

**ASSESSING POLITENESS, LANGUAGE AND GENDER IN**

**HLONIPHA**

**BY**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts in the Department of Linguistics, UKZN, Durban.**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or any examination in any other university. Where use has been made of the results of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thobekile P. Luthuli".

**Thobekile P. Luthuli**

**December 2007**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	vi
Abstract	viii
<b>Chapter One Literature Review</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Introduction	1
1.2    Important aspects of <i>isiHlonipho</i>	2
1.2.1    What does <i>Hlonipha</i> mean?	2
1.2.2    The essentials of <i>Hlonipha</i>	4
1.2.3    The functions of <i>isiHlonipho</i>	5
1.2.4    Agents and referents of the custom	7
1.2.5    Effects of modernization	8
1.2.6    Core vocabulary	9
1.3    Definition of Politeness	10
1.4    Models of Politeness	12
1.4.1    The social norm model	12
1.4.2    The conversational-contract model	13
1.4.3    Brown and Levinson's theory	14
1.4.4    Critique of Brown and Levinson's theory	16
1.4.4.1    Levels of directness	16
1.4.4.2    The notion of the universality of face	17
1.4.4.3    The Zulu notion of face	18
1.5    Debates around Gender and Language	19
1.5.1    Deficit, dominance, and difference models	20
1.5.2    Gender and identity	20
1.5.3    Socialisation	22
1.5.4    Societal norms	23
1.5.5    Power and dominance	23
1.5.6    Solidarity- social distance	27

1.5.7 Power/Status	27
1.6 Gender and Politeness	29
1.7 Conclusion	31
<b>Chapter Two Research Methodology</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1 Background Information	33
2.2 Data Collection Methods	34
2.2.1 Non-Participatory Observation	34
2.3 Interviews	35
2.3.1 Introduction	35
2.3.2 Interviewing Procedure	36
2.4 Questionnaires: Discourse Completion Tasks	38
2.4.1 DCTs: Set One: Females from Rural and Urban Areas	38
2.4.2 DCTs: Set Two: Males from Rural and Urban Areas	39
<b>Chapter Three Data Analysis and Discussion</b>	<b>40</b>
3.1 Introduction	40
3.2 Discussion	40
3.2.1 Observation	40
3.2.1.1 Observation of traditional ceremony “ <i>umembeso</i> ”	41
3.2.1.2 Observation of households: Urban and Rural	43
3.2.2 Interviews with elders	50
3.2.2.1 Religious Perspective	50
3.2.2.2 Cultural Perspective	51
3.2.3 Interviews with Women: Urban and Rural	55
3.2.3.1 Table: Degree of utilization of <i>isiHlonipho</i> by Women: Rural	61
3.2.3.2 Table: Degree of utilization of <i>isiHlonipho</i> by Women: Urban	62
3.2.4 Interviews with Men: Urban and Rural	63
3.2.4.1 Table: Degree of utilization of <i>isiHlonipho</i> by Men: Urban	66

<b>3.2.4.2 Table: Degree of utilization of <i>isiHlonipho</i> by Men: Rural</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.2.5 Analysis of Data from DCTs</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.2.5.1 Responses to DCTs: Set One</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.2.5.2 Responses to DCTs: Set Two</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>3.2.5.3 Conclusion</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Chapter Four Discussion of Results</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.2 Understanding of <i>isiHlonipho</i></b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.3 The value placed on <i>isiHlonipho</i></b>	<b>83</b>
<b>4.4 Theories of politeness and the target community</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Chapter Five Conclusion</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>5.1 Summary of Conclusion</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>5.2 Limitations of the study</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>5.3 Suggestions for further research</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Set of Questions for Elders</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Set of Questions for Women</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Set of Questions for Men</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Appendix 4: DCTs: Women</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Appendix 5: DCTs: Men</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>102</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following people:

**Dr S. Rudwick, my supervisor, for her expert guidance and valuable comments in the writing of this thesis.**

**My husband, Mpheni, for his inspiration and constant motivation.**

**My two sons, Manono and Ziphelele for their patience and understanding throughout the period of my study.**

**All the participants of the community that was studied who so willingly gave me their time. Without their cooperation this dissertation would not have been possible.**

## INTRODUCTION

### Outline of the research topic

*IsiHlonipho*, the language of respect, is a variety used by women of the Nguni and Southern Sotho cluster. *Ukuhlonipha*, on the other hand, refers to the act of respect. The difference between the two terms lies in the fact that all isiZulu first language speakers perform the social act of *ukuhlonipha*, whereas *isiHlonipho* is a sociolinguistic custom which is employed primarily by married women. According to Finlayson (2002), this language variety is used primarily by married women who show respect to their new home and family, through the avoidance of the main syllables of their husband's family's names. Men, on the other hand, *hlonipha* the names of prominent ancestors and chief ministers. However, unlike women, their language is not affected to a noticeable extent.

Raum (1973: 505) distinguishes two poles of sociological significance, namely, the agent and the referent. The agent represents the inferior social position and the referent represents the superior position towards which deferential conduct is directed. According to Raum (1973: 507), the deferential actions are judged to express the correct attitude of the inferior towards the superior. To display submissiveness by appropriate deferential avoidances is highly approved in Zulu culture. The referent as the incumbent of an authority is capable of altering the avoidance rules and of abolishing them for a special purpose.

Sociolinguistically, Trudgill (1974: 74) states that these two poles i.e., the referent and the agent are responsible for everyday code-switching/ style-switching whereby an individual speaker prefers one language variety over another in an attempt to conform to the social norms of the society. The speaker (in most cases women) regulates her choice of linguistic forms in order to show her sense of place, that is, of being the agent in isiZulu culture. By examining the culturally learned linguistic code of politeness for

women, i.e., *isiHlonipho*, one begins to understand that the linguistic features of this language variety are a direct result of the social structure within which it is embedded.

On the one hand, this study examines how gender relations and identities are forged linguistically within the isiZulu social system. On the other hand, it compares the attitudes of isiZulu L1 females living in the rural areas with the attitudes of those living in urban areas towards *isiHlonipho*. The evidence will be used to ascertain whether isiZulu L1 speaking females are beginning to reject traditional in favor of a more westernized, emancipated identity.

### **Reasons for choosing the topic**

Motivation for the investigation is based on the fact that *isiHlonipho* has thus far not found adequate attention among South African researchers. A review of the literature indicates that *isiHlonipho* has been investigated within isiXhosa society to some extent and that research into this variety among isiZulu L1 speakers has been somewhat neglected. As South Africa is a multicultural, multilingual country, it is important for the different cultural groups to be well informed about the politeness strategies operating within each cultural group.

From a global perspective, while much research has been done on the differences in speech styles of men and women in western societies, very little is reported in the literature on similar studies in non-western societies (Finlayson 2002). It should also be noted that *isiHlonipho* is a highly treasured linguistic custom for many in the isiZulu L1 speaking community. Its contemporary status in itself makes it a worthwhile subject of study. This study will thus make a significant contribution to understanding the role of isiZulu and its sub-variety, *isiHlonipho*, in the construction of gender identities in the South African context.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to investigate the politeness phenomena (particularly *isiHlonipho*) within the isiZulu speaking community in KwaZulu Natal. The study focuses on the understanding of *isiHlonipho* within the isiZulu speaking community and whether males and females from the urban and rural areas share a similar or different understanding of *isiHlonipho*. Furthermore the thesis investigates which of the existing Western/non-Western models of politeness are relevant for describing the politeness phenomena in the target community.

In order to achieve triangulation, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. These comprised of interviews with cultural/religious leaders, discourse completion tasks, and interviews with males and females from urban and rural areas in Mdumezulu and Umlazi Township.

My findings reveal that the understanding of politeness phenomena within the target community is more in keeping with that in other non-Western cultures than in Western cultures. Females from the rural area are found to utilize *isiHlonipho* more than those females from the urban area. On the basis of this limited sample, it is argued that females from the urban area may be beginning to reject traditional Zulu femininity in favour of more westernized identities.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This thesis is a sociolinguistic study of the role played by *isiHlonipho* and Zulu culture in perpetuating gender differences among males and females who are first language (L1) speakers of isiZulu. Hence, it also seeks to explore some of the ways in which language contributes to the construction of masculine and feminine identities. Therefore I examine the constructions of gender identities by means of politeness as demonstrated by the use of *isiHlonipho*.

Since *isiHlonipho* is a politeness strategy, the concept of ‘politeness’ shall be explored and defined. Various models of politeness will be examined, including the highly influential one developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Consideration is given to the debate around the applicability of this model to both Western and non-Western cultures. This is followed by a discussion on language and gender, and finally ends with a comment on the social dimensions of status/power and social distance.

The literature review below will contextualize the topic under investigation within the broader field of research undertaken on sociolinguistic politeness phenomena. Furthermore, the review will assist in developing the key questions to be asked as well as the theoretical framework which is used to analyse the collected data.

In Chapter 1, the following important aspects of *isiHlonipho* will be examined:

- (i) What does ‘*hlonipha*’ mean?
- (ii) What are the essentials of ‘*isiHlonipho*’?
- (iii) What are the functions of ‘*isiHlonipho*’?
- (iv) Who is involved in the custom?
- (v) What are the effects of modernization?
- (vi) What is the core vocabulary of *isiHlonipho*?

## 1.2 IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ISIHLONIPHO

### 1.2.1 What does ‘*hlonipha*’ mean

Among the ‘Nguni’, ‘ukuhlonipha’ means ‘to respect’ (Finlayson 1995: 140). The term *hlonipha* broadly refers to both the linguistic and behavioural aspect of the custom of respect. An example of the social aspect would be the avoidance of certain areas in the homestead, or dressing in a specific way. The term ‘*isiHlonipho sabafazi*’ (referring to the language of respect of women) can be explained in linguistic terms as follows:

**Isi** - the prefix in Nguni language, indicative of language + the verb root **hloniph** + nominal deverbal terminative -o (Finlayson, 1995: 141).

‘*isiHlonipho*’ as a traditional language of respect refers specifically to the names of the father-in-law and other family members of the husband. Finlayson (1995: 141) has raised a very interesting point, in that it is not the name itself which is the issue, but the ‘name as device which attracts the attention of its bearer and focus on the person uttering the name’. Finlayson (1978: 2) further adds that Zulu men also *hlonipha*, but theirs does not develop nor affect the language to a noticeable extent because they *hlonipha* only on special occasions, or in reference to special persons e.g. names of prominent chiefs, prominent ancestors of the clan and household. It is, however, important to note that a

well-known example of this custom as applied to men concerns Shaka, the Zulu king who, after travelling some distance without fresh drinking water, eventually came upon a well-watered place and wanted to name it *amanzi amnandi*, ‘fresh or pleasant water’. However, his mother’s name was Nandi and out of respect for her, he had to rename the place in order to avoid the *nandi* part of the qualificative. Hence he called the place Amanzimtoti, thereby inventing the word *-toti* to replace *-nandi*. This syllabic avoidance by men is not frequent, and research has shown that only in exceptional cases do men *hlonipha* (Finlayson, 1995: 3).

Raum (1973: 5) notes that the term ‘*hlonipha*’ also has abstract aspects, its meaning shading from “to obey”, e.g. one’s parents, to “a sense of decency”, (in a phrase like *akusikho ukuhlonipha uma owesifazane ehlezi ngokubhenyeka* [there is no sense of decency when a woman sits with her knees up], and to approved custom in general. He (1973: 5) also adds that ‘*hlonipha*’ expresses ‘to respect by means of avoidances’. This is confirmed by the etymology of the word *inhloni*. In isiXhosa, the term *inhloni*, which means bashfulness as well as shyness, is also associated with the feeling of shame or confusion. In addition, Raum (1973: 5) refers to the word *inhloni* with the concrete meaning of hedgehog and the figurative one of shame and bashfulness. Raum (1973: 6) states that in isiXhosa, the phrase ‘he was pricked by the hedgehog’ is an equivalent for ‘he is ashamed’. According to Raum (1973: 7), a similar association exists in Transvaal Ndebele where the root ‘*hloni*’ with the class prefix *in-* denotes hedgehog, but with the prefix *ama-* denotes shame and shyness.

Popular etymology equally connects the words by asserting that the hedgehog is called *inhloni* because it hides its head as a young wife hides her head under the kaross before her father-in-law. A similar connection was pointed out by one of Raum’s (1973)

informants (R.Goba ): "The animal called *inhloni* has the habit of casting its head on its chest and looking round shyly", in the same way a Zulu girl may not look her lover in the face, nor a bride her in-laws, as they are said to feel *izinhloni*, or bashfulness.

### **1.2.2 The essentials of *hlonipha***

Raum (1973: 505) is of the view that from a general sociological perspective, *hlonipha* actions are essentially deferential avoidance actions which occur in dyadic relations i.e. in relations between correlated statuses, such as child-father, child-in-law = parent-in-law. He (1973: 506) also adds that the avoidance conduct is frequently directed at objects rather than at the person to whom they belong. For instance, among the avoidances observed by wives and children are certain localities in the hut and homestead; the family head's sleeping mat; the tools used by the family head in his work; eating and drinking utensils; the clothes he wears, and certain parts of his body (as the family head). Consequently, the objects being avoided acquire symbolical significance because they stand for, or are a reminder to the agent of the owner (referent), and the actions towards them are acknowledged as acts of deference towards him. These deferential actions are also judged to express the correct attitude of the inferior towards the superior and more importantly, to display submissiveness by appropriate deferential avoidances. Raum (1973: 505) then distinguishes two poles of sociological significance in such relations: the agent, representing the inferior social position, and the referent, who stands for the superior position towards which deferential conduct is directed. However, it is important to note that the referent as incumbent of the position of authority is capable of altering the avoidance rules and abolishing them for a special purpose. It is also within the family head's authority to cancel the avoidances for an individual wife or child, to order the wife or the child to go into a locality reserved to him, and to handle an object normally used

by him (the family head) alone. Furthermore, Raum (1973: 507) states that the intensity with which an avoidance is observed corresponds with the nature of the relationship between the agent (female) and the referent (male). For example, the family head's daughters-in-law keep farthest away from him. This study will thus explore how observing avoidances of these varied objects, creates and maintains social distance between the agent of inferior status and the referent of superior status.

### **1.2.3 The functions of *isiHlonipho***

At an early age, Zulu women are taught that certain kinds of sociological and linguistic behaviour are either acceptable or not acceptable. They are made to believe that customary beliefs dictated through folk stories and figurative expressions should inform their behaviour. 'Personal preference' plays a minimal role in their choices. This is evident in the fact that a young girl will be taught how to speak and behave towards elders, and before she gets married, old women will also teach her appropriate behaviour towards her husband. This is done because in the Zulu culture, cultural behaviour follows the assumption that as women they should be acceptable to men, to be considered or kept in marriage relationships. There is a saying in *isiZulu* which goes thus: '*Ihlonipha nalapho ingayukwendela khona*'. This simply means that as a woman you respect everybody irrespective of whether they come from the family of your future in-laws or not. This study will examine whether this saying still holds true in both rural and urban areas in KwaZulu-Natal. It will further explore the extent to which women display actions of *hlonipha* in order to be considered or kept in marriage relationships. It will also be interesting to compare the latter in relation to women from rural and urban areas in KwaZulu-Natal.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the custom of *isiHlonipho* applies mainly to married women. When a young woman marries into a family, she will avoid the pronunciation of the syllables in the names of her husband's family, for example her father-in-law, mother-in-law, her father-in-law's brothers and sisters, and their husbands and wives. This can extend as far back as the great-grandfather-in-law. In a traditional Zulu context, the newly married woman is not allowed to treat this custom lightly, and is subjected to severe public shame should she ignore the rules laid down for her. The forces exerted by public opinion are a very important deterrent in upholding these rules, as one may be ostracised from one's community. Should the daughter-in-law disobey the rules she might be sent home and have to return with a gift of some sort in penitence. One could then argue that an open protest against and rejection of *isiHlonipho* is unacceptable in the Zulu culture. However, research done by Ige and De Kadt (2002) shows that females (*isiZulu* L1 speakers) from the former University of Natal (urban area) utilise English language extensively, thereby showing an inclination towards a 'western' identity. In contrast, most male students exhibit a more 'traditional' Zulu identity through the maintenance of *isiZulu* as the dominant medium on campus. The evidence of this research by Ige and De Kadt (2002) is an indication that some L1 *isiZulu* speaking females in urban areas are beginning to reject traditional femininity (which has to do with females who still uphold the behavioral patterns that are culturally defined), in favour of a more westernised, emancipated identity (that is, behavioral patterns that are not characterised by submissiveness or the culturally learned linguistic code, *isiHlonipho*).

Despite the above-mentioned dichotomy between the male and the female students at the then University of Natal, Dowling (1988b: 23-28) notes that speakers of *isiHlonipho* have the following reasons for utilising it (*isiHlonipho*):

- To maintain harmony and co-operation in the traditional household.
- To secure the inheritance of the house - by respecting the parents-in-law, the house will be inherited by the wife and the husband.
- To exhibit or show correct behaviour to the new wife so that her entry into the new house is successful.
- To teach the new bride that she has entered a new family and that she must learn to respect a different set of ancestors. Coupled with this is also the distinction that is drawn between the natural daughters of the household and the daughter-in-law.
- To maintain a certain distance and formality between the new bride and her in-laws.

Since this study will be conducted in both rural and urban areas, it will ascertain in which areas people would share the same reasons given by Dowling above.

#### **1.2.4 Agents and referents of the custom**

Raum (1973: 505) as noted, distinguishes two poles of sociological significance, namely, the agent and the referent, where the agent represents the inferior social position and the referent the superior position towards which deferential conduct is directed. Trudgill (1974: 74) concurs with Raum and further adds that these two poles (the agent and the referent) are responsible for everyday code-switching whereby an individual speaker prefers one language variety over another in an attempt to conform to the social norms of the society. Therefore the speaker (woman) regulates her choice of linguistic forms in order to show her sense of place, that is, of being the agent, particularly in the Zulu culture. A woman who does not honour her position of being the agent is regarded as behaving in a disrespectful manner.

Finlayson (1995) also agrees with Raum when she says that among the older generation of Xhosa society, the belief exists that there is a link between neglect of the custom and bad luck or barrenness. She substantiates this by giving an example of an educated, urban woman who was sent to her in-laws in the rural area to learn *hlonipha*. She was unable to have children, and her husband believed that this was the result of her failure to use *hlonipha*. Her father-in-law blamed civilisation for the fact that the custom is neglected. Among *isiZulu* L1 speakers there are males who share the belief that if one is looking for a wife one has to go to the rural areas where one will get a wife who knows how to respect a man. In the rural areas as well, men who get employment in the urban areas and end up coming back with a woman they want to marry, encounter a lot of criticism from their parents who also strongly believe in the adherence to the custom (*hlonipha*).

The dichotomy between urban and rural women was spelled out by Dowling (1988b) when she noted in her research on *hlonipha* that in the rural areas, the older women were adhering more to the custom than rural younger women. In contrast, urban women indicated that they did not think that the custom has validity for young city dwellers. This study aims to critically examine the findings of Dowling's study.

### **1.2.5 Effects of modernisation**

The evolution of *hlonipha* should be seen within the context of urbanisation in the various parts of Southern Africa (Dewar, Todes and Watson, 1982). Prior to the discovery of minerals in South Africa, the scale and rate of urbanisation were relatively low and traditional subsistence farming provided a more beneficial alternative to wage labour in the towns. Consequently, between 1870 and 1913, a rapid increase took place in

the rate of urbanization (Dewar, et al 1982). This trend has continued, though the different regions have experienced varying degrees of urbanisation.

Research done by Finlayson (1995) in Cape Town, Pretoria, and Soweto, has confirmed that the relations between husband and wife are no doubt closer in the urban household than they used to be in the traditional household. This, according to Finlayson (1995), is a consequence of the fact that the general trend for urban women is to be away from the extended family and the hardships involved for the daughter-in-law. The other reason, according to Finlayson (1995), is that the avoidance custom and the position of the wife as an outsider is not emphasized. Furthermore, the couple tends to be less involved with the parents-in-law. Dowling (1988b) concurs with Finlayson because the research she conducted in Tsolo and Mqanduli, in the Transkei and in Cape Town, demonstrated that attitudes of not only urban but also rural women towards the custom have changed.

However, it should be noted that these effects of modernisation involved Xhosa speaking people. This thesis will explore if the same can be said about *isiZulu* L1 speaking people from the area in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **1.2.6 Core vocabulary**

To ascertain the extent to which women in urban areas still uphold the tradition of respect for their in-laws through *hlonipha*, Finlayson conducted research in which 19 informants were interviewed. Of the 19 informants interviewed, 12 claimed that they had retained the custom and knew how to *hlonipha*. However, on closer investigation it emerged that random words of *hlonipha* origin were being used by these urban women, whereas the prime aim of *isiHlonipho*, the conscious avoidance of syllables occurring in

the family names of their husbands, was not being followed. Instead only a ‘core’ vocabulary was being used (Finlayson, 1982), which consisted of words generally known and accepted as *hloniphya* words. When questioned further about the names of their in-laws and the fact that these names were occurring in their vocabulary, the women maintained that nevertheless they were making use of *hloniphya*.

In this study I examine whether *isiZulu* speaking women from KwaZulu-Natal also have their own ‘core’ vocabulary, and in how this can be compared to that of Xhosa women. Furthermore, the study will also examine the differences or similarities of this core vocabulary for urban and rural women.

### **1.3 DEFINITION OF POLITENESS**

Two questions that immediately come to mind in any study of politeness are: “Is there a universal definition of politeness?” and “Is politeness an end in itself or a means to an end?” These questions are addressed below.

People communicate their feelings, thoughts and ideas, their relationship with others, and other socially meaningful exchanges through their verbal interaction with others. According to Lakoff (1975: 64), politeness is something that is “developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction”, while Brown and Levinson (1987: 1) state that “politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol, presupposes that potential for aggression (in social interaction) as it seeks to disarm it”. These notions imply that politeness is a means towards producing harmony in personal (human) relationships.

Despite the viewpoints given above, a review of relevant literature by Fraser (1990: 219) revealed a “lack of consistency among researchers on what politeness is, never mind how

it might be accounted for”, with many writers failing to explicitly define what politeness is. As a result of the different notions of the concept of politeness, as well as cultural and idiosyncratic variations, attempts to characterise aspects of politeness have proved difficult (Koike 1989: 182). In this regard, Ide (1989: 225) gives a working definition of linguistic politeness as the *language usage associated with smooth communication, realised*

- i) *through the speaker's use of intentional strategies to allow his/her message to be received favourably by the addressee, and*
- ii) *through the speaker's choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities.*

Holmes (1995: 225) similarly argues that politeness “refers to behaviour which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour”.

The review by Fraser (1990) indicates that there is no generally accepted definition of politeness. For the purpose of this study I shall adopt the definition of politeness as given by Ide (1989: 225). It is envisaged that this will assist me in addressing two key questions:

Firstly, what are *isiZulu* L1 speaking males and females' understanding and interpretation of *isiHlonipho* as a linguistic variety?

Secondly, what is the relationship between *isiHlonipho* and expression of politeness among L1 speakers of *isiZulu*?

Fraser (1990) identifies four other models of politeness in the published research on linguistic politeness. Before I search for answers to the questions raised, I will theoretically discuss relevant models of politeness.

#### **1.4 MODELS OF POLITENESS**

The models of politeness discussed below have been developed through the work of researchers in both Western and non-Western societies. In some instances the approach has been a “bottom-up” one in the sense that what is considered to be appropriate behaviour for a particular society is used to construct a model which is applicable to that society. However, in other cases a particular model has been developed and thereafter claimed to be universal in application.

The models below are discussed in order to get a broader understanding of the development of the politeness theory. Furthermore, they also serve as a forerunner for the current debate between Western and non-Western perspectives of politeness phenomena which will be discussed later.

##### **1.4.1 The social norm model**

“The social norm view of politeness assumes that each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behaviour, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context” (Fraser 1990: 220). Ide (1989) also

expresses the same view in her study of politeness phenomena in Japanese society. However, according to Nwoye (1992: 312), within the social norm model politeness is “seen as arising from an awareness of one’s social obligations to the other members of the group to which one owes primary allegiance.” Impoliteness or rudeness arises when one’s actions differ from the norms of that particular society.

The social norm model may be useful in the analysis of my data as its characteristics seem to be consistent with the behavioural patterns of the target community. This assumption is based on my personal interactions with the community in focus here (of which I am an insider), as well as the results of the interviews with the elders of the community (to be discussed later). Some aspects of the social norm model are further highlighted later in this chapter when politeness phenomena in non-Western societies are discussed.

#### **1.4.2 The conversational-contract model**

Fraser (1975), and Fraser and Nolen (1981) present the conversational-contract model (CC). In this approach, when entering into a conversation, each party “brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine, at least for the preliminary stages, what the participants can expect from the other(s)” (Fraser 1990: 232). These rights and obligations are based on the parties’ social relationships with one another and can be adjusted and readjusted during the course of time or when there is a change in context. This becomes the conversational contract within which speakers operate.

In this model, politeness means operating within the terms and conditions of the existing CC. Politeness is therefore an on-going process (Nwoye 1992: 310). If one violates the CC, then one is seen as being impolite or rude. According to the CC model, being polite involves conforming to socially agreed codes of conduct, as in the “social norm model”, but it also emphasises the existence of “quasi-contractual obligations” (Nwoye 1992: 310), which, as indicated above, can be re-negotiated. In this regard the CC model differs from the views of Lakoff (1973a) and Leech (1983), which involve making the hearer “feel good”, and from Brown and Levinson’s face saving model (to be discussed later), which involves making the hearer “not feel bad”.

Based on my previous personal experience, I expect the conversational-contract model not to be applicable to the target community, as the rights and obligations of parties in social relationships are to a certain extent, non-negotiable.

#### **1.4.3 Brown and Levinson’s theory**

The standard framework which scholars and researchers have adopted for the analysis of politeness, both in mainstream and feminist linguistics, is the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987). This framework in turn draws upon Goffman’s work on the construction of ‘face’ (1967). The further development of this theory of ‘face’ by Brown and Levinson is based on everyday usage in terms of ‘losing face’ and ‘saving face’. Politeness, according to this model, involves maintaining each other’s face by observing two different kinds of face needs, namely ‘negative face’ and ‘positive face’.

**Negative face** refers to the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

**Positive face refers to** the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987) assumes that speakers and hearers have the desire to maintain face. ‘Face’ is described as “the public self image that every member (of a society) wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60). Accordingly speakers analyse the level of threat involved, considering factors such as social distance, the degree of power that one party may have over another and the ranking of impositions within a culture, before selecting a strategy to complete the required act. In a similar vein, Leech (1983) maintains that the two parameters ‘social distance’ and ‘degree of power’ are highly relevant to politeness.

Brown and Levinson (1987) then present in great detail the range of ways in which positive and negative face manifest themselves as positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness aims to disarm threats to positive face (the desire to be liked and admired). Furthermore, positive politeness is essentially approach-based, that is, it is an expression of interest in the addressee by using strategies such as exaggerated expressions, use of in-group identity markers, seeking agreement and avoidance of disagreement, the giving of gifts in the form of goods, sympathy, understanding and co-operation. Negative politeness in contrast, as the desire to be unimpeded by others, aims to disarm threats to negative face (the desire to not be imposed upon). Negative politeness is avoidance-based and its strategies are characterised by self-effacement, formality and restraint, and usually redressed with apologies. Brown and Levinson

assume that these two types of faces operate in most languages, and claim universal status for them.

#### **1.4.4 Critique of Brown and Levinson's theory**

In spite of the considerable explanatory power of Brown and Levinson's model, it has increasingly been critiqued by scholars and researchers (Nwoye 1992, Matsumoto 1989) working on non-western languages and cultures. The first difficulty with Brown and Levinson's theory is the proposed relationship between social distance and indirectness. The second is the universality of Brown and Levinson's notion of 'face' and the third is the very different cultural assessments by language communities of power, social distance and imposition.

##### **1.4.4.1 Levels of directness**

One of the claims of Brown and Levinson (1987) is that increased levels of social distance between interlocutors result in increased levels of indirectness. On the contrary De Kadt (1992b: 103) argues that the link between directness and politeness levels may not hold true for all languages because her Zulu respondents showed a high frequency of direct requests with a high politeness rating by respondents. She further claims that if a show of sincerity, expressed directly, is preferred over a display of non-imposition, then directness will not necessarily be associated with impoliteness. De Kadt (1992b: 103) also claims that the standard polite request '*ngicela*', is normally a form with a high directness rating. However, this categorisation is problematic in relation to measures of politeness since her respondents rated this form 'most polite'. This discrepancy between

directness and perceived politeness raises the question of whether the link between indirectness and politeness is applicable to first language speakers of *isiZulu*.

#### **1.4.4.2 The notion of the universality of face**

The second criticism has come largely from Matsumoto (1988: 405) who claims that what is important to the Japanese is not his or her own territory but the interactants' position in relation to others in the group and his or her acceptance by those others. He argues that in these circumstances, 'face' ceases to be an important issue in interpersonal relationships (Matsumoto, 1988: 218). The concept of negative face as the desire to be 'unimpeded in one's action' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 24) is alien to the Japanese culture. However, politeness for the Japanese centres on the speaker recognising the relative social position of all interactants. Matsumoto (1988: 405) further states that in Japanese culture, social interaction is governed by a person's understanding of where he/she stands in relation to other members of the group or society, as well as his/her acknowledgement of his/her dependence on others in the group or society, and not by preserving one's own territory.

Consequently, the notion of loss of face in Japanese society is therefore qualitatively different from the notion held by Brown and Levinson (1987), in that it is associated with the perception by others that one has not comprehended and acknowledged the structure and hierarchy of the group. What affects 'face' in social interaction is social insensitivity and what is important is the need for a person to be judged as responding appropriately.

In his study of the Igbo society of Nigeria, Nwoye (1992: 313) finds Fraser's (1990) CC model applicable. He argues that it is through socialisation that members of the Igbo

society acquire patterns of behaviour, “thus entering as it were, into a type of social contract with other members of the society to do his/her best to keep social contract friction free” (Nwoye 1992: 313). He sees such a society as group-oriented, which is in contrast to Western societies which are more individual-oriented. In the Igbo society, Nwoye finds that the notion of “group face” is more applicable, since the focus is on the collective other, where the wants and needs of the group are placed ahead of the individual’s wants and desires.

#### **1.4.4.3 The Zulu notion of politeness**

In her attempt towards shaping a model for the study of politeness in the Zulu culture, De Kadt (1994) finds that politeness plays a positive role in maintaining harmonious relations within society. Age and social distance have an important influence on language usage. There is an emphasis on “group membership” in contrast to the “wants” of the individual. Therefore one would “lose face if he/she did not behave in a manner that was appropriate to his/her group”.

In further studies of the Zulu language, De Kadt (1995,1998) finds that politeness was a “core value” in the Zulu culture, with the direct form “*ngiyacela*” (I request) being the standard form for a polite request in a range of contexts. This contradicts the principle of “the more indirect, the more polite the request” as initially enunciated by Brown and Levinson (1987). Hence these findings cast doubt on the universality of the Brown and Levinson model, in particular with regard to their relevance to politeness phenomena in the Zulu culture. However, while De Kadt (1998) found that Brown and Levinson’s construct of negative face (i.e. the speaker’s desire not to be imposed upon) was

questionable in the Zulu culture, the term “face” itself still had validity in the folk sense. De Kadt (1998: 175) claims that Zulu speakers are in agreement that it is possible to lose face in the Zulu culture and that it is the fear of loss of face that constrains people to behave appropriately, that is, with respect and politeness towards others. For this reason, De Kadt (1998) does not discount Brown and Levinson’s construct totally but rather uses Goffman’s (1967) broader construct of face in her analysis of Zulu politeness.

De Kadt (1998: 179) states that while Triandis (1989: 207) distinguishes three aspects of the “self” i.e. the ‘private’, ‘public’ and ‘collective’ self, nonetheless, in his research focusing on America and the Far East, he explores only the private and collective self in great detail and states that the public self is not common. However, De Kadt (1998: 179) shows through the exploration of the two Zulu concepts of “*hlonipha*” (to respect) and “*ubuntu*” (humanity), that in the Zulu culture the public self plays a fairly substantial role.

## **1.5 DEBATES AROUND GENDER AND LANGUAGE**

After Lakoff (1975) initiated the study of language and gender in the USA, a spate of research was sparked off in this field, with the focus on the differences in the discourse styles between men and women. For example, Thorne and Henley (1975) Thorne, Kramarae and Henley (1983), and Meyerhoff (1987) conducted research on the possible existence of differences between male and female speech mostly in white, middle class, English speaking communities. A variety of explanations have been given for these differences in language use. Some of the main assumptions and arguments that have been made concerning these differences are discussed below.

### **1.5.1 Deficit, dominance, and difference models**

Cameron (1996), Bing and Bergvall (1996), and Johnson (1997) agree that over the past 20 years, three models commonly termed ‘deficit’, ‘dominance’ and ‘difference’, have dominated feminist linguistic approaches to language and gender. The first model, that of ‘deficit’, presents women as disadvantaged speakers based on their early sex – role socialisation. Lakoff (1973a; 1975) suggests that women interact in a ‘powerless language’. The second model, the ‘dominance’ model, exemplified for instance by the work of Zimmerman and West (1975), West (1984), and Fishman (1983), challenges the male control of language and focuses on how language reflects, constructs and maintains male dominance. Zimmerman and West conclude that women perform poorly in cross-sex conversations, in comparison to their male counterparts. Feminists like Spender (1980), among others, are interested in exploring how dominance is achieved through language: they consider how interruptions, the use of generic pronouns and nouns, politeness etc., reflect language power relations as well as how they are maintained. The third mode, that of ‘difference’, sees itself as an alternative approach to the first two models (Johnson, 1997). Its objective is to discourage those working on women’s speech from a perpetual comparison with male norms, which continues to place women in a position of deficit. This approach, therefore, stresses that women’s language is not inferior to men’s language, but simply different (Coates, 1986; 1995).

### **1.5.2 Gender and identity**

Moving beyond the three earlier models, Weedon (1987) has argued from a poststructuralist viewpoint that in order to understand gender power relations and bring about change, gender identity in general (and not just female identity) must be explored. There is a need to understand why women tolerate social relations that subordinate their

interests to those of men. Similarly, it is important to understand the discursive strategies employed by men in their quest to sustain male hegemony. Cameron (1996: 100) argues that instead of questioning ‘how women and men speak differently’, the question should be about language which challenges rather than reinforces gender polarisation. In other words, emphasis should be shifted from ‘gender difference’ to ‘the difference gender makes’ (Cameron, 1992).

It is important to note that feminine and masculine identities are not in fact opposites as constructed by the structuralist paradigm, but are mutual social or cultural constructs. Jenkins (1996), a structuralist sociologist, defined identity by classifying the world into two social groups, ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Hence, it is from such structuralist understandings that the essentialist feminists had derived their binary approach and this is now strongly challenged by poststructuralists. For instance, Hall (1996) a post-structuralist sociologist, argues that identity is not a given, but is constructed through discourse and disciplines. If identity is a construct, then gender identity is also a construct. Similarly, Butler (1990: 33) argues that gender is performative: ‘Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which over time produce the appearance of substance, of a ‘natural’ ‘kind of being’. Butler (1990: 33) further emphasises that a female speaker faces a double bind: if on the one hand, she does not learn to speak like a lady, she will be criticised, ostracised or scolded. If on the other hand, she does learn to speak like a lady, she will be systematically denied access to power on the grounds that she is not capable of holding it with her linguistic behaviour as partial evidence for that claim. This means that by performing these acts, behaviours imposed by culture or society become an accepted norm, and such behaviour after a period of time appears natural. Furthermore, gender is

reaffirmed and displayed by the constant repetition of acts in accordance with laid-down norms. Cameron (1997: 49), arguing from a poststructuralist approach, states that “people are whom they are because of (among other things) the way they talk”. Her reason for adopting this approach is embedded in the way women and men communicate daily.

However, the focus in this research is not on classifying differences between the speech of women and men, but to investigate the on-going use of linguistic and non-linguistic resources by individual women and men to produce gender distinctions. Hence the route taken in this thesis involves examining men and women’s use of one particular variety of language, *isiHlonipho*, and the role it plays in forming or constructing their identities.

### **1.5.3 Socialisation**

Some researchers, for example, Maltz and Borker (1982: 204-209), argue that in many societies girls and boys use and interpret language differently as a result of the different patterns of socialisation that they experience while growing up. For example, in most Western societies girls and boys operate in single-sex peer groups through most of their childhood. During this time they acquire and develop different styles of interaction. In a study in New Zealand, Holmes (1995: 7) found that boys’ interactions tend to be more competitive and control-oriented, while the girls interact more co-operatively and focus on relative closeness. According to Maltz and Borker (1982: 200), men and women grow up and are socialised into different sub-cultures, which serve as the bases for different ideologies. This leads to different perceptions of the characteristics of friendly interaction, rules for engaging in it, and ways of signaling solidarity (Du Plessis 1995: 23).

#### **1.5.4 Societal norms**

The social norms in many societies are such that power and interactional control are given to men. Most women are required to accept and support men without challenging these norms (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 199). Lakoff (1975: 53-57) claims that for American middle class society, socialisation reinforces sex roles and societal order. For example, women's societal role requires them to avoid offence at all costs. Thus, women are required to use hyper-correct grammar and super-polite forms; to avoid the use of swear words; use rising intonation in declarative statements, and to ensure that their message is understood correctly by both intensifying and hedging utterances. Women have to bear in mind that to avoid any offence they should not express their views at all. In contrast, men are free to swear, rough talk, joke and challenge each other, thus showing their allegiance or belonging to a particular group. Thus the speech of women is seen as immature, unassertive and hyper-polite. The speech of men is seen as assertive, adult and correct (Du Plessis, 1995: 23). This published piece of work by Lakoff (1975), though not based on empirical research, is probably the source of the linguistic tradition that women are more polite than men.

#### **1.5.5 Power and dominance**

It has been acknowledged by Brown and Levinson (1987: 15) that power plays an important role in determining the level of politeness which the speaker would use to an addressee. For example, in societies where women have an inferior role and are vulnerable to men, they use predominantly negative polite speech to men.

According to Holmes (1995: 7-8), the greater societal power accorded to men allows them to define and control situations within their communities. In some societies male norms predominate in interaction. Deuchar (1988 in Holmes, 1995: 8) argues that in situations where women are powerless members of a subordinate group, they are likely to be more linguistically polite than the men who are in control.

The claim that the speech of women is considered more polite than that of men will be looked at in greater detail as it forms an important part of this thesis, in which I will try to establish whether the speech of women or men, in the *isiZulu* L1 speaking community, is considered more polite within the framework of the usage of *isiHlonipho* in the target community. As noted, the comparison of my findings with similar/different observations in both areas (urban and rural) will be of interest.

According to Freeman and McElhinny (in McKay and Hornberger, 1996: 251), in societies where politeness is not acquired through language learning but is seen as a skill, men are understood as being more polite than women. However, in societies where politeness is perceived as a form of respect (rather than a skill) and indirectness is valued, women tend to be seen as more polite than men. My study will attempt to establish if either of these two categories apply to *isiZulu* L1 speakers from both areas under study.

Studies have shown that characteristics of men's speech in one society might be associated with women's speech in other societies. For example, in Malagasy (Keenan 1974), while the men use language subtly and try to maintain good communication in their relationships and avoid confrontations, the women openly criticise and confront others. While men prefer indirectness as an expression of respect, the women are more

direct. In this society directness is associated with deviation from tradition, and therefore with being less polite. Hence, indirectness is equated with politeness, and as a result men are to be more polite. This is in contrast to the pattern in Western societies. For example, Preisler (1986) found that British women are considered linguistically more polite than British men. The behaviour for the Malagasy society can be accounted for by the different roles that men and women have in this society (Holmes, 1992: 324), where men are engaged in village-to-village negotiations, dispute resolution and marriage requests, activities which are conducted through a traditional politeness system. Women on the other hand, spend a lot of time in the market place where transactions take place through a devalued European politeness system. Therefore, from a traditional perspective, women are not as skilful in polite speech as men.

According to Wessels (1995: 122), Lakoff's (1975) publication on American middle class society claimed that some politeness markers, such as tag questions, rising intonation and hedges are typical of women's language, thereby illustrating that women have a tendency to be linguistically more polite than men. Similarly, other researchers such as Brown and Levinson (1987: 252) also considered these forms to be politeness devices. Brown and Levinson found that in the Tenejapan society, women were overall more polite than men. Moreover, they (1987: 251-252) found that Tenejapan women use mostly negative politeness strategies when talking to men, and positive politeness strategies when talking to women, while men are relatively brusque to anyone, regardless of sex. This is a confirmation of the claim by Brown (1980: 119), that the level of politeness one uses would depend on the social relationship one has with the addressee. She found that in Tzeltal, the language spoken by the Tenejapan society, there is a class of particles which operates as adverbs, modifying the force of a speech act by expressing

something about the speaker's attitude towards the act being performed or towards the addressee (Brown, 1980: 119). In other words, these adverbs either strengthen or weaken what is said. Hedging is seen as being negatively polite and emphasising is seen as being positively polite. Brown (1980: 122) found that Tenejapan women use more particles in their (Tzeltal) speech than men and that their speech is more elaborate than men's speech for both positive politeness (emphasising) and negative politeness (hedging). The data presented by Brown suggest that women in Tenejapan are overall more polite than men. Women tend to use negative politeness towards both men as well as other women because of their sensitivity to face-threatening elements in their speech, and they use positive politeness towards men as well as other women because they are more sensitive to positive face wants (Brown, 1980: 129).

The findings reported above lead me to the following key questions which I shall address in the *isiZulu* speaking community (within the context of *isiHlonipho*):

- (i) What are the linguistic acts of politeness among men and women?
- (ii) Are the politeness strategies of women towards women different from those towards men, and vice versa?

It is noted from the above discussion that rules for polite behaviour, or similarly their perception of what is polite and who should be polite, differ from one speech community to another. This raises the question as to what factors determine polite behaviour in a given society.

According to Holmes (1995: 11), deciding what is or what is not polite in any community involves assessing social relationships along three dimensions: a) the solidarity-social

distance dimension, b) the power dimension, and c) the formality dimension. The first two dimensions will be looked at in detail in the next section, as the influence of these variables will be investigated in my study on the *isiZulu* speaking community.

#### **1.5.6 Solidarity-social distance**

The way in which solidarity or social distance is expressed linguistically differs from culture to culture. Leech (1983: 126) identifies social distance as an important factor in determining politeness behaviour. According to him, the determination of social distance involves not only the roles people assume in relation to one another in a given situation but also how well they know each other. Brown and Levinson (1987) also identify the importance of social distance as a relevant social dimension in all cultures. However, the factors that determine the level of importance will differ from culture to culture. Their model of politeness suggests that the greater the social distance between participants, the more politeness is required towards the other person.

#### **1.5.7 Power/Status**

Power refers to the ability of participants to influence one another's circumstances. Brown and Levinson (1987: 77) define the relative power between hearer and speaker as the degree to which the hearer can impose his plans and self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the speaker's.

Power may be derived from a number of sources, for example, one's financial status, knowledge, social and political prestige. Power may also be culturally constructed, in

terms of the power of the older person over a younger person or husband over a wife, etc. According to Holmes (1995: 17), power attracts deferential behaviour, including linguistic deference or negative politeness. In other words, people are generally more respectful to people who hold power and would try not to offend them.

Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out that the dimensions of power and social distance are interlinked. According to them, indirectness should increase with social distance and decrease with social power. Thus, one would expect greater indirectness between strangers and in upward speech from persons in relatively lower positions to their superiors. Holmes (1995: 18) is in agreement that power and social distance are interlinked: while negative politeness strategies are used to express distance, they also emphasise power distinctions. On the other hand, positive politeness strategies express solidarity and also emphasise equality between participants.

In closing this section, it must be noted that the context in which interaction occurs also plays an important role in determining the level of politeness one would use i.e. politeness is context dependent. This means that the solidarity-social distance dimension and power dimension cannot be considered in isolation but must be looked at in the context in which interaction occurs. For example, a wife will show more respect towards her husband in the presence of her in-laws than she would in their (in-laws) absence.

According to Holmes (1995: 20), negative politeness strategies are used more often in formal settings and interactions, while positive politeness strategies are used in more intimate and less formal situations.

The dimensions of social distance and status in the context of *isiHlonipho* will be explored further in my study of the *isiZulu* speaking community. Questions to be addressed are:

- (i) Does the status of the hearer (male/female) have any influence on the politeness behaviour of the speaker (male/female)?
- (ii) Does the social distance between the speaker and the hearer have an effect on their politeness behaviour?

## **1.6 GENDER AND POLITENESS**

The topic ‘gender and politeness’, was thematised by one of the first discussions of language and gender. Lakoff’s (1975) essay examines politeness in relation to women and concludes that the “kinds of politeness used by and of and to women”, such as over-politeness (Lakoff, 1975: 82), are by no means accidental: on the contrary, they are confining and oppressive. In attempting to define and describe ‘women’s’ language’, Lakoff acknowledges that politeness has variations that can be classed as politeness used by women and politeness used by men. Women are portrayed to be ‘more polite’ than men and as conversing in a ‘powerless language’: this too, is the result of male dominance. In this way, women are seen to have a particular polite speech style that, at the same time, conveys a lack of authority. Men on the other hand, are depicted as oppressors, domineering, less polite. Lakoff’s work has been critiqued because her claims were based mainly on personal intuition and not on sufficient empirical data. Nevertheless, she introduces what has since become an important topic in the discussion of gender and politeness: the claim that women are ‘more polite’ than men.

A few years later Brown drew on the Mayan culture from Mexico to show how and why ‘women are more polite’ (1980: 111). In this society, women are all categorised as non-powerful in relation to men. Furthermore, the femininity of the women is seen to override their individuality and also requires them to behave interactively as subservient to men. To establish this status of women, Brown (1980) demonstrates differences in the Mayan men and women’s use and style of language. Women are perceived as assuming more strengthening particles (like ‘sure’) when speaking to women, than when speaking to men. On the other hand, when women speak to men they tend to use more weakening particles, which are perceived as a sign of respect or non-assertiveness (Brown, 1980: 113). In addition, women make use of more particles when speaking to women than towards men, which also indicates respect. Consequently, women in this community are seen to have their own speech style. Clearly, Brown is working within the difference model. As a result, the focus here is on ‘gender difference’ rather than ‘the difference gender makes’.

It is important to note that recent work in politeness in African languages has shown that non-verbal forms of language are crucial for the understanding of polite behaviour in the African setting (De Kadt, 1994; Wood, 1992). This study will therefore take both the verbal and non-verbal forms of behaviour into consideration since it is fundamental to consider how important and necessary the non-verbal forms are in order to correctly evaluate polite behaviour (*isiHlonipho*: in this study) among isiZulu speaking people. The choice of *isiHlonipho* is motivated by lack of research in this area of African languages. It is expected that this special focus on *isiHlonipho* will enrich our understanding of the contemporary status of the politeness strategies of isiZulu L1

speakers, as well as our understanding of politeness and cultural rules for polite behaviour among *isiZulu* L1 speakers.

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

I have developed this rather detailed literature review because my research topic cuts across a number of fields in which research output has been extremely prolific. This overview has enabled me to refine my original questions further.

I now draw together the set of questions developed.

- (i) What are *isiZulu* speaking males and females' understanding of *isiHlonipho* as a linguistic variety?
- (ii) Is this understanding of *isiHlonipho* constant or has it changed in different areas, that is, urban and rural?
- (iii) Are the linguistic politeness strategies of women towards women different from those towards men and vice versa?
- (iv) Do men or women value *isiHlonipho* more highly in this (*isiZulu* L1 speakers) community?
- (v) To what extent do males and females from rural and urban areas share the same understanding of *isiHlonipho*?
- (vi) Are there linguistic differences in the politeness strategies of rural women versus urban women?
- (vii) What are the attitudes of rural and urban women towards *isiHlonipho*?
- (viii) What is the influence of such factors as age, social distance and status on the use of *isiHlonipho*?
- (ix) Which of the theoretical framework(s), if any, are most appropriate for analysing politeness phenomena in the *isiZulu* speaking community?

(x) Do women in urban or rural areas still use the language of avoidance? Identify the *hloniph* term that would be used as an alternative for a particular term.

To sum up: in the study of language and gender, the African experience is still unexplored. An African perspective on the issue of language (*isiHloniph*) and gender is crucial for the emancipation of women in all societies. In order to explore this issue in the African context, an examination of men and women's use of *isiHloniph* as well as ways in which gender identities are constructed will be investigated.

In the next Chapter, I present the methodology that will be used in an attempt to obtain answers for these key questions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The areas selected for data collection were Umlazi township which is an urban area in Durban, and Mdumezulu which is a rural area in Mbumbulu district just outside of the Durban metro. The participants of my study (from Umlazi) come from an area which is dominated by educated and high social class dwellers, whereas Mdumezulu is predominantly a low middle class dwelling where the majority of the residents are uneducated. I have worked in both areas and am familiar with the different lifestyles of both areas. My familiarity with these areas and its people made participants in the research respond freely to the questions during the interview sessions. At the same time this may have been a limitation, in that I tended to focus on the people I know. I feel that it is of particular importance that I should mention this point as it might somehow affect the responses of the respondents.

Since this study is a broad investigation of politeness (in the context of *isiHlonipho*) covering both linguistic and non-linguistic politeness strategies of *isiZulu* speaking women and men from rural and urban areas, different methods of data collection are used. Each method has its own advantages and limitations, so the limitations of one method could be balanced by the advantages of another. The complementary methods of data collection (mentioned below) are adopted in order to enhance the validity of my findings, as well as to provide answers to the key questions that are posed.

The methods of data collection used in this study are interviews, discourse completion task questionnaires (DCTs) and non-participatory observation. Two factors inspired the choice of this format for data collection: firstly, the need to collect both production and perception data, and secondly, the principle of multimethod. Cohen (1996) has called on researchers to use a multimethod approach in their assessment, in view of the fact that no single method can assess the entirety of any linguistic behaviour and indeed, that no perfect method exists. At the same time I wished to collect data on the production of *isiHlonipho* by men and women, and the perception of *isiHlonipho*, also by men and women. Under the category of production data, non-participatory observation was employed; for the second category of perception data, discourse completion task questionnaires and interviews were used.

## **2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

As mentioned above the data were collected through non-participatory observations, interviews and discourse completion task questionnaires. Below I present a more detailed description of the research methodology in accordance with the sequence in which the data were collected.

### **2.2.1 Non-Participatory Observation**

As a prelude to the interviews and discourse completion task questionnaires (DCTs), linguistic and non-linguistic politeness strategies of *isiZulu* speaking women and men from both urban and rural areas were observed. Observations were done in different contexts and under different circumstances, for example at weddings, funerals, and ordinary interaction in family households. Notes were made on paper and from memory

as to conversations and the non-verbal aspects of conversations. During the period of observation my attention was focused on the possibly gendered nature of linguistic and non-linguistic strategies of both males and females from urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the production of *isiHlonipho* was observed. *IsiHlonipho* lexical items were also collected from all the respondents.

It is important to note that data obtained from the observation of natural interaction will have a high degree of authenticity and can therefore contribute substantially to an investigation such as this one. Bloomer, Trott and Wray (1998), are of the opinion that while many types of research can only measure elicited behaviour, because specific tasks are presented in a controlled environment, observation enables one to examine non-elicited behaviour as and when it occurs (for example, slips of the tongue, paralinguistic behaviour, interactional behaviour, and pathological phenomena). This, according to Bloomer et al. (1998), allows for a much more 'holistic' view of how language is being used in context. For this reason it is a technique much favoured by ethnographers. The data collected during this phase, revealed great differences (which will be discussed in the next chapter) in both linguistic and non-linguistic politeness strategies of *isiZulu* speaking women and men from urban and rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal.

## **2.3 INTERVIEWS**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

I decided to use interviews because the nature of this study is such that firstly, I had to establish from a cultural perspective, what the understanding of *isiHlonipho* is in the target community and secondly, through further interviews with different individuals, to determine whether this understanding is consistent or whether the interviewees greatly

diverged in their understanding of *isiHlonipho*. Using questionnaires only would have been too restrictive as they would have not allowed for further elaboration and the development into a discussion.

Interviews proved advantageous in many ways for this study. Firstly, I found that since interviews involved direct interaction with the respondents, I was able to motivate them by arousing their interest in the topic. Secondly, the specific interview technique I employed allowed me to be very flexible and adaptable, as I could probe, follow up, reflect and get participants to elaborate on certain issues on which I needed more information. Highly beneficial for the nature of the data I collected was the fact that I observed the participants of this study in their homes and could therefore also document some of the interaction in their homes. This allowed me to correlate the responses that I obtained from the interviewees with the general behaviour of the entire family. However, it should be noted that one major practical disadvantage of using interviews is that it proved to be very time-consuming.

### **2.3.2 Interviewing procedure**

While politeness is a universal phenomenon, the accepted societal norm of what constitutes polite behaviour varies from one culture to another. Therefore, politeness is culturally determined. The starting point of this study was to first establish what *isiHlonipho* as a linguistic variety which is ‘traditional’ and strongly culturally embedded means to *isiZulu L1* speaking females and males, thus providing an answer to the first question posed at the end of Chapter 2.

In proceeding, I drew up a set of questions (see Appendix 1) which probed the interviewee's in-depth understanding of the linguistic and non-linguistic aspect of this variety. I used both structured and semi-structured questions in this schedule. The semi-structured questions were open-ended questions designed to allow for individual responses. The reason for using a combination of structured and semi-structured questions was to ensure a high degree of objectivity and uniformity, at the same time allowing for probing and clarification, while avoiding leading questions. The questions were phrased so as to elicit responses to different aspects pertaining to the understanding of *isiHlonipho*. These questions were used as guidelines and were expanded on or probed further depending on the answers that the interviewees had given.

The eight interviewees of the first research phase, all in the age group of 60+ (four males and four females), were chosen from different residential areas (urban and rural) and they came from different backgrounds, viz. retired educators involved in cultural activities/social activities, present day educators, and pensioners (not necessarily educated). All interviewees were isiZulu L1 speakers from the urban and rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu. All the interviews took place at the residences of each interviewee and each session lasted approximately one hour.

Furthermore, interviews with 20 males and 20 females, all in the age group of 30-49, were conducted. The sample consisted of 10 males and 10 females from the rural area as well as 10 males and 10 females from the urban area. As mentioned earlier I have worked in both areas and therefore it was not difficult at first to randomly select my sample. However, the problem began when some of the people I had chosen fell ill or lost close relatives. Because of the mourning period especially for women, I was compelled to

change my sample a few times. This did not in any way affect the findings of the study since the individuals came from the same area and after a brief explanation about the study, were willing to participate. Another challenge was the geographical location of some of the houses in the rural area. I had to walk long distances to reach residences of some participants and sometimes there was no network which made it difficult to make appointments over the phone. The procedure described above was followed, except that the questions (see Appendix 2) did not focus on the basic understanding of *isiHlonipho* but on their attitudes as well.

## **2.4 QUESTIONNAIRES: DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASKS**

DCT's were also utilized in this study since they provided the best method for seeking answers to specific situations. Although DCTs are used, cognisance is taken of their limitations. It is recognized, for instance, that a disadvantage of the DCTs is that they merely elicit written responses to short dialogues. As such, they neither allow for continuous verbal interaction nor do they cater for the non-verbal aspects of interactions. Nonetheless, DCTs are advantageous in that they allow one to collect a large quantity of data reasonably quickly (Wolfson, 1988) and to control variables thereby giving coherence to the findings. Also, as discussed above, this method is useful when seeking answers to specific questions ( De Kadt, 1992b).

### **2.4.1 DCTs: Set One: Females from urban and rural areas**

In the light of the results obtained from the interviews, questionnaires were drawn up in the form of DCTs (see Appendix 4). The DCTs were structured to obtain responses to

both linguistic and non-linguistic situations. The specific situations in the DCTs reflected potential real-life occurrences within the target community. Participants were presented with situations likely to take place in the daily interactions of different environments. All fifteen of these situations focused on both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of *isiHlonipho*. They (participants) were then expected to read each situation in the DCT and respond in the space provided. Respondents were also informed that they should fill in the DCTs individually and not discuss their responses with each other. The completed DCTs were then collected a few days later. A total of 20 DCTs were collected, comprising of 10 females from urban area and 10 females from rural area.

#### **2.4.2 DCTs: Set Two: Males from urban and rural areas**

Since this study is a cross-gender study another set of DCTs (set two) was compiled. The format was the same as that of set one. The difference was in the gender of the person to whom *isiHlonipho* was directed. The reason for two separate sets of DCTs was to clearly distinguish between the responses of males and females. Combining the study into a single set of DCTs would have resulted in a very long and tiresome questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following analysis of the politeness strategies of men and women from the urban and rural areas draws on the observation, interviews, and discourse completion task data. It will be shown that these men and women from different areas clearly do use significantly different politeness strategies. At the same time, however, differences in strategies emerge within the groups of both males and females from urban and rural areas. My analysis will show that, while all *isiZulu* speaking males and females profess to utilising *isiHlonipho*, it is only women who live in the rural areas who still use *isiHlonipho* in its authentic traditional style. This study also provides evidence that there is an indication that some *isiZulu* speaking women are beginning to reject traditional femininity in favor of a more westernised, emancipated identity as discussed by De Kadt and Ige (2002). The data analysis will reveal that this rejection of traditional femininity was noted more frequently among female respondents who came from the urban area in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **3.2 DISCUSSION**

##### **3.2.1 Observation**

In Zulu culture, showing respect is central to the indication of politeness, and can be expressed both verbally and non-verbally. Respect is supposed to be reciprocal, being conveyed from the speaker to the addressee and from the addressee to the speaker. In this analysis the focus is on the utilisation of *isiHlonipho* by both males and females from the

mentioned areas. The observation will reveal if for typical situations and contexts (for example, traditional ceremonies and funerals), there seem to be specific verbal and non-verbal strategies.

### **3.2.1.1 Observation of traditional ceremony “*Umembeso*”**

I will illustrate the female usage of *isiHlonipho* by describing the traditional ceremony of “*umembeso*” which I attended at Mdumezulu area in Umbumbulu. Before the ceremony the future wife’s family provides the future husband’s family with the list of items (gifts) that should be brought along on this particular day. This list comprises of gifts such as blankets, groceries, three-legged pots, grass mats, scarves, etc. A hat, coat, axe, sjambok and other items will also be in the list (for the wife’s father). Apart from these gifts the future husband is also expected to buy clothing for the future wife. This is the most important part of the ceremony since the name of the ceremony is also symbolic of what happens when the future wife is dressed up in the clothes brought by her future husband’s family. In *isiZulu* when you “*mbesa*” something or someone, you cover that thing or that someone with something. It is important to note that the purpose of “*umembeso*” is to show the future wife how the in-laws want her to dress up as their future daughter-in-law.

During the ceremony that I attended at Mdumezulu, after all the gifts had been handed over to the future wife’s family, the future bride was dressed up by the members of the future husband’s family and came to sit on the grass mat. She was dressed in a long dress with a hat as well as a scarf on her shoulders. A bench was provided for the future husband to sit on. After all the members of the future bride’s family had received their gifts, the mother-in-law made her speech. The speech was aimed at prescribing correct behavior to the new wife so that “initiation into her new home is successful” (Raum,

1973: 78). Furthermore, West (1976: 17) asserts, the purpose is to teach the new future wife that she has entered a new “family” and that she must learn to respect and honour a different set of ancestors. All this time the bride-to-be is seated on the grass mat with her legs folded. I enquired from the elders as to why the woman was subjected to sitting on the grass mat for such a long time. The response was:

*Umakoti oseganile akahlali esihlalweni kodwa uhlala ocansini. Ukaahlala kwakhe ocansini kukhombisa ukuzithoba nokuthi uyazi ukuthi akalingani nabantu basemzini. Kanjalo noma ngabe uhlangana nabasemzini endleleni kufanele umakoti asole ukuze akhombise ukuhlonipha.*

When a woman is about to get married she does not sit on the chair especially in the presence of her in-laws. If she happens to meet them in circumstances where the chair is not available, she is expected to bend her body and face the floor as a way of showing respect.

The absence of the father-in-law was also noted. On enquiring about his absence I was told that this ceremony is mainly attended by women and a few men who accompany the future husband. To maintain his dignity as the father of the husband, the father-in-law is not expected to attend. Dowling (1988b: 28) observes that this is done to maintain a certain amount of distance and formality between the new bride and her future husband's male relatives.

On attending a similar ceremony in Umlazi, it was very interesting to note the following similarities:

- (i) The father-in-law did not attend the ceremony (*umembeso*)
- (ii) The future bride was seated on the grass mat.
- (iii) The mother-in-law made a speech with more emphasis on the issue of respect

### **3.2.1.2 Observation of households (Urban and Rural)**

The dichotomy between urban and rural women was spelled out by Dowling (1988b) in her research on *hlonipha* when she noted that in the rural areas the older women adhered more to the custom than the rural younger women. In contrast, urban women indicated that they did not think that the custom has validity for young city dwellers.

From my observation in the rural area, I noted that the older women (from the age of 50-60+) strictly adhere to the custom of *hlonipha*. The husband has his own chair, and utensils which are not used by anyone except him. It was also noted that there was not much communication between the husband and the wife or between him and the children. If children need something from their father, the mother is the one who speaks to him. It is important to add that the mother waits for the time when the father is in a good mood and then tells him what the child/children are requesting from him. This is affirmed by Herbert (1990: 469), who noted that children normally showed “respect, deference and awe” towards their father, while between the mother and her children there grew “the deepest bonds of affection”. In one of the families I observed, both the wife and husband call each other “*baba ka Menelisi* and *maka Menelisi*” (father of Menelisi and mother of Menelisi). Menelisi is their first born child. I also noted with interest that at times that this would change to “*Mshazi*” (husband’s clan name) or “*Hlokohloko*” (wife’s clan name). This reciprocity is also noted by Dowling (1988b: 53), when she says that the man is expected to treat his wife respectfully, but obviously not in the same self-effacing way. I was also surprised by the fact that in some families where in-laws had long passed away, the wife still held onto the linguistic constraints imposed on her by them. This observation confirms Trudgill’s (1974) hypothesis that women are linguistically more

conservative than men, and more cautious in abandoning older linguistic practices such as *isiHlonipho*.

On observing the households of younger people in the same area (rural), I noticed that couples who live with their in-laws adhere to the custom of *isiHlonipho*. Most couples live with their families because of the high rate of unemployment. In the very few households where the in-laws were not in the same premises, I observed a certain amount of linguistic laxity on some of the non-linguistic and linguistic aspects of *hlonipha*. To illustrate this point, I noted that the husband in this particular household does spend some time with his wife and children and that the wife does not always cover her head unless they go to church or is attending a funeral or if the in-laws are visiting them. I should quickly add that of the ten families which were under surveillance in Mdumezulu, this was the only household where such laxity was observed. When trying to elicit the husband's opinions, he mentioned that his wife had to be careful in the presence of his family members because they would say that he was failing to control her.

The following observations were made in the urban area:

- (i) The father does not have his own utensils (except in one family where the wife explained that it was a birthday present for her husband, and that is how he happened to have his own utensils).
- (ii) In some households the family eats together but in others, children would sit together in one room and parents would be in another room.

- (iii) The father is not called by his name (for couples who are 60+ years of age) but is called by his name in some of the households of couples who are 30-49 years of age.
- (iv) The father does not have his own chair (except in one household for a young couple where there is a two seater for mom and dad when they are watching television). Anyone can sit on that sofa if they (parents) were not around.

The social norm view of politeness assumes that each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behaviour, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context (Fraser 1990: 220). According to Nwoye (1992: 312), within the social norm model politeness is “seen as arising from an awareness of one’s social obligations to the other members of the group to which one owes primary allegiance.” Impoliteness or rudeness, on the other hand, emerges when one’s actions differ from the politeness norms of that particular society. In the Zulu culture, women know or are informed when they get married about the behaviour expected of them in different contexts. The context I observed for this investigation is the funeral of the husband as opposed to that of a wife or married woman. The following observations were made in the rural area:

- (i) If the man dies the woman is expected to cry.
- (ii) She (the wife) has to sit down on the grass mat (although in some households a mattress was provided).
- (iii) She is not permitted to look at the mourners that come to pay their last respects.
- (iv) Her face must be covered.
- (v) She may not talk. Elderly women have to speak on her behalf.

In the urban area, the following was observed:

- (i) The woman sits on the mattress (except for one family where I was told that according to their religion, Seventh Day Adventist, there was no need to sit on the mattress. The wife of the deceased sits on the chair like everybody else and was not permitted to cry).
- (ii) The face of the woman does not have to be covered but a scarf on the head and shoulders is worn in order to show respect.
- (iii) She does not talk. Close relatives or the mother-in-law speak on her behalf. Her father-in-law still does not come close to her (wife of the deceased).

In contrast to what happens when the man dies I observed that there is no prescribed behaviour for the husband when the wife has passed on. He can sit anywhere around the house but not where the mourners are. Close relatives who are women will sit on the mattress. He may talk with his friends and relatives.

What one can conclude from this observation is that for women who are *isiZulu* L1 speakers, there are prescribed behaviours expected of them in different contexts (weddings, funerals, etc.), which are in line with showing respect. I say this because if a woman does not adhere to those prescribed behaviors, she is then described as rude or disrespectful. For example, Kuckertz (1984: 268) suggests that women in mourning for deceased husbands (re)adopt the *hloniphala* customs of a newly married woman; such a period of mourning typically lasts for one year. A wife who does not observe the period of mourning shows disrespect for the family of her husband and she will be made responsible for all misfortune in the homestead. Contrary to what Kuckertz suggests, some interviewees revealed that there are males who, because of their religious beliefs,

instruct their wives not to mourn in the “traditional” way once they have passed on. Although this is received with great hostility by the in-laws it is reported to be happening. Inspite of what the interviewees had to say, from my observations it is still females who are expected to show respect to males, and Herbert (1990: 462) supports this statement when he argues that generally speaking, respect and avoidances are shown only by the daughter-in-law. In my opinion this is the reason why males are able to dominate conversations. I say this because in Zulu culture submissiveness, humbleness, and speechlessness before a senior person are regarded as a show of respect in the Zulu culture. Therefore a woman who is seen to be contesting issues is regarded as disrespectful. This brings this discussion to the next point of dominance and difference. .

Three models commonly termed ‘deficit’, ‘dominance’, and ‘difference’ have dominated feminist linguistic approaches to language and gender. As argued by Cameron (1996), Bing and Bergvall (1996) and Johnson (1997), the first model, that of ‘deficit’, presents women as disadvantaged speakers based on their early sex-role socialisation. To illustrate this point, in the families that I visited I heard the mother of a young girl saying to her: “*Ungakhulumi noma ikanjani nomfowenu omncane ngoba lokho kukhombisa ukungamhloniphi*” “*Ubokhumbula ukuthi wena uyintombazane*” (You must not speak anyhow to your younger brother. Remember that you are a girl).

The second model, that of ‘dominance’, exemplified for instance by the work of Zimmerman and West (1975), West (1984), and Fishman (1983), challenge male control of language and focus on how language reflects, constructs and maintains male dominance. Zimmerman and West conclude that women perform poorly in cross-sex conversations in comparison to their male counterparts. In this study, I noted that in rural

areas males still dominate conversations because women there still believe that the husband's word is final. Interesting though was my discovery that in the urban area where the woman is not employed, the conversation is dominated by men. Where the woman is working, I noted that she does have a voice and is not afraid to differ with what her husband is saying.

I also noted that calling each other by name is not done by most couples, young and old, rural and urban. There were, however, a few young couples that call each other by names like 'babes', 'sweetie', etc.

Women in the rural area still use the language of respect (*isiHlonipho*). The following is the list of lexical terms that I collected from the participants. The interviewees were requested to write down *hlonipha* words that they were using or were used by their mothers when they grew up. The general term is in the left column and the term of respect (*hlonipha*) is in the right column:

<u>IsiZulu</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Hlonipha</u>
□ Amanzi	water	amada, amayiwane, amandambi
□ Indlela	path	inyathuko, inkambo
□ Umfana	boy	umkhapheyana
□ Indoda	man	injeza
□ Umuntu	human being	umenziwa
□ Ikati	cat	umangobe
□ Inja	dog	umgodoyi, ingcanga
□ Inkukhu	fowl, chicken	ikhwibi, intshingintshingi
□ Ukugeza	to wash, bath	ukuhlamba

□ Imfene	baboon	indangala
□ Amaqanda	eggs	amachoboka
□ Amasi	sour milk	amacubane
□ Amehlo	eyes	amabuko
□ Amazinyo	teeth	abathakathi
□ Izinwele	hair	izinsonto
□ Izcathulo	shoes	izingwabelo
□ Inkomo	cow	imeshe
□ Ukuhamba	to walk	ukukhija, ukujokola
□ Umfula	river	umlambo
□ Nomasokisi	socks	Nomakawuse
□ Mnyama	black, dark outside	mpisholo
□ Mbambeni	catch him/her	Mphuthumeni
□ Isiketi	skirt	isiyaluko
□ Imbobo	hole	umbhotshozelwa
□ Ukudakwa	drunk	ukuba mnandi, ukuqhuba imbuzi
□ Imali	money	inkece
□ Isipuni	spoon	ukhezo
□ Isivalo	door	isicabha
□ Isivalo sebhodwe	lid for the pot	isidikiseloselo
□ Ukubhala	to write	ukuloba
□ Siza	help	faka isandla
□ Indlu	house	inkatheko
□ Umshayelo	broom	umkhwayelo
□ Umlungu	white man	umgwansi

During the process of collecting the lexical terms mentioned above, males in the rural area were also very helpful since most of them are well aware of the linguistic avoidances prescribed for their wives. Some men even confessed to reporting their wives to their parents if they forgot to *hlonipha*.

The interviews were then conducted after the observations had been done. It was hoped that the interviews would shed light on other issues that could not be probed during observation.

### **3.2.2 Interviews with elders**

#### **3.2.2.1 Religious perspective**

From the responses of the interviewees, one may summarize that politeness within the isiZulu L1 speaking community is seen as an all-encompassing phenomenon, comprising gratitude, kindness, courtesy, love, respect and good manners. These virtues furthermore determine the character of the person. According to the Biblical injunction, respect is fundamental to the relationship between two people. In dealing with a fellow human being one should always show nobility. Politeness plays a similar role to the Zulu word '*Ubuntu*' meaning humanity or a deeply felt respect and belief in the equal value of all human beings.

Great emphasis is placed on sharing whatever one has with the greater community, irrespective of one's own particular situation. According to the religious perspective, one

receives greater blessing the more one shares. As a result, hospitality also plays an important role within the Zulu culture. One is expected to welcome and entertain one's guest with open arms without ever considering this to be an imposition. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the host to insist that the guest partake in a meal even though he/she was not expected. In days gone by, a man would even slaughter a beast for unexpected guests, and this would in turn make him highly respected in the community.

Within this framework, the scriptures emphasize the importance of respecting one's elders (one of the ten commandments) and also stipulate that wives have to respect their husbands. In order to respect God, one has to first learn to respect one's parents and other elders. According to the scriptures, the elders also have an important role to play since it is their responsibility to instill good morals and values in their children. In so doing, they have to be role models, leading by example.

### **3.2.2.2 Cultural Perspective**

From the cultural perspective, the interviewees (those who are 60+) confirmed that age, social distance and gender play a significant role in *hloniphia*. For example, a child is not allowed to backchat his/her parents. On the one hand, the wife is not allowed to backchat her husband but on the other hand, the same is not said about the husband. The authority given to elders is such that a child is not permitted to correct or oppose their views. Children are also not permitted to participate in discussions among adults. If a child participates in such discussions without formally being asked to do so by an adult, he/she is considered to be exhibiting rude behavior and also being disrespectful towards elders. Moreover, children are not permitted to address elders simply by their forenames, but to

have to prefix it by terms such as aunt, uncle, brother or sister. For example, one refers to ones elder brother as *Ubhuti* (brother), and sister as *Usisi* (sister).

Associated with the above is the importance that Zulu people place on preserving the image of the family. For example, the woman who does not respect her husband as well as in-laws, not only embarrasses her husband's family but her family as well. That is why when she gets married, women who are elders, including her relatives, will emphasize the following to her: '*Ungasiphoxi emzini*' (meaning, do not disappoint us).

From the above, one understands that within Zulu families, males play a dominant role, with the husband generally making all the major decisions. The father-in-law makes major decisions if they live on the same premises. Wives are not involved in discussions about family matters unless invited to do so. Daughters-in-law do not enter the bedroom of the in-laws. If she needs to speak with her father-in-law about something, she will ask the mother-in-law to do so on her behalf. This is further confirmed by Herbert (1990: 462), when he states that the relationship between the daughter-in-law and her father-in-law and other senior male relatives whose names she avoids is not reciprocal. Generally speaking, respect and avoidance are shown only by the daughter-in-law.

The interviewees were also asked to discuss the significance of social status in the target community. They were unanimous that within the cultural value system there is a divide. Professionals such as doctors and lawyers are generally accorded a higher status than persons holding lower occupations, like administrative clerks or factory workers. Teachers in the rural areas are still held in such high esteem that it is the wish of the majority of parents for their children to grow up and become teachers. Previously, people who owned cattle were accorded high status, but very few people own cattle these days.

Interviewees agreed that the impact of social status is less significant if the person is a woman who has succeeded outside her customary domain, for example, as a doctor or owner of a business, as compared to being an ordinary teacher. In both urban and rural areas, men still share the belief that if your wife is more educated than you are or brings home more money than you do, then she will not respect you. This is also as a result of the preconceived notion of the roles and expectations of women.

Within the extended family system there are prescribed norms of behavior: for example, the daughter-in-law should not engage in an informal discussion with her father-in-law. If the husband is sitting with his friends or other members of the family, the wife should not come and sit with them unless asked to do so. If the children need something from their father, such as money for school, the mother should speak for them because they should grow up knowing that the father is a figure of respect. The husband will only be respected by members of the community if he receives respect from his family. Although all children are taught respect (both boys and girls), more emphasis is placed on the girl because it is believed that she will eventually get married and leave the family homestead to live with another family. Similarly, in the urban area children are still taught respect but more emphasis is placed on girls.

The issue of respect in interpersonal relationships was felt to be an indicator of a strong commitment to traditional cultural values. Almost every one of the interviewees dwelt at length on the key importance of *isiHlonipho* in interpersonal relationships, especially in inter-generational relationships. There was also general agreement that respect was lacking in the modern township context, as the following quotation indicates:

*"Kunomahluko omkhulu kabi phakathi kwendlela esakhula ngayo thina amakhaya nendlela izingane ezikhuliswa ngayo kulesikhathi samanje. Thina sakhuswa ngokuthi*

*sihloniphe omdala nomncane kodwa izingane azisamazi umuntu omdala nomncane”.*  
(Mr Mvuseni)

There is a great difference between how we grew up in the rural area, and how these young ones are growing up. At home we were taught to respect the young and adults alike. What I notice now is that the young ones don't do that, they don't care whether a person is young or an adult.

One of the interviewees(Mr Gudi) who is an ex-teacher and was a card-carrying member of a certain political organization, went as far as saying that his party was so concerned about the decline of respect that they decided to incorporate it in one of the subjects taught in schools at that time.

The interviewees also unanimously agreed on the issue of the need to maintain one's face in the broader community. The isiZulu L1 speaking respondents spoke of 'isithunzi' (dignity). If a person behaves in a manner which is not in keeping with the norms of his/her group/community, this is referred to as 'ukuzehlisa isithunzi' or 'lowering one's dignity'. This discussion implies that the concept of face in the isiZulu L1 speaking community is significantly different to that in Western societies, in the sense that greater emphasis is placed on the face associated with the collective image of the individual. Therefore, in order to maintain face one has to conform to the norms of behaviour of the group/society, rather than to live up to one's own expectations. (De Kadt,1998: 185).

It can be concluded from the discussion thus far that the factors that make a profound contribution to the understanding and management of the politeness phenomena (*Hlonipha*) in the isiZulu L1 speaking community, are age, social status, distance, gender of the participants, as well as the context in which the interaction occurs.

Interviews were also done with married women from urban and rural areas. These interviews were conducted in isiZulu since most of the interviewees felt comfortable with their mother tongue. However, I indicated to them that they may use English as well if they wanted to. With the permission of the interviewees, notes were taken during the interview. Hence, when writing up my analysis I was able to make use of the notes effectively.

### **3.2.3 Interviews with women (Urban and Rural Areas)**

**(Note that all items quoted here are based on the notes made from responses to interview questions in Appendix 2).**

The sample used consisted of 10 respondents from the rural area and 10 from the urban area. They comprised of married women in the age group 30-49.

It was interesting to note that the women were very open during the interview. I think this was partly because they knew me as well as the fact that they were responding in their mother tongue.

#### ***What is your understanding of isiHlonipho?***

In response to this item, 80% of the women in the rural area described *isiHlonipho* as the language of respect which is used by women who are married, but then further emphasized that all women are taught to *hlonipha* at an early age. The mother is expected to educate her daughters in this regard and that is why she would be blamed if her daughter is disrespectful. Dowling (1988b: 71) is of the opinion that training is important

in that it indicates that *hloniph*, while being primarily an imposed discipline, is at the same time regarded as verbal skill, which (my addition) is learned or acquired from the environment and not inborn.

*"Ukuhlonipha kuhambisana nokuzehlisa, ukhulume ngokuzithoba ikakhulukazi uma ukhuluma nomyeni wakho. Ukuhlonipha umzimba wakho uze ube ushadile. Nebhayibheli liyasho lithi abantu besifazane abahloniphe amadoda". (Khumbulile, 43 years of age)*  
Respect goes hand in hand with humbleness. Women should humble themselves especially when having a conversation with their husbands. Respect your body until you get married. The Bible also tells women to respect their husbands.

It was, however, surprising for me to come across one interviewee (Tholakele, 33, married for 5 years) from the rural area who gave me a very different understanding of *isiHlonipho*.

*"Senza abantu besifazane babe yizigqila zomamazala. Awukwazi ukukhuluma ukhululeke ngoba ugade ukathi ungadideki ngoba kuzothiwa awuhloniphi".*

It makes women to be the slaves of their mothers-in-law. You are not free when you speak because you don't want to go wrong since that would be regarded as being disrespectful.

Herbert (1990: 457) agrees with this idea when he says that the initial position of the young wife is one of subservience to her mother-in-law, and is under her constant surveillance and supervision. In my opinion it is this constant supervision that strains the relationship between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law.

Of the ten interviewees from the urban area, only two described *isiHlonipho* as a language of respect used by married women. The other eight women referred to it as language that was used by their grandmothers long, long ago. The eight women concurred that if it is still used today, it is probably only used by people in the rural areas:

*"Umuntu osebenzisa ulimi lokuhlonipha lapha elokishini angazithola eseyinhlekisa ngoba abantu ngeke bamuzwe ukuthi uthini". (Maphindi, 32.)*

Here in the township people would laugh at you if you used a language that they don't understand.

Dowling (1988b: 113), in agreement with the respondent, argues that if this internalization and identification (with *isiHlonipho*) is not reaffirmed or reciprocated by the members of the society, its importance will be severely undermined.

*"Intu ekhulunywa abantu abangafundile futhi abangasebenzi, ngoba umuntu osebenzayo nje umsebenzi osile akakwazi ukuthi aloku egade ukuthi ukhulumana kanjani". (Nokwazi, 30 years.)*

It's a language spoken by people who are not educated and unemployed, because employed people will find it difficult to be always careful of what they are saying.

### *In your opinion is there still a place for *isiHlonipho* in your culture? Why?*

Some interviewees from the rural area had this to say in response to this question:

*"Uma ukuhlonipha kungekho kusho ukuthi kuyog huma amadivosi nje abantu bangahlali emzini". (Mapoko 48 years)*

If there is no utilisation of *isiHlonipho* then there would be lots of divorce cases and the young wives would not stay long with the in-laws.

*"Sishadwa ngoba sihlonipha. Uma lelisiko lishabalala kusho ukuthi nomshado awuzukubakhona. Iningi labantu besilisa bathanda ukushada nomuntu ohloniphayo ozofike ahloniphe abazali namadlozi". Amadlozi yiwona anikeza inhlanhla". (Thokozile 45 years)*

We are asked into marriage because we show respect. If this custom disappears then men would find it difficult to choose a wife. Most men marry women who show respect since that woman will be capable of showing respect to his parents and the ancestors will also be happy to see her on the premises of the homestead. Its important for the woman to respect ancestors since it is believed that they are the ones who will give them good luck.

One interviewee from the urban area had the following to say:

*"Mhlawumbe lisenayo indawo emakhaya kodwa la emalokishini angiboni ukuthi lisengalunga uma lizolandela ngendlela elalensiwa ngayo kudala. Khona amakhosikazi ayahlonipha kodwa hayi njengasemakhaya". (Nompumelelo, 31 years)*

Maybe it no longer has a place in the townships if it has to be practised like long ago. Women still do show respect but not in the manner that rural women do.

*"Sinenkinga thina besifazane basemalokishini uma kwenzeka utholana nomuntu onabazali abahlala emafamu ngoba abasifuni bathi asazi lutho ngamasiko ngisho nendlela esiggoka ngayo ayibagculisi. Kwesinye isikhathi uthole abazali bomfana bethi akakushiye athathe intombi yasemakhaya ngoba abayifuni eyaselokishini. Uma kwenzeka ekushada ngenkani usuyofika uthole ukuhlukumezeka okuyisimanga ngoba vele bebengakufuni. (Nonhlanhla, 36 years)*

We have a problem with this custom because if you meet somebody who has parents who live in the farm, they will say they don't want him to marry a woman from the township since they know very little about customs. The parents will even force him not to marry you. If he defies his family and marries you then you will be ill-treated when it is time for you to be assimilated into the family.

Some of the urban respondents felt that there is no place for *isiHlonipho* in contemporary Zulu society since most people have now been westernized and urbanized. These women were quick to add that society should strive to promote mutual respect between genders.

### ***What is the purpose of *isiHlonipho*?***

The purpose of *isiHlonipho*, according to 90% of the women (from the rural area), is to ensure that:

- (i) The woman knows her place as a subordinate of the man.
- (ii) There is harmony within the family.
- (iii) The woman gives the husband the dignity he deserves.
- (iv) Women express gratitude to men for providing them with their basic needs.
- (v) The woman respects the in-laws and other important members of the husband's family.

*Is there any inconvenience caused by the fact that there are words that you cannot use? Why?*

Only one woman (from the rural area) concurred with the statement “*isiHlonipho* disempowers women”. This woman said that *isiHlonipho* drastically changes the linguistic behaviour of women when they enter into marriage, and what is more important to note is that it does not give them a voice but rather deprives them of the right to engage meaningfully in conversations with their partners and in-laws. The other 90% of the women felt that *isiHlonipho* helps a woman in a number of ways. Unlike in marriages where *isiHlonipho* is not used, there are no arguments because the woman knows that she is not supposed to argue with her husband. The woman knows exactly how to speak to her husband. They even said that rural men prefer rural women over urban women because of *isiHlonipho*, which they (rural women) use without questioning.

“*Ngimbonile umama wami ehlukunyezwa ugogo kodwa ethi noma ebika ekhaya kubo kuthiwe umendo unjalo akathule abekezele kuzolunga. Umama ubengakwazi ukuthi aphikisane nogogo, lokho asekushilo kufanele akuvume ngoba uma engakwenzi lokho kuzothiwa akahloniphi bese kufuneka ayolanda imbizi kubo. Mina ngibona lokuhloniphakubenza abantu besifazane bangabinamandla okushaya ngisho umthetho owodwa lo emizini yabo bengathathisanga kumamezala noma umkhwenyana*”.

(Tholakele, 33 years)

I witnessed many incidences where my mother was abused by my grandmother (her mother-in-law). She would report to her family but they would tell her to persevere. My mother could not disagree with my grandmother since that could result in her being sent home to fetch a goat as a token of apologizing. I think this *hlonipha* really does disempower women to the extent that they cannot even make rules within their households without consulting either the mother-in-law or the husband.

One woman from the urban area had this to say:

“*Uma ubheka amakhosikazi asemafamu asabambelele kulelisiko uthola ukuthi akukho nje abakwazi ukuzenzela kona, abakwazi ngisho nokuthathha izinqumo uma abayeni babo besebenza kude. Noma efisa ukumvakashela kufanele acele angavele azihamble nje. Yingakho nje abanangi bagcina sebenabantu abazihlalela nabo bazale nezingane. Thina la emaThekwini abayeni bethu banakho ukungabi ‘strict’ ngakako. Unalo ilungelo lokuthi uhluke ngombono kuyena noma phela akubona bonke abenza kanjalo. Labo*

*abanabazali abahlala emafamu kufuneka wazi ukuthi uma ekhona umamazala izinto ziyashintsha ngoba naye ethi akafuni kuthiwe uhlutwa unkosikazi. (Dudwana, 46 years)*  
If you look at women from the rural areas you will notice that they can't make decisions independently without consulting their husbands or mother-in-laws. Even if their husbands work far away from home, they have to seek permission from them if they want to visit. Some husbands end up having extra-marital affairs. In the urban areas husbands are not that strict as far as decision-making is concerned. The woman may disagree. Those husbands who have parents who live in the rural area, things do change if the mother-in-law is around because the husband does not want her to say that he is being dominated by his wife.

The participants were asked to rate the degree of the utilisation of *isiHlonipho* in the following interactions:

- Women towards women
- Men towards men
- Women towards men
- Men towards women

The degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* by women from the rural area can be summarized as follows:

**Table 3.2.3.1: Degree of utilization of *isiHlonipho* by women (Rural area)**

<b>Interaction between</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Very low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very high</b>
Women to women	01	09	0	0	0
Men to men	03	0	07	0	0
Women to men	0	0	0	01	09
Men to woman	08	0	02	0	0

The degree of the utilisation of *isiHlonipho* by women from the urban area can be summarised in the following table:

**Table 3.2.3.2: Degree of utilization of *isiHlonipho* by women (Urban area)**

<b>Interaction between</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Very Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very High</b>
Women to Women	08	0	02	0	0
Men to Men	03	1	06	0	0
Women to men	0	0	02	08	0
Men to women	02	01	07	0	0

What is significant to note from the above tables is that women from rural area are of the opinion that the degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* by women towards men is very high, on the other hand women from the urban area feel that it is high. The explanation was that women marry into the family of the husband and consequently they have to *hloniphia* so as to be smoothly incorporated into the family. Some women stated that from an early age they were trained to respect males. They had to cook, wash, and iron their brothers' clothes. Therefore the socialization prepared them for marriage life. Lakoff (1975) claimed that the deferential use of language needed to be explained in large part on the basis of women's subordinate social status. Lakoff (1975) further claimed that

women's linguistic behaviour is deficient when contrasted with male speech behaviour. As one explanation for this deficiency she pointed to the differences in the socialization of men and women. Maltz and Borker (1982: 208) added that cultural factors were also responsible for speech differentiation.

### **3.2.4 INTERVIEWS WITH MEN (Urban and Rural areas)**

(Note that all items quoted here are based on the notes made from responses to interview questions in Appendix 3)

The sample consisted of 10 respondents from the rural area and 10 respondents from the urban area. All respondents were married males in the age group of 30-49

*What is your understanding of *isiHlonipho*?*

All males from the rural area unanimously agreed that *isiHlonipho* is a language aimed at raising the awareness of women to the fact that they should respond in a particular and special way to their husbands and in-laws. Women are expected to be respectful towards men and this reverence should clearly be shown in their usage of *isiHlonipho*. Men from the urban area understand the language as discriminatory and outdated. They all strongly feel that their wives should respect them but not by using *isiHlonipho* in the manner in which it was used long ago. Four of the urban men I interviewed expressed their concern about the double life that their wives have because of this custom. These men have homes in Umlazi, and they have parents who live in the rural areas. Their wives have to be careful about the following when they visit the in-laws:

- (i) They normally call each other ‘babes’ and have to refrain from doing this in the presence of in-laws.
- (ii) The wife has to choose specific clothes to wear.
- (iii) When the man is sitting with his parents she should not join them unless his mother invites her. If she is invited she should not speak to his father directly unless he asks her something.
- (iv) Her head should be covered all the time.
- (v) She has to speak in a soft voice all the time.

One urban man (Sipho) had this to say about *isiHlonipho*:

*“Ngiyathanda ukuthi umkami angihloniphe mina nawowonke umndeni wami kodwa kunezinye izinto abazali bami abathanda ukuthi azenze ngoba bethi zikhombisa inhlonipho mina sengathi ziyambandlulula bese ngiphatheka kabi. Isibonelo nje nasi: Uma ngihleli nabazali bami (emafamu) akufanele umkami eze azohlala nathi. Uma kuthiwe akeze naye uyesaba angazi ukuthi mhlawumbe uzokona ngaliphi ngoba phela yena akakhulelanga emafamu izinto eziningi zokuhlonipha ikakhulukazi uma ukhulumfa akazazi. Nomama wami ulokhu ebelesela ngokuthi lokhu kudalwa ukuthi ngangqaba ukuthi azokotiza sabona kungcono ukaya kwi honeymoon.*

I want my wife to respect me and my family, but there are things that she is expected to do under the guise of this *hlonipha*, which make her feel like she is being discriminated against because she comes from another family. To illustrate what I’m saying: if my parents and I are having a conversation in my father’s hut, she cannot come in; if she is asked to come and join us, still it’s a problem because she’s afraid she’ll make a mistake since she doesn’t know much about this *hlonipha* and my mother keeps saying it is because I refused to leave her with the family immediately after the wedding. Instead we went for the useless honeymoon.

Interestingly Herbert (1990: 457) made a similar observation to that of the interviewees above: “A wife is a great thing; she is a stranger; she must not be treated lightly”. Reader (1966: 210) also noted that one of the functions of *hlonipha* was to serve as a constant reminder to the daughter-in-law that she is “merely a graft upon her husband’s descent group, i.e. to reinforce her status as someone who is an outsider”.

***In your opinion is there still a place for isiHlonipho in your culture? Why?***

In spite of what some interviewees said about *isiHlonipho*, they feel there is still a place for it in the Zulu culture. Men from the urban area reiterate the point that it (*isiHlonipho*) should not be used in the same way as in the old days where women had numerous names to avoid. Males from the rural area strongly believe that in marriages where *isiHlonipho* is not adhered to, there will always be problems. In contrast, males from the urban area are of the opinion that *isiZulu L1* speakers should accept that *isiHlonipho* like many other aspects of our culture, should evolve. Males should embrace this evolution and not feel intimidated:

*"IsiHlonipho sisenayo indawo njengesiko kodwa kufanele kelibuyekezwe ukuze omkethu nabo bazibone beyingxenye yomndeni. Naye akahambe lapho kuhamba wonke umuntu. Angene zonke izindlu. Bambize ngegama odadewethu mabethanda, ngisho nomama angmbiza ngalo ngoba phela uma eseyindodakazi yakhe, wona akawabizi ngo mama kasibanibani kodwa uwagagula ngamagama".* (Bonginkosi, 35 years)

*IsiHlonipho* does have a place in our culture but it has to undergo some changes so that our wives can feel that they are part of the family. She must be allowed to move freely on the premises like all the members of the family. My sisters should feel free to call her by name. My mother should also do so because she says that she is her daughter, and she doesn't call her daughters' mother of so and so, but uses their names.

Rural men who were interviewed believe that *isiHlonipho* is still practised in the rural areas but quickly add that there are educated people who are beginning to question some aspects of *isiHlonipho*. One male made a very interesting point about a female teacher who had a problem of calling out names of pupils which were the same as those of the in-laws. It is in such cases and many others where people feel that something has to be done

about the utilization of *isiHlonipho*. The usage of *isiHlonipho* in the rural areas is a challenge for men whose wives have lived in the urban area all their lives and have never been exposed to this kind of life. Some men reported that there are people they know whose wives never visit the in-laws because they are against some practices of *isiHlonipho*. Urban men said that although their wives do not practise *isiHlonipho* in the same way as the rural women, they still do respect them as their husbands.

The participants were then requested to rate the degree of the utilisation of *isiHlonipho* in the following interactions:

- Women towards women
- Men towards men
- Women towards men
- Men towards women

The degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* by males from the urban area can be summarized in the following table:

**Table 3.2.4.1 Degree of utilization of *isiHlonipho* by men (Urban area)**

Interaction Between	Low	Very Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Women to women	06	03	01	00	00
Men to men	07	03	00	00	00
Women to men	00	00	00	08	02
Men to women	03	01	06	00	00

The degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* by males from the rural area can be summarized in the following table:

**Table 3.2.4.2 Degree of utilization of *isiHlonipho* by men (Rural area)**

<b>Interaction between</b>	<b>Very Low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very high</b>
Women to women	02	06	02	00	00
Men to men	03	07	00	00	00
Women to men	00	00	00	00	10
Men to women	02	07	01	00	00

What is important to note from the two tables above is that in both these areas, women are the ones who mostly utilize *isiHlonipho* towards men and not vice versa. During the informal discussion as the respondents were filling in the table, men continuously made reference to their culture in an effort to explain what *isiHlonipho* encompasses. In their eyes, the politeness behaviours of both males and females who are isiZulu L1 speakers, is prescribed by tradition. This means that the Zulu masculine and feminine identities, are socially constructed as well as clearly defined. This, according to the males is the reason why females utilize *isiHlonipho* more than males. It is a cultural expectation.

### **3.2.5 Analysis of data from discourse completion tasks questionnaires (DCTs)**

#### **3.2.5.1 Female Responses to the DCTs: Set One**

The data from the DCTs will now be presented and analysed. A scenario will be described and then responses from urban females contrasted with those of rural females

##### **Scenario 1**

*As a married woman are there clothes that you are not expected to wear in the presence of your in-laws?*

Urban females are of the opinion that *isiZulu L1* speaking females are aware of the rules that restrict them from wearing revealing clothes.

Rural women also concurred and added that during ‘umembeso’ (which was discussed earlier), the young wife is given an indication of the type of clothes she is expected to wear.

*“Uma kuthiwa uzokwembeswa, usuke uzokhoniswa ukuthi sekufanele igqoke kanjani ngoba manje usungena kwesinye isigaba sempilo. Kufanele kubonakale ukuthi usuzoshada. Uhlonipheke nakubantu abakubonayo”.*

If your future husband is coming to do the ‘umembeso,’ that is when you are shown how to dress up as a married woman, since you are now moving to another level of your life as a woman.

*“Kweminye imizi uishelwa kahle ukuthi ibhulukwe aliggokwa muntu khona, nezingalo zakho nekhanda, nomzimba wakho, kufanele kuhlale kumboziwe ngasosonke isikhathi, noma bekhona eduzane abasemzini noma bengekho”.*

In some families you are told not to wear pants, cover your body all the time, whether the in-laws are there or not. I also have colleagues that I know who always have to cover their heads even though they do not live with the in-laws. Most of the women I know

who follow this practice of covering their heads all the time admit that they do not like doing it but are forced by the in-laws. One of my colleagues said that her husband requested his parents to relax the rule after they had been married for ten years. The mother-in-law's (father-in-law was late) response was "*Niyokwenza lokho sengifile, hayi ngisaphila. Nami ngineminyaka ngagana kulumizi kodwa ngisathwala namanje*". You will do that when I'm dead not when I'm still alive. I have been married into this family for years but I still cover my head.

This, in my opinion is an indication that Zulu traditional femininity is still prevalent irrespective of the fact that some women are beginning to contest it.

### Scenario 3

***You've just been married. You are informed that the in-laws expect you to come and perform 'ukukotiza' (staying with the family for a certain period of time after getting married). You are working. What do you do?***

One urban woman said she would go there once she gets her leave but would not spend all of it there. Other women said that this is the time when the in-laws ill-treat you if they don't like you. One woman stressed the importance of a discussion between husband and wife before one gets involved in this ritual.

*"Kubalulekile ukuxoxisana ngaloludaba ikakhulukazi una wazi wena wesifazane ukuthi awufunwa. Abanye kugcina bengasayi kovakasha emafamu emva kwalomkotizo" Mina ngingomunye wabo ongasayi, ngoba kwakuhlekwa ukudla engikuphekile( hayi ngoba kukubi) kodwa ngoba bengakujwayele. Sahamba nabo siyotheza, bangishiya ehlathini ngedwa ngazitholela mina indlela yokuphuma. Nokunye okuningi.*

It's important to discuss this with your husband especially if you know that there is that kind of hostility between you and your mother-in-law. Some decide not to visit the in-laws after having been there for 'ukukotiza' and things did not go well. I am one of those who no longer visit because they (mother-in-law, and the daughters) even laughed at the food I cooked for them. (not because it wasn't well cooked) but it was something different from what they were used to. One morning we (me and my two sisters-in-law) went to the forest to fetch wood. They pointed at a spot where I had to get some wood and they would fetch from another spot and when I asked why, was told that all new wives in the family have to do that. I did and later on I discovered that they were gone and had left me alone in the dark forest and had to find my way out.

Herbert (1990: 467) noted that the process of incorporation is counterbalanced by a pervasive hostility towards the wife. There were interviewees who told me that part of

the advice given to the young bride before marriage has to do with this hostility. The emphasis is on perseverance if it occurs. Women are told not to report to their families of birth if they come across this hostility.

On the other hand rural women have no problem here because it is something that is done once you get married; however, they agree with urban women that if they (the in-laws) do not like you, they will make things very difficult for you during your stay in the family.

### **Scenario 5**

#### ***How do you call your husband?***

Most urban women call their husbands by name or other terms like ‘babes’ or ‘sweetie.’ However, there are also those that refer to them as so and so’s father.

Rural women call them so and so’s father or use ‘isithakazelo: for example, Mchunu would be *Macingwana*. One woman calls him ‘*Baba*’ (father). She says this was an instruction from the mother-in-law. This was even before they had children. One added that there was quite a long list of names of people she is prohibited from pronouncing. What is of significance in that list is that it is full of males from the family tree. Herbert (1990: 459) states that given the potential number of senior male relatives whose names must not be pronounced, the wife operates under a considerable linguistic constraint in her everyday conversation and the effect of such name/word taboos/avoidances may be quite extensive on an individual’s everyday speech.

### **Scenario 6**

#### ***Your father-in-law’s name is Maqanda (eggs). Do you use this term in your speech?***

#### ***Why?***

Urban women would use the name in his absence but not when he is there. One woman said she would replace the Zulu term (amaqanda) with the English one (eggs) instead, since she is not aware of an alternative term for this one.

Rural women would not use the name at all. They would opt for another one, whether he is present or not. If it happens that you forget, you no longer spit on the ground as people in the olden days did, but you do get scared because if someone from the family hears you, then your parents will be informed. If it happens more than twice then you go home for more advice since the feeling now is that “*Awuyalwanga kahle*”, (you were not well advised before you got married). When you come back, you bring a goat to apologise to the family.

Herbert (1990: 459) confirms that an initial infraction of the rules may result only in a verbal reminder (unless it happens in the presence of the father-in-law), but regular infractions result in the wife being returned to her parent's homestead. Her return must be accompanied by a beast or gift of some sort to “cleanse” the home. Mncube (1949: 49) on the other hand found that a woman who violates the taboo should spit on the ground and report the incident to her own family. Representatives will accompany her back to her husband's homestead to apologise, and a goat will be given and slaughtered to appease the ancestors. Further infractions may involve two or three goats.

### **Scenario 7**

***Do you use isiHlonipho ? Do you use it voluntarily or you have been forced to use it?***

Most urban women reiterated what they said earlier on, that they do use *isiHlonipho*, but not in exactly the same way as people from the rural area. For example, they know that in certain contexts (for example funerals) they have to cover their heads which is part of *hlonipha* custom. As married women they have to be careful about how they dress up. Polite behaviour towards one's husband was also mentioned as significant. Some urban women stated, however, that they were compelled to use the so called *isiHlonipho*. One woman from the urban area told me that she strongly believed that if you don't *hlonipha* the ancestors you will have bad luck. She made an example of her elder brother-in-law who has rejected all the customs and traditions because his wife's church is against that. His wife doesn't cover her head during rituals and sometimes does not even attend family ceremonies since they are done on Saturdays and she attends church on Saturdays. This

woman mentioned the following as the bad luck that has befallen the family of the elder brother-in-law:

Their youngest son is in jail for armed robbery. He was doing his third year in a tertiary institution when he was convicted.

The second born son was murdered when he was doing his third year at the university. The man who murdered him was acquitted.

Their eldest son is married but cannot even buy a house because he uses his money to buy alcohol. They are now maintaining the wife for their son in order to prevent her from leaving him.

It was interesting to note that there were two other women who shared the same belief. They were of the opinion that if your husband has strong rural ties you need to adhere to the restrictions imposed upon you especially those that have to do with the ancestors because it is believed that they have power over what is happening within the family.

Rural women on the other hand agreed that they use *isiHlonipho* because it is part of culture and that one cannot separate a married woman from *isiHlonipho*. It is part of married life for a woman.

### **Scenario 12**

*Is there any inconvenience caused by the fact that there are words that you cannot use?*

For urban women there is no inconvenience because they use all the words. Then some of them came up with the issue of not being allowed to call your husband by name in front of his parents.

*"Inkinga ibakhona uma umamezala evakashile noma uma thina siye khona emafamu. Bese kudingeka ngigade indlela engikhulumu ngayo. Uma sisobabili ayikho inkinga".* There are no words that I cannot use if I am with my husband, but if his mother is around then I need to be careful".

Raum (1973: 24) does note that in nuclear families there is a falling away of *hlonipha* practices because the wife and the mother-in-law live apart and hence quarrels are not prevalent between them. In addition, the husband's separation from his parents assists in

releasing the wife from the cattle pen taboo and the *hlonipha* behaviour expected of her towards other symbols of the agnatic structure. Dowling (1988b: 29) is of the opinion that a blanket description of nuclear families is insufficient: while a woman may be released geographically from her husband's parents, she may still be required to *hlonipha* them when she has occasion to visit (for celebrations, weddings, holidays, funerals, and other religious or social festivities). When rural women visit their husbands in the cities, that is when they experience the inconvenience because most people in the cities do not understand *isiHlonipho*

Dowling (1988b: 61) further adds that the “women’s language of respect” can be understood to be operating in different dimensions for different social groups. According to Dowling, the “traditional” woman, living in close, intimate, meaningful relationship with the symbolic world of ritual and custom, views this “language” as an integral and unquestionable given in her world. When she is required to move away from the family network, her speech habits will adapt in order to accommodate those groups of speakers with whom she has to communicate efficiently. In contrast, the urban woman, who at best regards *hlonipha* as a custom relevant only for rural dwellers, may, if she marries into a strict, traditionalist family, be forced to adapt her speech behaviour in order to maintain good relationships with her husband’s people. (This is especially relevant to those women whose in-laws still reside outside of the metropolitan areas).

#### **Scenario 14**

*Before you got married what was the most important advice given to you by the elders?  
In other words, something that was constantly emphasised to you.*

Urban and rural women all agreed that the issue of respect was emphasised to all of them. Some even quoted the following saying “*Uhloniphe ngisho inji yakhona*” (respect everybody, even their dog).

### **Scenario 15**

*For a wife whose husband has passed on, what is it that the wife is expected to do in order to show respect to him?*

Both urban and rural women said more or less the same thing. The wife sits down (on a grass mat or mattress), covers her head, puts something on her shoulders, and does not talk to anyone. Rural women also added that the wife also covers her face since she does not have to be seen by people and she must also not look at them.

One woman from the urban area gave me a cutting she made from the Sunday Times newspaper, although she could not remember the date of the paper. I quote relevant details from it below. The article reminds us that “fictions of an undiluted culture” have been weapons for enforcing women’s obedience, accusing them of being “too westernized”, at least those who are increasingly questioning notions of what is called African “culture”.

#### **IT'S A BOGUS 'AFRICAN CULTURE' THAT PUTS WIDOWS ON THE FLOOR**

*A friend's husband died a few years ago at a time when we were beginning to enjoy the benefits yielded to us by the women's liberation movement.*

*My friend is a modern woman, an intellectual. She is a confident mother with six children.*

*In the lead up to her husband's funeral we held numerous conversations rejecting the African culture expectations that her in-laws wanted to impose on her now that she was a bereaved wife.*

*We agreed that the rules were too oppressive. A pact was made that she would refuse to sit on a mattress to be placed on the floor - as is the custom. Furthermore, she would object to a sentence of being swathed for twelve months in black from head to toe - as is the custom. We agreed that there was no place for these oppressive practices in our quest to liberate our girl-children. Our daughters in turn would follow in our footsteps and at least in our two families, for future generations no women would be subjected to these archaic practices.*

*To my chagrin, we ended up on the mattress. I am not sure how it happened, but my friend was covered from head to toe.*

*After reading the article I enquired from the interviewee what she wanted to emphasise about its contents, and she said she wanted to highlight the extent to which women have*

been brainwashed about the *hloniph*a custom. They sometimes consent to do things they do not want to do because they are afraid of bad luck that would maybe fall upon their children because of their disrespect. Therefore, to prevent misfortune they then decide to do as they are told.

### **3.2.5.2 Male Responses to the DCTs: Set Two**

The accumulated data from urban and rural males will now be presented and analysed.

#### **Scenario 1**

*As a married man is there a particular manner in which you should dress when you visit your wife's family?*

Both urban and rural males agreed that one needs to look presentable but there are no particular clothes which they cannot wear when visiting their in-laws. One rural male, however, pointed out that a jacket used to be something that other families were particular about. It was taken as not respecting the house of your in-laws if you went there without one.

#### **Scenario 2**

*When you visit your wife's home, what are you not expected to do?*

Some said they were required to do nothing. Others said that moving around a lot and getting into all the rooms is viewed as a sign of not respecting your in-law's house. “*Ungachachazi emzini wendoda*” (Do not move around a lot in a man's house).

#### **Scenario 3**

*Between the mother and the father of your wife, who do you respect most?*

Rural and urban men respect the father more than the mother. One man justified that by saying that the father as the head of the family should be accorded more respect than the mother. Raum (1973: 456) agrees with this statement when he says that the primary avoidance throughout the *hloniph*a period is that of the husband's father; this avoidance

is unlike that of the husband toward his mother-in-law in a number of ways; the latter is not characterized by the fear which a wife feels toward the senior relatives.

Another male from the rural area compared the father of the house to the living ancestors of that homestead thus if one does not respect the father of his wife then that individual is showing disrespect to the ancestors. Herbert (1990: 462) also concurs: The Nguni husband does not regard his wife's mother as a potential ancestor:

*"Indoda ifana nedlozi lekhaya, ngakho uma ungahloniphi umkhwe wakho kusho ukuthi udelela idlozi ugobo lwalo".*

#### **Scenario 6**

***Your mother-in-law's name is Nomasokisi (socks). When you need your socks what do you say?***

Urban men would say 'please give me my socks', but quickly added that they would not use the word in her presence.

Rural men also agreed. They further said that in most cases men do avoid the names of their in-laws without anybody instructing them to do so.

In urban areas, men generally do not bother to *hlonipha* the name of the mother-in-law. Raum (1973: 58) noted that a man does not spit on the ground when he violates a name taboo. A man who uses his mother-in law's name in vain is unlikely to be fined: "All that happens is that he is called a 'senseless' person".

#### **Scenario 7**

***You are the boss. There are males and females who have to be disciplined. Is it easier for you to discipline males or females?***

Both urban and rural men concurred that females are easier to discipline because they accept and respect male authority. With males, one has to be very careful because males are protective of their dignity. There is consensus among males that the politeness

behaviours of both male and female members of Zulu society are prescribed by tradition. They are happy with these cultural expectations probably because they place them in positions of authority as they mature from boyhood to manhood: ‘when you are a small boy you must show respect to everybody, but once you are a young man, then the younger ones and ladies must respect you’ (a comment from one of the rural males). “*Uma usengumfana omncane kufanele uhloniiphe wonke umuntu kodwa uma usungene ezingeni lobudoda abafana abancane kanye nabesifazane kufanele bakuhloniphe*”.

### **Scenario 8**

#### ***Do you call your wife by her name?***

Four urban men who do not have ties with the rural area and do not live with their parents address their wives by their names. However, there was one male who admitted that he and his wife address each other as ‘*maka Sanele* and *baba kaSanele* (mother of Sanele and father of Sanele) since this is a constant reminder to them that they are now parents of a beautiful baby. So, for both of them it’s a mutual agreement and they both enjoy doing it, it was never imposed by culture. ‘*Minu nomkami sibizana ngomakaSanele nobaba kaSanele ngoba lokhu kusikhumbuza njalo ukuthi sesingabazali. Yinto le esavumelana ngayo ngoba iyasijabulisa asikwenzi ngoba silandela isiko*’.

Rural men on the other hand do not address their wives by names but address them as Ma Gumede (if she does not yet have a child) or maka Lwazi if they have a child.

### **Scenario 10**

#### ***Does isiHlonipho abuse women in any way?***

Six urban men are of the opinion that since it makes them not engage meaningfully in conversations, it does abuse them in some way. It makes them feel that they are different. Hence it is also discriminatory.

“*Uma umkami konamagama okungafanele awabize bese kuthi uma enze iphutha wawabiza bese kuba yicala, lokho kungukumhlukumeza,futhi kuyambandlulula*”.

*"Umkami uxabane nodadawethu omdala kunomsebenzi ekhaya. Udadewethu wayesephuiheni. Umkami kwafanele axolise ngoba yena njengomakoti akufanele aphendulane no 'mafungwase' kababa".*

My wife had an argument with my elder sister. My wife had to apologise even though she was not wrong. She is not supposed to argue with the eldest daughter of the homestead.

Rural men do not agree. They feel that *isiHlonipho* makes women highly respected by members of the community and their husbands as well.

*"Unkosikazi kufanele ahloniphe. Indlela akhuluma ngayo naggoka ngayo ibe nokuhlonipha ikhaya agane kulona ukuze namadlozi amamukele njengelunga lomndeni. IsiHlonipho asimhlukumezi, kodwa simenza amukeleke emzin"i.*

The wife is supposed to show respect. The way she speaks and dresses up should always show respect to the in-laws family so that the ancestors can welcome and accept her as a member of the family. *IsiHlonipho* facilitates her assimilation into the husband's family.

### **Scenario 11**

#### ***Do you use isiHlonipho when talking to women?***

Urban men say they respect their women as well as their close relatives. However, the respect has not been prescribed for them, men do it voluntarily. There is no punishment for not respecting.

*Ngiyahlonipha nami ngoba angibabizi abazali bakhe ngamagama, yize ngngatshelwanga muntu lokho. Kanjalo noma ngiya kubo angiggoki noma ikanjani. Naye umkami uma sixoxa ngiyamnika indawo yakhe yokuthi umkami kufanele sibonisane.*

I do *hlonipha* because I do not address her parents by their names although no one told me about this. If I visit her family I dress up in a presentable manner. I also respect my wife and when we are discussing something, she is given an opportunity to say something

Rural men say *isiHlonipho* is specifically for married women and not for men. Men have to pick from *isiHlonipho* what is appropriate for them.

*"IsiHlonipho ulimi lwabantu besifazane abashadile. Amakhosikazi yiwo okufanele afike emzini afunde zonke izindlela zakhona zokuhlonipha. Nathi madoda siyayihlonipha*

*iminden i yamakhosikazi yethu. Umfowabo ngoba mdala kunami angimbizi ngegama kodwa ngithi 'bhuti'.*

*IsiHlonipho* is a language which is generally used by married women. Men also do respect their wife's families, for instance, I do not address my wife's elder brother by name because he is older than me.

#### **Scenario 14**

***If your wife does not want to use isiHlonipho, what would you do?***

For urban men, this was acceptable if it does not mean not respecting him and his family.

*"Ukuhlonipha engikulindele kumkami ukuthi angambizi ubaba nomama ngegama. Uma kumansebenzi ekhaya nasezihlobeni zami agqoke njengomuntu oshadile, athwale iduku ekhanda, ibhulukwe angaliggoki. Uma engathandi ukukwenza lokhu kungafanele iminden i yomibili ihlale phansi kuxoxiswane".*

I expect my wife not to address my parents by their names. I also expect her to dress up like a married woman, that is, cover her head and not to wear pants especially during the performance of rituals. If she is against this, then the two families need to sit down and sort the problem.

Rural men will send the woman back home, if she rejected *isiHlonipho*.

*"Kungafanele aphindele ekhaya ayothola ukuyalwa kahle abazali bakhe. Bamtshele ukuthi uma uganile kufanele wenze okwenziwa emzini ngoba usuke usungowakhona. Uma kuthiwa ungahambi phambi kwesibaya, ungakholwa ukukwenza lokho ngoba kuchaza ukungahloniphi. Uma kuthiwa ungabomemeza egcekeni ukugweme ukwenza lokho".*

She has to go back to her family so that her parents can give her more advice. Her parents should emphasise the fact that a married woman is expected to do as she is told by the family of her husband. If they say she should not walk in front of the cattle kraal, and not to shout on top of her voice around the premises of the homestead, she should respect that.

## **Scenario 15**

***Your wife has passed on. What are you expected to do or not to do in order to show respect to her?***

The men from both areas (urban and rural) all agree that the behaviour expected from a husband who is mourning for a deceased wife is totally different from that of a wife mourning a deceased husband. As a man you are allowed to talk to the mourners that come to your house to pay their last respects. For “*ukuzila*” you can just put a black piece of cloth around your arm. Unlike a mourning wife you are not expected to take a bath in the early hours of the morning.

*“Ngilindelekile ukuthi ngikhombise ukuthi ngidabukile. Ngokwesiko lakwa Zulu indoda kuthiwa iyaqinisela, ayikhali kakhulu sengathi umfazi. Awulindelekile ukuthi uhlale phansi kulendlu okuzilelwwe kuyona, kodwa uma ungangena kuyona ungahlala esiggikini, awuphoqiwe ukuthi uhlale phansi ocansini noma umatilasi”.*

I’m expected to show remorse, however, contrary to what is traditionally expected from the woman who is mourning, the man is expected to display signs of being in control of his emotions. The husband is not expected to sit in the room where all the mourners are, but is welcomed in that room and can sit on the bench or chair. He is not compelled to sit on the grasmat or mattress.

### **3.3.5.3 Conclusion**

The observations done in this study revealed that even in contemporary society, there are substantial differences in what Zulu culture expects from a Zulu female as opposed to the Zulu male. For example, in each of the contexts where observations were undertaken it was noted that there were behaviours that culture expected from her.

It was also noted in the responses of both rural and urban respondents (males and females) that there are contradictions on *hlonipha* which are fairly widespread among Zulu women and men living in both rural and urban areas. For example, there are urban male respondents who said that their wives live two lives, one in the urban area and

another when they visit in-laws in the rural area. Despite being done twenty years ago, Dowling's study confirms this observation. She states that much of her research indicates that this perception – of the “right time and place” for *hloniph* - is generally held and, as long as societal structures in South Africa continue to encourage the existence of urban communities with strong rural links, it will be an important influencing factor.

Furthermore another important factor that came up in the responses is that women from the urban area are beginning to reject the rules that were considered too oppressive in their quest to liberate themselves. As opposed to rural women, urban women are of the opinion that *isiHloniph* has been used as a weapon for enforcing obedience and those who question its usage have been accused of being “too westernized”. Unquestioned adherence to the custom is regarded as being reasonable.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the focus is on finding answers to the questions that were posed in chapter one. The results obtained through the different methods of data collections are triangulated. An attempt is made to correlate perspectives on *isiHlonipho* offered by males and females from both urban and rural areas in which the study was conducted.

#### **4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF *ISIHLONIPHO***

Interviews with cultural/religious leaders and their families revealed a commonality in the background understanding of *isiHlonipho* among *isiZulu* first language speakers. The central theme of this understanding was that, both according to the scriptures and from a cultural perspective, *isiHlonipho* is fundamental to human relationships. Furthermore, respondents emphasized the use of appropriate politeness strategies, such as, children using both hands when accepting something from the elders. It was also noted in both sets of interviews that both linguistic and non-linguistic forms of behaviour are essential for displaying overall politeness.

When interviewing males and females from urban and rural areas, there was no commonality in their understanding of what *isiHlonipho* is. Some women from the urban area did not know what it is and some referred to it as a language that was used by their grandmothers long ago. With male respondents rural men were of the opinion that it is a language used by women to show respect to their husbands as well as the in-laws. Urban

men, however, referred to it as a language that is outdated and discriminatory. Dowling (1988b: 113) offers a reason for this difference of opinion. She states that for *hlonipha* to survive the family unity (in its wider reference) the constancy of the homestead must remain entrenched. Dowling further states that once the important “actors” are withdrawn from the *hlonipha* “drama,” other participants tend to miss their cues or merely say their lines without proper consideration of their meanings. With regard to the establishment of new relationships and values: No longer living in a close-knit society where families and relationships are inextricably connected, a woman who has moved from a rural to an urban area will have to redefine her reference world and her loyalties within this new environment (Dowling, 1988b: 113).

#### **4.3 THE VALUE PLACED ON *ISIHLONIPHO* BY MEN AND WOMEN IN THE TARGET COMMUNITY**

Interviews with the cultural/religious leaders revealed that from a cultural perspective there was a greater demand on women to display polite behaviour. The gender role defined for them requires that they display greater politeness. This was confirmed by the interviews with the families in which it was pointed out that women are expected to behave and speak in particular ways, with society expecting more of *isiHlonipho* from women. Women are expected to carry themselves in a particular manner. As such it is not in keeping with the cultural norms for women to resort to aggressive behaviour and use vulgar language.

A total of twenty six men and women from rural and urban areas interviewed, expressed the view that men lose their dignity (*ukwehla isithunzi*) when their wives do not behave appropriately. These interviewees further alluded to the fact that women who do not

*hlonipha* would be visited by bad luck. Therefore, according to the interviewees, women appear to be the ones who value *isiHlonipho* and consequently utilize it more than men.

In a number of ways, the DCTs supported the perception of women utilizing *isiHlonipho* more than men. Fifteen women from urban and rural areas stated that it is not only the husband and the in-laws who have a problem with a woman who does not *hlonipha*, but that society as a whole frowns upon that woman and accuses her of disrespecting her culture and bringing shame to her family.

The findings from the DCTs and the interviews with religious/cultural leaders, show that women are required to value *isiHlonipho* more highly than men in the target community. From the interviews and the DCTs it was also noted that while the custom (*isiHlonipho*) retained a significance for many, modern urban life presented a range of constraints on the practice of customs whose origin and rationale were closely linked to a rural lifestyle. For instance, references were made to the double life led by women whose in-laws still live in the rural areas.

The declining relevance of the *isiHlonipho* in some people's lives due to the influence of competing frameworks, most significantly Christianity (as alluded to by one of the interviewees) was also noted.

#### **4.4 THEORIES OF POLITENESS AND THE TARGET COMMUNITY**

Interviewees were unanimous on the need to maintain one's face in the wider community. Male interviewees from the rural area emphasized the importance of women utilizing *isiHlonipho* at all times, as one was not only reflecting an impression of one's self but also the image of the husband and one's family. The face of an individual is only meaningful when it is considered in relation to one's immediate (but larger) family.

Within the framework of the Western/non-Western debate on politeness phenomena, the concept of face within the community under discussion is consistent with that found in several other non-Western cultures, for example, in Chinese, Japanese and Igbo societies (Ide 1988; Matsumoto 1988; Nwoye 1992). It differs from the conception of face as private as expressed by Brown and Levinson (1987). These findings are also similar to those obtained by De Kadt in a study of the Zulu culture (1998).

An individual within the *isiZulu* speaking community is expected to conduct himself/herself in a manner that will portray a good image of himself/herself (individual face), of his family (group face) as well as receive the approval of the society at large (public face). Here, the term "individual face" relates to the desires of the individual to have his/her behaviour and actions approved by others. It contrasts with Brown and Levinson's (1987) "private face," which implicitly elevates the individual above the group.

The research done by Dowling (1988b) among Xhosa speaking community conforms with the argument above. She found that the interviewees in her research stressed that the dignity and respect that a woman would gain from using the *hlonipha* language would devolve on the whole of her extended family; thus it was not purely a personal, individual matter on the part of the woman. Her use of this language would not only reflect her femininity but also her sense of responsibility to the rest of her community, Dowling (1988b: 128). The same applies to some *isiZulu* L1 speaking women and men (interviewees in this study) who come from the rural area.

In concluding this chapter, one would mention that the responses of the interviewees demonstrate that the survival of *isiHlonipha* is highly dependent on the survival of other institutions as also argued by Dowling (1988b: 114) when she says that in the homestead those persons responsible for the proper teaching of *hlonipha* would also administer the necessary admonishments to the young wife and encourage her to behave according to the rules. Consequently, an absence of these "maintainers of the law" generates a corresponding lack of commitment, and as a discipline, *hlonipha* loses its significance and falls into the background as other more urgent matters take precedence. Dowling further states that in some instances, a woman living apart from the strictures of rural life may find that she has greater opportunities to increase her education, this increase in literacy leading to a decrease in the internalization of older, purely oral forms of expression.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION**

The key issue examined in this study is the role that *isiHlonipho* plays in the construction of gender identities among *isiZulu* L1 speakers in KwaZulu-Natal. In my analysis of the data generated by the interviews and DCTs, I have argued that the politeness styles of women and men from urban and rural areas contrast markedly in certain respects. The dominant male perspective on *isiHlonipho* (including decisions as to whether *isiHlonipho* is necessary in a particular situation), conforms with expectations from Zulu culture and with established Zulu traditional norms. Even in the urban context, a Zulu male can best construct his identity as a “man” by complying with the norms of a traditionally oriented Zulu-based politeness. Yet, as will be explained below, this perception is beginning to be contested. From my analysis I can also conclude that some women construct their female identity not only in terms of Zulu culture, but also in terms of attempts to create a platform for interaction with people from outside the Zulu culture. At the same time, of course, they are perfectly aware of what culture says and requires of them regarding polite attitudes.

From the responses of the interviewees I also conclude that the women’s language of respect, that is, *isiHlonipho*, operates in different dimensions for different social groups; for example, a rural woman living in close contact with the in-laws views *isiHlonipho* as an integral and unquestionable given in her world. However, this investigation revealed

that when the rural woman is required to move away from the family network (where the in-laws are not present), her speech habits will adapt in order to accommodate speakers who will not understand the language of respect.

On the other hand, urban women (even those who regarded *isiHlonipho* as something of the past), admitted that circumstances forced them to adapt their speech behaviour in order to maintain good relations with the in-laws. This happened specifically with urban women who were married and lived in the urban area with their husbands but had in-laws who still lived in the rural area.

Another significant conclusion is that while *isiHlonipho* retained a significance for many, there were also a number of references to the problematic status of this language (*isiHlonipho*) under the different conditions of modern urban life. According to some respondents, urban life presents a range of constraints on the practice of customs (*hlonipha* included), whose origin and rationale were closely linked to a rural lifestyle. Furthermore, newer, competing cultural claims are also evident in the daily household routine. At the most blatant level, in every house (in the urban area) in which our interviews took place, the women below fifty years of age, did not cover their heads. In addition to that, the demands of the workplace and the growing economic independence of women are clearly forcing people to make a range of adjustments to the patriarchal gender relations that underpin customary practices, resulting in a number of *ad hoc* adjustments to the practices themselves. To illustrate this point, one of the male interviewees from the rural area offered an example about his friend who is a messenger and is married to a nurse, whose salary is considerably higher than his. His friend (the messenger) feels able to assert traditional rules of behaviour at home but has abandoned

any control over her behaviour at her work: She (the nurse) can go to work without her head being covered (in the traditional way). But as soon as she comes back home she must observe the custom in the house.

Dowling (1988b: 146) is of the opinion that this type of paradigm shift can be attributed to the changing political, economic and social conditions which severely undermine traditional institutions. She further states that there is evidence that patriarchal authority is further undermined as women begin to enter areas of responsibility previously reserved for men. More importantly, the extended family, even in the rural areas, is becoming less supportive as economic demands necessitate migrant labour, and in urban areas women no longer identify completely with their traditional understanding of Zulu culture which prescribes that they utilize *isiHlonipho*. In other words, these women try to avoid carrying over their constructed identity when interacting with individuals who do not understand *isiHlonipho*. They seek to construct another identity that is acceptable in that particular environment, in this case, the urban area.

Johnson (1997: 25) has argued that 'a focus on the ways in which masculine identities are formed and in particular the role of language in the construction of those identities' is one of the ways of overcoming masculine resistance to change. She draws on Weedon's (1987) poststructuralist challenge to urge feminist linguists to begin to explore the 'discursive strategies employed by men in their attempt to resist change and hold on to power' (Johnson 1997: 25). In this research project I have discovered indications that some women are no longer willing to tolerate social relations that subordinate their interests to those of men.

In spite of the findings of this research, I would still predict that, despite these radical social changes, the essential aspect and meaning of *isiHlonipho* will not be entirely eradicated and forgotten, and that, even if the younger generation does not utilize *isiHlonipho*, they will retain some of its forms and a respect for what it once symbolized in the Zulu culture.

## 5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are initially discussed in terms of the tools used to collect the relevant data. These are the DCTs, and interviews with cultural leaders as well as interviews with males and females from urban and rural areas.

It should be noted that DCTs are advantageous in that they allow the researcher to collect a large quantity of data in a very short time, and also to obtain answers to specific questions. However, as Harford and Bardovi-Harlig (1992) have pointed out, a DCT “cannot..... show us the whole picture: it disallows certain common negotiation strategies, it eliminates certain semantic formulas, and it influences the politeness and status balancing profiles.....”. In addition, data drawn from DCTs cannot be equated with naturally occurring data. Nevertheless, with careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the tools to be used, the combined data allowed considerable insights into the role played by *isiHlonipho* and Zulu culture in perpetuating gender differences among males and females who are L1 speakers of isiZulu.

Another possible limitation of my study relates to the chosen sample size. In particular, the investigation was restricted to one township and a rural area that is on the outskirts of Durban. As such, my sample size may not be representative of a larger population, for

example, of the L1 speakers of isiZulu in KwaZulu Natal as a whole. For this reason I have been cautious when attempting to generalize my results.

Finally, Johnstone (2000: 86) asks a question whether a better researcher is the one who is a member of the group being studied. She further argues that both insiders and outsiders can be effective since once they start working, participant observers occupy roles of both insiders and outsiders. My role as an insider was beneficial to the study in the sense that I was able to probe and ask questions that would lead into eliciting the required responses without making the respondent uncomfortable. On the other hand my being an insider may have been a limitation in the sense that at times it may have prevented me from maintaining the critical and analytical distance that is necessary to abstract and generalize about the group under study (Johnstone, 2000).

### **5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

One of the aims of this research project is to contribute to the ongoing feminist project of exploring language as a means of constructing gender identities. It is anticipated that this will shed light to some of the various structures and strategies that still suppress women. The purpose of gender research (in my opinion), should not only be academic, but should also actively seek to contribute to societal redress.

The current research (as I indicated before), was carried out with a small sample. I therefore urge that similar research be carried out on a larger scale, to enable broader generalizations, and indeed conclusions to be drawn as to how women can best resist being dominated by men. On the one hand, the study could be expanded in terms of the number of respondents, and focus groups, in order to base conclusions on a broader sample. On the other hand, the types of data collected, and the context in which data is

collected, could be expanded. The collection of data in contexts such as technikons and schools would enable contrastive studies to be undertaken.

Moving away from the language perspective, researchers in gender issues might profitably explore what seem to be fairly substantial shifts in gender perspectives in urban areas. Some of the urban women who participated in the study seemed to be in agreement with their move from traditional Zulu femininity. Again, the potential societal consequences of such shifts make it imperative that we find out more about them. An investigation into the changes in the role of the Zulu married woman and the impact this may have on their linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour could be undertaken.

Another question that comes to mind for future study is: "How has urbanization contributed towards preventing the isiZulu L1 speaking community from retaining its cultural practices?"

Zungu (1985: 3) argues that *isiHlonipho sabafazi* is "an unfailing source of enrichment to the Zulu language". It would be interesting to find out what the results of this study would be if the sample is drawn from institutions of higher learning as well as individuals from Gender Equality Commission.

Finally, it was interesting to note that despite a small sample size, the characteristics of *isiHlonipho* within the isiZulu L1 speaking community that was studied were found to have much in common with those of other non-Western cultures. It is hoped that the insights provided by this study will inform the isiZulu L1 speaking community of the current state of *isiHlonipho* in the community. Also, within the multi-cultural South

African society, it will allow persons outside the target community to better understand politeness behaviour within the target community.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: ELDERS FROM THE RURAL AND URBAN AREAS (AGE: 60+)

1. What is your understanding of *isiHlonipho*?
2. Who should use *isiHlonipho*? Why?
3. In your opinion, is there still a place for *isiHlonipho* in your culture?
4. What is the purpose of using *isiHlonipho*?
5. Would you agree with the idea that *isiHlonipho* disempowers women? Why?
6. Do you think people in the urban and rural areas still practise *isiHlonipho* in the same way? Why?
7. Do any of these factors play a role in the use of *isiHlonipho* (age, status, social distance)?
8. How should *isiHlonipho* be utilized both linguistically and non-linguistically e.g.

Men towards men

Women towards women

Men towards women

Women towards men

## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: WOMEN FROM URBAN AND RURAL AREAS: (30-49 AGE GROUP)**

- 1. What is your understanding of *isiHlonipho*?**
- 2. Who should use *isiHlonipho*? Why?**
- 3. In your opinion is there still a place for *isiHlonipho* in your culture? Why?**
- 4. What is the purpose of using *isiHlonipho*?**
- 5. Would you agree with the statement that *isiHlonipho* disempowers women? Why?**
- 6. Do you think people in the urban and rural areas still practise *isiHlonipho* in the same way? Why?**
- 7. Do any of these factors play a role in the use of *isiHlonipho* (age, status, social distance)?**
- 8. What is the degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* (both linguistically and non-linguistically) in the following interactions:**

**Women towards women**

**Men towards men**

**Women towards men**

**Men towards women**

## **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: MEN FROM URBAN AND RURAL AREAS: (30-49 AGE GROUP)**

- 1. What is your understanding of *isiHlonipho*?**
- 2. Who should use *isiHlonipho*? Why?**
- 3. In your opinion is there still a place for *isiHlonipho* in your culture? Why?**
- 4. What is the purpose of *isiHlonipho*?**
- 5. Would you agree with the statement that *isiHlonipho* disempowers women? Why?**
- 6. Do you think people in the urban and rural areas still practise *isiHlonipho* the same way?**
- 7. To what extent do males and females from the urban and rural areas share the same understanding of *isiHlonipho*?**
- 8. Are the linguistic politeness strategies of women towards women different from those of women towards men and vice versa?**
- 9. What is the degree of the utilization of *isiHlonipho* (both linguistically and non-linguistically) in the following interactions:**

**Women towards women**

**Men towards men**

**Women towards men**

**Men towards women**

## APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE: DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASKS

NAME: (Optional).....

GENDER:            Female                              Female

AGE GROUP:        30-49                              60+

### INSTRUCTIONS

*The following situations are likely to take place in the daily interactions of different environments. Read through the situations and fill in, in the spaces provided, what you would say or do. Please respond as naturally and as honestly as possible.*

1. Your in-laws pay you a visit. You are dressing up to go to work. What do you choose not to wear?

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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. You are visiting your in-laws. As you enter the room where they are seated you notice that there are chairs as well as the grass mat on the floor. Where will you choose to sit? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. You have just been married. You are informed that the in-laws expect you to come and perform 'ukukotiza' ( staying with the in-laws for a certain period of time after getting married). You are working. What do you do?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**4. You are a manager within a big organization. Your assistant is a male. He seems not to do his work well. How do you speak with him?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**5. How do you call your husband?**

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.....  
.....

**6. Your father-in-law's name is Maqanda (eggs). Do you use this term in your speech? Why?**

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.....  
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.....

**7. Do you use *isiHlonipho*? Do you use it voluntarily or you have been forced to use it?**

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.....  
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.....

**8. If you do utilize *isiHlonipho*, where or to whom do you find yourself using it the most?**

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.....  
.....

**9. Do you think the utilization of *isiHlonipho* enriches *isiZulu* as a language or do you regard it as a suppressive agent to people that use it?**

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.....  
.....  
.....

10. Who uses *isiHlonipho* the most? Men or Women? What makes you say that?

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.....  
.....  
.....

11. According to your in-laws, are there words that you are forbidden to use?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. Is there any inconvenience caused by the fact that there are words that you cannot use?

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.....  
.....  
.....

13. Between men and women, who benefits from the utilization of *isiHlonipho*

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.....

14. Before you got married, what was the most important advice given to you by the elders? In other words, something that was constantly emphasized to you.

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.....  
.....

15. For a wife whose husband has passed on, what is it that the wife is not expected to do in order to show respect to him?

.....

## **APPENDIX 5:QUESTIONNAIRE: DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASKS**

**NAME: (Optional).....**

**GENDER: Male** **Male**

**AGE GROUP: 30-49** **60+**

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

*The following situations are likely to take place in the daily interactions of different environments. Read through the situations and fill in, in the spaces provided, what you would say or do. Please respond as naturally and as honestly as possible.*

1. As a married man is there a particular manner in which you should dress when you visit your wife's family?

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.....  
.....  
.....

2. When you visit your wife's home, what are you not expected to do?

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.....

3. Between the mother and the father of your wife, who do you respect most?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Among the siblings, whom do you respect the most?

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Before you got married what was the most important advice given to you by the elders?

.....  
.....  
.....

**6. Your mother-in-law's name is Nomasokisi (socks). When you need your socks what do you say?**

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.....

**7. You are the boss. There are males and females who have to be disciplined. Is it easier to discipline males or females?**

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.....  
.....

**8. Do you call your wife by her name?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**9. Do you use *isiHlonipho*?**

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.....  
.....

**10. Does *isiHlonipho* abuse women in any way?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**11. Do you use *isiHlonipho* when talking to women?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**12. Do you use *isiHlonipho* when talking to men?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**13. Are there words that you do not use because of *isiHlonipho*?**

.....  
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.....

14. If your wife does not want to use *isiHlonipho*, what would you do?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

15. Your wife has passed on. What are you expected to do or not to do in order to show respect to her?

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