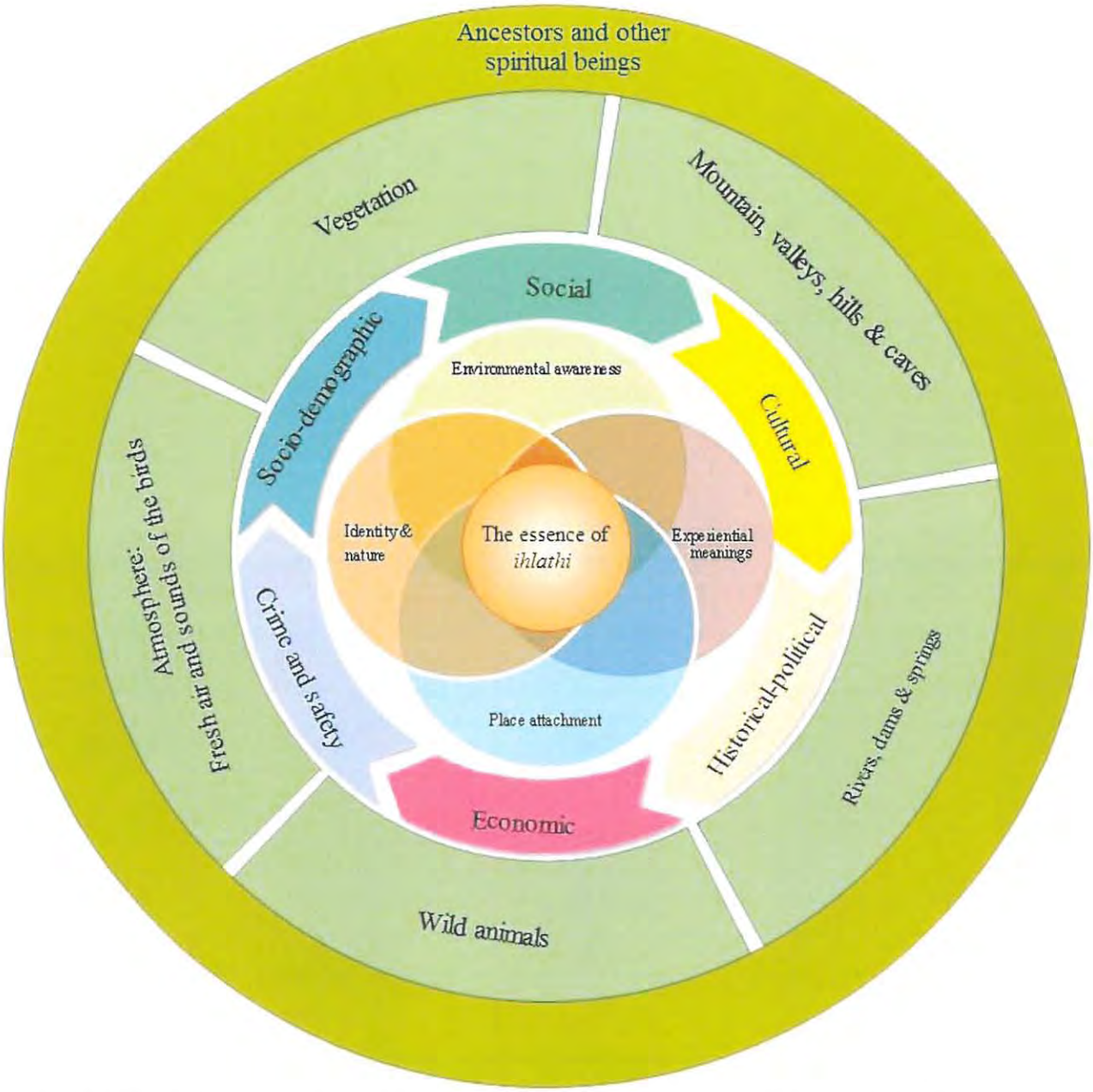

Figure 7.2.1.1: The interconnectedness of the different aspects of the human-nature relationship among local amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe.

The diagram above strongly emphasizes the significance of the *context* within which the amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe live. The outer circle along with the larger inner (green) segments represents the primary contextual features, which comprises both the physical and spiritual context of *ihlathi*. The third inner circle represented by the colourful segments signifies the contextual features, which form part of the social context in everyday life. These together then impact on the four inner components to reflect the essence of *ihlathi*

in local people's daily lives. The diagram helps to illustrate the complexity of various aspects of the human-nature relationship.

Within this system of interconnected aspects, it is also important to remember that local amaXhosa's interactions, experiences or meanings regarding *ihlathi* often have personal and social implications and these can manifest concurrently. The diagram below illustrates a typical multi-layered and complex organization of the everyday life of the amaXhosa, comprising two main levels, viz. the direct and the indirect dimensions.

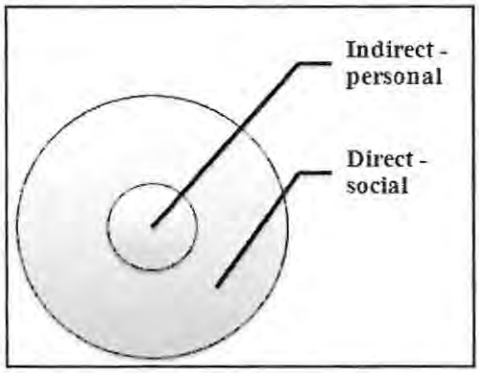

Figure 7.2.1.2.: The dimensions of *ihlathi's* significance to local amaXhosa in Grahamstown and Ndlambe.

The direct dimension represents the utilitarian and more tangible values of *ihlathi;* these values often have broader social (or collective) and cultural implications. The indirect or intangible level includes the more psychological, cultural, and spiritual values of *ihlathi*, and these often have implications that are more personal. It is important to acknowledge that any interaction with *ihlathi* may on the surface only have relevance to the direct dimension but as one delves deeper into the experience and meaning of the human-nature interaction it may also have more personal or indirect implications. Therefore, it would be misleading to consider the one and ignore the other.

7.2.2. The six interconnected aspects of the human-nature relationship

7.2.2.1. Contextual features

Contextual features form part of the holistic meaning inherent within the human-nature relationship and they play a very significant role within the everyday life context. This is because the physical environment (as depicted on Figure 7.2.1.1.) forms a primary basis for 'being' (existence/existentiality) as it is the locus where all existence, interactions and meanings emerge. It is however important to note that the temporal aspect cuts across the primary and secondary contextual features this highlights that both are not static but are real and subject to change. The spiritual realm[31] (represented by the ancestors and other spiritual beings segment in diagram 7.2.2.1.) is perceived as co-existing with the physical/natural world (natural landscapes) according to local amaXhosa's cosmological world-view. This is reflected in the amaXhosa's need to communicate with their *ancestors* while in *ihlathi*. The secondary contextual features include, among others, the social (interpersonal relationships), historical-political, cultural, socio-economic,-demographic factors, as well as issues of safety and crime, which also make up the everyday life context for local people impact all impacts on the type of interaction that is experienced within *ihlathi* which in turn impacts on perceptions and meanings which are attached to *ihlathi*. For example, issues such as higher incidents of crime were perceived as curbing one's ability to freely interact with *ihlathi*. Concerns were expressed that a lack of access to *ihlathi* threatened one's authentic identity as amaXhosa and one's sense of well-being. Both peri-urban and urban respondents acknowledged these concerns unanimously.

7.2.2.2. General experiential meanings

This aspect relates specifically to the personal or indirect dimension. These meanings were mainly extracted from Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, which unpacked the experience of being in

[31] The spiritual realm becomes another crosscutting aspect in this study as it manifests itself within both the primary and secondary contextual features. That is, although ancestors (as spiritual beings) may be generally perceived as residing in *ihlathi*, they are not necessarily limited to a specific space and time. This is why they could still be accessed within their communities through *ihlanti* (plural for *ubuhlanti*) when performing their cultural and spiritual rituals.

ihlathi and how these experiences related to psychological and spiritual outcomes and improved sense of well-being. For example, *ihlathi's* green scenery was generally perceived as communicating messages of hope and inspiration from nature. An appreciation was also expressed towards the smell, touch/grasp, sounds, and taste of *ihlathi* (including fresh air, some plants, water, sounds of the birds, etc.). Experiencing these qualities was generally perceived as relieving stresses and worries of everyday life.

It was also felt that the ability to perceive one's surroundings from elevated places such as hills or mountains in *ihlathi* helped to facilitated opportunities to gain fresh perspective on one's life and gain a sense of control over one's challenges. Participants also generally regarded the deeper and denser parts of *ihlathi* as facilitating experiences of spiritual oneness, belonging, and a sense of peace with nature (see further discussion on the final aspect, essence of *ihlathi*). These findings support previous literature conducted within Environmental Psychology which demonstrates that contact with the natural landscape elicit psychologically restorative and spiritual effects (e.g., Fjørtoft, 2004; Kylea *et al.*, 2004; Maller *et al.*, 2005; Schroeder, 2002; Saunders & Myers, 2003; Saunders, *et al.*, 2006).

7.2.2.3. Sense of place

In this study, one's sense of place may imply a sense of being rooted or belonging to *ihlathi*, culture, and the broader universe (cosmology) as discussed in chapters 4-6 (e.g., section 4.2.2.2., p. 71-72; 4.2.2.2.1., p. 72-73). Both the qualitative and quantitative measures of the study revealed that the majority of the amaXhosa have been exposed or connected to nature/*ihlathi* at some stage in their lives. This included either childhood interactions and partaking in certain rites of passages at various developmental phases and or engaging in certain traditional/cultural activities such as collecting firewood, herding livestock, hunting, etc.).

Through the phenomenological interviews, it also became apparent that people found refuge by going to *ihlathi* when they were experiencing critical life transitions. These included aspects such as marriage conflicts or separation; motherhood; diagnosis of a chronic illness; betrayal by a spouse; memorable events of courtship; transition into manhood; death of a father or head of the family; death of a spouse; relocation and displacement, as reflected in

the case studies discussed in Chapter 5. During this period, individuals described developing stronger personal, emotional, cultural and spiritual bonds with *ihlathi*.

In all cases, the individuals' attachments to place were developed in specific places within *ihlathi* such as within caves and places within *ihlathi* as well as places that had lush vegetation. These places became filled with memories and meanings that accumulated over time. These attachments, together with their commitment to performing necessary cultural rituals they felt signify their affiliation and respect for their culture. This they felt contributed towards ensuring they felt part of their community and enhancing their sense of belonging. Failure to adhere to expected cultural rituals and norms was perceived as negatively impacting on the social bonds of solidarity within their community. Bonds of solidarity were also perceived as being threatened when natural resources became scarce in *ihlathi* as reflected in theme 5.2.8).

These attachments to place also generated a sense of anxiety over potential removal from the place, through relocation and migration. It is however important to acknowledge that attachment to place may remain strong despite mobility (Bell *et al.*, 2001).

The temporal, historical-political, and environmental contextual factors also played a significant role in the individual's sense of place, as seen in Chapters 4 and 5. For example, certain land marks with *ihlathi* were perceived as reflecting the marks of the painful historical events such as the *amankazana* which elicited sad memories of those who had died in the Settler's wars. For others the surrounding landscape reflected the aftermaths of past regime of events of how they (as amaXhosa) were forcibly relocated to unsustainable environments (see theme 5.2.6). Such associations have negatively impacted on their ability to find meaning and attachment to place. In turn, this in relation to Case 5.2.6 and Case 5.2.2 has impacted on their sense of identity. For example, the young man who wished to owe livestock and the woman who wished to own her own amagoqo (plural for *igoqo*).

7.2.2.4. Identity

As indicated, *ihlathi* plays a very significant role in the participants' sense of identity. The aspect of identity is closely connected with the sense of place and can have both personal and social significances. For example, access to *ihlathi* was strongly believed to play a crucial role in the process of (personal and social/communal) identity construction and expression of the amaXhosa (Chapters 4-6). The survey results in this study clearly indicated that a vast majority of the respondents in Grahamstown and Ndlambe village acknowledged that access to *ihlathi* makes one a real amaXhosa person whereas limited access was perceived as curbing one's sense of identity. For example, respondents in both samples unanimously felt that they could not be *amaXhosa* without access to *ihlathi*.

The use of natural resources from *ihlathi* was perceived as not only meeting economic needs but was also fulfilling cultural and spiritual needs within the participant's lives. For instance, some natural resources are harvested to design cultural artefacts such as *igoqo* and *ubuhlanti* (Xhosa female and male domains respectively), and to fulfil various traditional and spiritual purposes of identity through ritual activities. These results concur with those of Cocks and Wiersum (2003), illustrating that while a kraal/*ubuhlanti* superficially represents an enclosure for livestock, it also represents a male's domain, as well as a shrine where family members communicate directly with the ancestors and host traditional rituals. Again, the survey results indicated that almost all the respondents in both areas acknowledged that it is impossible to perform rituals without access to *ihlathi.* Rituals were cited as promoting spiritual healing/cleansing for an individual, making transition phase into either manhood, womanhood or motherhood and offering goodwill from the ancestors, integrity, and respect and a sense of belonging within ones' community. The ability to engage in various traditional practices such as harvesting firewood, hunting, or herding livestock was perceived as enhancing one's social status identity. For example, the collecting of firewood in *ihlathi* was perceived as reflecting desirable characteristics of an *umama* (Alexander, 2010; Cocks *et al.*, 2008). The engagement in such these practices was also perceived as contributing to social cohesion within a community.

7.2.2.5. Environmental awareness

Most of the participants in both study areas were aware of the positive and negative environmental conditions of *ihlathi* in their immediate area, from their personal experience or interactions with *ihlathi* (Chapters 4-5). However, at a societal or community level, we saw that the majority of respondents in both communities strongly believe that *ihlathi* will never diminish regardless of how much it is used. The majority of the participants in Grahamstown strongly felt that *ihlathi* would never diminish despite its perceived threats of over harvesting and lack of care/management being given to *ihlathi,* as they trusted in *ihlathi's* regenerative and resilient qualities to sustain itself. It is of interest to note that this particular finding is similar to one recorded by Anthony *et al.* of Tsonga (2011). The Tsonga strongly believe that all natural resources are given by God, and that they are entitled to use them for their survival, thus rendering forest and wild animals' protection inconceivable or irrational (Anthony *et al.*, 2011). Participants in Ndlambe village however emphasized that *ihlathi* could only remain resilient if it was cared for it through sustainable harvesting as advocated through TEK.

More frequent interactions with *ihlathi* offered opportunities to develop stronger bonds and this helped to facilitate a sense of attachment to place (this came out very strongly through the phenomenological interviews). The survey indicated that the urban respondent's interactions/relationship with *ihlathi* seems to be weakening because of their less frequent visits to *ihlathi* as compared to the peri-urban sample. The survey results also indicated that the peri-urban respondents acknowledge more responsibility for *ihlathi's* current biophysical conditions whereas urban respondents did not. Previous research has shown that an attachment to place or natural setting facilitates pro-environmental behaviours (Gosling & Williams, 2010; Halpenny, 2006; Hernàndez *et al.*, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). Therefore, indicating that urban respondents' sense of attachment and relationship with *ihlathi* is weak and has impacted on their feelings of being responsible for *ihlathi's* biophysical conditions.

7.2.2.6. The essence of *ihlathi*

This aspect comprises all the interrelationships between the various aspects discussed above. It forms part of the fundamental findings of this study because it captures the core meaning

and significance of *ihlathi* among the amaXhosa participants in this study. The results suggest that the essence of *ihlathi* includes a strong belief, that the amaXhosa cannot be who they are – in terms of both their personal and social/cultural identity and sustaining their health and well-being (physically, spiritually, and psychologically). *Ihlathi* is also perceived as being deeply connected to the amaXhosa's humanity and/or sense of being (see bold texts in Chapter 4, themes (4.2.2.1.1.) and effects of these experiences, (4.2.2.2.) Spiritual oneness with *ihlathi* (p. 69, 80 and Chapter 6, p. 122-123) is captured in the concept of being '*umntu*', which means being a dignified human. U*mntu* is perceived as forming a fundamental part of the amaXhosa worldview, culture and identity as highlighted in bold texts in chapter 4 (p. 69) and Chapter 6 (p. 123). Being *umntu* or being *umntu wemXhosa* (as described in themes 4.2.2.1.1 and 5.2.3) is characterised by a state of goodness, dignity, health, wholeness, meaningfulness, peacefulness, caring, and responsibility. In other words, the spiritual nourishment as described earlier would result in these qualities. These qualities are believed to be the basis of humanity and the amaXhosa. The language reflected in these bold texts reveals the essence of *ihlathi* among the amaXhosa. The language also speaks to the amaXhosa's way of life (e.g., understanding and respectfulness to the interconnectedness between themselves and *ihlathi*), which makes an individual a real Xhosa, as they often emphasized throughout the study that it is how they were made/created. This concept has social implications because a person possessing such qualities is respected within the community.

The participants' consciousness of and regard for other beings around them (e.g., God and/or their ancestors, animals, and plants/trees) in their experiences and interactions with *ihlathi* is profound and crucial. To think of other beings besides themselves (*ihlathi* and its constituents) and recognize one's entitlement to the earth (respect of territory in *ihlathi*) reveals that the world-view of the local amaXhosa participants in this study is multi-layered, holistic, and interdependent. This understanding is facilitated by continued spiritual experiences of *ihlathi* over time. This is a crucial dimension of understanding the human-nature relationship between the amaXhosa participants and *ihlathi*.

The participants did however convey concerns about the steady on-going processes of change in their communities (e.g., environmental and lifestyle changes caused by modernization as well as crime and safety). These, they feared, may threaten their culture as amaXhosa. Cultural change or dynamism is an inherent feature of culture (Cocks & Wiersum, 2003), and

participants were aware of this. However, they were significantly concerned about these changes to their 'being values' or 'being *umntu*.'

7.2.3. Understanding the implications of spiritual values on local urban and peri-urban communities' well-being in everyday life

Generally, intangible values are often difficult to measure and express in landscape management studies (Verschuuren, 2006). However, it does not mean that they are less significant. Therefore, I draw insights from psychology to enhance our understanding, in a complementary manner, regarding how crucial the spiritual values are to the rural and peri-urban people. Spirituality had been one of the important topics within humanistic psychology and aspects of it could be draw in to enhance our understanding and significance of these spiritual values to amaXhosa as reflected in their concepts of *impilo* and being *umtu* as used in this study. According to Elkins (2001), Maslow categorized human needs into basic needs (e.g., physical survival and may include the need for food, shelter, and social connections) and higher needs (e.g., *being-values*, which include the need for truth, beauty, goodness and love). However, deprivation of these higher values, may lead to what he called *Metaphathology*, "a pathology that is a direct result of deprivation at the spiritual level" (Elkins, 2001, p. 203). According to Maslow, renewed contact with the realm of being that is achieved through peak experiences is the best cure for this spiritual deficiency. Insights concerning concepts of *impilo* and being *umtu* as used in this present study are very much congruent with Maslow and Elkins' understanding of spirituality and *ihlathi* is perceived as fulfilling spiritual and psychological needs. Therefore, spiritual values or needs as satisfied by *ihlathi* play a crucial and irreplaceable role in enhancing both urban and peri-urban communities' well-being and ignoring or depriving them such fulfilment can cause a spiritual deficiency (see further details from an Extract 6.1, p. 123; also Extract P7, p. 72; P1, p. 69).

7.3. Implications for improved conservation and management of biodiversity and natural landscapes in South Africa

The findings in this study have several empirical, theoretical, and methodological implications. Firstly, based on this research, the evidence strongly suggests that the ordinary or local people living in urban and peri-urban communities appear to have a profound

awareness, understanding, and appreciation of nature as well as a deep connection with forested landscapes. I argue that these deep connections are only made possible through access to such areas. Thus, according to the findings in this study, denial or lack of access to such places (either due to an exclusive landscape management strategy or by ignoring other persistent social problems such as crime and/or lack of safety, primarily among women) may hinder these relationships and values from being formulated and maintained in everyday life for local people. Additionally, it can be expected that a decline in these diverse intangible values (as discussed earlier), due to a reduction in the availability or access to forested landscapes, may have significant detrimental effects on the personal, societal, cultural and spiritual processes of individuals. Moreover, these values are also applicable to people living in and urban areas. Ultimately, as shown in the case studies, without access to *ihlathi* in particular, local people would certainly suffer from a loss of their sense of place, being and identity.

Since context has been important in this study, we have seen how historical landmarks have elicited strong emotions for individuals and influence their behaviour or attitude towards the natural landscape. Literature has previously acknowledged that the landscape of many areas in the former South African homelands undeniably bears the social and environmental scars of the previous political and conservation dispensations (Ainslie, 1999; Cocks & Wiersum, 2003). However, to date it has not been demonstrated what impact this may have on people's environmental behaviour and their sense of place and identity. By focusing on local context and people's everyday interactions with natural landscapes, it has been possible to provide novel insight into such issues. For example, as highlighted by Nkosi from case 5.2.6, p. 106 who felt that although biodiversity conservation messages are publicly disseminated on local radio channels, individuals still require further encouragement and empowerment to participate in local conservation initiatives, because of past historical legacies. Conservationists need to acknowledge these processes, and more imperatively recognise that biodiversity and natural landscapes plays a pivotal role in contributing to personal, cultural and spiritual values of local people. The evidence presented from this study suggests that biodiversity conservation should not aim to only address and promote ecological/biological values but take cognise of the deep social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual values attached to natural landscapes.

To ensure a more holistic and balanced approach to managing natural landscapes there needs to be integration of the social and cultural attachments to the landscape. Policies adopted should therefore not be exclusionary and narrowly focused infringing upon local people's sense of place, identity and comprises local peoples' cultural-spiritual ways of being. It is vital that local people's traditions and cultures are respected, valued, and embraced in the management and planning of natural landscapes, particularly in areas where such values are still considered important. These findings should not be overlooked in landscape and community-based conservation management debates going forward. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that spiritual values are not only relevant to 'sacred protected sites' but also have relevance within natural landscapes.

7.3.1. Benefits of adopting holistic approach to understanding human-nature interrelations

Most studies investigating the significance of the cultural values of biodiversity primarily rely only on statistically derived indicators of the more utilitarian or tangible dimension (see literature review) with an exception of a study which derived its results from qualitative data obtained through focus groups (e.g., Anthony & Bellinger, 2007). The latter study however failed to provide an in depth holistic understanding of how significant cultural values of natural landscapes are in everyday life in contrast this study addresses this drawback by portraying a holistic framework of how natural landscapes contribute to people's personal psychological, spiritual and cultural well-being in their daily lives.

Previous studies conducted within the Environmental Psychology have demonstrated that contact with the natural landscape elicits psychologically restorative and spiritual effects (e.g., Kylea *et al.*, 2004; Maller *et al.*, 2005; Saunders, *et al.*, 2006; Schroeder, 2002; Saunders & Myers, 2003;). These effects were however largely presented within a context-free or controlled settings and do not provide a context in which these effects are felt in real-life or in an everyday life setting. By adopting a holistic approach, it has been possible to investigate the effects that interactions with *ihlathi* have had on community members living adjacent to them have had. The adoption of such an approach has also allowed me to unearth the true essence of *ihlathi* according to the *lay* person perspectives in their everyday life and

this has ensured that the perspective has been derived for a particular cultural context. This is in contrast to previous studies which have tended to provide only a fragmented, expert-based, positivist approach to understanding human-nature relationship. This study therefore addresses what Macpherson refers to as the visual and detached way of perceiving landscapes that characterizes an ocular-centrism that is fundamental to western thought associated with privilege and modernity (2005). This approach therefore helps to bring the value of meaning, cultural, and real-life contexts into perspective.

This holistic approach has also enhanced our understanding of what is considered a core aspect of well-being amongst amaXhosa living within peri-urban and urban communities. For example, the concept of *impilo* is considered of paramount importance in ensuring a sense of well-being and this reflects a distinct cultural perspective. To date such distinction has not been being portrayed within the psychological literature (Kaplan, 2001; Kelly & Hosking, 2008; Kyle *et al.*, 2004). The latter studies have tended to focus on the biological and emotional responses to natural landscapes (e.g., stress relief or happiness) and not the deeper cultural and spiritual significance. For example, a sense of inner spiritual satisfaction is reached after interacting with *ihlathi* particularly if one has also communicated with God and/or their ancestors while being in *ihlathi*. Communication with one's ancestors is perceived as eliciting positive feelings and is generally perceived as receiving a blessing from the ancestors. Interactions with one's ancestors are considered to be significant because it is through them that one receives guidance, protection, and success in life. These more spiritual aspects are often not acknowledged within the environmental psychology literature and have not been incorporated into transactional studies so far. These findings therefore emphasize the significance of context and encourage a more interactive and cultural meaning-making process between individuals and the natural landscape as opposed to a passive and detached one. Moreover, ignoring these cultural and spiritual values in landscape management processes would be detrimental to local communities' ability to fulfil their spiritual needs.

This approach has also allowed us unpack how the broader social context has impacted on local communities interactions with natural landscapes. For example, perceptions of crime and lack of safety in *ihlathi* have adversely impacted on people's ability to interact with *ihlathi*. Many other studies that focus on biodiversity and landscape values have tend to focus

on how socio-economic factors have impacted on household's reliance on natural resource harvesting and they have failed to look at the array of secondary contextual features which may be impacting on people's interactions with *ihlathi*/nature. It is important to investigate how these factors can manifest as both contextual and temporal aspects as they have the potential to influence behaviour and well-being bot positively and negatively. For instance, from both the qualitative measures and the survey we have seen that a fear of crime and the perception of a lack of safety in *ihlathi* were consistently acknowledged as impacting negatively on the respondents' everyday interaction with *ihlathi* and that this decreased their sense of well-being, particularly amongst the women. These factors form part of the everyday life context for local people and are unfortunately often taken for granted despite the significant impact they may have.

This study's aim was not to rule out the validity of PAs or Community-based approaches (with their existing flaws), but to rather provided insights into of human-nature relationships and that these could be used at consultative stage (inception) of a conservation strategy and be used to guide future biodiversity conservation and landscape management processes because the human-nature relationship is inextricably linked to everyday life needs. The use of both a qualitative and quantitative methods has allowed us to explore the benefits of both. For example, the Phenomenological interviews (primarily involving individuals who have first-hand experience and interactions with *ihlathi*), enabled the participants to pause, i.e., come out of their daily routines and gain perspective and reflect on their everyday experiences regarding *ihlathi*. Whereas the quantitative methods used allowed us to determine how widespread these findings were amongst both peri-urban and urban community members. The use of these approaches also allowed us to capture a holistic conceptualization of the phenomenon under investigation. For example, the more spiritual insights gleaned through the Phenomenological interviews are often not readily accessible through mainstream or positivist research approaches and methodologies. These aspects do however exist and are, phenomenologically speaking, often 'taken for granted.' In the same light, one of the participants said, *"You may not be aware of it but it is visible to us."* Paying attention to detail and context through phenomenological and transactional approaches adopted made this exercise possible. Since *ihlathi* plays a crucial role in fulfilling these deep/inner spiritual and existential values, they should not be ignored at any point in any landscape management and conservation processes, particularly for the amaXhosa

community members living in both peri-urban and urban communities in the Eastern Cape. Moreover, according to Elkins (2001), meaningless or a deficiency in these *being values* is a "major existential problem of our times and care of the soul is an important part of psychological healing" (p. 210). To date spiritual values of in relation to biodiversity and landscape management have been neglected. The empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of the significance of natural landscapes as providing (holistic) well-being to local people. Therefore, these findings suggest that biodiversity loss (or natural landscape corrosion) is not the only matter for concern; the sacred values as forming part of the foundations of local people's worldview and culture (of the amaXhosa specifically) are concurrently endangered.

7.4. Limitations

The size of the survey sample in this study (N=80), comprising two study areas namely Grahamstown and Ndlambe is small. However, more importantly, the overall exploratory and descriptive nature of the study (and not experimental or predictive) makes it difficult to generalise the outcomes to the entire amaXhosa population in the EC thus; they should be interpreted with caution. Hence, the aim of the present study was not to make generalized statements regarding the entire amaXhosa population, but to rather gain an insight into the meanings, values, or relations between the local amaXhosa living in both urban and peri-urban communities and their surrounding natural landscape. This study worked only with the amaXhosa participants. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the surveys showed how significant natural landscapes are in the everyday lives and identities of the participants involved. There is reason to believe, that my findings may be relevant to other cultures as well. Nevertheless, it would be informative to extend this study to other provinces, countries, or places with different cultural backgrounds.

7.5. Final Conclusion

This study has used the Transactional worldview and Phenomenology to understand the holistic human-nature relationship, with specific focus on the intricate and intangible values of natural landscapes to local people at grassroots level. It has been demonstrated that both the natural and social contexts are not static in nature and the everyday life context plays an indispensable role. The study is one of the first in the country to explicitly generate localised

and detailed qualitative research using two Psychological approaches. By doing so, the study has shown that the intangible and tangible values of natural landscapes co-exist in everyday life interactions/relationships and within a complex (multi-layered, and interdependent) and dynamic fashion and should not be treated independently. Our understanding of local people's interactions with, and meanings towards natural landscapes was improved in this sense. These findings calls for a paradigm shift regarding how we seek to manage and conserve natural landscapes and this implies respecting and acknowledging the worldviews and lived experiences of local people on the ground (bottom-up approach).

The present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that biological and cultural diversity are inextricably linked. Furthermore, the perceptions and values of natural landscapes are context specific. Conservation and management measures thus need to be sensitive to context. In addition, this study has shown that the values and meaning of natural landscapes held by local people differ considerably to those of scientific community upon which most conservation management plans are based upon. Thus, it is clear that insights presented by the social scientists, even from more qualitative approaches, have an important contribution to make to this process. Moreover, integrating spirituality into conservation and landscape management can be highly effective. To approach biodiversity and/or natural landscapes from a positivist and fragmented approach, especially at a community level, would not provide the opportunity to incorporate local people's values (and concerns) of such places. Neither would attempting to investigate such values from a natural science approach yield such an understanding of these values. The challenge going forward is to find a way of ensuring these differing worldviews and value systems can complement one another in a creative and effective way.

7.6. Recommendations for future research

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study may have some important practical, theoretical/conceptual, and policy implications for conservation and landscape planning process. This study presents a foundation from which further research may follow locally and internationally. For instance, the findings in this study could not be generalised; further work needs to be done to establish whether these values could be measured at a larger scale. It would also be of value to extend the study to other ethnic groups to determine how wide

spread such associations are. The study has also revealed a that a link exists between local people's spiritual, psychological well-being sense of identity; attachments to place and their feeling of responsibility towards the natural landscape's physical (deteriorating) condition. It would be possible to build on this link to ensure a more inclusive and "owned" conservation and landscape management process. This would provide a good starting point, however to ensure complete ownership of the process it would be necessary to incorporate local people's value system into the national biodiversity conservation measures and not simply regard local people as a 'means to an end' to achieve a win-win situation. Moreover, is worth investigating in future studies how these aspects can be used to improve biodiversity conservation. For instance, the (context-specific) themes could be used to develop key people-centred messages through social marketing strategies to improved biodiversity and landscape conservation strategies in a designated locality. Finally, this study has revealed the complexity and dynamics inherent in both the environmental and social contexts reflected in the human-nature relationship in everyday life. Thus, it is recommended that further research be undertaken on how to deal with the dynamism and complexity. I conclude this chapter with a summarized extract from one of the participants in this study to emphasize the significance/essence of natural landscapes in local people's everyday lives:

"*Connecting or reconnecting to nature reconnects you to self, identity, and way of life. You feel connected with nature because we were created to be like that*!"

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Appendix A: CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AGREEMENT

BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I agree to participate in a research study conducted by Ms Mogano Lydia, a Masters student at the Department of Anthropology at Rhodes University, under the supervision of Michelle Cocks. The purpose of the study is to explore the daily experience and meanings of the forest.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting research as part of the requirements for her Anthropology Masters degree at Rhodes University.

2. The researcher is interested in exploring the lived experience of the ama-Xhosa people who often have various interactions with the forest as to illuminate the meanings that they hold.

3. My participation will involve sharing my experiences in an interview which will take about 45-60 minutes and may involve no more than a 45 minutes follow-up interview. I am invited to inform the researcher of any concerns I might have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

4. To participate in this study is entirely voluntary. I may refuse to participate from the study at any time. However, I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

5. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but I have been assured of my anonymity, that is, that the report based on this information will be compiled in such a way that individual participants cannot be identified by the general reader.

I have carefully studied the above and understand the agreement.

Participant: ..... Researcher: .....

Signed on (Date): ..... Signed on (Date): .....

Appendix B: GLOSSARY OF ISIXHOSA

Igoqo	Women's domain
Ihlathi lesiXhosa	A Xhosa forest
Ikhala	*Aloe ferox*
Inkunzane	(*Emex australis*)
Iroyivater	*Bulbine latifolia*)
Isicakathi	*Apaganthus africanus L.*
Itolofiya	*Ornithogalum*
Ubuhlanti	Men's domain
Umiqokolo	*Dalbergia armata*
Umnqonci	*Trichocladus ellipticus*
Umnquma	*Olea europaea subsp. Africana*
Umsenge	*Cussonia spicata*
Umthathi	*Ptaeroxylon obliguum*
Umthi welitye or umlitye	*Ochna serrulata*