

**AN AFROCENTRIC ENQUIRY ON LIVED EXPERIENCE
OF UBUNTU AMONG ISIZULU-SPEAKING PERSONS
FROM DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC AREAS, SOUTH
AFRICA**

by

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DECLARATION

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February 2017

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ABSTRACT

In post-apartheid South Africa, the term Ubuntu has come to be popularised and thus politicised by the governing party (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013). This has been done in an effort to evoke a sense of unity in the South African populace and thus aid in nation building (Nkondo, 2007). However, in order for Ubuntu to be a governing value embraced by South Africans and assimilated into South African society, a clear definition and understanding is required so that it may have practical application in day to day life. Such practical information seems to be largely missing in literature. It was therefore the objective of the following Afrocentric, explorative study to investigate how the concept of Ubuntu is subjectively defined, understood and applied by people in everyday life. In an effort to gain detailed data, the study focussed on eight isiZulu-speaking persons from two geographic areas in KwaZulu-Natal – the suburban areas surrounding Durban, and an informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg. Both commonalities and discrepancies were discovered and explored in the narratives of Ubuntu between the two areas under study. In addition, a multiplicity of insights into the nature and practice of Ubuntu were discovered. It was found that Ubuntu denotes the quality of being a person made possible through humane relationships with other people, and that being a person simultaneously implies interconnection and morality. In addition, it was found that participants conceptualised Ubuntu as inclusive of all human-beings, but practiced Ubuntu in a more exclusive manner. Such discoveries facilitated a comprehensive discussion around Ubuntu – the positives, potential downfalls, affecting variables and possibilities. The aim of this work is to continue both the development of Afrocentric research in South Africa, as well as the body of knowledge around Afrocentric topics such as Ubuntu, thus assisting in the effective application of African knowledge in Africa.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of Ubuntu in suburbia and in an informal settlement in KwaZulu-Natal. Literature indicates that Ubuntu is an African-based life philosophy and culture to which numerous African communities and societies have adhered: a collective way of being where interdependence is essential and inevitable (Dolam, 2013; Nkondo, 2007, Ramose, 2001). Although such a description provides an abstract idea of Ubuntu, it fails to provide a subjective, detailed or applied understanding of this term, or how the conceptualisation and experience of Ubuntu may be affected and by what variables. The dearth of information in these areas regarding Ubuntu therefore provided the focus and objectives for this study. These objectives were achieved through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of eight isiZulu-speaking persons' personal narratives, and from within an Afrocentric paradigm. The Afrocentric paradigm is a philosophical framework and worldview that centralises the African perspective (Asante, 1991; Schreiber, 2000), and is therefore in keeping with the way this study is to be conducted, as well as the subject of study – Ubuntu.

1.1. Rationale for the study

Although existing literature is able to provide descriptive definitions of Ubuntu, such definitions are often abstract and sometimes vague (Dolam, 2013; Lutz, 2009). Accordingly, they do not delineate how Ubuntu is understood, practiced or experienced in day-to-day life by lay people. This is problematic if one acknowledges Mkhize's (2008) argument that Ubuntu is (or should be) an applicable way of life that has relevance in reality, not a mere abstraction. In addition, it has been argued that Ubuntu is a dynamic concept which adapts according to time, place and context (Mkhize, 2008). The meaning of Ubuntu has therefore been transformed over the course of history, undergoing multiple shifts in meaning (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; Gade, 2011). Imposed westernisation, apartheid policies and Christian influences have had an impact on how Ubuntu is conceptualised and practiced (Coertze, 2001).

However, it seems that little attention has been paid to the context-dependent nature of Ubuntu or how this impacts its real-world application. While traditional notions of Ubuntu are given consideration, as well as its theoretical roots and core ideas, the lived experience of Ubuntu in current-day South Africa has been largely overlooked. This is despite the conviction that the majority of South Africans are brought up with Ubuntu and socialised in accordance with this way of life (Ramose, 2001). It is therefore essential that Ubuntu, as it is understood and experienced by people in present-day South Africa, is given due attention. Research needs to be done to find out more about the dynamic nature of Ubuntu – if and how it has been adapted and used by people

across different contexts, the impact this has on its meaning, definition, experience and application, and how context-dependent differences and similarities effect Ubuntu in South Africa today. It is expected that an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of participants' experiences will go some way to answer such questions, thus providing a more concrete understanding of Ubuntu in present times. In addition, such a study is important in the South African context where research has been largely dominated by Westernised approaches imposed on the Black population of South Africa, and where Afrocentric investigations of important concepts such as Ubuntu are somewhat underdeveloped.

1.2. Objectives

This study aims to explore the concept of Ubuntu as it is subjectively understood, experienced and practiced by isiZulu-speakers from two different geographical and socio-economic backgrounds. Through this exploration, it is hoped that this study is able to contribute to and expand on existing literature on Ubuntu and Afrocentricity. In addition, a more defined and practical understanding of Ubuntu may assist in navigating a path forward for Ubuntu in South Africa, both in academia as well as in our everyday lives. With these broad aims in mind, the constituent objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To explore how Ubuntu is subjectively defined, described and understood.
- 2) To learn if and how Ubuntu is practically experienced and exercised in every-day life.
- 3) To discover both the positives and potential shortcomings of Ubuntu according to participants' personal perspectives.
- 4) To compare and understand commonalities and differences between the narratives on Ubuntu across different geographical and socio-economic contexts thereby enhancing an understanding of the dynamic, context-dependent nature of Ubuntu and the potential impact this may have in South Africa.
- 5) To gain information on participants' views regarding the future of Ubuntu in South Africa.

1.3. Research questions

- 1) How is Ubuntu subjectively defined, described and understood by a sample of Zulu persons living in two different geographic and socio-economic contexts in KwaZulu-Natal?
- 2) What do participants' narratives reveal about how Ubuntu is practised and experienced in their day-to-day lives?
- 3) What are the positive and potentially negative aspects of Ubuntu according to participants' personal views?
- 4) How do the narratives regarding the experience of Ubuntu compare across the two chosen

contexts, and what can such comparisons tell us?

5) What are participants' views regarding the future of Ubuntu in South Africa?

1.4. Definition of terms

There are five key concepts in this study which need to be expanded on: Afrocentricity or Africentricity, Ubuntu, Zulu, peri-urban and suburban.

Afrocentricity or *Africentricity* is a philosophical framework and worldview that centralises the African perspective (Asante, 1991). This includes African culture, history, beliefs, experiences and aspirations (Asante, 1991; Schreiber, 2000). The Afrocentric stance therefore reveals a move away from individualistic and isolated understandings of people, particularly people of African descent, towards a collective and contextual understanding of human beings (Schiele, 1990). Although "Afrocentricity" and "Africentricity" are interchangeable, (Nobles, 1985), the word "Afrocentricity" or "Afrocentric" will be used from here on out.

Ubuntu is a derivative of the Nguni language and can be simplistically translated to mean being a human-being (Ramose, 2001) or "the essence of being human" or "humaneness" (Coertze, 2001, p. 113). However, it is perhaps more aptly defined by Ramose (1999a) as: "being human and having a humane (respectful and polite) attitude towards other human beings" (p. 97).

The *Zulu* people are part of the larger African Nguni ethnic group who live in South Africa and speak a derivative of the Bantu-language, isiZulu (Afolayan, 2004). They constitute the largest cultural group in South Africa, and although widespread, predominate in KwaZulu-Natal (Wilkes & Nkosi, 1998).

Informal settlement is the name given to "An unplanned settlement on land which has not been surveyed or proclaimed as residential, consisting mainly of informal dwellings (shacks)" (Statistics South Africa, as cited in the HDA, 2013, p. 6). Subsequently, an informal dwelling or shack, is a structurally unapproved building made out of improvised materials (HDA, 2013).

Suburban areas are formal residential areas outside of the central city or town but still within the confines of the city or town (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Historically speaking (under apartheid policies), the suburbs referred specifically to typically official dwellings within White inhabited areas (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

1.5. Delimitation and scope of the study

The aim of this study was to explore in-depth the topic of Ubuntu according to the personal perspectives of eight isiZulu-speaking participants in KZN – four from Hlalakahle, an informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg, and four from the suburban areas surrounding Durban. This study is therefore restricted to the narratives of these young adult participants, living in present-day South Africa, within the specific aforementioned environments. The detailed, idiosyncratic data gained is not meant to be generalised, but instead used as an preliminary exploration of what Ubuntu means to this sample of lay people who are experts regarding their personal understandings and experiences of Ubuntu in their own lives. The aim is to learn from them and illuminate their insights into this topic. It is hoped that such information will open avenues for further areas of study, while adding to already existing literature on Ubuntu.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter firstly discusses the concept of Afrocentricity. Through this initial discussion, it is shown that Ubuntu is an Afrocentric subject best studied from within this paradigm. It then examines the concept of Ubuntu itself and the relevant information available regarding this subject in prevailing literature. In this review it becomes evident that although adequate conceptual information around Ubuntu exists, there is a dearth of practical information on this significant topic. Little research has been carried out concerning the practical application and lived experience of Ubuntu, and thus the voice of those for whom Ubuntu is an actuality in day-to-day life, is largely missing. The extensive conceptual information surrounding Ubuntu is therefore examined, unpacked and rehashed in the following chapter so as to understand this broad and complex topic. Through this process, potential issues are discussed, common and conflicting ideas reviewed, and ultimately the importance of this study is shown.

2.1. The Afrocentric paradigm

First and foremost it is important to discuss and provide a sufficient understanding of the Afrocentric paradigm which informed and guided this research process. As this study was implemented within this framework, it informed how the research subject (Ubuntu) was studied and analysed; in addition the research was guided by the philosophical assumptions underpinning the Afrocentric worldview (Pellerin, 2012). Furthermore, Ubuntu, as an African concept, should too reflect these assumptions, both in literature and in participants' narratives, thereby proving both the reliability of the Afrocentric worldview as well as the suitability of applying the Afrocentric model in this study.

2.1.1. Afrocentricity and a summary of Afrocentric tenets

According to Schreiber (2000), Asante is one of the leading writers of the Afrocentric paradigm. Accordingly, many of the underlying thoughts expounded by Afrocentricity that are to be discussed are based on his work, as well as that of other authors who have elaborated on his work in different ways. Asante (1991) states that Afrocentricity is a social science paradigm or worldview founded on African philosophical thought that centralises the African perspective. It encompasses African culture, history, beliefs, experiences and aspirations, all of which are seen to provide important knowledge worthy of study and further enquiry (Asante, 1991; Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000).

There have been numerous articles documenting the various tenets of Afrocentricity. These tenets are understood to be common in the majority of cultural groups throughout Africa (Karenga, 2004; Mbiti, 1970). According to literature reviewed from Asante (1987), Graham (1999), Myers (1985), Schiele (1990; 1996) and Shreiber (2000), the tenets of the Afrocentric paradigm can be

summarised in the following three points. 1) There is no definitive boundary between the spiritual realm and the physical realm of human-beings. 2) All humans-beings (both within and outside of our known physical reality) are interconnected and interdependent. Accordingly, interpersonal relationships are perceived as highly valuable and are of central importance in African thought. 3) Human-beings have a propensity for both rationality and emotion; both of these psychological functions are seen to be equally important, and both provide valid forms of knowledge. Although simplified here, these three basic tenets indicate that the dichotomies that often exist in western thought, which tend to divide and separate coexisting phenomena, do not exist from the African perspective (Pellerin, 2012). Instead, Afrocentric philosophy assumes harmony and reciprocity between all things and in so doing encourages a holistic perspective of phenomena (Mkhize, 2008; Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996). These assumptions will be discussed in more detail now.

Spirituality

The spiritual realm holds immense significance from the Afrocentric perspective (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). The reason for its significance lies in the belief that no separation exists between the physical and spiritual world – they are interconnected and interdependent realities (Akbar, 1984; Asante, 1987; Myers, 1985; Schiele, 1996). Therefore, what is typically identified and categorised as two separate and contrasting realms in modernist western thought, presents as one unified and holistic realm in Afrocentric thought (Asante, 1987; Pellerin 2012; Myers, 1985). Pellerin (2012) argues that in addition to these imposed dichotomies, Eurocentric thought also evaluates the physical and spiritual as valuable and inconsequential respectively. As a consequence, little emphasis is given to spirituality. However, according to Afrocentric thought, such a perspective that prioritises the physical world in this way, thus nullifying spirituality, is incomplete and inaccurate (Akbar, 1984). In a similar vein, Afrocentricity assumes an interconnection between the mind, body and spirit (Graham, 1999; Mbiti, 1970). It is perhaps for these reasons that Gyekye (2010) states that Africans are an exceptionally religious and spiritual people for whom religious beliefs and day-to-day life are interwoven and indistinguishable from one another. And indeed, as the material and spiritual are entwined realities, it is coherent that spirituality is as integral to human existence as the exterior, material world (Akbar, 1984; Mbiti, 1970).

Subsequent to this conclusion, it is important to understand the implications of the spirituality inherent in African ontology. According to the Afrocentric worldview, spirituality spans across time and place and therefore counteracts the limitations of the current material world in which human-beings physically exist (Akbar, 1976; Graham, 1999; Menkiti, 1984; Myers, 1985). This means that all persons past (the ancestors), present (the living) and future (the hitherto unborn), are interconnected and interdependent (Menkiti, 1984; Myers, 1985). Furthermore, this interminable

spirituality is perceived to be a characteristic not just of persons but of all natural phenomena, and thus the medium through which all living things are interconnected (Asante, 1987; Karenga, 2004; Graham, 1999; Schiele, 1996). This leads to one implication of particular importance: through spirituality there is a connective and mutually dependent bond between all natural things; both to one another and to a higher spiritual power (Akbar, 1976; Mkhize, 2008; Schiele, 1990). Spirituality connects all natural phenomena together in one complete network where one is connected to all others (Akbar, 1976; Mkhize, 2008; Schiele, 1990).

Interconnectedness of human-beings

The interwoven, interconnected system of all natural phenomena, particularly human-beings is the second tenet of the Afrocentric paradigm (Asante, 1987; Mbiti, 1970; Schiele, 1996). Inherent in this belief is the idea that each human-being is intrinsically connected with all other human-beings, past, present and future (Asante, 1987; Schiele, 1996; Menkiti, 1984). This idea is conveyed best by Mbiti's (1970) well-known quote: "I am because you are. And since you are, therefore I am" (p. 141). In this quote it is apparent that human-beings are conceived not only as connected to one another, but also fundamentally interdependent. This means that a person cannot be wholly or accurately understood in isolation as a human-being can only be properly defined in terms of other human-beings (Mbiti, 1970; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2006; Schiele, 1990). This Afrocentric stance displays a clear move away from individualistic and insulated understandings of people towards a necessarily reciprocal, collective and contextual conceptualisation (Asante, 1987; Schiele, 1990).

The outcomes of this collectivist stance are significant as it is essentially a position which places value on every human life and champions human relationships above all else (Gyekye, 2010; Mbiti, 1970; Schiele, 1996). This is because relationships are understood to be an inherent part of being a human-being: people are seen to be socially orientated by nature and hence require relationships to be fulfilled as people and provide purpose (Graham, 1999; Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2006). In view of this, the social context in which people exist becomes essential: human-beings are perceived to be fully enmeshed in their social context, valuable within this context, and understood only within this context (Asante, 1987; Gyekye, 2010; Schiele, 1990).

Furthermore, it is evident that the principle of interconnectedness is a position which emphasises socially orientated values and actions – commonalities become more important than differences, that which unites people takes precedence over divisive factors, and the goals and good of the group become the personal goals of each person (Asante, 1987; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Schiele, 1990). It is a perspective which champions a humanistic and socially-based code of ethics which places worth on every human life, on harmonious relations, cohesion and survival (Akbar, 1984;

Gyekye, 2010; Myers, 1985; Schiele, 1990). It can be argued that this tenet is of major importance, particularly in this study regarding Ubuntu, as it significantly effects the conceptualisation of all human-related phenomena.

Emotions as valuable

The third Afrocentric tenet under consideration is the principle that emotion is valid and highly important (Asante, 1987; Akbar, 1984; Schiele, 1996). It is understood that human-beings have the capacity for both rational and affective (‘irrational’) thoughts and behaviour (Akbar, 1984; Asante, 1987; Schiele, 1996). The unambiguously human-centred principles espoused by the Afrocentric approach means that our human propensity for emotion is valuable for the very reason that it is an inherent and indispensable part of being a human-being (Asante, 1987; Schiele, 1996). Where western thought dichotomises rationality and emotion, and again evaluates these sources of knowledge as worthwhile and worthless respectively, the Afrocentric stance perceives both these ways of knowing as reciprocal and equally valuable (Asante, 1987; Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996; Schrieber, 2000). Affect and rational thought are positioned not as opposites but rather as two sides of the same coin – two different but inter-reliant ways of knowing (Schiele, 1996). Together, they are able to provide an enhanced understanding of the world, and consequently, more complete and accurate knowledge (Schiele, 1996).

This acceptance of emotions as worthwhile gives way to the recognition that human behaviours or actions are typically emotionally based (Akbar, 1984; Schiele, 1990). Despite the human capacity for rational thought and the importance of rationality, Akbar (1984) and Schiele (1990) argue that it is emotion that most often shapes human behaviour and experience. In other words, emotion is the primary medium through which we, as human-beings, experience both ourselves and the world around us (Asante, 1987; Akbar, 1984; Schiele, 1990). To acknowledge such information as true is to acknowledge the significance of affective knowledge. Such an acknowledgment is especially important for qualitative social science research as it postulates that in order to accurately study, explore and understand human-beings and human related phenomena such as Ubuntu, affective knowledge has to be accepted as indispensable knowledge.

An alternative paradigm

Afrocentricity, along with various other paradigms (such as social constructionism and feminism), are products of a movement against modernist westernised ideas and ideals (Pellerin, 2012; Schrieber, 2000). This countermovement is evidenced in the above summary of Afrocentric tenets which stand in contrast to modernist social science theories espoused by western philosophy. The interwoven nature and reciprocity apparent in Afrocentric ontology, epistemology and methodology

diverge from positivist-based notions based on the discrete categorisation of the physical world (Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Afrocentricity takes a stance against European-centred thought which prioritises and authenticates the individual, the material, the rational, the objective and the quantifiable, largely discrediting almost everything else (Asante, 1995; Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000). In comparison, “the tenets of the Afrocentric model reflect its collective, rhythmic, non-material or spiritual, and affective character” (Schiele, 1996, p. 146).

The perceptible divergences between African and European philosophical assumptions influence how phenomena is understood, analysed and interpreted. Noticeable differences in their epistemological positions provide one example of this. Positivist epistemology suggests that an external, law-like reality can be discovered and therefore known using objective, detached methodology (Schreiber, 2000; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). This represents a major departure from the highly contextualised, subjective epistemology of the Afrocentric paradigm (Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000). From an Afrocentric perspective, to attempt to understand a person objectively and rationally as an individual apart is to undermine his or her sense of communal self, spiritual self and affective self, ultimately resulting in a limited and warped understanding (Graham, 1999). In view of this, it can be seen that the study of African phenomena (such as Ubuntu) from a Eurocentric perspective, is a study that disregards, devaluates and/or distorts such phenomena as it discredits many African ontological and epistemological assumptions (Asante, 1995; Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000).

Coherently, the Afrocentric paradigm asserts that Africans and African topics ought to be studied, analysed and understood from an African (internal) perspective, based on African philosophical assumptions (Asante, 1995; Schiele, 1996; Schrieber, 2000).

2.1.2. Appropriateness of the Afrocentric paradigm

The noted differences between western and African thought are important in so far as they are able to indisputably demonstrate the suitability of the Afrocentric paradigm in framing and structuring this study on the experience of Ubuntu. As Ubuntu is an African concept experienced primarily by African people (Gade, 2012), it needs to be studied within a paradigm which centres African assumptions. This is based on the idea put forward by Mbiti (1970) that the principles upon which the Afrocentric paradigm are based, permeate throughout Africa, including South Africa, and are therefore appropriate to all African-related phenomena. The aim is therefore to explore and understand the experience of Ubuntu in the day-to-day life of a subset of Zulu South Africans, based on the philosophical tenets outlined by the Afrocentric approach. According to the work of

Asante (1995), Pellerin (2012), Schiele (1996) and Schreiber (2000), this emic approach should a) result in research that is orientated towards African liberation and validation, b) prevent the marginalisation of African phenomena, persons and philosophy, c) remedy distorted European-imposed conclusions and d) offer accurate and insightful results. With these points in mind, it is now necessary to discuss Ubuntu in detail.

2.2. Ubuntu

Although it has been established that Ubuntu, by virtue of its African-ness, is an Afrocentric concept best studied using an Afrocentric approach, it has not yet been made apparent what exactly Ubuntu is. Understanding the nature or exact meaning of Ubuntu is immensely difficult due to the plethora of meanings and interpretations that have been accorded to the term by various scholars (Nussbaum, 2003; Pietersen, 2005; Tshaepe, 2013). Literature on Ubuntu can be found in articles regarding law (Cornell & van Marle, 2005), philosophy (Metz, 2011), politics (Nkondo, 2007; Ramose, 1999a), religion (Mbiti, 1970), personhood (Fairfax, 2011; Menkiti, 1984), history (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011), and other subjects. These various interpretations of Ubuntu do not always speak to each other, and when they do, the connections and implications are complex. Consequently, the task of forming a *linear* discussion regarding a widely-encompassing, complex, holistic and not yet completely delineated concept has been a challenge. Nevertheless, such a challenge is worthwhile to explore – the more attempts made to delineate and accurately understand Ubuntu, the closer we come to its ultimate realisation in South Africa today. The structure and approximate English translation of the word “Ubuntu” is a useful place to start.

2.2.1. Word structure and English translation

According to Ramose (2001), the word „Ubuntu“ is a derivative of the Nguni language. The first part of the word, „ubu“ denotes *being* or behaviour, and „ntu“ forms the noun-stem which denotes the physical form of the *being*, the human (Coertze, 2001; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 2001; Shutte, 2001). Therefore, in its most simplistic form, Ubuntu can be defined as being (behaving) human, or humanness (Ramose, 1999b; Tshaepe, 2013). It is evident that this translation is ambiguous leaving it open to interpretation, as it is not obvious what „being human“ or „humanness“ means or what it entails. Nevertheless, this elusive translation is significant as it is the foundation upon which more complex meanings and interpretations of Ubuntu have been derived (Tshaepe, 2013).

Gade (2012) argues that despite multiple interpretations, there are specifically two popular and commonly held ideas about the meaning of Ubuntu or „humaneness“ among South Africans of African descent (SAAD): in the first, Ubuntu denotes a moral quality that only human-beings can possess, in the second, Ubuntu denotes a phenomenon by which human-beings are interconnected

and interdependent with one another. According to Gade (2012) SAAD may hold either or both of these ideas as true. In reviewing the available literature, it was evident that many scholars argue for both interpretations where Ubuntu conveys two simultaneous, mutually dependent meanings: being humane (Ubuntu as a moral quality) and being a human-being (defined collectively as interdependent with other human-beings) (Coertze, 2001, Dolam, 2013; Louw, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b).

It is evident that human-beings take centre stage in the understanding of Ubuntu. The next section therefore discusses the different conceptions of African personhood. These conceptualisations are integral to understanding Ubuntu, as a phenomenon by which human-beings are interconnected, and/or as a moral quality which human-beings possess (Gade, 2012).

2.3. African personhood

Understanding personhood is integral to understanding Ubuntu. This is evident when one examines the isiZulu maxim popularly used to describe or define Ubuntu: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Gade, 2011; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). The most common English translation of this maxim is: a person is a person through or because of other people (Gade, 2012; Nussbaum, 2003). This maxim, together with the structure and translation of the word „Ubuntu“, illustrate that Ubuntu is about personhood. Ubuntu means to be a person, and likewise, in order to be a person, an individual has to have or do Ubuntu (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). For the sake of ease and clarity, a distinction between the words „human-being“ and „person“ becomes necessary: from here on out, „human-being“ will denote the biological form of an individual, while the „person“ will automatically imply someone with Ubuntu.

Accordingly, in order to understand Ubuntu, a thorough exploration and understanding of personhood is necessary. However, this exercise is complicated by the various understandings of African personhood that exist (Gade, 2012; Pietersen, 2005). Conceptualisations of African personhood range from broad and indiscriminate, to specific and exclusive. Nevertheless, there is one commonality basic to this range of understandings – African personhood is always collectively conceived (Schiele, 1990). This notion is best conveyed by John Mbiti’s (1970) famous quote: “I am because we are and because we are therefore I am” (p. 141). African personhood is automatically recognised as interconnected with the personhood of others (Dolam, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999b). Despite this foundational premise, different opinions exist about the extent of this collectivism, resulting in distinctive conceptualisations of personhood. These conceptualisations have various ethical, philosophical and practical implications which need to be explored further (Mkhize, 2006).

2.3.1. *Collectivism to communalism*

As has already been argued, the quote, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other people) frequently used to describe Ubuntu, alludes to a collective conceptualisation of personhood. This maxim however, is open to multiple nuanced interpretations regarding the extent of collectivism. Nonetheless, two ideas in particular are typically held among scholars regarding the nature of collective personhood: the first is that all *human-beings* are interconnected and interdependent by virtue of their innate biological humanness (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003); the second is that *human-beings* are interconnected and interdependent by virtue of being *people* (Gade, 2012; Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 2001). The first understanding is broad, inclusive and non-specified, whereas the second understanding is exclusive to *people*. Although both conceptualisations adequately fit the description of collective personhood, it has been argued by authors such as Ramose (2001), that the latter idea is more aptly described as communal personhood. This is because this conceptualisation of personhood is based on the principle that a *human-being* is only a *person* through interactions with other people – interactions which are distinctly communal in nature rather than collective (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 2001; Tschaepe, 2013). Accordingly, communal personhood holds the same general principles as collective personhood but conveys more intimate and closely orientated connections between persons rather than abstract connections between all human-beings based on our human essence. These two different ideas result in alternative translations of personhood and thus Ubuntu, and therefore need to be explored further. The collective conception of personhood will be discussed first.

2.3.1.1. *Collective conception of personhood*

The collective conceptualisation of personhood denotes that all human-beings are interconnected and interdependent (Asante, 1987; Graham, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1996). Nelson Mandela's (2006) statement that "we are still all branches on the same tree of humanity" (as cited in Lutz, 2009, p. 4), provides an effective illustration of this idea. This understanding rests on the principle that all human-beings are valuable and interconnected by virtue of our innate humanness or common humanity (Graham, 1999; Gyekye, 2010; Schiele, 1996). Consequently, it is coherent that in this conceptualisation of personhood, all human-beings are regarded as people. According to such an understanding, every human-being should be treated with respect and dignity because a) we are equal in our humanness, and b) our humanness connects us as one actuality (Akbar, 1976; Gyekye, 2010; Metz, 2011; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1996). These implications mirror the foundational and basic meaning of Ubuntu as humanness: simultaneously signifying 1) being a human-being through other human-beings, and 2) being humane (Gade, 2012; Ramose, 2001; Ramose, 1999b).

It is with this collectivist view that Shutte (2001) argues that Ubuntu is a humanist philosophy or worldview where each and every human life is worthwhile and important. Such a humanist perspective has many implications. Firstly, it does not provide grounds for discrimination between human-beings on any front as it is based purely on being a human-being. Common humanity takes precedence over differences (Gyekye, 2010; Schiele, 1996). Secondly because it does not discriminate and is inclusive, it can be used widely across different cultures and societies (Gade, 2012; Shutte, 2001). This is useful in a country such as South Africa where there are numerous cultural, racial, religious and language groups. Thirdly, it advocates ethical behaviour or responsiveness from all human-beings towards all other human-beings (Akbar, 1976; Gyekye, 2010; Myers, 1985; Schiele, 1996; van Niekerk, 2011). It therefore acts a protective and unifying value system (Ramose, 2001).

However, there are also some problems with this conceptualisation of personhood and its implications for the meaning of Ubuntu. First and foremost, this humanistic and all-inclusive understanding of Ubuntu is not accepted by everyone (Gade, 2012). There are many scholars and SAAD who have (to different extents) more exclusive understandings of personhood and thus Ubuntu (Gade, 2012). In addition, even if this understanding was universally accepted, it is an abstract understanding which renders practical application difficult. Although theoretically, a collectivist conceptualisation logically denotes human interconnection and morality, practically, such denotations make little sense: it is not evident how human-beings are actually interconnected or how such theoretical interconnections practically imply morality.

It can therefore be seen that this collectivist conceptualisation of personhood is inclusive and human-centred. It provides a theoretical understanding of Ubuntu as both the phenomenon by which human-beings are interconnected, and, the morality that human-beings ought to show one another given this interconnection. These understandings correspond with both of the popularly held beliefs regarding Ubuntu among SAAD (Gade, 2012). However, this conceptualisation of personhood is not universally accepted and fails to provide an explicit or practical understanding of Ubuntu. It is therefore necessary to explore communal conceptualisations of personhood which are more exclusive and practical.

2.3.1.2. Communal conception of personhood

Communal personhood is so called because in this conceptualisation personhood is exclusive to those human-beings who are capable of and/or actually experience communal interactions with other human-beings (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a; Tschaepe, 2013). In contrast to the collective conception of personhood, communalism is more specified and conditional as it does not apply to

all human-beings. However, Gade (2012) found that different opinions exist regarding the form and extent of exclusivity of communal personhood. This finding was reflected in the reviewed literature.

Gade (2012) argues that among SAAD, three conditions in particular are used to delimit personhood: 1) he or she has to be of African descent and therefore Black, 2) he or she has to be formally incorporated into personhood, 3) he or she has to embody and demonstrate morality. Although this may be true of SAAD, in reviewing the literature (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a) two more conditions of personhood could be put forward: a) the capacity to experience mutually beneficial relationships or interactions, and b) (on a related but more specific condition), a human-being's valuable participation in, and solidarity with, his or her specific community.

Each of these conditional conceptualisations will be explored and discussed in turn from the least conditional to the most. It must be noted before commencing this discussion that typically, each additional condition of personhood encompasses the previous condition but takes it one step further, developing into increasingly exclusive versions of personhood. Subsequently, the least exclusive conceptualisation of communal personhood is a useful place to start.

Capacity for, and experience of, reciprocal relations

The condition for personhood in this broadly defined version of communal personhood is a human-being's capacity for, and experience of, reciprocal interactions with others (Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999a). On this basis, a human-being is defined as a person, only to the extent that he or she experiences mutually beneficial or reciprocal relationships with other people (Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999a). According to this understanding, we are born human by virtue of our biology, but need relationships with other human-beings in order to be a person (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Lutz, 2009; Menkiti, 1984; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999b).

In this version of personhood, people are perceived as necessarily interconnected, but it is by virtue of mutual reliance rather than biological predisposition as in collectivism (Gyekye, 2010; Lutz, 2009; Nussbaum, 2003). The difference between the collectivist and communalist conceptualisations of personhood is therefore clear. Communal personhood infers people actually co-operating together, not just existing together as in collectivism (Louw, 2010; Menkiti, 1984). So while the collectivist conception acknowledges the humanness of others, the communal conception goes one step further to necessitate interdependent and interpersonal relationships with others.

The primacy afforded to interpersonal relationships in this account of personhood can be explained in the following way: According to Mkhize (2006), human-beings are naturally socially orientated beings, both capable of, and requiring relationships. At the same time, humans are perceived to be

limited beings that have to rely on one another for survival, as well as psychological and physical fulfilment (Gyekye, 2010; Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999a). Accordingly, it is interdependent relationships with others that ensure survival and provide human-beings with worth, purpose and meaning as people (Graham, 1999; Nkondo, 2007; Ramose, 1999a). In other words, a human-being's sense of identity or personhood is formed and rooted in his or her relationships with others (Akbar, 1984; Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Louw, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Nkondo, 2007). As Cornell and van Marle (2005) argue, "Who and how we can be human beings is always being shaped in our interaction with each other" (p. 205).

The necessity for social relationships or interactions as a condition for communal personhood has many consequent implications which become central to the meaning of Ubuntu. For example, Shutte (2001) defines Ubuntu as that which "is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment" (p. 2), which in this conception of Ubuntu implies the existence of mutually beneficial relationships with others. Bishop Dandala (as cited in Nussbaum, 2003) describes Ubuntu in another way, as the "bedrock of a specific lifestyle or culture that seeks to honour human relationships as primary..." (p. 2). Despite the fact that these descriptions of Ubuntu are dissimilar, it is obvious that in the communal understanding of personhood, Ubuntu becomes about practically experiencing fulfilling, mutually beneficial, interpersonal relationships (Nussbaum, 2003).

This understanding of Ubuntu has a positive ripple effect on human-related phenomena. For example, the requirement of reciprocal relations for personhood means that the consequences of such relations are actualised and can be realistically beneficial rather than theoretical. A human-being must embody Ubuntu, and act or behave according to Ubuntu, if he or she wants to be known as a person (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Ramose, 1999b). A related consequence is that people's self-concepts, because they are based on being people through fulfilling relationships, are typically positive (Graham, 1999; Wastlund et al., 2001). Value is given to who one is as a person in relation to others, rather than to what one has (Graham, 1999; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Schiele, 1996). A person's monetary wealth, intelligence or social standing, are therefore means to a person's worth from an Ubuntu perspective (Ramose, 1999a); in other words, the nature and quality of one's relationships with others is of ultimate importance (Mkhize, 2008). Furthermore, as relationships are dynamic and fluid (Graham, 1999), they are open to change, reparation, as well as a developing of quality and quantity. It is for such reasons that Graham (1999) argues that Ubuntu can alleviate many social problems as harmonious relationships are primary and people hold themselves and each other in positive esteem.

Although there are many positives in this conception of personhood, there are also several criticisms that have been posed by authors such as Coertze (2001) and Gade (2012). The first potential problem is that according to Coertze (2001), communal personhood may not be inclusive of all human-beings. This may leave Ubuntu vulnerable to misinterpretation, and consequent misuse. For example, Gade (2012) found that some SAAD believe whites to be non-people, typically incapable of Ubuntu. One reason for this perception may be the westernised validation of independence over dependence (Pietersen, 2005). Another reason may be the brutally enforced racism of apartheid that SAAD were subjected to, which went against everything Ubuntu stands for (Gade, 2012; Nkondo, 2007). Although this perception of whites and/or others may be justifiable, such an exclusionary interpretation of Ubuntu, 1) hinders the acceptance of all human-beings as worthwhile people (Coertze, 2001), 2) could hamper Ubuntu as a governing value in South Africa moving forward (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012), and most importantly, 3) according to collectivist personhood (Ubuntu), the perception of any human-being as non-people is in itself a violation of Ubuntu (Akbar, 1976; Gyekye, 2010; Myers, 1985; Schiele, 1996; van Niekerk, 2011).

The next potential problem is that there is no consensus that this is the „right“ version of Ubuntu. While the majority of scholars seem to endorse interdependent, interconnected relationships as necessary for personhood and Ubuntu, there are also several prominent scholars (Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 2001; Tschaepe, 2013; Wiredu, 1984) who extend the conditions of personhood one or two steps further (as will be seen later), while others reject conditional personhood altogether as has already been seen). Moreover, even within this version of communal personhood, the scope and actual application of Ubuntu is not clearly or unanimously delineated. For example, it is not clear whether the spirit of Ubuntu should apply to all people equally, or only to those people with whom one experiences, or has a proper opportunity to experience, actual interdependent, interpersonal relationships (Coertze, 2001; Lutz, 2009; van Niekerk, 2011). For instance, Mkhize (2006) argues that in a person's self-conception, family is of utmost importance and family must therefore be each person's primary responsibility. Although this seems reasonable, it does seem to open Ubuntu to personal interpretation or misinterpretation that could result in nepotism or the exploitation of those people who fall outside one's own personal network of relations (Lutz, 2009; van Niekerk, 2009).

Although potential problems with this conceptualisation of communal personhood exist, it also has many strengths. With a) a positive interpretation, b) a proper delineation of Ubuntu which accounts for different scenarios and ethical positions, c) a detailed demarcation of its practical applications, and d) general consensus by SAAD, communal personhood based on reciprocal relationships could be advantageous as a governing value for South Africans. However, in order to achieve this, a lot

more detailed information about Ubuntu as it is perceived, experienced and applied, needs to be collected and engaged with.

Community-based relationships

Where the previous conception of personhood necessitated the experience of interpersonal, interdependent relationships, this conception of personhood, most common in literature regarding Ubuntu, requires that an individual be interdependent with his or her community (Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Osagie, 1985; Tschaepe, 2013). In this understanding, interpersonal relations are still essential but the community is of ultimate importance (Tschaepe, 2013; van Niekerk, 2011). Despite the broadly humanistic stance taken in Afrocentric thought, it has been noted that the primacy afforded to the community unit is a sentiment that is echoed across Africa (Lutz, 2009). Accordingly, the community is regarded by many as the foundation upon which African culture, philosophy and lifestyle has been built (Lutz, 2009). Not surprisingly then, it is also considered by some writers to be central to African personhood (Menkiti, 1984; Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008).

Dolam (2013) clarifies this community-based conceptualisation of personhood by arguing that just as it is reasonable that an individual would identify him or herself as part of a particular community, the same holds true that an individual's community is integral to his or her identity. This is what Myers (1985) refers to as "holonomy" (p. 35), where the whole is contained in each part. Louw (2010) conveys this idea in another way by comparing a community to an organism: the organism (the community) is dependent on each of its organically interconnected parts in order to function effectively and, each interconnected part relies on the functioning of all other interconnected parts and therefore the whole organism, in order to also function effectively. On this basis, it can be seen that there is an inherent and necessary interdependence between the community and the individual where neither can survive without the other (Dolam, 2013; Gyekeye, 2010; Mbiti, 1970; Tschaepe, 2013). In other words, the community is created by and made up of human-beings (Cornell & van Marle, 2005), and it is only within this community and with each other, that these human-beings can survive as people (Dolam, 2013; Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2004).

However, in this conceptualisation of communal personhood, it is not enough to exist in a community. One has to actively participate in his or her community as part of the community (Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a). This means that a human-being is defined as a person through active community involvement and through the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with other community members (Fairfax, 2011; Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Wiredu, 2004). In true communal reciprocity, a human-being adds value to the community and in turn, the community provides that human-being with a sense of

value as a person (Lutz, 2009; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2006). Moreover, according to Menkiti (1984), Mkhize (2008), and Ramose (1999a), one's value as a person is proportional to the *extent* of his or her constructive involvement in the community. Personhood therefore becomes open to evaluation and thus too, differentiation (Menkiti, 1984; Metz, 2011).

According to Metz (2011) and van Niekerk (2011), community involvement and valuable membership are expressions of communal solidarity. Solidarity is seen to be an essential part of being a person as it indicates a commitment to the community's interests and reciprocity with the community, both of which are conditions of communal personhood (Menkiti, 1984; Metz, 2011; van Niekerk, 2011; Tschaepe, 2013). If one is indifferent, disinterested or antagonistic towards other community members, or the community as a whole, then one is failing to show solidarity, and thus failing to be a person (Metz, 2011). This plays a major role in the development and maintenance of a strong communal identity, which further ensures communal holonomy, and thus the survival of the community and all its members (Metz, 2011; Osagie, 1985; van Niekerk, 2009). In Menkiti's (1984) words, a community is "not an additive „we“, but a thoroughly fused collective „we“" (p. 179). In essence, some scholars believe acts of solidarity or *simunye*, to be acts of Ubuntu – a way of showing personhood through reciprocity with, and commitment to, the community (Ramose, 1999a; van Niekerk, 2009).

Communal solidarity also means that the successes and failures of a particular community belong to each individual community member (Graham, 1999; Mbiti, 1970; Metz, 2011). Lutz (2009) likens this idea to that of a team sport where playing well in one's own right is simultaneously playing well for the team's sake and, if the team is successful then so too is each individual member. In this way we "experience our lives as bound up with the good the particular community in which our identity has been constituted" (Nkondo, 2007, p. 90). Based on this idea, the assumption made is that that which is good for the community is good for all those who constitute the community (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Pietersen, 2005). Consequently, the interests of the community take precedence over the interests of individual persons (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Nkondo, 2007; Tschaepe, 2013). Hence, in this conceptualisation of personhood, a person should act or behave according to what is advantageous for his or her community as a whole, thus demonstrating solidarity, valuable membership, and thus Ubuntu (Gyekye, 2010; Metz, 2011; Ruch & Anyanwu, 1981).

This conceptualisation of personhood results in an understanding of Ubuntu as the process through which each individual develops into a person through interdependence with his or her community and which results in a communal frame of reference for understanding the world (Bujo, 2003, cited

in Dolam, 2013; Tschaepe, 2013). It is evident that this description of Ubuntu is more detailed than previous descriptions based on other conceptualisations of personhood. The strongly rooted nature of this version of communal personhood, and the more clear-cut boundaries, roles and practical requirements of being a person, give way to a more definitively demarcated sense of what Ubuntu is and entails. As a result of such practical demarcations, it could also be argued that such a conceptualisation also has more definitive outcomes, both good and bad.

On the positive side, this understanding of personhood seems to provide a potent and favourable communal self-concept as it promotes feelings of exclusive belonging and thus a unique and affirmative in-group identity (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012; Nkondo, 2007; Tschaepe, 2013). Secondly, the solidarity and commitment of all members to the group ensures the survival and wellbeing of the group and all its members (Gade, 2012; Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990). Consequently, it aids in the prevention of human greed and egocentric behaviour which alienates, divides and results in a diminished and fragile sense of self-worth (Nussbaum, 2003; Myers, 1985). Instead, Ubuntu dictates that all community persons should be treated with respect and dignity which safeguards a unified, strong, stable, and protected group (Gade, 2012; Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990). Thirdly, as personhood is open to evaluation based on the extent of a person's valuable participation, it conceivably rewards and encourages people to be the best that they can be, and obligates people to, at the very least, behave according to the norms of their group (Gyekye, 2010; Pietersen, 2005; Wiredu, 2004). In addition, an exclusive and delimited group renders the interconnection and interdependence between members of the group more apparent. This applies social pressure on community members to act according to certain standards of Ubuntu – one, because if such standards are not met, that individual will no longer be seen as a person in the eyes of other community members; and two, because one person's failure is taken personally and seriously by all other interconnected and interdependent community members (Graham, 1999; Lutz, 2009; Mbiti, 1970; Metz, 2011). Lastly, this understanding of being a person or Ubuntu is practically applicable for the very reason that it is more detailed and clearly demarcated. The actual manifestation of Ubuntu in everyday life therefore becomes palpably plausible. This is both advantageous and necessary for the future of Ubuntu in South Africa.

Unfortunately, this conceptualisation of personhood also presents potential problems. Firstly, it has been argued that solidarity, essential to Ubuntu in this community-based conceptualisation of personhood, is greatest within small, defined and exclusive groups or communities (Rorty, 1999 & Butler, 2000, as cited in Nkondo, 2007). Indeed, Metz (2011) argues that this account of Ubuntu is a product of such groups that existed pre-colonisation as small farming communities. It is therefore not apparent whether this conceptualisation of Ubuntu with its emphasis on solidarity can be

translated to a large, modernised, multi-cultural society (Metz, 2011). It is plausible that in our current society, a strong and exclusive in-group identity may result in a preference (to greater or lesser extents) for one's own group over others (Lutz, 2009; Louw, 2010; Gade, 2012; Schiele, 1990). It is for such a reason van Niekerk (2009) argues that solidarity or *simunye* should not be confused with, or used to mean the same thing as Ubuntu, as used alone, it can function to be somewhat at odds with Ubuntu philosophy. Avoiding this pitfall is therefore vitally important in this understanding of Ubuntu and personhood.

In addition, Matolino (2011), van Niekerk (2011) and Sono (1994) believe that emphasis placed on solidarity may result in the compulsory conformity of all community members through the persecution of innovation, novelty, and differences, in the perceived interest of the community. Indeed, it is not obvious what the consequences would be if communal interests differed to that of a few of its members. It is conceivable that sometimes that which violates one person's human rights could be perceived as beneficial to society or a community as a whole. Examples of this are evident in the presence of homophobia, sexism and community justice. In contrast, it has been reasoned that the community's interests should always be in line with those of all its members (Gyekeye, 2010; Metz, 2011). It has been argued that community-based Ubuntu should mean that every person is acknowledged, that differences are tolerated, that compromise is imperative and therefore this understanding of Ubuntu should, theoretically, be protective (Louw, 2010; Ramose, 1999b).

It is in view of the aforementioned points of weakness that Gade (2012) argues that Ubuntu is better viewed as embracing all humanity as in the collectivist conception of personhood. On the other hand, unlike the collectivist philosophy, this community-based understanding of personhood presents a version of Ubuntu that is practical, realistic and defined (Mkhize, 2008). It is in light of these different opinions that more information needs to be gained. A dialogue with South Africans needs to be opened so that the value and utility of Ubuntu in South Africa may be retained and developed. The next and last conceptualisation of personhood, although somewhat similar to the community-based conceptualisation under current consideration, is able to provide further information and thus extend our understanding of Ubuntu.

Processual personhood

In interviewing SAAD, Gade (2012) found that some believe personhood to be processual. This belief is also reflected in a fair amount of the literature about Ubuntu. For example, Karenga (1997) and Ramose (2001) argue that Ubuntu means humanness and not humanity, because humanness infers something dynamic thus more accurately reflecting the on-going nature of being and becoming a person. Thus, although it may have been implied in the previous conceptions that a

person has to continue being person – acting and behaving according to Ubuntu – in this conceptualisation, the on-going process of developing personhood and being a person is emphasised.

Menkiti (1984) argues that personhood is something that is acquired over time as a human-being develops biologically, socially and morally from childhood to adulthood. Children have to be properly socialised by their families and communities, and possess the capacity to become fully functioning members of their communities in order to become and keep being people (Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Myers, 1985; Ruch & Anyanwu, 1981; Wiredu, 2004). A child is therefore perceived as a human-being capable of achieving or failing personhood (Gyekeye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984). Accordingly, the process of ageing is also the process of developing into a person. Congruent with this idea, the older a human-being becomes the more of a person he or she becomes or is capable of becoming (Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2006). Mkhize (2006) describes this phenomenon as a cycle whereby the community socialises the human child into personhood, and once personhood is attained, the unceasing process of further developing personhood through community involvement (part of which is socialising the community's children) continues.

Some scholars take this condition of personhood one step further by contending that the process of becoming a person is more formalised than mere development into adulthood (Coertze, 2001; Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Ramose, 1999). The rituals and rites of passage, or particular processes of incorporation that some communities expect their youth to undertake before they are acknowledged as official community members, embody these more formalised processes of personhood (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012; Hill, 1992). It is argued by Menkiti (1984) that, "Without incorporation into this or that community, individuals are considered to be mere dangles to whom the description „person“ does not fully apply" (p. 172).

Although processual personhood is an extension of communal personhood, it has been differentiated here as it presents as more formalised and conditional than the previous conceptualisations of communal personhood. The focus on development and appropriate socialisation into personhood highlights and outlines more clearly the necessary capacities, norms, roles and obligations of personhood (Wiredu, 2004). The implications of this conceptualisation are comparable to the previous community-based conceptualisation of personhood but with the additional strength and corresponding greater weakness that comes with increasingly exclusive accounts of personhood. Firstly, processual personhood probably provides an even stronger in-group identity due to the official and exclusive incorporation process which discerns between members and non-members in a specific and identifiable way. Although it probably provides a

more potent sense of solidarity and is protects group survival (Gade, 2012), it does not specify how non-community members should be treated. It does not outline or provide detail on the treatment of any human-being who: a) has not yet achieved or is incapable of achieving personhood (children, the cognitively handicapped, those with certain psychological disorders), b) is not a member of the community, or c) thinks and behaves differently from the given community norms (Lutz, 2009; Louw, 2010; Gade, 2012; Matolino, 2009; Schiele, 1990). The concern is that without such specifics, Ubuntu may be open to misinterpretation and thus compromise the humaneness that Ubuntu stands for (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; van Niekerk, 2009). With positive reframing and more information, such misinterpretations may be prevented thereby maintaining the integrity of Ubuntu.

Concluding communal personhood

It can be seen that in comparison to collectivism which encompasses all human-beings, communal personhood is a condition-based personhood. Although the underlying principles of communal personhood are the same, slight variations in ideas regarding the conditions of such personhood, result in subtly different understandings of Ubuntu, from generalised to specific (van Niekerk, 2011). These subtle distinctions are important as they indicate that in reality, Ubuntu may be understood, practiced and experienced in varying ways by various people for various reasons. It is imperative that this hypothesis is developed and explored so as to gain an improved understanding of the utility and value of Ubuntu in South Africa. Subsequently, it is the aim of this study to take a step towards a more holistic understanding of Ubuntu through engaging the perceptions and experiences of lay amaZulu people, and through exploring the impact of comparative geographic locations and socio-economic status on understandings of Ubuntu.

2.3.2. Review of personhood

It is evident that conceptualisations of personhood can be understood on a scale from inclusive but abstract on one end, to exclusive but practical on the other end. As the understanding of Ubuntu coincides with the conceptualisation of personhood, the meaning of Ubuntu exists on a parallel scale from broad and humanistic on the one end, to the other where it denotes something focused and community-specific. The purpose of delineating personhood along a scale is to demonstrate that differences exist in conceptualisations of personhood and subsequently there is not enough unanimity on the exact meaning and implications of Ubuntu.

However, despite variations in understandings regarding the form and extent of personhood found in the literature, there do seem to be two points of commonality among all conceptions. Firstly, African personhood is always collective or communal (Dolam, 2013; Kaphagawani, 2004; Lutz,

2009; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999b; Schiele, 1990). So whether people are interconnected by virtue of their biological humanness, or by virtue of reciprocity with a community of persons (whatever form this may take), people are always conceived as interconnected with one another (Schiele, 1990). Correspondingly, Ubuntu always implies interconnection between people (Ramose, 1999b). Hence the maxim: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – a person is a person through other people.

However, the interconnected nature of people defines African personhood, and although inherent to the meaning of Ubuntu, it is not the primary definition of Ubuntu. Rather, it seems that Ubuntu denotes the acknowledgement, development, maintenance and protection of this interconnection and implies those behaviours, actions, values, or capacities that do so, thus protecting personhood (Mkhize, 2008; Tschaepe, 2013). This leads to the second commonality. Despite variations in the form and extent of interconnection between people, Ubuntu, being that which protects personhood, always implies morality (Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008; Tschaepe, 2013). Ubuntu expects a person to treat other people in a humane and moral way as it is these moral or humane behaviours, norms and values that sustain and enhance interconnections between people (Cornell & van Marle, 2005). Indeed, in accordance with the view that Ubuntu always and necessarily implies morality, morality will be discussed next.

2.4. Social morality

2.4.1. Moral personhood

It has been argued that the meaning of Ubuntu necessarily encompasses those human capacities, actions and/or values that ensure the wellbeing of interconnections between people and thus enable and protect personhood. Here it will be argued that those human capacities, actions and/or values required by Ubuntu are moral capacities, actions and/or values. This notion is supported by Gyekye (2010) and Metz (2011) who argue that in African thought, personhood implies morality. This is further confirmed by Fairfax (2011) and Gyekye (2010), according to whom the linguistic connotation attached to African words for personhood are typically twofold denoting both being a person *and* moral character. In other words, the same word is used for morality and personhood as they are viewed as one and the same. It is consequently apparent that personhood is a moral notion (Gyekye, 2010; Metz, 2011), and so too is Ubuntu.

According to Bewaji (2004) and Gyekye (2010) ethics or morality are rooted in our ideas about that which is right and wrong, good and bad as it relates to human conduct. As the person is central to ideas about morality, the way morality is conceived needs to coincide with how a person is conceived (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008) Firstly, as it is expected and normal to be a person, coherently, it is expected and normal to behave morally (Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Metz, 2011;

Wiredu, 2004). Secondly, because African personhood is collectively or communally conceived, the moral values necessary to facilitate and actualise personhood need to correspond with such collectivist or communalist notions (Bewaji, 2004; Wiredu, 2004). As collectivism and communalism revolve around interconnectedness and interdependence, it makes sense that conduct which is perceived to be socially beneficial, (honouring, protecting and enhancing such interconnections), is also ethical or moral (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008).

This can be understood more clearly when set out in a linear argument: 1) interconnectedness and interdependence are what makes human-beings people, 2) human-beings are therefore dependent on such interconnections for survival or fulfilment as people, 3) social morality is necessary in the development, protection and maintenance of these interdependent interconnections, and 4) morality that is orientated towards these interdependent interconnections is essential and therefore prioritised (Graham, 1999; Gyekye, 2010; Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999a). Accordingly African personhood inevitably and necessarily implies adherence to acceptable moral standards.

2.4.2. Dynamism of morality

As the parameters of personhood determine morality, and African personhood is fundamentally collective or communal, what is moral must be socially beneficial (Gyekye, 2010; Wiredu, 2004). Further, it is logical that that which is socially beneficial varies according to time, place, circumstance, prevalent viewpoints, and conceptualisations of personhood (Fairfax, 2011; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). Subsequently, it has been argued by scholars such as Gyekye (2010), Mkhize (2006) and Ramose (2001), that that which is viewed as moral also varies – it is flexible and informal so that it may always be moulded according to what is socially beneficial. Morality is made by the people, for the people and is therefore relative rather than absolute (Ramose, 1999b). It is important to note here, that while spirituality and religion are immensely important in African culture and an integral part of African life (Pietersen, 2005), this subject is not to be pursued at this time given the argument made by Gyekye (2010) and Mkhize (2006) that moral relativity does not coincide with an absolute morality based on religion. What is perceived as socially moral or immoral is dependent on what is useful to people in a particular social context and not on a preordained morality of absolute rights and wrongs determined by transcendent being(s) (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006). In conclusion, it can be seen that as African personhood and morality are thoroughly intertwined and can accordingly be viewed as one actuality under the name Ubuntu. If this is true, it logically follows that Ubuntu is too a dynamic concept that should be used flexibly in a way that is useful and valuable according to current circumstances.

2.4.3. Socially moral virtues

Although it has been argued that social morality is relative, there does seem to be certain moral virtues that are always socially advantageous regardless of changing social situations as they are categorically orientated towards mutually beneficial relationships, the common good and/or the restoration of harmony (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 2001). One of the most commanding virtues quoted in the majority of literature regarding Afrocentricity and Ubuntu, is humaneness (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013; Ramose, 1999a; van Niekerk, 2011); this encompasses a broadly compassionate attitude towards other people in recognition of the inherent worth of all people (Ramose, 1999a). Metz (2011) uses the idea of friendliness in general to describe this virtue, whereby that which is friendly is moral and that which is unfriendly, is immoral. Humaneness or friendliness is concomitant with several other virtues such as generosity, empathy, responsiveness, hospitality and the provision of help where needed (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003). These constitute virtues which develop, protect and enhance interdependent interconnections between people (Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 2001). According to Ramose (1999a), they also function to prioritise the life, dignity and wellbeing of a person above all else.

These virtues are imperative to ideas about Ubuntu and personhood – they provide guidelines on how to develop, protect and maintain interconnections between people that are applicable across most contexts. Of particular importance is the virtue of humaneness. It has been argued by Gade (2012) and van Niekerk (2011), that other socially advantageous virtues must always be performed in conjunction with general humaneness at all times. For example, oppression, mandatory conformity, exploitation, nepotism, tribalism and xenophobia encompass just some of the various ways in which socially moral virtues, if pursued without humaneness, could be misconstrued and abused, thereby falling far short of Ubuntu (Gade, 2012; Sono, 1994; van Niekerk, 2011). It can be argued that it is these potentials for misinterpretation that have resulted in the bulk of criticisms posed against Ubuntu. However, as humaneness should be inherent to Ubuntu, an immoral or inhumane Ubuntu is an oxymoron and should not be possible. Ubuntu must be simultaneously humane, socially beneficial, and adaptably utilised so as to always be valuable, moral and operative in any context.

2.4.4. Social responsibility and duty

Collectivism or communalism results in a worldview where social responsibility trumps individual rights (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Nkondo, 2007; Tschaepe, 2013). As interrelatedness makes personhood possible, a person has an inherent responsibility to do that which is advantageous for such interrelations (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 1999a;

Tschaepe, 2013). According to such an understanding, that which is beneficial for the whole must also be beneficial for the constituent one (Kaphagawani, 2004; Mbiti, 1970; Tschaepe, 2013). Consequently, the primacy of duty or social responsibility functions effectively and does not, or should not undermine individual human rights (Gyekye, 2010). This is because the interests of the individual are not secondary to the group's interests, but are rather one in the same where personal rights and social obligation are entwined and function in harmony (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Lutz, 2009; Ramose, 2002; Wiredu, 2004).

2.4.5. Moral reciprocity

Alongside a sense of duty, and integral to the function of moral personhood, is reciprocity (Gyekye, 2010). The development, protection and maintenance of interdependent relations between people, requires reciprocity. Without reciprocity, interconnections would not be interdependent, would cease to function effectively, and would therefore compromise personhood (Ramose, 1999a). Reciprocity ensures that interactions are mutually beneficial thus safeguarding the personhood of all involved (Lutz, 2009; Gyekye, 2010; Masolo, 2004; Ramose, 1999b). It is in view of this that Ramose (1999a) contends that reciprocal relations are a practical manifestation and obligation of Ubuntu.

According to Ramose (1999a), reciprocity will always function and be necessary because of the inherent highs and lows of life. In these highs and lows, communal persons must give and receive respectively (Masolo, 2004; Ramose, 1999a). In giving, a person sets himself up for receiving, and in receiving he sets himself up to be able to give (Ramose, 1999a). According to Gyekye (2010), an individual's failure to reciprocate has practical risks as it sets him or her up to be denied beneficial interactions during difficult times. An individual who does not reciprocate a favour damages mutual dependence, and in so doing, fails to be a person and accordingly denies him or herself to be treated as such by others (Gyekye, 2010). Comparatively, reciprocated acts of giving and receiving seem to restore the dignity and advance the personhood of all involved in such an interchange. Personhood is therefore afforded to those who practice and embody reciprocal empathy, responsiveness, responsibility and any other virtues determined by that which is socially beneficial at any particular time (Gyekye, 2010; Masolo, 2004; Ramose, 1999a).

2.4.6. Practical versus abstract ethic

Although the importance of social morality is evident, there does seem to be a divergence of ideas between collective and communal conceptualisations of personhood. According to the collective conceptualisation of personhood, all human-beings are worthwhile (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1996). This implies that all human-beings, with or without the condition

of morality, are worthwhile and deserving of Ubuntu. The morality referred to in collectivism seems to be an ethical philosophical idea that should guide societal norms, policies and ideas. Here, Ubuntu is primarily about the interconnected nature of humanity and the corresponding ethical framework that nourishes such interconnections (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003). Social morality seems to be something that human-beings *should* or *ought to* have in recognition of our collective humanity. In comparison, communal personhood is based on the condition of social morality – it is necessary that people possess and demonstrate socially beneficial values in order to develop, protect and enhance those interconnections which render them people in the first place (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Menkiti, 2004; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). According to the communal conceptualisation of a person then, the possession and demonstration of social morality is an obligation or duty part and parcel of being a person. Here, Ubuntu is practical – it is about actually *being* a person interconnected with other people which automatically infers *being* moral and behaving morally according to the attributes of personhood (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b).

It can therefore be seen that collective personhood and communal personhood provide two different ways of understanding social morality and thus Ubuntu. These differences coincide with Gade's (2012) finding that there are two commonly held ideas on the meaning of Ubuntu among SAAD: 1) a uniquely African humanistic philosophy and 2) a demonstration of morality. Thus, while Ubuntu denotes both, 1) a phenomenon by which people are interdependently interconnected and the corresponding social ethical framework, as well as 2) the actual quality of social morality that a person necessarily has in order to be a person, the primary focus differs according to collective and communal conceptions.

Abstracted Ubuntu

Collective personhood primarily indicates a humanistic ethical worldview based on ideas of a common humanity (Gade, 2012; Graham, 1999; Schiele, 1996). In this interpretation, Ubuntu is an abstract ethical expression that denotes a phenomenon by which all human-beings are interconnected and interdependent and the corresponding moral philosophy where each human-being has innate value and worth and should be treated as such (Gade, 2012;). It presents as a societal framework for a social morality (Nkondo, 2007; Pietersen, 2005): it is human orientated and therefore humanistic (Schiele, 1990; Tscahepe, 2013); it prescribes humane conduct; is flexible and relative according to context; and based on the common good (Gyekye, 2010).

According to Gyekye (2010), this ethical system, although developed and actualised in Africa, can function effectively in all societies where basic human needs and human dignity are important. This

is major strength of this abstract understanding of Ubuntu – it represents a widely applicable moral theory or framework, not bound by any one culture or lifestyle (Metz, 2011; Tschaepe, 2013). This makes this understanding of Ubuntu ideal and particularly useful in a country of diversity like South Africa (Gade, 2012). It is arguably for this reason that this abstract understanding of Ubuntu has become increasingly popular in literature and among SAAD.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that this theoretical conceptualisation of Ubuntu may pose some potential problems (Coertze, 2011; Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008). Firstly, it does not seem to necessitate the demonstration of social morality. It is a worldview which espouses the idea that people *should* or *ought to* be moral in their conduct given our common humanity. However, where *all* human life is valued, and the wellbeing of *all* human-beings is important, the implication is that there are no immediate or tangible consequences for people who do or do not honour the interconnections between people. This poses the second potential problem: if we are all equal in our humanity and every life is worthwhile and important, it follows that there should also be no differentiation in treatment between human-beings, regardless of how they conduct themselves or how intimate the interconnection is. It does not discriminate between a family member and a stranger, one's own community and the people of another country, or between a criminal and a benevolent person. Thirdly, it could also be argued that abstract conceptualisations of Ubuntu may result in various interpretations or misinterpretations thereby conceivably undermining the consensus, unanimity, and potentially the humaneness that Ubuntu stands for (Metz, 2011). Ubuntu as a philosophy, although perhaps ideal, fails to outline the practical implications of personhood and social morality, and it lacks the applicable detail more evident when considering the practical social morality of communal personhood.

Practical Ubuntu

Communal personhood requires a person to demonstrate social morality. In this understanding, Ubuntu is about *being* a person, *demonstrating* socially moral behaviour – it is the action or practice of being a person and thus being humane (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Ramose, 1999b). When a human-being consistently behaves or acts in a moral way (demonstrates Ubuntu), he or she attains a moral character and becomes a person (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Menkiti, 2004). Consequently, in this understanding, Ubuntu is as Mkhize (2008) argues, should be: a concrete and realistically applicable concept with clear delineations. It is a real-world Ubuntu that has tangible and outcomes and implications.

This practical action-based understanding of Ubuntu (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b), stands in contrast to an understanding of Ubuntu primarily as an ethical philosophy centred on a common

humanity. Certainly, there are many scholars who feel that it is the practical applicability of Ubuntu that is its ultimate strength (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Mbeki, 2005 as cited in Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008; Nkondo, 2007): these scholars argue that if Ubuntu is to have real value in society and effect actual change, it needs to retain practical relevance in every-day life. Nkondo (2007) states unequivocally that “*Ubuntu* is not a system of general or abstract principles...” (p. 93) but is instead, a practical way of life. Mkhize (2006) also argues that, “Attention should be paid not to principles that have been abstracted from their context, but to the phenomenological and lived experiences of the people in question” (p. 28). Accordingly, Ubuntu should be an operationalised way of life – explicit, detailed and practically applicable (Cornell & van Marle, 2005).

Despite its usefulness, a practical understanding of Ubuntu comes with its own potential problems. Firstly, there is a dearth of written information regarding the experience and practice of Ubuntu in current day South Africa within different geographical locations and contexts. If Ubuntu is to be practically relevant and useful in South Africa today, (as many scholars have argued it is or should be), it is evident that such information is necessary. The second potential problem is the very real implications and consequences. Such implications are positive where Ubuntu is applied humanely and correctly. However, these implications may be negative if and where Ubuntu is improperly interpreted or misused (Gade, 2012; van Niekerk, 2011). Such misuse or misinterpretation may occur if the parameters of Ubuntu are not clearly delineated, thus rendering practical application difficult or open to interpretation. For example, it is not clearly stipulated if Ubuntu is exclusively the domain of people, or whether a person should treat all individuals (people and human-beings) with Ubuntu. It is uncertain whether socially beneficial conduct should apply to all human-beings equally or whether it should apply more, or only, to those people with whom one experiences, or has a proper opportunity to experience, actual interdependent, interpersonal relationships (Coertze, 2001; van Niekerk, 2011). In another example, it is unclear what the procedure should be where someone is a person in some contexts but thoroughly immoral in others. Or, where do human-beings with psychological or cognitive difficulties which prevent them from attaining and/or practicing personhood, stand in terms of Ubuntu? Furthermore, where do children, human-beings who value independence or violent defenders of family and community, stand in terms of Ubuntu? This information is vital if Ubuntu is to be lived, practiced, valuable and ethical in South Africa.

Although these potential problems need to be taken into account and require more information and exploration, Ubuntu as a practical way of living retains its value and ethical prowess. This is argued on the basis of Gyekye’s (2010) ideas on African morality as relative and humanistic: it must always be based and moulded according to what is ethical and valuable in the current context. As social morality is part and parcel of Ubuntu (More, 2004; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a), it is

coherent too then that Ubuntu should be relative and moulded according to that which is ethical and valuable in South Africa today (Mkhize, 2008). However, such moulding requires research, consensus and detailed delineations to avoid misuse and resultant negative consequences.

2.4.7. Concluding social morality

In summary of the above section, it is apparent that Ubuntu, personhood and social morality are one actuality with each necessarily inferring and requiring the other. Personhood is coterminous with social morality, and social morality encompasses those human capacities, actions and/or values that enable and advance personhood (Gyekye, 2010). It was then argued that African morality is a social phenomenon, and thus, the capacities, actions and values deemed to be socially beneficial are not absolute (Bewaji, 2004; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006). Rather, what is deemed or perceived to be socially beneficial is based on a number of dynamic factors which render morality relative (Gyekye, 2010). However, despite this moral dynamism, certain behaviours or values are undoubtedly always protective of personhood (Metz, 2011). It is for this reason that Ubuntu has also been used to denote socially moral virtues or a virtue-based ethics (Lutz, 2009). Although there are many social virtues espoused by Ubuntu, humaneness is indisputably the social virtue of major importance (van Niekerk, 2011). It stands as the basic meaning of Ubuntu and as the foundation of social morality (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013; Louw, 2010). It is only in conjunction with humaneness that other behaviours and social virtues such as solidarity should be adopted (van Niekerk, 2011). In addition to humaneness, and in keeping with collectivist or communalist understandings of personhood, are social responsibility and reciprocity (Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 1999a). It was argued that these values are indispensable to moral personhood, as without them, interdependence and interconnectedness between people would be compromised, thus comprising personhood and Ubuntu.

Subsequently, it was shown that collective and communal understandings of personhood result in subtly different understandings of social morality. Ubuntu according to collectivist social morality is primarily philosophical and only secondarily infers a social moral quality that human-beings should possess and demonstrate. Ubuntu according to communalist social morality is primarily practical, denoting the quality of social morality that human-beings have to possess and demonstrate if they are to be people; secondary to this is the inference of an ethical theory. Both views have their strengths and weaknesses, and both views are of major interest in this study. In view of this, it is necessary to explore and gather information on which view (either, both or neither) of Ubuntu is held by participants and to understand the implications of such a view on their experience of and attitude towards Ubuntu. However, as will be seen in the next section, Ubuntu as a practical way of life presents as a closer approximation to historical understandings of Ubuntu.

2.5. Past, present and future

Thus far, we have explored Ubuntu as an aspect of personhood and social morality. However, Ubuntu has lengthy past and therefore needs to be historically contextualised. Such contextualisation will aid in the understanding of Ubuntu as it stands today, as well as how it may be utilised in the future of South Africa. However, as Nkondo (2007) states, the history of Ubuntu is complicated. This is evidenced by the different conceptualisations of Ubuntu that have already been discussed. According to Coertze (2001) and Gade (2011), there are numerous historical reasons for these variations, and it is this history that will now be examined.

2.5.1. History of Ubuntu

According to Coertze (2001) and Gade (2011), historical records show that Ubuntu was typically described in a concrete and practically applicable way. Although some scholars such as Mkhize (2008) and Ramose (1999b) preserve the practical integrity of Ubuntu in their writings, the abstraction of Ubuntu apparent in other literature shows that Ubuntu has undergone some major conceptual shifts over time (Coertze, 2001). According to Gade (2011), this is clearly apparent when one reviews the range of literature available from 1846 up until the present day. He argues that early definitions of Ubuntu were specific and focussed on a moral quality afforded to people; it was only much later on, during the latter half of the twentieth century that Ubuntu started to be more broadly defined as a philosophy, worldview, and ethical value system. There are various reasons posited as responsible for this shift in meaning which will be examined in turn.

It has been argued, for good reason, that the original form of Ubuntu cannot be completely known (Louw, 2010). Firstly, as Nussbaum (2003) argues, Ubuntu was (and still is) a way of living that was passed on through oral traditions and socialisation. Accordingly, written data is not readily available. Secondly, historical data is always distorted by personal bias and thus cannot be accurately or objectively captured (Cornell & van Marle, 2005). For these reasons, the historical background of Ubuntu can only be guesstimated. However, attempts have been made to try to understand how Ubuntu might have presented itself in the past as doing so allows one to track the changes and shifts of meaning that it seems to have undergone.

It is believed that the concept of Ubuntu is a precolonial notion denoting communalism and human interdependence that has been in existence in Africa for hundreds, if not thousands of years (Gade, 2011; Gade, 2012; Mkhize, 2008; Nussbaum, 2003). According to Broodryk (2008, as cited in Dolam, 2013) and Karenga (2004), the underpinning conception of Ubuntu can be traced back to ancient Egypt. Due to migration, this concept spread throughout Africa and became a way of being

and living that numerous and diverse African societies adhered to (Dolam, 2013; Nkondo, 2007). One such society was the Southern African Nguni group (Gade, 2012).

In pre-colonial times, Coertze (2001) believes that Ubuntu was primarily about performing particular social roles and upholding certain responsibilities regarding one's relatives and community. He argues that part of this required community members to conform to community norms in order to gain the acceptance and support of other members. To conduct oneself according to Ubuntu in this way was seen to maintain harmony and solidarity among community and family members (Coertze, 2001). Although historically, communities indigenous to the Southern African region were documented to be hospitable and friendly, Coertze (2001) believes that outsiders remained outsiders until they were able to prove themselves to be a worthy part of that particular community.

The colonisation of Africa resulted in major, irreversible change which permeated and influenced all African existence (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013; Wiredu, 2004). The upshots of colonisation were numerous and varied resulting in a ripple effect of change. For example, Coertze (2001) argues that the introduction of Christianity and Christian missionaries resulted in a shift in thinking regarding Ubuntu. During colonisation, African culture and beliefs were oppressed, depreciated and vilified by foreigners (Dolam, 2013; Schiele, 1996; Wiredu, 2004) and westernised thought and belief systems, which were seen to be superior, were disseminated and imposed (Coertze, 2001; More, 2004). Coertze (2001) believes that it was the influence of Christianity on SAAD, and the ensuing acceptance of this religion, that initiated the slow transformation of Ubuntu from concrete to abstract. The practically relative and morally dynamic practice of Ubuntu became influenced by absolute ideas of right and wrong based on divine principles of morality (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010). Louw (2010) argues that it was this shift that rendered Ubuntu increasingly conceptual, distorted and thus difficult to apply.

According to Coertze (2001), another major shift in the meaning of Ubuntu in South Africa came about during the implementation of apartheid. With forced segregation policies and the general exploitation of SAAD by a White minority, families and communities alike were dislocated and dramatically altered in structure, affecting all areas of SAADs' lives (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013). Accordingly, in order to prevent isolation, protect communal personhood and mutually beneficial relationships, the meaning of Ubuntu had to be reconceptualised to embrace a wider array of people (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011). Thus Ubuntu became a more inclusive term, including neighbours and people from different communities, of various languages and cultural backgrounds (Coertze, 2001). In addition, this inclusive reconceptualization of Ubuntu functioned to bring SAAD together in

solidarity against an oppressive force (Shutte, 2010 as cited in Gade, 2011). For these reasons, it could be argued that apartheid resulted in an altered understanding of Ubuntu from an exclusive conceptualisation of communal personhood, to a more inclusive conceptualisation of communal personhood based on beneficial interdependent relationships.

The rise of Black Consciousness by academics such as Steve Biko during the apartheid era may have resulted in another shift in the conceptualisation of Ubuntu (Dolam, 2013). The Black Consciousness movement aimed to address and rectify the cultural oppression, alienation, loss of identity, and a general devaluation of African culture under apartheid (Dolam, 2013). It focussed on re-establishing pride in being Black, on taking back African culture, religion and history, and on psychological and physical liberation of the Black population (Dolam, 2013). Ultimately, it was a fight for the SAAD's sense of self as people, a fight for their Ubuntu (Dolam, 2013). However, as Black Consciousness was largely a religious and philosophical movement (Dolam, 2013), it is coherent that Ubuntu may too have been increasingly conveyed in this way.

It could be further argued that the rise of Black Consciousness was the beginning of what Gade (2011) labels, „narratives of return“ (p. 304). Such narratives typically occurred throughout African countries in post-colonial times as a call to return to traditional African humanist values, and to validate and restore African culture as it was perceived to be before colonisation (Gade, 2011; Wiredu, 2004). Although not post-colonial, it could be argued that the Black Consciousness movement initiated such a narrative in South Africa to which Ubuntu was integral. However, Gade (2011) himself, presents a different hypothesis: he attributes the commencement of this „narrative of return“ to Zimbabwean authors, Samkange and Samkange. Of particular significance is that Samkange and Samkange wrote about Ubuntu in 1980, not as a moral human quality typical of previous literature, but rather, as a political philosophy for a post-colonial Zimbabwe (Gade, 2011). Gade (2011) argues that this may have set the path for a similar political interpretation of Ubuntu in post-apartheid South Africa.

Whether a result of the Black Consciousness movement, Samkanges' writings, other „narratives of return“, alternative causes such as political violence, and/or a combination of such factors, the concept of Ubuntu increasingly gained exposure towards the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011; Louw, 2010; More, 2004). Five interrelated factors in particular seemed to place Ubuntu in the spotlight: 1) its use in the Interim South African Constitution set out in 1993 (Gade, 2011), 2) the belief that the fairly peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy was an embodiment of Ubuntu by SAAD (Louw, 2010), 3) its utilisation and emphasis in The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Coertze, 2001), 4) its fundamental role in South Africa's

„narrative of return“ (Gade, 2011), and 5) its espousal by the governing party as a uniting philosophy to heal a fractured nation (Coertze, 2001; Dolam, 2013; Pietersen, 2005). The use of Ubuntu in such political, philosophical and social perspectives resulted in a major discursive shift in its meaning, from a concept denoting a particular communal and socially moral way of being, to a concept denoting an abstract human phenomenon and moral philosophy.

Although this understanding of Ubuntu may make sense in the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa, it is important to keep in mind that there is a political agenda behind this politicised meaning, and that such an understanding of Ubuntu is somewhat at odds with original ideas regarding Ubuntu (Coertze, 200; Gade, 2011). As Coertze (2001) succinctly states, “a concept expressing a deep-rooted value judgement in African society has been imbued with new ideological content” (p. 116). This has resulted in slightly conflicting ideas regarding Ubuntu. Consequently, there is some disagreement as to what Ubuntu actually implies and as a result, we are currently faced with an all-encompassing, multi-faceted and complex version of Ubuntu.

2.5.2. Concluding a brief history of Ubuntu

It can be seen that African concepts such as Ubuntu cannot be untangled from a history of oppression (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; More, 2004). Colonisation and other major events through time have influenced and impacted African societies and culture (Coertze, 2001). Accordingly, the nature of Ubuntu has undergone actual transformations, denoting that which at any particular time has been socially beneficial and protective of personhood. In addition, Ubuntu has undergone discursive shifts, especially with the introduction of „narratives of return“ through which Ubuntu came to be conceptualised in an increasingly theoretical way (Gade, 2011). It seems that each shift, actual and discursive, has resulted in additional interpretations of Ubuntu rather than new interpretations: previous meanings of Ubuntu still hold true and have not been negated by new interpretations. Consequently, there is currently no single or definitive meaning of Ubuntu – instead, it is a complex and multifaceted concept, with sometimes contradictory elements, pertaining to all areas of human life (Gade, 2011). This is the Ubuntu of our current society: complex, multifaceted, contradictory, difficult to understand and perhaps also difficult to apply. It this Ubuntu, currently at play in South Africa today, that forms the focus of this research and will therefore be examined and discussed next.

2.5.3. Ubuntu currently

According to Metz (2011), although the history of Ubuntu is important as it promotes a more holistic understanding of the concept currently, it is more important to understand Ubuntu as it presents itself in the present time. To reiterate what has been discussed previously, Gade (2012)

found that there are two popular conceptions of Ubuntu among SAAD in South Africa today: one as a phenomenon by which all human-beings are interconnected in a common humanity; and the second as a moral quality possessed and demonstrated by people. The first of these conceptualisations is a broad, inclusive and humanist philosophy, while the second is exclusive (to varying degrees), practical and communal.

According to Coertze (2001) and Pietersen (2005), in post-apartheid South Africa, the broadly inclusive humanistic understanding of Ubuntu has been utilised as a political ideal in an effort to promote unanimity among a diverse and divided nation. Although this humanist agenda makes sense in South Africa's current socio-political climate, and the concept is a relatively simple one, the practical implications of this version of Ubuntu (as it currently stands), is fraught with difficulties.

First and foremost, this humanist or collectivist conceptualisation of Ubuntu is not held by all South Africans (Gade, 2012), therefore not fully understood by all South Africans, and accordingly, the assimilation of this ethic is not straightforward. Secondly, it has been argued that the efficacy of an inclusive, humanistic Ubuntu is weakened by the immense dissimilarities among South Africans – social, visual, numerical, cultural and economic – which tend to seriously hinder the acceptance of all human-beings as worthwhile people (Coertze, 2001; Shutte, 2010 as cited in Gade, 2011). This is especially true given South Africa's racially charged history in which such differences were emphasised, evaluated and placed in opposition (Coertze, 2001; Shutte, 2010 as cited in Gade, 2011). Thirdly, although a humanist Ubuntu has been popularised and endorsed as a political and social model, very few, (if any), of its ideals have been properly delineated, formalised or concretised (van Niekerk, 2009). For example, a number of scholars make reference to the fact that there is no direct reference to Ubuntu in the South African Constitution or legislation (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Nkondo, 2007; Ramose, 2001). Accordingly, the ideals of Ubuntu are not incorporated into South Africa's economic policies, social development schemes, laws or education objectives (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Nkondo, 2007; Ramose, 2001). Instead, these areas still seem to be dominated by western thought and philosophy (Louw, 2010). As a consequence, discrepancies exist between popularised Ubuntu ideals that South Africans are expected to embrace, and the actual requirements of South Africans in day-to-day life (Lutz, 2009; Ramose, 2001).

Despite the promotion of an all-encompassing Ubuntu, many SAAD hold a communalist understanding of Ubuntu which requires the demonstration of personhood through social morality (Gade, 2012; Ramose, 2001). As a result, this version of Ubuntu is also at play in current day South Africa. It is a more exclusive understanding of Ubuntu, which, according to Nkondo (2007), makes

for more functional and effective application. This is because defined and exclusive groups are based on similarities and accordingly have minimal in-group variations thus promoting feelings of Ubuntu – solidarity, reciprocity and humaneness – within and between members of the group (Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990). Such similarities function to make communal Ubuntu readily applicable. Furthermore, this understanding of Ubuntu fits in with Afrocentric ideas about social morality, personhood, community and relationships, all of which have long held immense importance in African culture (Mkhize, 2008). However, there are also problems with this conceptualisation of Ubuntu.

Communal Ubuntu works best in communities – confined in-groups with low internal differentiation (Nkondo, 2007). This presents a challenge in a diverse population such as South Africa as its implementation may legitimise segregationist ideas (Gade, 2012; Louw, 2010). As Schiele (1990) argues, subdivisions may result in people demonstrating a commitment to the interests and survival of their own division, rather than the interests and survival of the whole. In addition, it seems probable that such in-group prioritisations may come at the expense of other groups and communities (Louw, 2010). It is apparent that these segregationist ideas will hinder Ubuntu's progress in South Africa as an ethically sound concept (Gade, 2012). Moreover, given the relativity of Ubuntu according to what is a socially beneficial in a particular context (Mkhize, 2008), different groups (given their differing contexts – geographic, economic, social, etc.), may have different ideas about Ubuntu. These differences translate to variations in how Ubuntu is implemented, experienced and practiced, and could become problematic if and where there are conflicting ideas regarding moral conduct. An associated problem is that because of such contextual variations, a communal Ubuntu has not been, and cannot be, formalised or operationalized in the public sphere.

According to Coertze (2001) and Louw (2010), the primary problems undermining the effectiveness of Ubuntu in South Africa seem to be diversity and the influence of westernisation. Louw (2010) has questioned whether a concept dating from a pre-colonial era, can adequately cope with a post-modern pluralistic world with a strong western influence. When one takes into consideration, 1) that solidarity is greatest within definable and exclusive in-groups (Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990), 2) that it may be within such groups that communal Ubuntu functions best (Nkondo, 2007), 3) that Ubuntu is contingent on what is socially beneficial (Mkhize, 2008), and what is socially beneficial may be differently conceived by different groups and 4) the influence and implementation of western ideas which often stand in contrast to Afrocentric ideas (Louw, 2010; Schiele, 1996), it is evident that a nation-wide Ubuntu in a country of diversity presents as a major challenge.

2.5.3.1. Coping with diversity

Although culture and race are cited as the most obvious South African diversities, there are many (increasing) differences to be found within these cultural and racial groups. It is important to consider (the perhaps more subtle) within-group differences in order to understand if and how these differences may influence how Ubuntu is conceptualised, experienced and practiced in current-day South Africa. The particular focus in this research is geographic location of Zulu SAAD. According to place-identity theory, place provides people with an exclusive identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Thus, when one considers Zulu SAAD, it is apparent that geographic location may provide an exclusive sense of identity which differentiates between persons within a shared racial, cultural and language group. Such contextual differences may further result in differences in the understanding and implementation of Ubuntu. Accordingly, it is pertinent here to understand and discuss geographic location in terms of place identity, and the potentially correlated factors of socio-economic status, so as to better understand Ubuntu in South Africa today.

2.5.3.2. Place identity

The end of apartheid saw laws restricting the movement and settlement of SAAD fall away thereby allowing SAAD freedom to live and settle in places not permitted during this regime (Prinsloo & Cloete, 2002). Available living areas for SAAD expanded from specified and controlled rural and informal settlement areas to include any available geographic location in South Africa, including previously „White only“ suburban and urban areas (Prinsloo & Cloete, 2002). Accordingly, SAAD, and of particular focus in this research, Zulu SAAD, currently live across diverse geographic locations. The two geographic subgroups under study, the informal settlement, Hlalakahle, and affluent suburbs surrounding Durban, exemplify this diversity. These locations provide strongly contrasting contexts in which to collect data. Geographic location is therefore set-up as a significant variable in this study.

According to Dixon and Durrheim (2000), there is an intimate interplay between geographic location and the people who reside there. Each geographic location presents with different combinations of environmental, material, social and economic features (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Each place is therefore unique and different from other places, thus providing a basis for an exclusive identity for those who feel that they belong (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). The feeling of belonging to a specific place provides both a concrete and symbolic distinction between those who do belong and those who do not (Ramose, 2001; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). As Rose (1996, as cited in Dixon & Durrheim, 2000) states, part of communal identification is a „dis-identification“ from others“ places of belonging and place identities (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). It is these sorts of more

subtle exclusive in-group identities that may render the actualisation of a nation-wide Ubuntu, problematic.

Moreover, the complex interplay of various features, and the resulting unique contexts accorded to different geographic locations (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), complicates the conceptualisation and implementation of an undisputed Ubuntu. As Ubuntu is contingent on what is socially beneficial, and what is socially beneficial varies across contexts (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008), it is coherent that Ubuntu would be conceptualised and practiced differently across different contexts. For example, a rural context differs markedly from an urban context: these two locations present with dissimilar living conditions, social structures, resources and opportunities, to name a few. Accordingly, such divergent contexts are sure to also have dissimilar challenges and strengths. It therefore seems likely that what is socially beneficial and protective of interdependent relationships in one place, may differ from the other.

An important contextual difference, often strongly correlated to geographic location, is socio-economic status (Prinsloo & Cloete, 2002). The downfall of apartheid resulted in more economic opportunities for SAAD (Prinsloo & Cloete, 2002). In discussing African-Americans, Schiele (1990) states that as a result of more liberal policies, socio-economic disparities have widened. As a consequence, some African-Americans have advanced in socio-economic status while others have been left behind. According to Schiele (1990) this economic gap has functioned to weaken African-American solidarity and their sense of collective identity, creating divisions within this population group. It seems possible that this scenario may hold true for SAAD in current day South Africa, where despite the growing Black middle class, poverty is still a reality for many. Socio-economic distinctions may provide further differences in conceptualisations of self (according to exclusive identities), as well as result in dissimilar living conditions and contexts. As it has already been argued, such distinctions and differences complicate the understanding and implementation of Ubuntu in current-day South Africa.

2.5.4. Concluding Ubuntu in current times

The picture of South Africa today is a complex and multifaceted one. Given South Africa's divisive and oppressive past, the range of language, racial, cultural, religious and socio-economic groups, as well as more subtle in-group variations such as differences in geographic location and social context, a national Ubuntu that is able to overcome and cope with this heterogeneity, presents a challenge of utmost difficulty (Coertze, 2001; Shutte, 2010 as cited in Gade, 2011). This is further complicated by exclusive identities (Coertze, 2001; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), the efficacy of communal Ubuntu within exclusive in-groups (Nkondo, 2007), and the context contingent nature of

Ubuntu (Mkhize, 2008). It may be for these reasons that Ubuntu has not been formalised or operationalized in South Africa today despite calls to do so (Lutz, 2009; Ramose, 2001; van Niekerk, 2011). This however, is a „catch twenty-two“, as without a unanimous and operationalized Ubuntu, Ubuntu cannot be effectively promoted and implemented. Despite the current problems, many believe that going forward, such difficulties can be overcome if Ubuntu is creatively reconceived in a more promising and positive way (Louw, 2010; Metz, 2011).

2.5.5. Moving forward

The major question going forward is therefore whether Ubuntu will help overcome differences and create a sense of national identity and solidarity, or whether it will cement ethno-cultural thinking and provide stronger divides between in- and out-groups. If it were to be positively interpreted and well implemented, it is widely believed that a delineated and operationalized Ubuntu would function to validate African culture, help compensate for past injustices, build solidarity, promote humane and ethical behaviour, and provide a positive and potentially more just society (Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 2001; Schiele, 1996). However, in order to achieve such goals certain requirements would have to be met.

Firstly, Nkondo (2007) argues that a unanimous and authoritative interpretation of Ubuntu would be required. Such an interpretation would necessitate thorough research, would need widespread consensus, and would have to be able to overcome the abovementioned difficulties that South Africa currently faces (Louw, 2010). Secondly, Ubuntu would have to be effectively operationalized throughout all spheres of South African life thus giving it real weight, application and implications (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Lutz, 2009; Nkondo, 2007; Ramose, 2001). This would enable and ensure consistency between personal values and public expectations thus preventing potentially confusing discrepancies (Lutz, 2009). Lastly, and significantly, Nkondo (2007) and Nussbaum (2003) argue that South Africa's national consciousness would need to be transformed by Ubuntu. The values underpinning Ubuntu would need to be truly internalised and appropriated by all South Africans if Ubuntu is to be effective (Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003). Accordingly, it would need to resonate with all South Africans, across cultural, racial and language boundaries (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010), taking precedence over internal differences (Lutz, 2009), and provide the nation with a “sense of shared fate with the South African community” (Nkondo, 2007, p. 92).

As a valuable, authentic and positive Afrocentric concept, it is apparent that Ubuntu may well be a useful and effective concept in South Africa moving forward. However, it is also evident that given the complex nature of South Africa and the various issues presented, a better conceptualisation of

Ubuntu, one that is able to overcome current difficulties, is necessary. Before we are able to move forward, there is still a significant amount of detail that needs to be mapped out and understood. Although scholars have put forth their ideas and their arguments for and against Ubuntu, there is a dearth of information from lay-SAAD regarding Ubuntu. It seems apparent that many answers concerning Ubuntu lie with those who understand, believe, live, and practice Ubuntu in their everyday lives. The aim of this research was therefore to find out more about Zulu SAAD's conceptualisations, experiences and ideas regarding Ubuntu. Although the Ubuntu project in South Africa has looked into layperson's attitudes and ideas regarding Ubuntu (Cornell & van Marle, 2005), there is a lack of phenomenological information from SAAD (Louw, 2010). Such information is indispensable in gaining insights into Ubuntu, the workings thereof, differences in its understanding and application, as well as ideas about the future of Ubuntu in South Africa.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter commenced with an outline of Afrocentricity and Afrocentric tenets. Through this outline, it has been shown that the Afrocentric paradigm is most suitable in framing and structuring research regarding Ubuntu given that Ubuntu is itself an Afrocentric concept experienced primarily by African people. In addition, this chapter discussed the complex nature of Ubuntu. It has been shown that despite its simplistic English translation of „humaneness“ or „being human“, the actual meaning of Ubuntu simultaneously implicates African personhood and ideas of social morality (Gade, 2012; Gykeye, 2010). It has been found that there are two prominent ideas regarding personhood in literature; the one is a collective conceptualisation of personhood which is inclusive of all human-beings, and the second, is a communal conceptualisation with more exclusive ideas about who is and who is not a person. These distinctive conceptualisations of personhood translate to differing ideas regarding Ubuntu. Following this, social morality was discussed. It has been found that demonstrating social morality is implied in being a communally conceived person, and that such morality is essentially the defining feature of ultimate importance in communal personhood (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). However, in terms of collective personhood, social morality is not necessitated for personhood but rather utilised as a theoretical guideline that should be followed given our shared humanity (Gade, 2012; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1996). Given the discussion around personhood and social morality, it has been established that two principal versions of Ubuntu exist – the first is based on collective personhood whereby Ubuntu is the phenomenon according to which all human-beings are interconnected as people in a common humanity; the second is based on communal personhood where Ubuntu is primarily about demonstrating personhood through socially moral conduct that is protective of interconnections between people.

This chapter then went on to consider the history of Ubuntu in order to understand how these two versions of Ubuntu have developed. Literature indicates that communal Ubuntu more closely resembles Ubuntu historically (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011) but that the collectivist understanding of Ubuntu has become popularised post-apartheid in an attempt to validate African culture and unite a divided nation (Coertze, 2001). Although both understandings of Ubuntu are held by SAAD today and come with their own strengths, they do not merge seamlessly. In addition, contextual differences affect the understanding and implementation of communal Ubuntu given the relativity of social morality. The consequence is a complex and ambiguous Ubuntu which has been further complicated by a divisive past, a pluralistic nation, as well as western influence (Coertze, 2001; Metz, 2011; Tschaepe, 2013). Consequently, South Africa today lacks a definitive understanding of Ubuntu that can be effectively implemented.

Despite being complex and pervasive, it has also been shown that Ubuntu is a useful and positive Afrocentric concept. For this reason, the argument has been made that more effort should be made to map out Ubuntu in detail, discover its nuances and intricacies so that it may be interpreted and used in a more promising way going forward. Lay-SAAD play an imperative role in doing just this. There is a dearth of phenomenological information regarding Ubuntu. Accordingly, this research aims to fill a small gap in the knowledge base regarding Ubuntu in South Africa. The aim was to find out how Zulu SAAD understand and experience Ubuntu, if their ideas regarding Ubuntu fall into one or both of the predominant ideas regarding Ubuntu and why, how contextual differences may affect ideas and practices of Ubuntu, and ascertain their thoughts regarding how to move forward. In the next chapter the methodology used to achieve such aims is discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study attempted to qualitatively understand and explore the concept of Ubuntu from an Afrocentric perspective. As little in-depth, phenomenological data has been collected regarding Ubuntu, an appropriate research design was needed in order to produce thoughtful, affective and in-depth knowledge about Ubuntu. This section therefore looks at the framework used in the implementation of this study. First, the Afrocentric methodological principles, the interpretive phenomenological qualitative approach, and the explorative purpose of this research design will be examined in turn. The sampling method is then discussed along with a synopsis of the research participants. The form and process of data collection is subsequently considered, along with the associated ethical considerations. Lastly, the guidelines and process of data interpretation and analysis are described according to the chosen design and methodology, and the corresponding issues of reliability and validity are discussed.

3.2. Research design and methodology

3.2.1. *Afrocentric methodology*

This explorative study was conducted within an Afrocentric framework, using an Afrocentric, qualitative methodological approach. Although the Afrocentric standpoint has been previously discussed, it is necessary here to examine Afrocentric methodology. Simply put, Afrocentric methodology is a way of conducting research that centralises African culture and is based on African truths and beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge (Asante, 2007; Graham, 1999; Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000). This methodological approach has grown largely out of a resistance to the dominant modernist, usually positivist approaches, seen to be Eurocentric in nature (Schreiber, 2000). Two major criticisms have been voiced by Afrocentric scholars regarding Eurocentric methodology: 1) Eurocentric methodology studies cultures from an outside perspective according to westernised ideas of ontology and epistemology (Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000); 2) not all phenomena of importance are quantifiable or scientifically measurable according to positivist standards (Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996). The Afrocentric approach seeks to remedy these problems.

As Schreiber (2000) argues, although an etic approach has its place in intercultural research, it cannot legitimately stand alone as valid research. Using a Eurocentric approach to study an African subject could be equated with studying oceanic life from an ocean shore without exploring the actual water – although important information may be found, it is not a true study of marine life. In line with this sentiment, Graham (1999) and Schreiber (2000) deem it necessary that a researcher

understand the nature of African phenomena under study within a paradigm and using a methodology that is suitable to it. In doing so, the researcher avoids countless pitfalls that serve to invalidate the research. Using an Afrocentric methodology prevents the objectification of African people, allows for a proper contextualisation of the phenomenon under study, provides a more accurate reflection of African reality and consequently validates an African point of view (Asante, 2007; Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000). It can therefore be seen that the application of Afrocentric methodological principles is essential in the study of African phenomena as it approaches such phenomena from an internal standpoint, from “within the culture, history, experience, and perspectives of African people” (Pellerin, 2012, p. 153). Doing so ensures design coherence, which in turn safeguards the accuracy of results gained, thereby improving the quality of the research and producing African-based knowledge that is both valuable and emancipatory (Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000).

If one approaches African topics of study from an African perspective, it becomes evident why an inherent belief of Afrocentric methodology is that not all phenomena of importance are quantifiable (Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996). A quantitative research design does not easily lend itself to the innate complexities and nuances of intercultural research (Schreiber, 2000). It would be inappropriate to conduct research with African persons, such as in this research, using a quantitative paradigm which chooses to discount affective, contextual and spiritual knowledge, focussing purely on absolutes in an objective reality. The fluidity and reciprocity of African ontology, the obligation to social, political and historical contextualisation, the value placed on affective knowledge and the perceptions of the subjects involved, as well as the need for a holistic approach in general, all necessitate a qualitative research approach (Pellerin, 2012; Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000).

3.2.2. Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach is typically humanistic and subjective (Kelly, 2006). It accepts the existence of socially constructed and/or subjectively known realities (Creswell, 2003; Guba, 1990). Accordingly, qualitative approaches explicitly rely on the subjective perspectives of participants in order to understand the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2003; Guba, 1990). This subjective stance stems from the belief that there are multiple truths – meanings generated are always context-dependent and therefore can only be understood from a social, cultural and historical perspective (Creswell, 2003). This holistic view is in keeping with Afrocentric principles. In addition, the inductive and flexible approach taken in qualitative research is able to prevent the imposition of inappropriate measures or principles (Asante, 2007; Durrheim, 2006; Pellerin, 2012).

It is evident that qualitative research stands in contrast to the one-dimensional, objective ontology

of the quantitative approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbusie, 2004; Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000). In contrast, qualitative research design is seen to allow for natural, holistic, detailed and open research (Durrheim, 2006; Schreiber, 2000). Through the collection and production of subjective, detailed, contextualised information and understandings of a phenomenon, the inherently humanistic stance of qualitative research upholds Afrocentric philosophical and methodological principles (Schiele, 1996; Schreiber, 2000). It is therefore clear that a qualitative approach was necessitated in the implementation of this African-centred study.

3.2.3. Interpretive Phenomenology

Although it has been argued that Afrocentric methodological principles must necessarily guide this research process and that a qualitative approach is the best way to uphold these principles, the focus of the research determines the type of qualitative design used. The focus of this particular study was on the understanding of real life experiences. Accordingly, a phenomenological approach was appropriate (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Phenomenological research aims to provide detailed descriptions and analyses of lived experience through which meaning is created (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). According to this perspective, reality is always subjectively perceived and can only be understood through experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Accordingly, the reality of Ubuntu can only be understood and made sense of by exploring people's lived experience of Ubuntu and the meaning that such people have attributed to it through their experience.

However, the approach taken is not only phenomenological but also interpretive as it recognises the active role that the researcher has in the research process (Schreiber, 2000; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher can only understand the experience and perspectives of participants (phenomenology) through her own subjective perspective (interpretive) (Creswell, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2008). As a consequence of this qualifying feature, this qualitative study was designed according to an interpretive phenomenological approach.

Moreover, it is evident that an interpretive phenomenological approach falls in line with Afrocentric epistemological, ontological and methodological principles. This approach unequivocally recognises the cultural nature of human beings (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). It emphasises the contextual background against which information from participants is gathered and made sense of (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Participants are viewed as experts regarding their own experiences and perceptions, and focus is therefore consistently given to and centred on the participants' voice (Reid et al., 2005). Lastly, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), this approach perceives people as both rational and emotional beings and both knowledge forms are seen as

valuable.

The compatibility of interpretive phenomenological and Afrocentric methodological principles demonstrates that it is possible for certain methods of analysis to be tailored according to the Afrocentric paradigm and used effectively within this framework (Schreiber, 2000).

3.2.4. Shortcomings of qualitative design

Although a qualitative design was considered suitable for this study, such an approach possesses both strengths and weaknesses. It is important to explore and discuss the weaknesses of qualitative research as doing so provides transparency and integrity to the research. As has already been stated, qualitative research is not objective (Durrheim, 2006; Schreiber, 2000). In fact, Parker (1994) defines qualitative research as “the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made” (p. 2). This lack of objectivism is viewed as problematic from a quantitative perspective which equates an objective standpoint with scientific soundness. However, as Schreiber (2000) argues, intercultural research is never objective and always influenced by the researcher herself and her context. Accordingly, it is arguably better to acknowledge the explicitly subjective nature of the research, where the researcher accepts her role as the primary research instrument (Creswell, 2003; Kelly, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The flexible and naturalistic nature of qualitative research also means that variables are not controlled (Schreiber, 2000). However, it was not the purpose of this study to identify, isolate and control variables and make predictions based on such variables, but rather to discover such variables in the first place from the participants themselves (Creswell, 2003).

Another criticism posed against qualitative research is that it does not typically produce generalizable knowledge or information (Schreiber, 2000). However, the exploratory purpose of this study meant that generalisability was not a priority. Instead it was interested in understanding a phenomenon according to the lived experiences of a few participants (Creswell, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The aim was to produce idiosyncratic, detailed information.

It is apparent that the explorative purpose and the phenomenological focus of this study refute the criticisms posed against qualitative research design. Those qualities seen to be flaws where a study aims to objectively explain, imply causation or generalise, do not apply. A qualitative approach, despite its inherent weaknesses, is highly appropriate within the Afrocentric framework where the purpose of the research is exploratory, as it reflects the need for an in-depth and contextualised understanding of Ubuntu.

3.2.5. Explorative research

According to Pellerin (2012), the Afrocentric paradigm provides a methodological framework for explorative research into African phenomena, where such phenomena are investigated “for the purpose of developing a culturally accurate understanding of African reality” (p. 153). This study can be defined as explorative because there is insufficient documented research on the subject under investigation (lived experience of Ubuntu) and it aims to gain a unique understanding regarding this phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Durrheim, 2006). It is a preliminary investigation into the lived experience of Ubuntu so that this facet of African reality may be better and more holistically understood. According to Durrheim (2006), explorative research warrants qualitative methodology as it offers a more fluid and less restricting approach than quantitative methodologies.

It is subsequently evident that an Afrocentric, qualitative, interpretive phenomenological methodological approach, tailored to the aims of the study, was appropriate given the explorative nature of the research (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In essence, the Afrocentric phenomenon of Ubuntu was studied from an Afrocentric standpoint through the employment of an exploratory research design which necessarily utilised qualitative methodology.

3.3. Sampling

The methodological frame used needs to guide sampling procedures in order to ensure design coherence, as well as uphold standards of validity and reliability. According to De Jongh (1990), three major areas need to be addressed in sampling: 1) specifying the targeted population under study, 2) utilising an appropriate sampling method, and 3) ensuring that the sample is suitable in terms of the overall goals and purpose of the research. These criteria, as set out by De Jongh (1990), will be used to structure the following discussion on sampling in this study.

3.3.1. Targeted population

According to Durrheim (2006) sampling entails choosing a subset of a population (the research participants), based on a particular set of parameters determined by the research objectives and the unit of analysis. As this research aimed to explore and understand personal experiences of Ubuntu by Zulu persons in an informal settlement and suburban area, the sample chosen needed to come from population groups with such characteristics. Accordingly, two population groups were targeted for sampling: Zulu persons in Hlalakahle (Northdale, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal) and Zulu persons in suburban areas surrounding Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Besides having the characteristics necessary for this research, these areas were accessible and convenient for the researchers involved in terms of time, financial as well as travelling constraints. Over and above the specification of

geographic area and population group, participants had to be over eighteen years of age for consensual reasons, while both genders were targeted to gain a more holistic perspective.

3.3.2. Sampling method and size

Purposive, homogenous sampling was used to gain a sample for this study. Such sampling is appropriate within the interpretive phenomenological approach where data needs to be collected with participants who have had personal experience of the phenomenon under study (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This form of nonprobability sampling is systematic rather than random and therefore allows the researcher to choose suitable participants (De Jongh, 1990). In this particular study, participants needed to be proficient regarding the experience being explored (Ubuntu), as well as available and willing to participate (Durrheim & Painter, 2006; Reid et al., 2005). Sampling was therefore used to recruit participants who, 1) are Zulu and living in one of the two geographic areas under study, 2) understood and have experience of Ubuntu, 3) were available and willing to talk about their perceptions, ideas and experiences of Ubuntu as they personally understood them.

Potential participants were engaged through the use of an ethically approved recruitment and informational letter as shown in appendix 1. Recruitment and information letters (appendix 1) were given to available potential participants in each of the target populations. Contact with other known potential participants was requested from such persons thus recruiting further participants through snowballing. The aim was to recruit a sample of about six to twelve participants overall, evenly distributed over both geographic areas. According to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007), a typical sample size for phenomenological inquiry ranges from one to ten participants. An actual sample size of eight participants was achieved. This smaller sample size encouraged depth of analysis, with the overall goal to produce comprehensive, situated and detailed information (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Generating this type of in-depth information would not have been possible or feasible with a large, heterogeneous sample.

3.3.3. Appropriateness of sample size and method

A small sample size is theoretically appropriate according to the idiographic focus inherent to an interpretive phenomenological approach (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008). From this perspective, it was important to understand that “an individual person can generate hundreds of thousands of concepts [and therefore] large samples are not necessarily needed to generate rich data sets” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). The high level of commitment to each individual participant’s account, the comprehensive analysis of each these accounts, and the limited time available in which to produce the research, necessitated a small sample size (Smith & Osborn,

2008). In addition, Afrocentric methodological principles guide the researcher to do justice to the African phenomenon under study and to do so by giving full agency to participants in the study (Asante, 2007; Pellerin, 2012). This was perceived to be more possible with a small sample size where each participant could be given adequate time, attention and autonomy in expression. Moreover, according to Kelly (2006), a small sample size of six to eight participants is sufficient for an explorative study.

As this was an explorative study that made use of a nonrandomised sampling procedure and engaged a relatively small number of participants, it is evident that the results from this study are not generalizable. However, the results gathered and the interpretive phenomenological analysis of these results, aimed to produce in-depth insights into the lived experience of Ubuntu, idiosyncratic to the participants themselves (Durrheim, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this way, the information gained from this study should provide the reader with a preliminary understanding of how Ubuntu may be experienced and perceived by Zulu persons in two differing geographic areas. These preliminary insights should be valuable, transferable and able to provide an adequate foundation for future, more specifically based research, conducted with large randomised samples (Henry, 1990; Kelly, 2006). In conclusion, the sampling method described and utilised in this study is theoretically appropriate for an explorative, Afrocentric, qualitative interpretive phenomenological enquiry.

3.3.4. Participants

This study recruited eight Black, isiZulu-speaking participants – four suburban participants from suburban areas surrounding the city of Durban, and four participants from the informal settlement, Hlalahle, near Pietermaritzburg. Access to Hlalahle was gained through a letter, (refer to appendix 3), which requested permission from the appropriate gatekeeper, the Hlalahle counsellor.

All participants were between the ages of 20 and 30 years old, and males and females were equally represented in both geographical subgroups. Suburban participants had spent most of their lives residing in suburban areas and were living in formal settlements and homes at the time of data collection. Participants residing in Hlalahle were either from this location or from similar informal settlements and had relocated to Hlalahle. These two subsets of participants represented two contrasting geographical, social and economic contexts within the same cultural group and province.

3.4. Instruments

Instruments are necessary for data collection. Such instruments need to be appropriate according to the overall methodological approach and purpose of the research (Kelly, 2006). The medium used to facilitate data collection in this study was an individual, semi-structured interview. This tool will be examined in detail. Integral to the use of a semi-structured interview for data collection are the participants (or interviewees) and the interviewer. As they play an instrumental role in the process of discovering, exploring and understanding the research phenomenon, their roles will also be discussed in this section.

3.5.1. *Semi-structured, individual interview*

An individual, semi-structured interview, as seen in appendix 4, was used to collect data from research participants. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) such an interview can be described as a face-to-face verbal interaction or conversation between an interviewer and interviewee, based on, and guided by, questions related to the phenomenon under study and the purpose of the study. The semi-structured nature of the interview means that an interview schedule was constructed according to research questions but was used as a guideline during the interview process, assisting rather than directing the interview (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). The goal of the individual interview is to yield in-depth, detailed and authentic personal accounts from participants, accounts that provide the interviewer with an understanding of the interviewees' perceptions, feelings and experiences (Kelly, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The words and narratives evoked during the interview are taken to be intentional and meaningful in accordance with the epistemological idea that there is a connection (albeit complex) between what people say, and what they feel and think (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

According to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007), a semi-structured interview is effective in gaining nuanced descriptions and understandings of experiences from participants necessary for phenomenological research (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This made it an appropriate instrument of choice for data collection. Reasons for its value in collecting qualitative information are summarised in the following points:

A) The non-directive approach and open-ended questioning facilitate participant self-expression where participants can give their own version and explanation of their experience, thereby validating their own subjective narratives and perceptions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Reid et al., 2005; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The length, form and flow of the interview are therefore at the discretion of participants (Pellerin, 2012; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This feature of data collection is indispensable regarding Afrocentric methodological standards where according to

Pellerin (2012, p. 156), “the voices of Africana people must be the target of any study exploring Africana phenomenon”.

B) Related to the previous point, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to purposefully position herself as the uninformed, interested student of the participant (interviewee) (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Schreiber, 2000). As questions are guided and used in context of what participants say, rather than imposed according to a pre-formulated structure, it becomes possible to position participants as experts and empower them (Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000; Smith & Osborn, 2008). In this way, the instrument provides the researcher with the “opportunity to learn from the insights of the experts – research participants themselves” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 20).

C) In terms of the structured aspect of the interview, pre-planned questions or themes allow the interviewer to keep track of what has or has not been covered (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Burman, 1994). According to Witzel (2000), this is beneficial because coverage of the same or similar themes with different participants allows comparisons to be made thereby assisting the process of analysis. The structured questions are also able to assist both the interviewer and interviewee when either party feels „stuck“ or unsure during the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Burman, 1994; Witzel, 2000).

D) The combination of structure and flexibility is useful in questioning. While pre-formulated themes and questions assist in maintaining focus on the research phenomenon and important details of interest, (Burman, 1994; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007), spontaneous probing questions are also permitted to engage in detailed exploration, and pre-formulated questions or themes can be reviewed, restructured, and/or redesigned in light of new information gained from each participant (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

E) Lastly, although the interview process is fairly prescribed, it is a form of data collection that closely emulates normal human interaction, it can be conducted in the interviewee’s own environment, and it permits freedom of self-expression (Burman, 1994; Kelly, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

These aforementioned features of the individual, semi-structured interview substantiate its suitability for qualitative data collection (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kelly, 2006). This instrument corresponds with the aims of the research as well as with the overall methodological approach and qualitative design (Kelly, 2006; Schreiber, 2000; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Accordingly, it was seen

to be the best option in collecting open, honest, and authentic knowledge from participants about their subjective experiences and perceptions of Ubuntu, while being flexible enough to cope with variations in participants' personal preferences in self-expression (Kelly, 2006; Schreiber, 2000; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

3.5.2. Interviewer and interviewees

Although the interview is a medium or tool of data collection, both the interviewer and interviewees are necessary and therefore instrumental to the data collection process. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), the interviewer is instrumental in ensuring that the interview yields good, in-depth information on the phenomenon under study. It was therefore the responsibility of the interviewer to carry out the interview in such a way that the positive aforementioned qualities of the semi-structured interview were realised, while also paying attention to, and observing, the context of the interview, interviewees' behaviours and other factors potentially influencing data collection. However, the main aim was to create a space for, and encourage participants themselves to be the primary instruments of data collection, thereby allowing them to take an active and empowered role in the research process (Asante, 2007; Schreiber, 2000). Accordingly, it was necessary that participants largely directed the interview process (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

3.5.3. Weaknesses

Although an individual, semi-structured interview was a necessary and appropriate instrument for data collection according to the purpose of this research, for the sake of transparency, it is necessary to point out the inherent weaknesses of such an instrument. These are summarised below:

In qualitative research, naturalistic information is seen to be superior to controlled or artificially formalised information (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Although the interview process mirrors a normal conversation between two people, it is not a natural situation but rather purposefully set-up according to the research intentions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This means that the information gained from participants will have been influenced by the interview situation and the interviewer herself. This presents a problem regarding accuracy of the information gained and therefore requires the interviewer to be acutely aware of this dynamic. In addition to the impact of the interview context on the data collected, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) contend that social interactional verbal data are vulnerable to distortions (both intentional and unintentional). Furthermore, participants may not always be able to express themselves accurately or may be unwilling to do so (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). However, according to Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005), "IPA researchers are aware that interviews are not „neutral“ means of data collection" (p. 22), but rather a collaborative process. So while information obtained from the interview process is taken as the idiosyncratic truth of each

participant, it is also recognised that this truth is complicated by various factors and therefore has to be interpreted judiciously and contextually (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). It is the researcher's responsibility to make the reader explicitly aware of the various factors that may have influenced participant self-expression, so that the information gained from the interview process is properly situated.

Lastly, a semi-structured interview permits spontaneous adaptations and/or probing questions based on each participant's personal account (Smith & Osborn, 2008). While this is an advantage, according to Babbie & Mouton (2001), unplanned questions formulated during the interview may also be unintentionally biased or leading. In trying to gain further information from a participant, the interviewer may inadvertently point out her views and therefore influence the response. The interviewer should take care to avoid this; however, if there are incidents of leading, these should be noted during transcription and interpretation.

In summary, it is evident that while the individual, semi-structured interview is the most suitable research instrument for data collection in this study on the experience of Ubuntu, it is necessary to be aware of the limitations of this instrument in the endeavour to obtain accurate and authentic information.

3.5. Data collection process

Research data was collected through the collaboration of three instruments – the individual, semi-structured interview, the interviewer and interviewees (participants). In order to carry out this process of information gathering effectively, certain preparations were made and carried out:

Firstly, the interview questions were learnt and rehearsed by the interviewers so as to avoid consistently referring to the interview schedule during data collection. This was done in the attempt to produce a more natural conversation during the interview process, befitting of each participant's personal account (Burman, 1994). According to Burman (1994), a more natural interview conversation allows for authentic expression from participants.

Secondly, an outline of the interview schedule (appendix 4) was given or emailed (dependent on preference) to each participant in advance of the actual interview. This was done to prepare participants for the type and range of matters to be covered in the interview, therefore allowing them to contemplate these topics and how they wanted to express themselves in light of these (Reid et al., 2005; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This was done based on Schreiber's (2000) suggestion that in order to conduct good Afrocentric research, research participants should be allowed to offer information in the way that they feel most comfortable, without certain designs (especially

Eurocentric) being imposed on them.

In order to clarify this freedom of self-expression, as well as participants' roles in the interview and research process, the third measure taken was to provide each participant, alongside the interview schedule, a letter of informed consent (refer to appendix 2). This informed participants of their autonomy to determine the manner in which to offer information about Ubuntu, emphasise the importance of their voices in the research process, and explain the particulars of the interview process (Kelly, 2006; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Fourthly, each participant was asked to set aside time for a single one-on-one interview session of about an hour and a half. This length of time was seen to provide participants with ample time in which to offer valuable and detailed material about Ubuntu (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). However, it was also made known beforehand that the form, flow and actual length of the interviews, were at the discretion of each participant (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Reid et al., 2005). Therefore, although the researcher prepared for approximately hour and a half long interviews, this was used responsively with each participant (Reid et al., 2005).

According to Burman (1994), it is important that the setting of the interview is comfortable and natural as such an environment is more likely to facilitate authentic self-expression on the part of the interviewees. Accordingly, the fifth measure was to arrange for interviews to be conducted in the home of each participant, or in an environment familiar to them. It was ascertained that the time and place of the interview would be quiet and thus conducive to the interview process, thereby preventing disruptions and/or inaudible recordings (Kelly, 2006). It was also hoped that this set-up would also empower participants and lessen the power dynamics between the researcher and participant (Burman, 1994; Schreiber, 2000).

These steps were imperative in the data collection process as they upheld the guiding Afrocentric principles of this study, according to which, African participants need to be positioned as authorities of their own knowledge (Mazama, 2003, as cited in Pellerin, 2012). It was the role of the researcher to ensure that participants engaged in a collaborative interview process with a particular emphasis on their contributions (Schreiber, 2000). Accordingly, data collection revolved around covering pre-formulated interview themes and any additional issues, while respecting each interviewee's choice of self-expression and expertise.

Data collection was carried out in two specified geographical areas: two psychology honours students collected data in Hlakahle, under the supervision of Thabo Sekhesa, while interviews with participants residing in suburbs surrounding Durban, were carried out by the researcher

herself. Before the interviews were conducted, rapport was built with each participant and any questions and concerns were addressed. With participants' permission (as agreed to in the consent form, appendix 2), audio-recording then began. Interviews were conducted in each participant's language of choice – either isiZulu or English. IsiZulu interviews were conducted by a first language isiZulu-speaking interviewer, and English interviews were conducted by first language English interviewers. This ensured that culturally appropriate language and terms were used with participants thus facilitating an effective interview conversation (Pellerin, 2012). With participants' permission, interviewers wrote down a few notes during the interview sessions (Babbie & Mouten, 2001). This was done to assist in the later process of data analysis as it provided the researcher with non-verbal information (contextual elements, actions, gestures and expressions) not captured in audio-recordings (Babbie & Mouten, 2001; Witzel, 2000). However, notes were only written when necessary so as to avoid distracting participants (Kelly, 2006). Further ideas and comments were written down immediately after the interview for the sake of thoroughness and to remind the researcher of details of potential significance (Kelly, 2006). Audio-recordings were then used to transcribe the interviews onto a word processor so that analysis could begin (Kelly, 2006).

3.6. Data Analysis and interpretation

According to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007), the analytic approach chosen needs to align with “the desired product of study, with the researchers’ assumptions, existing knowledge, and reasons for engaging in research” (p. 1372). This research endeavoured to explore and understand human experience. Not just any human experience but the African experience of an African phenomenon. For this reason, an Afrocentric phenomenological approach to data analysis was appropriate. However, the core epistemological assumption upon which this research was based was that of “complex subjectivity” (Parker, 2002, p. 196): a person has agency but is enmeshed in his or her social, political and economic milieu (Parker, 2002). Based on this assumption, information or truth can only be known contextually and subjectively: it is always made sense of through a personal lens (Parker, 2002; Smith and Osborn, 2003). In this way, any phenomenon has to be made sense of, firstly by the participant who provides a personally interpreted narrative of the phenomenon, and secondly by the researcher who has to then subjectively interpret this narrative (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Accordingly, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which combines the phenomenological focus with this double interpretative approach, was utilised as the analytical method. It is an inductive, idiographic and hermeneutic analytical method which aims to explore and understand subjective experiences of a phenomenon and how such experiences are made sense of (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

In addition, this analytic approach required an Afrocentric orientation so that the African phenomenon under study would be interpreted from an African-centred standpoint (Pellerin, 2012). Accordingly, analysis needed to be both Afrocentric and interpretive phenomenological. This combined approach was possible due to the strong correlation between the IPA approach, which emphasises participants' contextual and personal idiosyncrasies (Smith & Osborn, 2003), and the typically ideographic, interpretative approach endorsed by and often used in Afrocentric methodology (Schreiber, 2000). The analytic method dictated by IPA was therefore used, but the interpretation of participants' lived experience was analysed using the researcher's subjective, but African-centred interpretation of these experiences (Pellerin, 2012; Reid et al., 2005).

According to Smith and Osborn (2003), the goal of IPA is to develop core themes, a process which culminates in writing a narrative account that presents, explains and elaborates on these central themes supported by verbatim quotes. The method of analysis followed was the method put forward by Smith and Osborn (2003). Although this method of analysis is presented as a coherent procedural, step by step process, the authors emphasise that this is not realistic as analysis is meant to be an iterative process – some processes of analysis occur coincidentally, others occur later, and some aspects are repeated (Smith & Osborn, 2003). However, the step-by-step procedure given provides clarity for the reader and was a useful tool for the researcher during analysis.

The steps for IPA as put forward by Smith and Osborn (2003) and used as a guide for analysis in this study were as follows:

- 1) The researcher was to fully engage with the collected material and become familiar with it through numerous readings and note-taking on various points. As IPA is an idiographic approach, it was necessary to examine and analyse one interview transcript in detail before moving onto the next interview transcript. Extensive notes were made by the researcher as these assisted in the production of themes through inductive thematisation (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). The themes and notes detailed from each participant's transcript were used to aid in the analysis of subsequent transcripts. This was done for three reasons: a) efficiency, b) to render contrasts more apparent, and c) to discover common themes that could have otherwise been missed.

Although the discovery and exploration of common themes is significant both in IPA and Afrocentric methodology (Schiele, 1990; Smith & Osborn, 2003), this research also presents and explores comparisons between different geographic areas and therefore needed to consider dissimilarities too. Although unusual, according to Reid et al. (2005), such a comparison means that the phenomenon under study is explored from different angles, and this "can help the IPA analyst to develop a more detailed and multifaceted account of that phenomenon as a kind of

„triangulation” (p. 22). As this was the goal of the research, both similarities and differences between participants and the two participant subgroups were important in analysis.

- 2) The second step put forward to guide analysis was coding. This process entailed listing all the themes established for a single case and then finding connections between these themes. Related themes were grouped together and these groups were subsequently given theme headings. It was then necessary that these theme headings be checked against and clearly linked with verbatim quotes from that transcript, so as to ensure that these broader themes demonstrated coherence and authenticity, therefore safeguarding inductive probability. Accordingly, suitable extracts from each transcript were placed with the broader themes developed from that transcript, providing evidence for the researcher's interpretations. This process of thematising, clustering and thematising was carried out with all the collected data.
- 3) On completion of the previous process, common overarching themes from all participants' transcripts were listed. These themes needed to be “informed by the original Africanism displayed for the sake of genuineness and validity” (Pellerin, 2012, p. 157). Accordingly, it was important that the overarching themes were relevant, apparent and clarifying of the overall study and were once again supported by verbatim evidence. These superordinate themes provided the focus and structure for analysis.
- 4) The fourth and last step of analysis was interwoven with the first part of the write up and entails an exploration and elaboration on the themes induced (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This research write up takes the form of a narrative account where the developed themes have been described, explained and elaborated upon in an effort to produce an overall interpretation of participants' experiences and perceptions of Ubuntu. (Reid et al., 2005). The given analysis was thus an argument that provides support for the researcher's subjective understanding, but Afrocentric interpretation, of participants' experiences and perceptions of Ubuntu. The argument for this interpretation has been clarified and bolstered by participants' verbatim quotes.

These four steps describe the guiding process of analysis (as put forward by Smith and Osborn, (2003)) used by the researcher. It should be clear to the reader that the analysis given and understandings of Ubuntu put forward, are not representative of an absolute truth. Rather these explanations of Ubuntu are interpretations on the part of the researcher, (supported by extant literature and always positioned around participants' voices), which aim to accurately represent, clarify and expand on participants' narratives regarding Ubuntu, and thus provide insight into Ubuntu itself (Kelly, 2006; Reid et al. 2005). In addition, the results have been stated not as current truths but as historical accounts. This is because, from the Afrocentric perspective, the perpetual

fluidity of life means that nothing is constant and therefore participants' previous narratives may not be the same as their current narratives of the same phenomenon (Schreiber, 2000). Furthermore, it should be evident to the reader that the results and discussion have been framed and contextualised from an Afrocentric standpoint so as to produce an insightful African-based narrative about the African experience of an African phenomenon (Pellerin, 2012).

As qualitative research openly uses the researcher as the primary instrument of analysis, included in the discussion is a reflexive piece which critically reflects on my role as a researcher and the context in which the data was interpreted (Creswell, 2003; Pellerin, 2012; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This is a candid account of my own perspectives and beliefs and how these may have influenced by interpretations, as well as an acknowledgement of the etic position from which this study was undertaken, and the advantages and disadvantages of this position (Schreiber, 2000). The purpose of this was to allow the reader to orientate himself or herself to the material from the researcher's (my) perspective and thus evaluate whether the account given was „true“ and plausible from this perspective (Kelly, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Tindall, 1994).

The overall aim of data analysis was to transform raw data into comprehensive and comprehensible results without compromising the original truth of the data (Pellerin, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The resulting narrative should readily enable the reader to note the significant features of the experience and understanding of Ubuntu as voiced by participants (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). In addition, the interpretations put forward should read as plausible and coherent (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). In this way, this study expected to achieve what Smith and Osborn (2008) call „theoretical generalisability“ where the reader can, given all the necessary material and information, come to the same conclusions as the researcher. It is expected that the results gained from this analysis and the ensuing discussion, will provide the reader with authentic information regarding participants' experiences and understandings of Ubuntu and in so doing, offer valuable insights into Ubuntu itself.

3.7. Validity, reliability and ethically sound research

According to Emanuel, Wendler and Grady (2000), there are seven core principles that need to be adhered to in order to conduct ethically sound research. These requirements set out by Emanuel et al. (2000) expect research to: 1) be of social value, 2) be scientifically valid, 3) use appropriate and fair sampling, 4) ensure a favourable risk benefit ratio for participants, 5) be subject to independent review, 6) practice informed consent, and 7) respect potential and actual participants. A concerted effort was made to rigorously uphold ethical protocols and on the whole, this study aimed to be of value as well as beneficial and empowering for the participants involved.

3.8.1. Valid and reliable research

The first three of Emanuel's et al. (2000) requirements pertain to conducting sound research and will be discussed first. As this was a qualitative study based on Afrocentric principles, traditional and/or positivist requirements are not appropriate and were not to be used to judge the quality of this research (Pellerin, 2012; Smith, 2003). Instead, this research was deemed to have met the requirements of good qualitative research and be evaluated according to these, as well as Afrocentric, standards (Pellerin, 2012; Smith, 2003). Yardley (2000, as cited in Smith, 2003) believes that there are three comprehensive standards according to which qualitative research can and should be judged: 1) "sensitivity to context", 2) "commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence" and 3) "impact and importance" (p. 232-234). These standards to be discussed coincide with those requirements set out by Emanuel et al. (2000) which are necessary for sound research.

"Sensitivity to context" requires an awareness of: a) extant literature around the research topic, b) socio-economic-political circumstances and location, c) the researcher's personal role, d) the researcher's relationship with participants and the impact of such dynamics on the collected data and results, and e) sensitivity of interpretation and the inductive probability of such interpretations (Smith, 2003; Tindall, 1994). These principles were adequately reflected in: the introduction and literature review which covers extant literature around Ubuntu and discusses the background against which this research took place, in the results section where analyses have been supported by verbatim quotes, and in the discussion where my reflections on the research process and my role, position and influence as the researcher, are fleshed out. Demonstrating sensitivity to context is of particular importance from an Afrocentric perspective due to the openly subjective and interpretive nature of the methodology used (Schreiber, 2000).

Observance of the second standard of "commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence" lent itself to adequate research validity (Yardley 2000, as cited in Smith, 2003, p.232). Accordingly, thorough engagement with extant literature on Ubuntu was demonstrated in the literature review, and the results should indicate the researcher's immersion in the collected data (Smith, 2003). A great deal of time was spent reading the data obtained in detail and the analysis of this data was comprehensive. Summarised notes which documented the process of analysis and theme production, thus demonstrating the inductive interpretation of data, are available for reference in appendix 5. These notes allow an independent evaluator to assess the researcher's analysis and interpretation, thereby respecting the standard of transparency (Cresswell, 1998; Tindall, 1994). In addition, the resultant interpretations can be understood and/or evaluated by reading the reflexive account contained in the discussion section, which explicated the researcher's role in the research process (Kelly, 2006; Pellerin, 2012; Tindall, 1994). Although the results represented the

researcher's interpretation, such results need to be believable and resonate with other Zulu persons' ideas, definitions and experiences of Ubuntu (Kelly, 2006; Pellerin, 2012). In terms of coherence, it has been shown that the sample, data collection process and method of analysis used, are appropriate to the research question, the qualitative research design and the Afrocentric theoretical orientation.

The third standard of "impact and importance", (or what Emanuel et al. (2000) label „social value"), will be upheld if this research is able to make a meaningful contribution to existing literature, positively influence understandings of Ubuntu, and/or promote social coherence in South Africa (Yardley, 2000, as cited in Smith, 2003). It was expected that this research would be valuable in current day South Africa, if not further abroad, as it offered an in-depth insight into lay person's experiences and opinions of a core African phenomenon, illuminates where and how these narratives may differ, and why.

The overall aim of validity checks in this qualitative research was to make sure that the report produced was plausible and justified in terms of the material collected (Smith, 2003). One of the concerns held by the researcher was that this study would be perceived as unreliable or invalid due to the cultural and racial disparity between the researcher and participants. However, according to Schreiber (2000), the Afrocentric approach "does not mean that only Africans can study Africans, for it is not the cultural background of the researcher but rather the perspective from which that person examines data that is important" (p. 655). In acknowledgment of Schreiber's (2000) statement, it was hoped that the knowledge constructed in this study demonstrates validity and reliability regarding the interpretation of participants' subjective experiences and perceptions of Ubuntu, and thereby established the "adequacy of the researcher to understand and represent people's meanings" (Tindall, 1994, p. 143).

3.8.2. Benevolent and ethical research

The last four requirements set out by Emanuel et al. (2000), speak to the ethical treatment of those persons involved or participating in research projects. These requirements are mirrored and emphasised by the Afrocentric tenets on which this study was based. Accordingly, it was imperative that this research was ethically sound regarding the research participants and met all the necessary requirements.

Firstly, no risks were identified for those participating in this research. Instead, as this study highlights a core African phenomenon and participants' personal narratives regarding this phenomenon, it was hoped that participation validated both African culture and participants' worth

as experts in this culture (Schreiber, 2000). In addition, it was hoped that participants enjoyed talking about their experience and perceptions of Ubuntu with an interested interviewer who recognised each one of them as an authority on the subject of Ubuntu. Accordingly, a favourable risk-benefit ratio was expected with no identifiable risks (Emanuel et al., 2000). No incentives were offered for research participation as incentives could be construed as coercion, and/or can result in skewed information (Wassenaar, 2006). Over and above the aforementioned potential advantages of participation, this research met the requirements of an independent review (appendix 6), ensured informed participation (appendix 2) and practiced respectful conduct towards participants, thus further ensuring a favourable risk-benefit ratio (Wassenaar, 2006).

An independent review was a necessary ethical procedure as it ensured that the researcher practiced sound and benevolent research methods throughout the research process (Emanuel et al., 2000). This study met the requirement of independent review in two ways. Firstly, the research proposal was subjected to review by The Ethics Review Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which ensured that proposed research met rigorous ethical standards. Approval to conduct this study was gained from this Committee thus endorsing the ethically sound nature of this research (refer to appendix 6). Secondly, this research was overseen by a research supervisor who monitored the research process from beginning to end. This supervision ensured that the researcher upheld standards of sound and ethical research.

The requirement of informed consent was upheld during the data collection process (see appendix 2). According to Wassenaar (2006), it is of utmost importance that research participants are fully informed, legally autonomous persons, able and willing to make an informed decision about participating. As well as being an ethical necessity, it is apparent that voluntary and fully informed participation is more likely to achieve authentic and enthusiastic involvement from the participants. Accordingly, informed consent forms (appendix 2) were provided for participants before they partook in the study. These forms were either in English or isiZulu, dependent on the preference of the participant. This ensured that all information contained in the document was clearly understood and therefore that the choice to participate was a fully autonomous one.

The informed consent forms (appendix 2) notified potential participants of the full research process (including the research objectives), the voluntary nature of participation, rights to anonymity and confidentiality, the role of participants, as well as information regarding the results of the study, as set out by Wassenaar (2006). It also included further information about participants' rights. This included their rights to withdraw from the study at any stage, as well as their full control over the personal information and knowledge they provided (Wassenaar, 2006). The researcher and

participant verbally went through this form together before the interview. In this way, the researcher was able to confirm that participants fully understood their roles and rights, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the interviewer and researcher. Any additional concerns or questions on the part of the participant were also addressed. Two hard copies of the consent form were signed by both the participant and the researcher so that each party had his or her own copy. In this way, ethical standards were upheld, and it was hoped that the innate discrepancy in the roles of the researcher and the research participants, were somewhat moderated (Tindall, 1994).

The last requirement set out by Emanuel et al. (2000) was the respectful treatment of potential and actual research participants. This was also reflected in Afrocentric principles which require participants to be treated as fellow human beings involved in the research process, and not as objects of research (Pellerin, 2012; Schreiber, 2000). Respect for participants (potential and actual) was practiced in several ways. Firstly, participants were given ample time to read through, fully understand and familiarise themselves with the topic of research and interview schedule (appendix 4) before choosing to participate in the study; according to Tindall (1994), this practice ensures participant autonomy. Doing this also allowed participants to prepare and consider how they wanted to relate their personal experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Furthermore, before the interview started, participants were made fully aware of their control over the interview process: they were informed of their choice to answer or decline to answer any question asked of them, and of their option to withdraw from the study completely, at any point, without any consequence (Kelly, 2006).

Furthermore, according to Babbie and Mouten (2001) it was necessary to gain consent from participants to audio record the interview dialogue. The consent for audio-recording was included in the consent form (appendix 2) and explicitly agreed to by all participants involved. The interview recordings were retained until full transcription and analysis was completed, after which they were deleted. Permission from participants was also obtained to take notes during the interview process in an effort to record observations and details necessary for thorough analysis (Kelly, 2006). All information has been kept anonymous with the use of pseudonyms, and all personal details have been kept confidential, (saved on a password protected, personal laptop). According to Wassenaar (2006), these measures safeguard participants' privacy and prevent any harm as a consequence of their personal narrations. This personal data would be permanently deleted after 5 years. According to Wassenaar (2006), this time period is necessary to allow for possible future research related to this study. Participants would be informed when their data and details will be deleted, and/or would be asked for their permission if their data was to be used again in a future study.

3.8.3. In conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that the necessary ethical research requirements were met and upheld in the design and conduct of this research, rendering the endeavour both scientifically sound and benevolent. It meets the standards of good qualitative research, adheres to Afrocentric principles and ensured the respectful treatment of all participants involved. It is anticipated that this research will be of value and that participants' expert understandings will contribute positively to Afrocentric literature and knowledge surrounding Ubuntu.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has clearly outlined and described the methodology, design and purpose of this study, and provided a discussion and motivation regarding the sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity, reliability and ethical considerations. In this way, design coherence should be evident: the explorative purpose of this study is best carried out using a qualitative design, specifically a phenomenological interpretive design given the subject of the research, and Afrocentric methodology dictates an approach that is typically qualitative in nature. The purposive, homogenous sampling used to gain participants for this study is theoretically appropriate and pragmatic in terms of the interpretive phenomenological approach, and also in terms of the instrument of data collection – the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is a suitable and commonly used instrument in gathering detailed qualitative data from participants, particularly experience-based accounts. IPA, when used with an Afrocentric orientation, is apt in the analysis of the narrative data collected as it coincides with the overall aim of this study: to produce detailed, Afrocentric-based interpretations of participants' experiences and opinions regarding Ubuntu. Lastly validity and reliability checks, as well as ethical considerations that guide the researcher to carry out and produce sound and benevolent research were delineated, and the corresponding measures that were taken to ensure that this study was an ethical and valid one, were discussed. The following chapter details the results and interwoven discussion from the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents both the research results as well as the discussion of these results. The purpose of this chapter was to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' personal accounts of Ubuntu, and thus further information on Ubuntu itself. The aim was to ground the complex, multifaceted and sometimes ambiguous Ubuntu of academia, within laypersons' narratives of a practically experienced Ubuntu. This was achieved through a combination of a) participants' own verbatim words, b) an Afrocentric-centred interpretation of participants' narratives, and c) supportive literature which both verified and enhanced interpretations made. Although this research intended to be positive in nature by showing the worth of Ubuntu, the potential negatives and difficulties will also be discussed. This is necessary for two reasons: firstly, an acknowledgement of both positive and negative aspects adheres to, and shows respect for the participants' narrations; and secondly, possible limitations need to be recognised and engaged with so as to form a stepping stone to the progressive use of Ubuntu as a valuable African concept in the context of South Africa.

In accordance with the IPA methodology, four major overarching themes were derived from the analysis of research participants' interview transcripts. These themes are as follows: 1) defining Ubuntu, 2) personhood, 3) demonstrating Ubuntu/being a person, and 4) Ubuntu across time and place. These overarching themes have been used to organise the results as well as the interpretation and discussion of these results. This gives focus to the participants' voice and allows for the most accurate interpretation of the information gained.

Overview of the research participants

This study focused on eight Zulu participants – four participants from the suburban areas surrounding Durban, and four participants from the informal settlement, Hlalakahle, in Pietermaritzburg. All participants were between the ages of 20 and 30 years old, and both genders were equally represented in the geographical subgroups. For the sake of anonymity, participants' names have not been used. Participants have instead been labelled according to their geographical subgroup. An „S“ represents the suburban subgroup, and an „H“ represents the Hlalakahle subgroup. The numbers 1 to 4 are indicative of the different participants in each subgroup. Thus, the suburban subgroup consists of participants S1, S2, S3 and S4, and the informal settlement (Hlalakahle) subgroup consists of participants H1, H2, H3 and H4. This should help the reader to follow the ensuing results and discussion with ease.

4.1. Defining Ubuntu

Participants' personal definitions of Ubuntu formed a useful starting point in presenting the results and discussion as they provide a foundation upon which participants' accounts of Ubuntu were built. Their subjective experiences and understandings of Ubuntu were linked (in various ways) to the way they defined the concept.

4.1.1. *Ubuntu as being a person through humane relationships*

Participants initially defined Ubuntu simplistically. Although their responses varied to an extent, all responses inferred relationships or interconnections between people. This was extended by some participants who specified that such relationships should be ethical. The isiZulu maxim, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, was the most common definition of Ubuntu expressed among suburban participants. This definition, although somewhat abstract, plainly indicates interconnection and interdependence between people as it specifies that it is only through and with other people that a person is a person, someone with Ubuntu. Accordingly, suburban participants' initial definitions of Ubuntu closely reflected definitions found in reviewed literature. However, participants from Hlalakahle provided less abstract and more straightforward definitions of Ubuntu which were particularly useful in gaining a robust starting point. H2 in particular provided just such a useful understanding:

H2: We need to have relationships with other people to be a person, to make you completely understand everything. You must not discriminate, whether it's Zulu or Xhosa, or the Indians. Don't mistreat other people. It's relationships, mutual respect.

This description given by H2 aptly encompassed the general underlying understanding of Ubuntu expressed by all participants: that it is about being a person interconnected with other people through humane relationships. This description is consistent with the definition of Ubuntu given by Ramose (1999b): "to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them" (p. 37). His definition also reflects Gade's (2012) findings that among SAAD, Ubuntu was popularly defined in two ways: firstly as a moral quality possessed and shown by people, and secondly as a phenomenon by which people are interconnected. It is evident that H2 successfully made use of both definitions simultaneously, providing a coherent understanding of Ubuntu as both a) morality – a person "must not discriminate", must not "mistreat people", and must show "mutual respect", and b) the interconnection between people – "we need to have relationships with other people to be a person".

4.1.2. *Defining is limiting*

Although the above is valuable, it must be noted that suburban participants struggled to define Ubuntu so succinctly. Two participants in particular, S1 and S2, were of the opinion that no single definition of Ubuntu could do it justice. S1 made the following verbatim statements during the interview process:

S1: It was just a thing of there's a certain code for what we do... Then eventually, someone put a, someone tried to coin it kind of, and they made it a certain structure, I guess. But even that word, I think it's restricting because it goes beyond...

S1: ...the word Ubuntu for me is just a way of doing things and when we put a word to it we're actually, I think, making it now less than what it actually should be, I think.

For S1, no single definition was able to capture the intrinsic scope and depth of his understanding of Ubuntu. His statements suggest that even the assignment of a single word, „Ubuntu“ is problematic. The categorisation of this all-encompassing concept into a single word delimits and delineates this concept from other concepts. S1's comments seem to imply that Ubuntu should not be isolated in such a way as it is a concept thoroughly entwined with many other words and concepts, permeating all areas of life. This inability or reluctance to define Ubuntu singularly was also apparent in the literature reviewed (Dolam, 2013; More, 2004; Nussbaum, 2003). The multiple definitions available convey the complex and all-encompassing nature of Ubuntu (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Tschaepe, 2013). Thus, for scholars and some participants alike, a disparity exists between available expressive language and the multifaceted, all-pervading nature of Ubuntu. Indeed, this presented a particular challenge in this research where the aim was to achieve exactly such a goal – to capture, communicate and accurately explain Ubuntu.

Contrarily, this idea of Ubuntu as an all-pervasive way of life that is not easily or adequately constrained by a single definition, aids in the definition of Ubuntu if used as a defining feature. In view of this, it was established that, according to participants, Ubuntu is about being a person through humane relationships with other people, and that being such a person is a way of living that permeates all areas of life, and is therefore difficult to characterise in a singular way.

4.1.3. *Same essential values, different interpretations.*

The final two points of significance in presenting an initial understanding of Ubuntu from participants' perspectives are evident in the following quotes:

S1: Not every person's version of Ubuntu is the same. Just because it's called Ubuntu and the values are the same, doesn't mean we look at it the same. I mean we might all have the same values, exactly the same, but we don't all behave the same.

S4: Ya, people twist it, basically for their own purposes because of what they need; but as, as a whole, we all know that Ubuntu means to help each other out, do good clean work, you know, you're a person, you know...

It is evident that S1 and S4 were of the opinion that the essential values of Ubuntu are shared among those who know Ubuntu. So, despite its immensity, Ubuntu encompasses particular, definable values (Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008). This interpretation is reinforced by the majority of participants' narratives of Ubuntu in which similar principles – relationships, moral behaviour, reciprocity and responsibility – were described as basic to Ubuntu. This interpretation is also supported by literature: despite the differing conceptualisations of Ubuntu put forth, interconnection, interdependence and morality were consistently used to delineate Ubuntu (Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008).

The second point of significance in the above quotes, is that despite these shared essential values, Ubuntu is interpreted, experienced and acted out in different ways by different people. The overall picture gained in the analysis and comparison of participants' narratives, supported this notion – each participant held a unique perception of Ubuntu despite expressing similar definitions of Ubuntu. Thus, despite comparable and shared underlying values, Ubuntu is relative rather than absolute, and therefore interpreted and experienced differently among different people (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 1999b). The function and form of Ubuntu is dependent on social context (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 1999b), and therefore allows “people [to] twist it, basically for their own purposes because of what they need”.

4.1.4. *An initial definition*

The resultant interpretation gained from participants regarding the definition of Ubuntu is that Ubuntu: 1) denotes a quality of being a person that is only made possible through humane relationships with other people, 2) cannot be defined in singular or simplistic way without limiting it, as it is extensive and complex, 3) is a way of living that permeates all areas of life, 4) has core principles that are common to all people who know and embrace Ubuntu, and 5) is understood, interpreted, experienced and lived out in various ways.

It is evident that this understanding of Ubuntu reflects the humanistic and relationship-focused Afrocentric tenets espoused by scholars such as Asante and Akbar. The five points that form the initial conceptualisation of Ubuntu from participants' perspectives also correspond with literature regarding Ubuntu. According to many academics, the basic definition of Ubuntu, in its most simple English translation, is „being human“ or „being a person“ (Coertze, 2001; Ramose, 2001; Shutte, 2001; Ramose, 1999b). Personhood, which will be discussed next, is therefore central to the understanding Ubuntu according to both reviewed literature and the sample group. It was then

qualified, by both participants and scholars, that being a person is only possible through other persons – *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Coertze, 2001, Dolam, 2013; Louw, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). This relationship-centred conceptualisation of being a person was further qualified by the morality or humaneness inherent in being a person through others by both participants and academics (Gyekye, 2010; Louw, 2010; Metz, 2011; More, 2004; Ramose, 1999a). Thus, participants and scholars alike, agree that the notion of Ubuntu conveys being a person through benevolent relations with others.

Secondly, multiple authors commented on the complex and extensive nature of Ubuntu and/or the distended and multifaceted meanings endowed on Ubuntu (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Dolam, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003). This standpoint is in agreement with S1 and other suburban participants' perceptions of Ubuntu as complex, lacking a single definitive definition and being incapable of being so defined. Although this was not mentioned by Hlalakahle participants, their narrations did not contradict this perception. It is a sentiment supported by Dolam (2013), More (2004) and Nkondo (2007) who explicitly refer to the complexity of Ubuntu and, in agreement with the third defining feature surmised from participants, specifically state that Ubuntu is a way of living that cannot be simplistically characterised.

Regarding the fourth defining feature as interpreted from participants, it is evident that despite various interpretations and definitions of Ubuntu found in the literature reviewed, interconnection, interdependence and morality consistently appeared as defining features of Ubuntu (Mkhize, 2008; More, 2004; Ramose, 1999a). These could be seen as the essential values or principles underpinning Ubuntu that are shared and known by all who embrace Ubuntu. However, it is evident that what constitutes moral relationships is somewhat open to interpretation given the dynamic nature of African morality and Ubuntu (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). This reinforces the last defining feature of Ubuntu inferred from participants, that despite the same essential values, Ubuntu can be interpreted and used differently by different people according to their needs.

In conclusion, the initial understanding gained from participants and supported by literature, is the following: Ubuntu means the essence of being a person; being a person simultaneously implies interconnection with others and morality; being a person encompasses a way of living that permeates all facets of life and is therefore not easily or simply defined; although being a person necessitates moral relations with others, what constitutes as moral and to whom these relations apply, is interpreted and practiced differently by different people. Given this initial understanding of Ubuntu, it is now necessary to build a more detailed understanding of Ubuntu that adequately explicates these defining features and grounds such understandings in the narrated experiences of

participants. As the notion of a person is central to the meaning of Ubuntu, „personhood“, as conceived and experienced by participants, provides a valuable successive theme.

4.2. Personhood

It is evident that being a person or being a human-being is central to understanding Ubuntu. In actuality, Ubuntu denotes the very quality of being a person and thus personhood (Fairfax, 2011; Louw, 2009). While literature cites „humaneness“ or „being human“ as the basic definition of Ubuntu (Coertze, 2001; Ramose, 1999b; Shutte, 2001), the definition given by H2 uses the word „person“. For the sake of clarity, „personhood“ will replace „humaneness“ so as to differentiate between a biologically predisposed human-being and someone who has Ubuntu. Accordingly, the following applies going forward: a) Ubuntu automatically denotes personhood, b) a person automatically denotes someone with Ubuntu, c) without Ubuntu, one is not a person. As S4 stated, *‘...you need to have Ubuntu, otherwise you’re not a real human-being in my eyes. That’s how we look at it: you’re either a person or you’re not!’*

It is useful here again to consider H2’s subjective understanding of Ubuntu: *We need to have relationships with other people to be a person, to make you completely understand everything.* The first half of this statement speaks of Ubuntu, defined as relationships with other people, as that which makes a human-being a person. Accordingly, being a person or having Ubuntu refers to someone who is necessarily interconnected with other people (Dolam, 2013; Lutz, 2009; Nussbaum, 2003; Ramose, 1999b). Thus, from here on out, „person“, refers to someone who is necessarily interconnected with other people. The second half of H2’s statement can be construed as Ubuntu directing a process of person-actualisation, of *being* a person, through which one can “understand everything”. Following this, it can be interpreted that without Ubuntu, an individual is devoid of personhood. Consequently, in order to understand personhood, a state of being which demonstrates Ubuntu, it is necessary to explore the subtheme of collectivism.

4.2.1. Collectivism

John Mbiti (1970) summed up African personhood by stating “I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am” (p. 141). This is closely related to the isiZulu maxim, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. Participants’ ideas of being a person corresponded closely with such notions. Through their narrations, it became evident that for them, being a person is not possible in isolation, that it is the interconnection between us that renders us people. Initially, most participants focussed on Ubuntu as relationships between human-beings, explicitly encompassing all human-beings with little specification. So, although participants recognised Ubuntu as uniquely and exclusively African in origin, it was articulated that Ubuntu should encompass and embrace diversity:

S1: No definitely, that's why I said, the word Ubuntu is restricting because it should be about South African people, I don't know of any culture that doesn't have it, but where do we get that assumption from is my question... Mm, it's like the fact that we called it Ubuntu and this is how African people live; but it's not necessarily the way that it is because every single cultural group in South Africa has a certain sense of it, otherwise we would still be segregated and it's the reason why we can live together and there's not so much friction. Accommodation must be made for all of us and we've done that, I think we've done that pretty well!

S3: I...right now, it shouldn't be just about Black people; I feel like Ubuntu should be togetherness of everyone. And I live my life so. I mean my best friend is, one of my best friends is White, my boyfriend is Coloured. Um, I live in such a mixture of...this city and I try to define myself as a human-being who likes to hang out with other human-beings and not just Ubuntu as in Black people. I want togetherness of everyone else. So I like the concept of Ubuntu but just change it from one race to everyone.

S4: Um, my personal understanding of Ubuntu is, uh, you know...Ubuntu is like, it's from the saying "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", meaning like, a person is a person by people. So Ubuntu is an African thing that, you know, came from way back when... I feel that it applies to all people; um you know, that's because of how I was raised... It started obviously with Africans, but I believe it's for all South Africans living, all Africans as a whole, ya, no matter what race you are.

This inclusive conceptualisation of Ubuntu as communicated by S1, S3 and S4, is a collectivist conceptualisation of personhood, popularly supported by many scholars. It is the sentiment that all *human-beings* are interconnected by virtue of our shared humanness (Asante, 1976; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1990). It is a broad, inclusive and humanistic understanding of Ubuntu. S3 in particular supported a collectivist conception of personhood and Ubuntu, and expressed the same opinion as Afrocentric scholars such as Akbar (1976), Graham (1999) and Schiele (1996), that value should be given solely to humaneness and that it should be this biological humaneness that unites us as equals, equally deserving of respect and dignity.

This explicitly humanistic and collectivist understanding of Ubuntu was held by participants from both geographic areas. They spoke of Ubuntu, and thus personhood, in an inclusive way as applying to all South Africans and encompassing diversity.

4.2.2. *Communalism*

Despite such inclusive ideals, it was evident from participants' accounts that Ubuntu was practically experienced in a more personal and exclusive way. Their narrated experiences of Ubuntu revolved around those people with whom they shared actual relations. There was therefore a distinction between participants' understandings of Ubuntu and their practical experiences of Ubuntu. So, although S4 stated that Ubuntu is "for all South Africans living, all Africans as a whole", in his own life, he stated that Ubuntu was something he practiced in an exclusive way:

S4: Ya, ya, it's not like I'm some sort of, you know, the guy who goes out to help on the weekends – no! I help people out that need help that I know in my situation, that I have some sort of relationship.

Ya so, be it a friendship or whatever, I'll help them out – that's Ubuntu. And I would expect him as well, to help me out...

This statement by S4 speaks directly to the notion that if a person is a person through other people, it is specifically through those people with whom a person associates with. This is further indicated by the following extract taken from the interview with H3:

H3: ...we show Ubuntu if you are building a house here. We help you, we help you on what you are doing. We can also eh, build Ubuntu. We play soccer, play together... We know how to communicate, find friends where we are. Eh, or what can I say, sometimes we play snooker. We interact with different people every time. It means that every time we meet here we build Ubuntu, mm. Eh, I can also say, even at work no one is lonely or used to being alone, we are also together. At work you all have to get together, you also have to have Ubuntu. It includes friendship, so that you know eh, you're not alone.

Both extracts illustrate that although personhood was collectively conceptualised by participants, in their day-to-day life, communal personhood applied. Communal personhood is so-called because it implies communal interactions with others (Ramose, 1999a; Ramose, 2001). In contrast to the collective conception of personhood which is inclusive of all human-beings, communalism is more specified, personal and conditional. In this understanding, personhood is based on the minimum condition of reciprocal relations with others (Louw, 2010; Mkhize, 2006; Ramose, 1999a). It can be seen in the above extracts, that these participants' practical experiences of Ubuntu, were with those persons with whom they shared relationships – friends, families, and colleagues.

4.2.2.1. *Reciprocal relationships*

Literature regarding communal personhood posits that it is the capacity and experience of actual relationships with others that makes one a person (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Lutz, 2009; Menkiti, 1984; Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999b). This directly mirrors the definition of Ubuntu as given by H2: *We need to have relationships with other people in order to be a person...* Thus, both literature and participants provide an account of Ubuntu that is centred on relationships. In the following verbatim extracts, sound reasons for this assertion are provided by S2 and S3:

S2: Alright, um, the term is very broad in terms of the fact that it relates with, um, people being people through people, you know what I mean? Does that make sense? So it's people being people through people and meaning that you can't necessarily be, um, who you are, without the influence or the history or the backing of another person. So Ubuntu basically means, um, being able to live together and grow together as a nation, or as people in a society, or in a family, or as friends. You know, it doesn't necessarily have to be necessarily a Black thing; it just means any society being able to gain some sort of value from the next person. That's how I understand it.

S4: A person is a person through people because, the way I look at it is, because if you help people out, they'll speak well of you – that's how we look at it in an African, you know, sense. Like you can't just be by yourself, you know, you won't make it through life by yourself. You have to help other people out in order for to be known as a person, as „umuntu“.

In the above extract, S2 reasons that personhood is inextricably linked with other people because a person is always something or someone in relation to others – the social roles demarcated in relation with others, forms a human-being's identity as a person. Both S2 and S4 convey the notion that it is in the context of other people that a human-being is understood to be a person and have value as a person. This interpretation is supported by literature regarding personhood where it is argued that one's identity and self-worth as a person is inextricably tied up with and formed in relation to those interconnected with that person (Akbar, 1984; Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Dolam, 2013; Louw, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Nkondo, 2007). Therefore, in accordance with S4's statement that a person cannot make it through life alone, a lot of literature argues that human-beings are limited beings and such limitations necessitate mutual reliance on one another for survival and fulfilment as people (Gyekye, 2010; Lutz, 2009; Nussbaum, 2003). People require "the influence, or the history, or the backing of another person" (S2) for their own personhood.

The sense of *interdependence* or *reciprocity* is significant as it aids in distinguishing between collective personhood and communal personhood. Unlike collectivism which poses that we are inherently interconnected, communalism requires active interdependence upon which interconnections can be developed and sustained (Louw, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). Indeed, despite participants' shared opinion that Ubuntu is non-discriminate and should include (at least) all South Africans, their practical experiences of Ubuntu were largely restricted to those with whom interdependence was possible or established:

H2: Ubuntu – when a neighbour occasionally doesn't have a job and they're looking for a job, um, I'll get them work if I have work for them. Make sure he/she has eaten... You can offer employment, or likewise, if your neighbours find that there is no electricity, you can ask to charge... Everyone respects each other in Hlalakahle. There is no one who doesn't understand that.

S4: I help people out that need help that I know in my situation, that I have some sort of relationship...ya so, be it a friendship or whatever, I'll help them out – that's Ubuntu.

These excerpts are indicative of the importance and prevalence of neighbours, friends, community, and known or familiar people in participants' experiences of Ubuntu. It is worth mentioning in regards to this find, that a slight but still discernible difference was found among Hlalakahle and suburban participants: while almost all participants articulated the importance of community in their understandings of Ubuntu, typically the suburban participants' experiences of Ubuntu were more orientated around friends and family, whereas the predominance of community and neighbours was manifest in the narratives of Hlalakahle participants. This difference will be examined more closely now as a specifically community-based conception of personhood is presented.

4.2.2.2. *Community-based relationships*

It has just been established that in terms of participants' *experiences*, if a person is a person through other people, it is specifically through those people with whom a person associates with. For the Hlalakahle participants particularly, their community and neighbours played a prevalent role in their experiences:

H1: When it comes to that, Ubuntu, to me, ah, here, I can be able to go to my neighbour and say I don't have food or I don't have dishes, and he or she can be able to help me... Actually you know the definition of Hlalakahle? It means living together peacefully and helping each other. And I came here, I saw, and I won't lie, I saw people used to help one another. So I follow that. Everywhere there are ups and downs. So people help one another despite of what happens.

H2: Everyone respects each other in Hlalakahle. There is no one who doesn't understand that...

H3: ...we can build Ubuntu here. It does have an impact because we're coming from different places. As I come from Hammarsdale, when I first came here I met people that I can live with because they have Ubuntu. I can say where I am, Ubuntu does unite us. I am coming from a different place and the people I'm with do have Ubuntu.

H4: Because if you don't have nothing and go to somebody else, especially in these days you don't have electricity, you can go to your neighbour and ask him: "please borrow me some money, I want to buy paraffin, I'm very starving, my children", you know. There is Ubuntu here, I can't lie...

It is evident from these excerpts, that the community played a significant role in these participants' experiences of Ubuntu. Where the boundaries of Ubuntu and personhood seemed to be more fluid for suburban participants, the boundaries for Hlalakahle participants seemed to be more definitive and slightly more exclusive. Their narrations mirror those conceptualisations of communal personhood which prioritise community participation and solidarity in the conceptualisation of personhood (Mkhize, 2006; van Niekerk, 2011; Tschaepe, 2013).

The above excerpts are suggestive of the same reasoning posed in literature: Ubuntu allows the community to function effectively and ensures the survival of both the community as a whole, as well as its community members (Dolam, 2013; Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2006; Tschaepe, 2013). The Hlalakahle participants conveyed that Ubuntu allows community members to live together peacefully through mutual aid, respect and collaboration. Accordingly, it can be interpreted that, for these participants, a major part of being a person is about community involvement – about showing Ubuntu, developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relations, with community members (Karenga, 1997; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008). This sense of mutual dependence and reciprocity among community members in Hlalakahle came across strongly in these participants' narratives:

H1: It's something which happens all the time, something which happens all...not because I have much. But they usually come, "I'm short of this, I don't have food, my kids, I don't have this for my kid", but I know what they going through because I've suffered. I know I can help where I can. And

if I don't know what to do, I try to arrange and make a plan. Because here, we have people from different...where they usually help one another, so try to talk to those people and sort those things out.

H4: No, nothing is difficult to practice Ubuntu, it's not difficult. It's very easy because we all need help, no one rich is staying here in Hlalakahle. We have to practice how to protect other people. There is no need to be high with others „cause we all staying here, we come from different families, we have to have a plan, helping each other.

These excerpts depict a set of circumstances where community members rely on one another for help and where no one is exempt from needing such help. This puts into play a situation where every person is obliged to participate in mutually beneficial relations with other community members if they are to retain their sense of personhood and ensure their survival (Mkhize, 2008; Pietersen, 2005; Tschaepe, 2013). As H4 stated, "...because you helping me, I help you; you don't help me, I won't help you". The consequences in this comment are clear: if you do not show Ubuntu to a person, you will not be shown Ubuntu and thus your personhood will be denied. Accordingly, part of being a community member is to share responsibility for the community as a whole and for other community members (Graham, 1999; Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011). However, Hlalakahle participants' narrations extended to any demonstratively benevolent person they associated with. Although not a part of their immediate community, most of these participants' narrations of Ubuntu included accounts of Indians in the interlocking Indian community:

H1: Even people outside, like the Indians. The Indians usually come on Thursday and do funding. They come and offer them food, yeah, jobs, yeah; they usually come, which makes it easier for on those days, on Monday and Thursday, for them to survive.

H2: What encourages Ubuntu relations is Indians are able to give us work; the nature of that work can be nice or not nice, but a job is better than no job. And if you feel hungry, you can ask an Indian. You ask and she will give you food if she's got.

Despite the predominant focus on their community, this focus seemed to be less a requirement of community membership and more about benevolent relations. Those human-beings that enabled these participants' physical survival, thus ensuring psychological dignity, were included in their conceptualisations of personhood. It can be inferred that these participants' narrations did not include persons from other communities, or of other racial and cultural groups, because of limited benevolent interactions with such groups. The following comment made by S1 supports this inference:

S1: ...we can all make it, a version of it that is broader in a sense. Instead of only Ubuntu in the community, when they get out, they'll get exposed to different people and see how they live – then we can take from them and they can take from me.

Accordingly, all participants' experiences of Ubuntu encompassed, with relative exclusivity, a group of people determined by the possibility of a collaborative relationship, rather than any

particular human characteristic (race, culture, class, or creed). However, it is also true that Hlalahle participants, because of their focus on their community, experienced personhood in a more definitive way. This idea will be considered in more detail further on. For now it is pertinent to examine how this exclusivity was understood and experienced by participants, as well as the potential ramifications of this.

4.2.2.3. *Communal personhood as exclusive*

According to Rose (1996, as cited in Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), a communal identity is formed through dichotomies which separate an „us“ from a „them“, thereby creating a strong identification with one group through distancing another (metaphorically, physically, socially or otherwise). Accordingly, although it was evident from participants' narratives that their *understandings* of Ubuntu were inclusive of all South Africans, their *experiences* of Ubuntu were much more limited to an exclusive group of people. Exclusivity seemed to be based on two things: firstly, participants by and large experienced Ubuntu with those people known to them, with whom relationships were established or possible; secondly, some participants (mostly Hlalahle participants), experienced Ubuntu exclusively with those who demonstrated communal personhood through community membership and commitment. All participants narrated an experience of exclusivity with regards to Ubuntu. Their narrations included personal experiences of being excluded, knowing of people or groups who exclude others, or practicing exclusion themselves. The experience of being excluded is conveyed in the verbatim extract below:

S2: I'm not part of the community because already, the community highlights the way I speak, the way I conduct myself, even when I went to work. I mean, let's not even talk about going to family, work environment. Everyone should be equal regardless of what you say or whatever, but I still got singled out in a sense at the time, you know. I was actually telling my dad that they just think I'm this other thing that I'm really not! Like just because I speak different or I carry myself different, they think I'm a certain type of person which is fine, it's fine, but I don't want you to limit me to that you know? I'm more, I'm much more. If I do do something very African or Black, they're like, "oh my gosh!"

S3: Black people felt more like I should be more Black, White people didn't really care. Um, they felt like I didn't really have Ubuntu because I was not Black enough... Just because I wasn't together with them, they felt like I didn't know their idea or the concept of being Ubuntu or being Black...

It can be understood that S2, along with S3, experienced exclusion based on their assimilation of westernised behaviours. Their perceived non-Black behaviour was used as an indicator to others that they did not belong. Moreover, their westernised ways seemed to be taken as a betrayal of communal personhood. Accordingly, they felt that Ubuntu did not extend to them and was instead used to exclude them. Indeed, Gade (2012) did find that among some SAAD, Ubuntu was understood to apply to exclusive groups of people based on various conditions, and for some, this

condition was based on race and culture where non-Black South Africans were not included in conceptualisations of Ubuntu. S4 found this same sentiment among some of his acquaintances:

S4: Because you get staunch Black people that, “Ubuntu is Ubuntu and I’m not helping out no Coloured guys, Indian guys or a White guy, I’m helping out my Black people”. They’ve been oppressed and all that stuff, and they fought for their freedom, you know?

S4 conveys that for some Black people, Ubuntu only applies to other Black people as was traditionally intended. His reasoning for this exclusivity is based on the idea that Black people have been oppressed. This insight correlates with Gade’s (2012) finding that among certain SAAD, Whites are disqualified from their understandings of Ubuntu because of apartheid. In accordance with what has been discussed about communal personhood, this evaluation makes sense: apartheid, as implemented by the White minority, undermined benevolent interdependent relations between racial and cultural groups and was particularly non-humane (Mkhize, 2008; Nkondo, 2007). Such conduct defies the very definition of Ubuntu. In addition, the independence that is valued and promoted by White human-beings, stands in contrast to communal personhood where personhood is only possible in the context of interdependent relations (Pietersen, 2005; Tschaepe, 2013). Case in point, four participants articulated the idea that Indian people have Ubuntu. This was evident under the previous sub-theme where it was shown that Hlalakahle participants included Indians in their narrations of Ubuntu, and in the following two extracts taken from suburban participants.

S1: That’s the reason why I say, using the word Ubuntu and restricting it to Africans, that’s the reason I find it restricting, that’s part of. Because if you look at Indians, Indians have that very much so, if you look at Indians in their community, they live that, I mean they embody it. So why can’t they be included in the definition of it?

S2: Definitely, I mean take for example Indians. I work a lot with Indians and you’ll find that they all come in there and they’ll all share one pot of tea! That is not practical! But it’s because they have that sense of: we are here together, and if one person can afford, we all share it. You know what I mean? ...But I mean when you think about it, it is hectic from the business side, but from the family side, it just shows that you know what, we’re all together and we share, and we help each other, we build each other up. So I definitely think other cultures can definitely... I mean cultures are doing it!

Despite the fact that Indians comprise a different racial, cultural and religious group, participants perceived them as having Ubuntu. In view of this finding, it can be reasoned that Whites are not excluded based purely on being different, but because they are typically seen to live in a way that is not conducive with Ubuntu.

However, while the exclusion of some human-beings may be justifiable and important in creating a strong communal sense of personhood for those included, it does bring about some difficulties. Exclusionary practices undermine the expressed desire or belief that Ubuntu is inclusive of all human-beings (Gade, 2012). It also suggests that Ubuntu may not be tolerant of diversity. In a

country of extensive diversity such as South Africa, exclusive practices could enhance divisions of all types – racial, cultural, religious, economic and social (Coertze, 2001) This would hinder the value and efficacy of Ubuntu as an ethical governing value in South Africa moving forward (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012). Furthermore, exclusivity and divisions may legitimise the placement of one's own social group's interests above those of others, thus causing further fragmentation and ethical difficulties (Gade, 2012; Louw, 2010; Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990). This last point was clearly articulated in the following suburban accounts:

S2: ...they (criminals/thieves) were like: "most of the time, we try not, um, commit the crime on a Black person". Even though they do, but because we are in the majority there will more of us than there is any other nationality. So um, the ones (criminals) that I have had the opportunity to talk to, they were like: "we try not to attack our own kind", even though it does happen, you know what I mean?

S4: ...in the location, like if you're a known criminal, you don't do your crimes in this area, in this community – do it that way, where the other location is, or go to Westville and do your crime or whatever; don't do it here because we're trying to live and that's Ubuntu. And even then like, if the criminals are running away, the community will be like, "we don't know where he is", if he hides in the community. They won't talk to the cops or police officers because they know that criminal has done whatever he's done elsewhere, but here he helps us out and he defends us from others. Some of them know this person is doing crime, but as long as it's not around them, they don't see it... So them protecting, you know, this or like this one criminal will be: elsewhere he's a menace but here, in his area, they know him as Ubuntu, whether he hides it or not.

These extracts establish that when Ubuntu is practiced with exclusivity, it may legitimise the preference for one's own group, or interconnected relations, over others. This preference provides a space for non-Ubuntu behaviours and actions (from disinterest to harm) to be practiced on those who fall outside the realms of a particular, usually exclusive, in-group (Gade, 2012). Preference, if taken to the extreme, may result in nepotism, tribalism, xenophobia and other discriminatory behaviour (Nkondo, 2007; van Niekerk, 2009; Sono, 1994). It is obvious then that exclusionary practices could have negative repercussions and/or result major social problems.

Participants however, did not seem to experience such problems. Despite knowing of people who excluded others, or feeling excluded themselves, the specifications of inclusivity apparent in their personal understandings of Ubuntu, were practical and without ill intent. Interdependent, co-operative relationships as a defining feature of Ubuntu was simply a reflection of the way that they themselves practiced and experienced Ubuntu in their personal lives, and realistically, this extended to a limited number of people. All participants seemed open to including any human-being with whom benevolent reciprocity could be established. Consequently, although participants' narrations show that caution needs to be taken to avoid negative exclusivist tendencies, their narrations also indicate that a positive and inclusive understanding of Ubuntu promotes flexibility and tolerance in

the practice Ubuntu, thus preventing its misuse. This provides a valuable insight into understanding the dynamic workings of Ubuntu, both of how it is used and how it could be used.

4.2.2.4. *Becoming a person*

During interviews with participants, several of them (predominantly suburban participants) made reference to how they came to know about Ubuntu. This topic was spoken of by the same participants in two seemingly incongruous ways: in some instances, they spoke about an inherent knowledge or awareness of Ubuntu, and in other instances the suggestion was made that Ubuntu was something that had to be learnt, a way of being that was imparted through upbringing. The following short extracts make evident the impression given by several participants of an innate sense of Ubuntu:

S1: ...it's a code. It's not something that should be spoken all the time, like there's no sort of laws to it but we all know what it means... Ubuntu, it's just something that we all know what to do.

S2: ...we're still there, it's still entrenched in us but I think the practice, I think the conscious practice of it has faded and it is fading... But I think we all come from that, from that um, base as Black people.

S4: Mm, okay, in terms of African people, Ubuntu's known, that's just what it is right... that's Ubuntu! For me it's just a natural thing

These extracts suggest that Ubuntu is inherent – it is something “known”, “entrenched” and “natural”. This could have been an indication that Ubuntu is not something that can be acquired or learnt, thus rendering it exclusive to those born with it, typically Black people. Conversely, the same three suburban participants, as well as one participant from Hlalakahle, referred to Ubuntu as something that was imparted to them through their upbringing:

S1: I think I was about, in high school when I first heard the word. It was the first time I put meaning to you know, the way I was brought up.

S2: I guess maybe, um, it's the way we get brought up... So for me I think, it wasn't necessarily highlighted to me but it was just through his teachings that I knew about it, and obviously through socialisation and just school and all the rest.

S4: It can be learnt, you know? I mean I didn't wake up born with this. My parents taught me that this is Ubuntu and Ubuntu gets the glory for helping people out and being, you know, socially aware and caring.

H1: .Knowing that I have to help one another. So it's something that I learned from my mother, something that I saw and practiced.

Although these excerpts seem to contradict the previous excerpts on Ubuntu being natural, through a deeper analysis, it was found that they do make sense together. It is logical that Ubuntu would feel natural or innate to someone brought up and socialised in this particular way. These participants felt that Ubuntu was an intrinsic part of who they were because it was instilled in them through their

upbringing. It also makes sense that Ubuntu would feel innate to participants who identified themselves as people, because thus far, Ubuntu has been understood to be the necessary foundation of personhood and consequently an inherent part of being a person (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). It can therefore be inferred that it was through participants' upbringing that they learnt to have Ubuntu and thus to be people. This further implies that these participants conceived personhood, or becoming a person, as a process of socialisation. This understanding coincides with Masolo (2004), Menkiti (1984), Mkhize (2006) and Myers' (1985) arguments that personhood is acquired over time as a human-being develops from childhood to adulthood through a process of communal socialisation.

It is thus significant that the suburban participants all spoke of Ubuntu as something that was grown into with age and maturity. They all made reference to having a basic knowledge of Ubuntu as children, but coming to understand and fully appreciate Ubuntu as they got older. As a result, the interpretation was made that a) their understanding of Ubuntu, b) their capacity to have Ubuntu, and c) their ability to be fully functioning people, developed simultaneously:

S1: Funny enough, the actual word for Ubuntu, I didn't hear about that word for a long time. I think I was about, in high school when I first heard the word. It was the first time I put meaning to you know, the way I was brought up.

S2: So for me, primary school even, I knew about Ubuntu. But I guess, yes, what you mean in terms of it being conscious and you being aware of it, I didn't think it was that apparent to me until my older stage of life, even varsity you could say, where I was actually understanding the concept and people were talking about it in more relevant scenarios... So I mean, I think ultimately what I'm trying to say is that Ubuntu – I've known about it but I'm growing a deeper understanding the older I get about it.

S4: I was raised in a certain way and then I discovered that word "Ubuntu", you know? Because um, you're raised a certain way and then um, as you grow older, it starts to have meaning now. You know like, this is Ubuntu, this is what we do, and then you understand as you grow older.

It can be reasoned that, according to these participants, personhood through Ubuntu is a process that occurs over time: Ubuntu was not something that they were born with, but rather something that developed as they matured and attained their full capacity of cognitive functioning. Thus with age, Ubuntu slowly became an integral part of their mind-sets and self-conceptions. Their citations emulate Gyekeye (2010) and Menkiti's (1984) argument that in African personhood, a child is a human-being without personhood. Rather, a child is perceived as a human-being capable of achieving or failing personhood (Gyekeye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984). Accordingly, it can be reasoned that the normal process of ageing (if one is properly socialised) is also the normal process of developing into a person (Masolo, 2004).

As a whole, these results portray Ubuntu as valuable and integral to the upbringing and lives of the participants. This finding is in line with Ramose's (2001) belief that "the majority of the South African population continues to be nurtured and educated according to the basic tenets of Ubuntu" (p. 6). This expands the understanding of Ubuntu: it can be argued that Ubuntu is a way of life that directs processes of socialisation, thereby developing human-beings into communal people who orientate themselves around humane, interdependent relationships with others as an expression of their communal selfhood and an embodiment of Ubuntu (Bujo, 2003, as cited in Dolam, 2013; Fairfax, 2011; Ramose, 2001).

4.2.2.5. *Communal selfhood*

Through the process of socialisation and maturation, a human-being develops into a communal person (Menkiti, 2004; Mkhize, 2008). Consequently, one's identity and self-worth as a communal person is inextricably linked with those interconnected with that person (Akbar, 1984; Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Dolam, 2013; Louw, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Mkhize, 2008; Nkondo, 2007). This results in "a conception of self that is embedded, ensembled and situated" (Uichol, 1995, p. 46 as cited in Wastlund et al., 2001). Accordingly, most participants seemed to experience a communal sense of self where the value they accorded both themselves and others was based on the capacity to embody Ubuntu through benevolent, interdependent relations with others. In the extracts below, H1 identifies himself as having Ubuntu, through which it can be understood that he feels a sense of self-worth. S4 on the other hand, articulates how human-beings without Ubuntu are viewed by others as worthless:

H1: We help each other – it's something that normally happens. So I follow that route. It's who I am. I like to help other people.

S4: ...Ubuntu is what you do; that's what you're supposed to do! A real person helps out, that's a real person! Not this, you know... You know they'll even call you a dog if you don't look out for each other you know. That's the talk hey, that's the talk and it goes around. And then people in the community are like, "ah, that guy's a dog hey!" Because, if you don't have Ubuntu, you're just like scum.

In the above statements two implications are noteworthy. Firstly, being a communal person, i.e. demonstrating Ubuntu, is something that is expected of human-beings. To be a person is normal (Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 2004), and thus to show Ubuntu is "something that normally happens" (H1). As personhood is normalised, if someone fails to embody Ubuntu, then that human-being is not *umuntu* (a person), and may be labelled by others as a "dog" (S4; Gade, 2012). Secondly, despite being normalised, to have Ubuntu and to be a person is praiseworthy (Nussbaum, 2003). According to Afrocentric literature and participants themselves, there is inherent value in being a person (Gyekye, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003; Schiele, 1996). Thus although participants did not

explicitly talk about their self-concepts, many alluded to having positive self-concepts by identifying themselves as having Ubuntu, which they viewed positively.

4.2.3. *Concluding personhood*

The understanding gained from participants is that personhood is central to the meaning of Ubuntu, and personhood is only made possible through and with Ubuntu. Participants implied that personhood theoretically applies to all South Africans. Accordingly, all South Africans can be included under the umbrella of Ubuntu without discrimination. It is a collectivist stance on personhood in which all human-beings are interconnected and valuable given our common humanity (Akbar, 1984; Gade, 2012; Myers, 1985; Schiele, 1996). It presents as a humanistic, inclusive and ideal understanding of Ubuntu and personhood (Gade, 2012).

Despite this understanding, realistically, Ubuntu was experienced and applied in a more exclusive manner. Participants' real-world experiences of Ubuntu revolved around communal persons with whom benevolent, mutually beneficial relations were established and/or possible. In this context, it was persons interconnected with the participants through practically experienced, interdependent relations, who were seen to have Ubuntu. Accordingly, it was within each of their social systems of interdependent relations that participants experienced themselves and others as valuable communal people. As a consequence, personhood applied to a limited number of people. Despite its practicality and harmless intent, participants' narratives also conveyed that such an exclusionary practice could be misused if not interpreted and utilised in a positive way.

Further, it was learnt that if one is a communal person, Ubuntu is an innate and normal part of who one is as a person (Mkhize, 2008). However, a human-being is not born a communal person with Ubuntu – it is something that has to be learnt and understood through socialisation and with age (Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 2004; Mkhize, 2008). Accordingly, personhood is a process that occurs over time with maturation and understanding (Menkiti, 1984). An individual can be defined as a person once they are able to take part in a system of interdependent collaboration and be an embodiment of Ubuntu (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a). Indeed, for the majority of participants, Ubuntu was significant to how they defined themselves as people.

Although personhood is central to understanding Ubuntu as it denotes with whom Ubuntu is practiced, and the conditions and consequences thereof, personhood does not supply a complete understanding of Ubuntu. To be a person is to have *benevolent interdependent relationships* with other people: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. However, the conduct or behaviour necessary for benevolent, interdependent relationships has not yet been discussed. Arguably, Ubuntu is about

being a person interconnected and interdependent with other people *through* those behaviours or values which acknowledge, develop, maintain and protect such relationships and thus personhood (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; More, 2004; Tschaepe, 2013). This will be discussed next.

4.3. Being a person – demonstrating qualities of Ubuntu

Thus far it has been shown that Ubuntu means being a person interconnected and interdependent with other people. It was found among participants, that this meaning encompassed those actions seen to aid interconnections. Such actions were seen to be socially beneficial and necessary for the wellbeing of the interconnected group. Here, the centrality of socially beneficial conduct will be expanded on and it will be shown that for participants, such conduct was integral to their understandings and experiences of Ubuntu. This is immediately evident when we consider the initial definition of Ubuntu used, as articulated by H2:

We need to have relationships with other people to be a person, to make you completely understand everything. *You must not discriminate*, whether it's Zulu or Xhosa, or the Indians. *Don't mistreat other people*. It's relationships, *mutual respect* [emphasis by author].

All participants' understandings of Ubuntu included the expectation that a person treats other people in a humane way. Benevolence was a key element in their conceptualisations of Ubuntu. Gyekye (2010) and Metz (2011) argue that the benevolent or socially beneficial conduct required from communal people, is moral conduct. Accordingly, Gyekye (2010) contends that African personhood is synonymous with moral personhood – to be a person is to conduct oneself in a socially moral way. As a result, it can be deduced that a) Ubuntu means being a person interconnected with others, b) being such a person requires and encompasses socially moral conduct, and c) such moral conduct is in turn, a demonstration of Ubuntu (Gyekye, 2010; Fairfax, 2011; Metz, 2011; Mkhize, 2008).

In light of this, it is necessary to now consider what ethical conduct participants' perceived to be demonstrative of Ubuntu. Although such demonstrations were spoken about in various ways by different participants, the overarching interpretation gained from participants is that it is necessary for a person to *prove* him- or herself as a person by *being* a person. H1 made the concise statement: „I practice Ubuntu by my actions“. African personhood, which is central to Ubuntu, is therefore also about “how one demonstrates an understanding of a personal humanity, affect or sensibility through one's conduct, such as mutuality, priority of social and group relationships, generosity and benevolence, respect for others, spirituality/morality” (Fairfax, 2011, p. 131). The understanding is that through *practicing* socially beneficial behaviours perceived as integral to Ubuntu, Ubuntu becomes an actuality (Ramose, 2001). If Ubuntu is not concretely carried out, it remains no more

than a concept. Participants' narratives contained comparable ideas about what constitutes as socially beneficial behaviour. From data analysis, three major categories of socially beneficial behaviours were established: 1) general benevolence towards others, 2) reciprocity and 3) solidarity.

4.3.1. Benevolence

This subtheme is called benevolence as it encompasses all those behaviours and acts which are seen to be socially beneficial in all contexts at all times. One of the most commanding virtues quoted in almost all literature regarding Afrocentricity and Ubuntu, was humaneness (Akbar, 1976; Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Metz, 2011; Schiele, 1990; Ramose, 1999a). Participants' narratives mirrored this emphasis on humaneness. Benevolence therefore played a major role in participants' narrations of Ubuntu with many of their personal accounts revolving around the experience of Ubuntu through others' kindness, or practicing Ubuntu through behaving or acting benignly. Although the word, „benevolence“, could refer to numerous honourable behaviours, three behaviours in particular were interpreted as exemplifying Ubuntu for participants: 1) helping others, 2) respect, and 3) support and empathy. These virtues were interpreted as aiding the development, protection and enhancement of interdependent interconnections between people.

4.3.1.1. Helping others

„Helping others“ was a motif shared amongst all participants despite variances in their personal narrations and understandings of Ubuntu. It was also the most frequently referred to act of Ubuntu. The overall attention given to „helping“ by participants is interpreted as being particularly significant.

S4: You have to help other people out in order to be known as a person, as *umuntu*... to become that man of great stature or whatever; you need people to help you. That's the core foundation of it all and that's that person who will help others.

This extract taken from S4 conveys that providing “help” is the very thing that allows an individual to be known by other people as a person, and that it is “core” to Ubuntu. Other participants' narrations coincided with S4's sentiment that helping others is central to Ubuntu, with many using this example to define Ubuntu or describe a person:

S3: Ubuntu should be togetherness for all because it actually goes into all those aspects of different types of people and that's why I love the concept – togetherness, other people, help each other out, don't be mean to people...

H1: Ubuntu is a way to help each other, to love each other, it is a way we learn to help one another.

H3: Eh okay ya, we show Ubuntu if you are building a house here. We help you; we help you on what you are doing.

These extracts indicate that Ubuntu is showcased through the humane act of helping others out. The receiving and giving of help was perceived by participants to be socially beneficial, protecting the interconnections between people and thus maintaining the personhood of both the helper and the helped person. This is most clearly articulated by S4:

S4: ...Basically, you're helping that person out, you're making that person a person now. Ya so, instead of them being sad, down, whatever so...So if the whole mission was to embrace that, and you'll see if you go help people out all over the show that, like I said earlier on, people are happy and it's a load off their shoulders because we're helping out...

S4 makes it clear that „helping others“ creates a co-operative, mutually beneficial relationship between the helper and the helped. One is a person by practicing Ubuntu (showing humanity to another person through the act of assistance), and by doing so, allowing the assisted human, become a person too (Ramose, 2001). According to Busia (1962, as cited in Van Niekerek, 2011), helpfulness is an indispensable part of Ubuntu as the survival of a social system is dependent on each person's capacity to help one another. This is a significant finding as it suggests that the act of „helping others“ may essentially be the principal concrete form of Ubuntu.

4.3.1.2. *Respect*

„Respect“ seemed to be a form of benevolence strongly related to the definition of Ubuntu as interdependent, co-operative relationships between people. Participants conveyed that for such relationships to be possible, mutual respect was a prerequisite. Accordingly, respect for fellow persons was another way in which participants had experienced, practiced and understood Ubuntu:

S1: But you know...it works on expectations of respect and to be decent.

H1: Actually, I practice Ubuntu by my actions you know. The first thing I know is to respect. Respect comes first if want to do Ubuntu. And listen to people's point of view, listen to people's problems.

H2: Don't mistreat other people. Its relationships, mutual respect...

H3: You have to show you have Ubuntu when you are with other people. If you are with other people, you have to behave well and show humanity. Eh, ya, you have to, if, Ubuntu is to behave well to people, eh ya. You know to show respect and communicate with people.

These extracts elicit the interpretation that respect is necessary in order for Ubuntu to function properly. Whereas helping others was an action that both demonstrated and gave Ubuntu, respect was spoken of as way of treating another person, and a way of recognising Ubuntu in another person. This is in line with Ramose's (2001) idea that a person asserts their personhood through recognition of, and subsequent respect for, Ubuntu in another person. Therefore, according to both

Ramose (2001) and participants, a major part of Ubuntu and thus of demonstrating personhood, is being respectful towards other people.

4.3.1.3. *Support and empathy*

If Ubuntu means to be a person through co-operative relationships with other people, then in order to have Ubuntu, a person needs to foster and maintain such relationships. Without support or empathy, a person may come to feel isolated and alone – the antithesis of Ubuntu. It therefore follows that participants' personal narrations provided evidence that support and empathy were significant in showing Ubuntu:

S4: Um, support hey, even support is very much, um, Ubuntu; because after I lost my mom, a lot of people came around to support, people coming around and checking up, you know? Sometimes it's not just about helping out; it's about caring as well.

H1: I think being able to talk to somebody else whom you know, might have that power to do Ubuntu. It's about understanding people's dilemma. It's a way to acknowledge people's things, the way they do things, and how to solve problems. But I know what they going through because I've suffered.

It is evident from these extracts that the provision of support and empathy to other people are also important benevolent behaviours seen to effectively demonstrate Ubuntu and thus personhood. For participants, such behaviours seemed to function as a way of forming and maintaining a support network of interdependent relationships.

4.3.2. *Reciprocity*

Although the term, „mutually beneficial relations“ has been used previously, attention here must be drawn to the definite sense of give and take apparent in participants' narrations:

S1: ...it's not just a way of living, it's a like a code. You help another person out and the other person will help you – you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. You know, you treat a person well, speak well to your elders and all the things that people should know.

S4: I'm not helping you out now because I know eventually I'm going to need your help and I'm going to use...no! It's just Ubuntu! It's far greater than that. But when I do need your help, because of Ubuntu you, you're compelled to do it.

H2: Ah, it's easy [to have Ubuntu] because if you show Ubuntu to people, then people will show you Ubuntu.

H4: I know how to help people because I also want help. Ya, because you helping me, I help you. You don't help me, I won't help you.

Reciprocity was a shared idea among all participants who defined Ubuntu as a system of interdependent, co-operative human relationships. For all the aforementioned acts of benevolence, the word „mutual“ was or could easily have been used in conjunction: mutual help, mutual support

and empathy, and mutual respect. According to Ramose (2001), this mutuality or sharing is a basic principle of Ubuntu which should underlie all relationships among people. Reciprocity is integral to moral personhood as it ensures that interactions are mutually beneficial thus safeguarding the personhood of all involved (Lutz, 2009; Gyekye, 2010; Ramose, 1999b). If Ubuntu is not mutually beneficial for all parties, it becomes unbalanced, unfair and inharmonious. This notion was conveyed by S1 in the following statement:

S1: You can come to my house for a broom and then I'll give you a dust-pan you know. But if you take my broom, take my dust-pan, take my car and you don't give anything back, eventually, after a while, I'll be like okay, I've got nothing anymore, you've taken everything, you're bringing me down with you. If you keep taking and not giving, that's actually exploiting, yes! You can't keep asking for something without getting anything in return. It's just, human nature...

This extract gives the distinct impression that Ubuntu is a delicate system which depends enormously on balance. This balance is preserved through reciprocity – a give and take which allows Ubuntu to be socially beneficial for all involved (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a). Without reciprocity, exploitation and general misuse of the system become likely possibilities. Reciprocity can therefore be seen as an essential part of being a person as Ubuntu relies on it to function effectively and ethically (Ramose, 1999a).

Reciprocity seemed to have different connotations in the two geographic subgroups under study. While the motif of reciprocity was voiced by both groups of participants, the reasons behind it were subtly different. For suburban participants, day-to-day reciprocation with others was not perceived as indispensable to their own or their interconnected others' wellbeing. These participants seemed to attribute no more to reciprocal displays of benevolence than Ubuntu itself. Their focus was on „paying it forward“, in recognition that they would not have been where they were without others.

S1: I look at it his way, if people before me with much less than what I have right now...were able to put aside their own problems and do something that good for me, what makes me think that I can't do the same thing for somebody else who's in need of help?

S2: I think Ubuntu also teaches you that you must love your neighbour as much as you love yourself, which also goes back to the bible which also basically says um...it makes the environment you live in one that you will be happy about, because you are paying it forward...

In comparison, participants from Hlalahle spoke of reciprocity as necessary for survival. It was apparent that this give and take occurred in their every-day lives with the envioning people in order to survive. This focus was perceptibly different from suburban participants' narratives:

H4: So I know how to help each other because I don't know what could happen to me or my child tomorrow. So I have to help each other. I don't have...because you helping me, I help you. You don't help me, I won't help you.

H4's comment here mirrors Gyekye's (2010) argument that a person's failure to reciprocate sets him or her up to be denied beneficial interactions during difficult times. In an environment such as Hlalakahle, failure to reciprocate risks both a person's physical and psychological survival. However, in giving, a person sets himself up for receiving, and in receiving he sets himself up to be able to give (Ramose, 1999a). In H1's words, "Once you give, there are blessings for it. You receive blessings."

Although the reasoning behind reciprocity differed between the two subgroups, all participants deemed it to be an important part of showing Ubuntu and being a person. The practice of reciprocity directly coincides with the communalist idea that human-beings have to depend on one another for psychological fulfilment and physical survival as people (Masolo, 2004; Nussbaum, 2003; Tschaepe, 2013; Wiredu, 1984). Reciprocated acts of giving and receiving restore the dignity and advance the personhood of all involved in such an interchange (Ramose, 1999a). In other words, "A perpetual exchange goes on between men...and this must be so if the universal order is to endure" (Ramose, 2001, p. 99).

4.3.3. *Duty*

According to some participants, a major part of demonstrating Ubuntu is by being a responsible person. In particular, this sense of duty seemed to drive suburban participants to conduct themselves in a humane and generous way towards others. As has already been discussed, participants from Hlalakahle seemed to be motivated to reciprocate as a result of a real dependence on one another for survival. However, the better social and economic position of suburban participants meant that survival was not a driving force. Their reciprocation of Ubuntu seemed to be based on a sense of duty to be a moral person and promote the wellbeing of those less fortunate (Masolo, 2004). Their entrenched sense of responsibility to do what is right by others is exemplified in the following quotes:

S1: I would love to go live abroad but I don't want to let my cousins down. If they need help with anything, they can call me and I'm there for them, I have to be there. I haven't got a choice.

S4: There's no...you can't say...it's very tough because you can't even say no when I ask you, you know what I mean? That's how powerful this, this Ubuntu thing is. If you say no, whoa, then you don't have Ubuntu and it's like bad; people will speak ill of you.

In this extract, S1 verbalises a strong sense of obligation towards his family. He feels that he cannot follow his individual aspirations because of this responsibility. S2 speaks of the power of obligation that comes with Ubuntu, where it is felt to be a person's absolute responsibility to behave and act benevolently for the sake of others and one's own personhood.

From the data collected from suburban participants, it was also understood that responsibility towards others necessarily involves people in each other's lives:

S2: ...they tell us Black kids that are at varsity, we're not there for ourselves, we're there for those people who can't be there and we are supposed to be being, being the best at what we're doing so we can go and uplift those people, which is Ubuntu you know.

S2 was taught that it is the duty of those in an advantaged position to take responsibility for those less fortunate and to give back to them. It is evident that this idea is a form of reciprocity as it is about the responsibility to distribute wealth and resources among all people (Masolo, 2004). Furthermore, this sense of responsibility towards others, if carried out, necessarily involves people in the lives of others. This supports a communal identity and ensures communal responsibility and wellbeing (Bewaji, 2004; Fairfax, 2011, Masolo, 1994; Matolino, 2011). It can also be seen from this extract that this sense of responsibility seems to apply pressure to be a good example and lead a worthy life for the sake of one's honour and others (Bewaji, 2004). This pressure works to ensure that each person is treated as morally accountable for his or her behaviour (Gyekye, 1992, as cited in Fairfax, 2011). Furthermore, being responsible was also about being accountable for others' behaviour:

S1: To make sure that people take the right route... And if, and if he ends up not doing the right thing, then I have to ask myself, what did I do wrong?

In other words, if the person S1 tries to help fails, then he too has to take responsibility for that failure. An interconnected group has to share responsibility for the group itself and its individual members, acting as one united unit and not individual parts (Graham, 1999; Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999a; Tschaepe, 2013). Doing so demonstrates communal personhood as it is an acknowledgment that a person is ontologically interconnected and interdependent with others (Mkhize, 2008; Tschaepe, 2013). In accordance with this view, a few participants explained that being a person through other people means that the actions and behaviours of one person belong to all people interdependent with that person, and so too become the responsibility of all those interconnected. The following two extracts provide justification for this interpretation:

S1: ...they are very disappointing because at the end of the day, that person was raised in that community and if you come from a community like that, you're all raised the same and so you have to think, where did it go wrong, where did the community go wrong with this person? That's the thing, if a parent of a child, if the child – we know that sometimes, these things happen you know, I know this now. But you always have those questions in your head – what could I have done differently? What should I have done differently to help this person? So say some neighbour becomes a gangster and I become a graduate but we were raised the same way, there'll be questions. Maybe they didn't give that child as much attention as maybe they gave me or something might have gone wrong in that family.

S4: If you play basketball or any team sports, you know, basketball you...I understand why, why it worked, because it's a team sport and you all want to win, but if I don't pass you the ball and help you out, get into that position for you to score that point. Because you need to be in a certain position for him to give you the ball and you score and you have thirty points. And then the stats sheet read: oh, he's such a brilliant guy, he scored thirty points this particular game, wow, you know, he's amazing. But he didn't do that on his own – it's his team that helped him get there and get to that position.

These excerpts show that the actions of one person affect, and are the responsibility of all with whom he or she is connected (Graham, 1999; Lutz, 2009; Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999b). Accordingly, a group must take responsibility for both the graduate and the gangster, sharing their success and failure. Lutz (2009) and S4 make use of team sport as a suitable example of the responsibility that comes with being a person interdependent on others. And indeed, such a comparison is effective – every team member plays to the best of their ability for the sake of their team because the team's success is their success, and the team's failure is their failure. It can be seen from this example, that all group members have to be committed to the interests of the group (Bewaji, 2004; Nkondo, 2007; Pietersen, 2005). Such a commitment and sense of responsibility is a show of solidarity with the group (Ramose, 2001). Solidarity promotes mutual responsibility and mutual responsibility promotes in-group solidarity (Ramose, 1999a).

4.3.4. *Solidarity*

If communal personhood necessitates interdependent or reciprocal collaboration with other people, and such interdependence requires and encourages mutual responsibility, then it is reasonable that being a person through other people would bring about a sense of solidarity between interconnected people (Menkiti, 2004; Ramose, 1999a). This particular subtheme was verbalised by many participants as togetherness or being united, as can be seen in the excerpts below:

S2: So I think that's maybe where Ubuntu came from, where it was the system of "we are one and we will keep each other as one" and whoever can do that job the best will do that for everyone, it wouldn't just be for those who are able or unable.

S3: Um, normally when I was in varsity you would say: "*Ubuntu sisonke*". We used to say "Ubuntu" as in peopleness, togetherness and *sisonke* is another word for togetherness as in we are, we are together, we are one, united front, united we stand.

H3: It does have an impact because we're coming from different places. As I come from Hammarsdale, when I first came here I met people that I can live with because they have Ubuntu. I can say where I am, Ubuntu does unite us. I am coming from a different place and the people I'm with do have Ubuntu.

The first extract taken from S2 suggests that Ubuntu stems from a social system based on solidarity; the second quote by S3 indicates that Ubuntu is synonymous with solidarity; and the third excerpt implies that solidarity is a result of Ubuntu. Accordingly, it can be seen that solidarity was understood as the origin, the definition, and the result, of Ubuntu. The experience or understanding

of Ubuntu as togetherness with others was explicit in most accounts given by participants. It is evident that part of being a communal person, is feeling a sense of solidarity with interconnected persons (Menkiti, 2004; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999a).

According to Metz (2011) and van Niekerk (2009), solidarity is shown through caring and being responsive to interconnected persons, as well as through showing commitment to the interests of the interconnected group over oneself. Consequently, an individual's failure to be committed and responsive towards interconnected others, is a failure to show solidarity and thus a failure to be a person (Metz, 2011). It is evident that a sense of solidarity will likely ensure the survival and welfare of the group and all its members thus safeguarding a unified, strong, and stable group (Gade, 2012; Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990). Solidarity with one's group therefore constitutes socially beneficial conduct as it protects interconnections and interdependence between people.

4.3.5. *Conformity*

In true solidarity, the interests of the group take precedence over the interests of the individual, and group norms have to be followed in order to achieve the interests of the group (Cornell & van Marle, 2005; Gyekye, 2010; Menkiti, 1984; Nkondo, 2007; Tschaepe, 2013). Accordingly, participants' narrations included ideas about conformity. There was the innate sense that participants' experiences of being communal people and demonstrating Ubuntu included an expectation of a certain amount of conformity with group norms. This need for conformity was normalised and accepted in most participants' accounts:

H3: Eh, I think it's destroyed with people who are used to being alone most of the time. And you cannot talk or communicate well with those people. Those people lead their lives differently. Some people like to be left alone... It is discouraging if you don't want your children to play with other children. If they are playing with others, you go with them so you can see every move they make. You can't communicate with other people. You do things differently and the way you like. Those things betray Ubuntu.

S1: ...someone will decide to live a completely different way and that won't work. All of us actually have to contribute, we have all do it and we can't do it half-heartedly. It can't be half of us living it and half of us don't, you know?

It is evident in these extracts that conforming to certain norms is part and parcel of having Ubuntu and being a person. If one fails to act according to certain social norms by "being alone most of the time", or leading "their lives differently", according to H3, that person may be perceived as betraying Ubuntu. The comment made by S1 indicates that Ubuntu necessitates conformity to certain norms if it is to function effectively. Interpreted together, it becomes evident that being a communal person requires conformity to group norms, as without conformity, the group cannot function in a cohesive manner (Pietersen, 2005). Accordingly, non-conformist behaviour is viewed

negatively as it undermines solidarity and thus Ubuntu. Two participants in particular experienced this negativity as a result of their perceived nonconformist conduct.

S2: ...they made me feel inadequate for not thinking the way they thought. So that can cause a rift with the whole Ubuntu thing because Ubuntu says: "come on guys, let's feed from each other, let's help each other". So they shouldn't make me feel bad for having a different opinion. You should be wanting to understand my opinion and finding a way forward to work with your opinion, my opinion to get the end result – that's how I think about Ubuntu.

S3: Just because I wasn't together with them, they felt like I didn't know their idea or the concept of being Ubuntu or being Black. I was the other, I did feel like the other, even though I am Black, but how does one act Black, um, what more Blackness do I need?

The quotes reinforce the idea that conformity to communal norms is necessary if one is to be accepted as a communal person. Where an individual fails to conform to accepted norms, he or she may be perceived as failing to show solidarity and thus failing to be a person.

4.3.6. *Misconstructions of being a person*

Through benevolence, reciprocity, duty, solidarity and conformity, a human-being shows him or herself to be a person, an embodiment of Ubuntu. These behaviours can be categorised as socially beneficial as they produce and protect the necessary interconnections between people (Gyekye, 2010). As such, they are seen to be both ethical requirements and laudable consequences of a properly functioning and effective Ubuntu. From participants' narrations, it would seem that Ubuntu cannot function without such conduct. Furthermore, it can be interpreted that these socially beneficial behaviours should always function together. Participants' accounts provided insight into some of the detrimental repercussions that can arise when one form of socially beneficial conduct is practiced in isolation from the others:

H1: Actually I have a tuck-shop you know. So now people take advantage of what you have. They come more often, even though they don't have problems, just because they need money to do something... they actually come with different stories, and at the end of the day when you walk around, you see some drunk and you go: "How! You said you had this problem but yet you drunk. How is that?" But then, I've done my part. When you come to me, I make sure I do my bit.

S4: And sometimes people define Ubuntu in a weird way hey! Like sometimes you get people who are like, "Ay, I need you to help me out with this, this and this thing". But that's like, wrong, but they're like, "that's Ubuntu, we're looking out for each other, you know, we're Africans", or whatever. But you know that what they want you to do is wrong. That's another side of the coin... And he's leaning on that, on, like the word, you know. You have to do this because of Ubuntu. And then that's now, comes to a personal uh, your own moral compass so that you can say no, I can't do things like that, I don't do illegal things, you know, and you stop, you know.

It is evident from these extracts that some individuals misuse Ubuntu. They show that such a misuse may leave people open to abuse or exploitation under the guise of Ubuntu. H1's account provides an example of how some individuals may misuse Ubuntu for personal gain. The second extract from S4 conveys how certain individuals may rely on the idea of Ubuntu and its inherent sense of

obligation, to manipulate people to do something unethical. From the literature reviewed and an analysis of participants' narratives, it seems that all the aforementioned socially beneficial behaviours, with the exception of benevolence, can be misused (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; Sono, 1994; van Niekerk, 2011). Without benign conduct, Ubuntu may open up to nepotism, xenophobia, tribalism, coercion, and discrimination and oppression in general (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; Sono, 1994; van Niekerk, 2011). As a result, it can be seen that reciprocity, duty, solidarity and conformity cannot be construed as socially beneficial, without benevolence in general. This leads to the subsequent interpretation that benevolence is of utmost importance in being a person and correspondingly, key in defining and understanding Ubuntu.

As has already been noted, participants understood Ubuntu to be for all South Africans but personally practiced Ubuntu in a more exclusive way for practical reasons and real-world constraints. Their personal experiences of being people through practices of solidarity, responsibility, conformity, reciprocity and benevolence, typically occurred within each of their interconnected groups. According to literature on the subject, such exclusive practices make sense given that solidarity, group responsibility and conformity are most effective within small defined in-groups (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; Nkondo, 2007). Conversely, if humaneness is practiced in a partial way, exclusivity, oppression and general misuse may apply as humane conduct may not necessarily extend outside of one's own interconnected group (Coertze, 2001; Nkondo, 2007; van Niekerk, 2011). However, participants implicitly provided a way to solve this problem. Their narrations conveyed that Ubuntu can be collectively conceived but communally practiced. Accordingly, it would make sense that even if Ubuntu is practiced in an exclusive way where a communal people conduct themselves according to the abovementioned socially beneficial behaviours for the good of their interconnected group, humaneness should be practiced with all South Africans in general according to a collective understanding of Ubuntu. Doing so may go some way to ensure that Ubuntu is not misused and remains valuable, moral and operative in any context.

4.3.7. *In conclusion*

Human-beings need one another for fulfilment and survival as people (Graham, 1999; Gyekye, 2010; Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003). According to this view, mutual relationships, or interdependent interconnections, are of primary importance in a person's life. It is coherent that socially beneficial conduct is necessary if such relations are to function effectively and fairly (Gyekye, 2010). Because such relations are a requirement of personhood, so too is socially beneficial conduct. A person therefore automatically refers to someone who conducts him or herself

in a socially beneficial manner (Fairfax, 2011; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008). Socially beneficial conduct is Ubuntu conduct, and refers to those behaviours that develop, protect and maintain interdependent interconnections between people (Ubuntu). In other words, one must embody Ubuntu in order to protect Ubuntu.

Through an analysis of participants' narrations, it was inferred that behaviour that is benevolent, reciprocal, responsible, in solidarity with one's interconnected group, and conforming to group norms, constitutes as socially beneficial conduct. These interpreted subthemes of socially beneficial behaviour are interrelated, so while they have been discussed in a linear fashion, it should be apparent that they are co-dependent and constitute both prerequisites and consequences of being a person. It has also been noted that in order for Ubuntu to function fairly, effectively and ethically, such behaviours have to coexist. However, findings also suggest that it is benevolence that is of utmost importance in being a person (van Niekerk, 2011). It is only in conjunction with benevolent conduct that the other aforementioned socially beneficial behaviours become moral behaviours that exemplify Ubuntu (van Niekerk, 2011). The prominence of benevolence is reflected throughout participants' narratives, and particularly in the way that they defined Ubuntu: being a person interconnected with other people through *humane* relationships.

Summing up, it can be seen that participants regarded Ubuntu as a practical endeavour. Their accounts mirror the notion that Ubuntu is about *being* a person, through *demonstrating* socially moral behaviour (Gade, 2012; Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). It is the real-world practice of socially beneficial behaviours and actions that renders Ubuntu a concrete actuality (Mkhize, 2008; Ramose, 1999b). Through the practical demonstration of Ubuntu, participants became necessarily and inevitably involved in, and connected to, the lives of others, developing, maintaining, protecting and/or enhancing interdependent interconnections.

4.4. Ubuntu across place and time

Thus far, we have noted participants' personal understandings of Ubuntu and how Ubuntu is connected to personhood. We have also seen that a person has to practice Ubuntu by demonstrating socially beneficial behaviours. However, it is significant to note two features regarding these findings: a) the participants were all young adults living in the twenty-first century in current day South Africa – their narrations exist and have been influenced by their place in time, and b) although many commonalities exist between the two groups of participants, differences are apparent too – these differences reinforce Gyekye (2010) and Mkhize's (2008) contention that context influences understandings of morality and thus Ubuntu. The purpose of this theme is to take note of

the commonalities and differences in how Ubuntu has been understood and practiced across place and time.

4.4.1. *Ubuntu across place*

It has already been noted that although participants all felt that Ubuntu should be applied and practiced with all people, their experiences of Ubuntu were understandably with those people with whom they shared relationships or associations. Following this, it makes sense that these relationships were generally with people in participants' own communities, or with people with whom they interacted with regularly (van Niekerk, 2011). This is one way in which Ubuntu and place seem to be related: for participants, place dictated to a large extent, the people with whom Ubuntu applied:

H3: We play soccer, play together. Ya eh, we meet, Ubuntu, communicate together even though meetings are created, *we stay together*. We know how to communicate, find friends *where we are*. [emphasis author's own].

S4: I was raised in a very... You know, my neighbour was White and whatever so for me like, it's just, I will help out anyone, because I've been exposed. The way I define the word is just as, as people. I help people out that need help that I know in my situation, that I have some sort of relationship.

H3 and S4 both refer to having Ubuntu with those people with whom they shared relationships, and how where they lived, whether in Hlalakahle or the suburbs, directed these relationships. Some participants spoke of Ubuntu and its correspondence to place as informing more than just the experience of Ubuntu, but also one's identity as a person. This point is conveyed in the following extract by S1:

S1: So for example, if you say, I'm from KwaMashu, the people there should all be known to be from there, so where you're from should all be the same because they're raised by the same community kind of.

S1 speaks here of identifying oneself as a person from a specific place, and with the people who live in the same place. As each place is unique, it provides an exclusive identity for those who feel that they belong to a particular place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Location therefore plays an important role in self-conceptualisations. This seemed to be particularly true for participants living in Hlalakahle where they seemed to be fully involved in practice of Ubuntu with their community. Suburban participants, although situated from the outside looking in, gave comparable accounts of the nature of Ubuntu in such communities:

H4: I don't want to go to other place because I got friends, ah, old people acting like my mother, my father... to practice Ubuntu, it's not difficult. It's very easy because we all need help, no one rich is staying here in Hlalakahle... There is no need to be high with others, 'cause we all staying here.

S3: ...there everyone knew who's who – if you can point there, he "I tell you who's the neighbour, he "I tell you that this is so and so and he looked after him as a child, that they'd helped each other out with the car that picked up all the children, um...

These extracts speak of an uncomplicated sense of Ubuntu within informal settlements and outlying communities. Firstly, the interconnections formed among people are aided by geographic proximity (van Niekerk, 2011). Secondly, as H4's statement conveys, demonstrating Ubuntu with fellow community members is "not difficult" as it is natural to empathise with people who experience the same plights and/or circumstances. Indeed, literature indicates that commonalities readily aid reciprocation, solidarity, humaneness and a „common good“ (Nkondo, 2007; Schiele, 1990; Tschaepe, 2013).

Suburban participants' experiences of Ubuntu in relation to place seemed to be more complicated. Although Ubuntu was important to them, they seemed to find it difficult to practice Ubuntu in the suburbs for various reasons. The first reason given relates again to „knowing people“:

S1: The difference is that, the thing about here is, we know we're on a cordial basis but there's no way that the neighbour's child will come to me and ask me to give her a lift to work, kind of, if she's stranded, because she doesn't know me that well. But I could do that if I was living in KwaMashu.

This quote is representative of the general feeling among suburban participants that they were not well acquainted with their neighbours and the people in their community. The lack of consistent association with people in their community rendered the practice of Ubuntu more problematic for these participants. One reason for such limited relations is evident in the following extracts:

S1: Yes, because if you look at, say Kwamashu, where my grandmother lives, you can just walk into her house and say hi or knock on her door. You can't knock on my door to come in here – you have to get past the gate, get past dogs, you have to jump over fences, then you can eventually ask for what you want...

S2: I think when you're living in the „burbs, your walls are higher, you don't know your neighbour, you just know your family. Whereas you go to a typical location, the walls are lower, there's less, um, you know, distance. Everyone knows each other's neighbours. There is that sense of, if I'm down, someone will be there to pick me up. Even more in the rural areas – there are no walls; it's just land upon land. You walk through each other's yards.

It is evident that the physical set-up of suburban areas were seen to provide literal barriers to Ubuntu – physical entities that separate and isolate the people within from the people without, thus breaking down the necessary interdependent, co-operative system of relationships between people. This seemed to be a key difference between the two geographical areas in this study. S1 explained the perceived necessity of these barriers in the suburbs:

S1: ...the security here is different because you're not exactly going to open up your house to anyone here. You're scared people are going to come take your stuff. You've worked so hard for so long to get all your possessions which you think are valuable, you want to guard them, which makes sense.

This extract sums up another crucial difference between the two geographic areas under study – material wealth. In Hlalakahle, participants seemed to have very little and relied on Ubuntu to survive and live in a harmonious environment (Mbigi & Maree, 1995, as cited in Pietersen, 2005). In contrast, participants in the suburban areas possessed material wealth, thus rendering physical survival a non-issue. Accordingly, it is interpreted that for suburban participants, Ubuntu was not a necessity but rather a responsibility driven by their communal ideals and upbringing. And despite this responsibility, the preservation of wealth was also influential in their lives. Living in the suburbs seemed to mean that a proper communal sense of Ubuntu was sacrificed to some extent for possessions and wealth through fear and isolation.

Another feature that differentiated the experience and practice of Ubuntu in the two geographic groups was the influence of westernised ideas. Suburban participants recognised and spoke about the influence that the western value system had on them, and it is reasonable to suggest that this influence coincided with their suburban geographic location:

S3: Ya, I, I think if I didn't grow up in a White neighbourhood, I think I would have defined it differently but I don't think...I think if I was in a Black community and because my family is Black, my neighbours are Black, everyone else was Black, school was like...I think I would have defined it in that more, in more of that sense. But because um, I grew up in a different neighbourhood, I guess all the influence, I was influenced a lot by the Western culture...

Suburban participants spoke of the impact western ideas had on their definitions and practices of Ubuntu. In general it seemed to complicate their sense of Ubuntu and they spoke of grappling with various contradictions as a result of this influence. Of particular importance in their narratives was the sway of capitalist ideals:

S1: If you are able to sweat in your business and put in hours and hours and hours, and someone is not putting in the effort, you deserve more than that person because you worked harder, you know. So Ubuntu doesn't cater for that.

S2: If you're rich, then they don't think you're a person, do you know what I mean? They'll take advantage of the fact that you're rich because they think well, we're hungry but they're not understanding that I'm rich because I worked...

S3: And it's different, people are now competing with money, money-wise you know. And Black people are starting to have money. And then you get the Black people with lots of money who do not want to help. And then you've got the underdog. Those who have changed and see themselves as more westernised because of money and then ah, and then the experience of Ubuntu changes as well.

S4: Ya, it brings out that greed and then you start to calculate in your head – what if I didn't have to help out so many people or be there, I could be far. So everyone becomes individualistic, they selfish and greedy, and that's what...that's one thing that can harm it.

In the above extracts, it is evident that these participants found themselves in a predicament: they experienced and enjoyed financial prosperity due to capitalism, but at the same time they, like

Schiele (1990) and Graham (1999), understood such ideals and consequent disparities to be detrimental to Ubuntu. Accordingly, the influence of capitalism and westernised thought meant that suburban participants had to try and navigate more complex paths in their understanding of Ubuntu. This path seemed to be uncharted territory on which these suburban participants were pioneers. These participants therefore understood themselves as having altered narrations of Ubuntu from those living outside suburbia and from those of previous generations.

4.4.2. *Interlink between place and time*

Interviews with participants from Hlalakahle provided an understanding of Ubuntu as it is experienced in an informal settlement. When suburban participants were asked what they thought Ubuntu was like in areas such as Hlalakahle, their accounts were comparable to those of the Hlalakahle participants. Suburban participants likened this form of Ubuntu, as practiced and experienced in informal settlements and non-urban areas, to the Ubuntu of their parents' generation. The economic and social restrictions experienced by participants from Hlalakahle were perceived as similar to those experienced by generations of SAAD before. Accordingly, Ubuntu was understood as being utilised and experienced in the same way across the time-span of previous generations under apartheid, and in current times in those spaces outside of urban and suburban areas. Evidence of this can be effectively illustrated by comparing statements about Ubuntu in non-urban areas and Ubuntu in the past, made by the same participants:

- S1 { Yeah it is, because even, it worked back in the day, back in the day, under apartheid I think it worked...we were all made equal and there wasn't much we could really do to come out of it. It worked better when everybody was poor, I know it sounds bad but it did.
VS.
I mean, the thing about KwaMashu now is that there's not much of a difference, it hasn't moved forward because people get out and leave and never come back
- S3 { I'm not too sure, but I don't know if it was something that had more meaning and more relevance during apartheid times more than it does now.... as Black people you needed to stick together, you needed to be a community, you needed to have each other's backs because all you had was each other fighting an unfair regime.
VS.
They [people in non-urban areas] are fighting common goals all the time, should I put it that way? They're fighting poverty, they're fighting um, other things, ya.
- S4 { ...you must understand that they coming from a, you know, a different generation... But for my parents, my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, for them it's more: you stick to the Black people...
VS.
They [people from informal settlements] would probably see it as Black people because they're in that situation where you know, they're surrounded by Black people and they, they, their problems are right there. So they have to help out and keep it like that and help, keep it Black.

In the first instance, S1 voices his view on Ubuntu during apartheid. Further on in his transcript, as represented by the second quote, S1 makes the comment that places such as KwaMashu have not

progressed. His statement implies that the circumstances in places such as KwaMashu are much the same as they were under apartheid. S1 felt that Ubuntu was made easier under apartheid due to the relative equality of most Black people under this oppressive regime. In the same way, it is implied that there is a general equality among people in areas such as KwaMashu, because those who do make money, move out, leaving it and its people in much the same position as before. The commonalities in race, language, culture, resources and goals found both in the past and in many non-urban areas, render Ubuntu easier to practice. S1 thus provides evidence for one way in which time and place interlink.

An appraisal of S3's quotes, show another way in which time and place interlink. S3 believed that Ubuntu was necessary under apartheid as it built solidarity, thus allowing SAAD to unite and fight for a common cause. This belief implies that Ubuntu is rendered more relevant and applicable when there is a shared objective. According to Gyekye (2010), shared goals provide people with a common interest around which behaviour can be organised. She uses this same notion to describe those people living outside of urban and suburban areas. Although their cause may be somewhat different to that of previous generations, shared difficulties such as poverty provide common ground and consequently help build solidarity, reciprocity and Ubuntu in general (Mbigi & Maree, 1995, as cited in Pietersen, 2005). This feeds back into the idea that Ubuntu is easier where commonalities exist.

A sense of exclusivity in the practice of Ubuntu as expressed by S4 is the last example given of the association between time and place. This is somewhat related to the previous point made by S3 about being united for a common cause, but also has to do with the previously covered topic of exposure to various influences. For the preceding generations of SAAD, their envioning social system typically consisted of Black people only. Besides the obvious reason of not extending Ubuntu to an oppressive people, Ubuntu was extended to the people with whom interdependent, co-operative relationships were possible – Black people. S4 believed the same is true of persons currently living in peri-urban and rural areas due to their reliance on each other for survival, as well as their limited exposure to people of different race and culture.

The general impression gained from suburban participants was this: the more rural the place, the less Ubuntu had been affected by change over time and accordingly, the stronger the resemblance to the Ubuntu of generations passed. Such environments tend to result in relatively small and exclusive groups where language, culture, beliefs, resources and location are shared (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010). Literature on the subject indicates that communal Ubuntu works best in such communities – confined in-groups with low internal differentiation (Coertze, 2001; Nkondo, 2007).

Accordingly, this version of Ubuntu was viewed by suburban participants as more prototypical and less complex than the version of Ubuntu that they were negotiating.

Undeniably, Afrocentric thought argues for the importance of emphasising commonalities rather than differences, placing focus on that which unites people rather than on factors that differentiate (Asante, 1987; Gyekye, 2010; Schiele, 1990). In light of this, it becomes apparent why suburban participants looked to the past, or to more rural areas, in their narrated conceptualisations of Ubuntu. It is also coherent why Hlalakahle participants seemed to have an uncomplicated sense of personhood in comparison to their suburban counterparts. Commonalities is therefore a significant subtopic in participants' narrations – under this motif, it becomes evident how Ubuntu of the past (particularly under apartheid) and Ubuntu in more rural areas, is interpreted as being similar and thus interconnected.

4.4.3. *Ubuntu across time*

The transformation of Ubuntu over time was articulated by some participants through interview questions on how they came to know about Ubuntu. As they spoke about how their parents brought them up, they inevitably spoke about generational differences in the understanding and practice of Ubuntu:

S2: I think also maybe that's why Ubuntu also has had so many different faces because it's had to evolve with the times, and over time with people and how people act and things... I mean we're not the same people as we were 200 years ago.

S3: ...unfortunately it's something that ah, I can't detach from [apartheid] because of the way I grew up over many many years, and parents who went through apartheid, who were in apartheid, and stories that were passed down to me... If we could ya, I don't want to use the "rainbow nation" but it's the next best form I could think of right now in definition „cause "rainbow nation" means post-1994 and something that they were trying to push, and I think that it defines more what we should be now than Ubuntu; as much as still struggle and still love it, the word bears too much of the past which we should remember but also should move forward.

S4: ...back then, like if you speak to older people, you know, Ubuntu is what you do, that's what you're supposed to do! You know, they'll even call you a dog if you don't look out for each other. That was back then, now if you have Ubuntu, you're like: Ah man, you want to help that person out? What's wrong with you?

It is evident then that understandings of Ubuntu have undergone multiple conceptual shifts over time (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011). As Ubuntu has been in existence in Africa for centuries (Gade, 2011; Mkhize, 2008; Nussbaum, 2003), and as S2 argued, circumstances and people change over time, it makes sense then too that Ubuntu has transformed time. For suburban participants, a major change in the experience of Ubuntu was between the Ubuntu of their parents' generation under apartheid, and their own experiences of Ubuntu in a democratic South Africa.

S2: ...they're still in that era, and for me, I'm from this era. Even though we come from the same idea but still, we've been brought up differently.

S3: I think now it needs to change, the concept will change because we're not living in that time anymore, we are not as Black people... we have opportunities, we have other people that we are living with together, we don't need to fight the other anymore.

The definitively different social, economic and political environments between the two generations resulted in marked differences between their experiences and personal practices of Ubuntu. These differences resulted in a struggle apparent in their narrations: a struggle between the past and the present, between remembering the injustice of apartheid and moving forward as a South African nation, between Ubuntu as it was and Ubuntu as it could or should be.

These participants recognised Ubuntu as a dynamic, changed and changing concept. Although they gave praise to the Ubuntu of the past and in the more rural areas, and although they expressed unhappiness over the idea that Ubuntu could be potentially be non-existent for future generations (S1: "I never want my kids not to grow up with those principles"), they felt that an adapted Ubuntu would result in a more encompassing and tolerant version that could embrace diversity and help South Africa move forward.

S3: I mean a lot of people in apartheid times, our parents, still live and are influenced by it and I think it's our responsibility as people who post-1994 growing up, should define it differently so that we pass it on differently to our children... there's nothing you can do about most of all this now but there's something we can do about the generations to come...

Participants' ideas regarding Ubuntu were relevant to post-apartheid South Africa and thus more in line with current politicised conceptualisations of Ubuntu as a humanistic and collectivist value system capable of uniting a diverse South African populace (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2012). And accordingly it is evident that the meaning of Ubuntu has undergone a transformation from the meaning it held during apartheid (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011). However, it seems that this shift in meaning has resulted in its own difficulties as a new generation of South Africans try to adapt and apply Ubuntu in a changed and changing climate.

In response to such a challenge, suburban participants articulated that if Ubuntu is to stay valuable and applicable in the current South African context, it would have to be expanded upon and conceptualised somewhat differently moving forward:

S2: We should all be given equal opportunities in life to be the people that we're meant to be. That's why I'm saying Ubuntu can be combined with independence because the Ubuntu side says "I'm giving everyone the opportunity" and the independence side says "with this opportunity what will you do".

S3: ...the word stays the same, the concept stays the same but we put it on a broader spectrum so you don't actually change the African-ness of it but you apply to everyone else in this country... you can keep the Ubuntu and the Africanist part and maybe defining African as people in Africa than just African as in Black people.

These two extracts taken from S2 and S3 respectively, convey their feelings that Ubuntu needs to adapt in order to cope with diversity and with the influence of Westernisation. Their feelings coincide with the argument made by Ramose, (1999a) that the western influence in Africa is a reality and accordingly, it would make more sense to open up a dialogue and find a way for these two different world views to coexist. Their sentiments also echo Gyekeye's (2010) work regarding the fluidity of African morality – that which is seen to be moral must always be relevant and thus relative to context. However, it is also obvious from S3's extract that the inherent African-ness of Ubuntu must remain. So while Ubuntu should encompass all South Africans in all their diversity, it should retain its Africanness.

Despite the inevitable challenges of applying Ubuntu to a diverse and segregated nation (Coertze, 2001; Louw, 2010; van Niekerk, 2009), a desire and hope to achieve just such an objective was interpreted from participants' narratives. It was expressed that if Ubuntu was assimilated and practiced across culture, race, class and creed, that South Africa would benefit and change for the better:

S1: It's good to have different cultures and stuff but we should try...I don't see why Ubuntu can't be the thing that defines us as a country. The rainbow nation for me means that, but I don't think we've made enough of a push for us to be defined by that. We could make that fight now for struggling for Ubuntu – we're all going to live like that, that should be the fight now.

S2: Ubuntu, yes, it comes from Blacks or the African nationality, but it's definitely for everyone. Everybody can practice it. And I think if Ubuntu is practised more often, we'd see a lot of change in our society

S3: I think that's when we need it the most – the fact that we're so different, that's when we need to define Ubuntu the most. That's when it needs to come in as a „South Africanness“ um, because we're so different we need to have it; a common goal for us to live together in peace and harmony and put it all there as a common goal. When we all have different goals that's when the fighting starts, that's when someone starts thinking they're better than someone else because we are different.

It can be seen that the idea of Ubuntu encompassing a South African rainbow nation was extended by suburban participants. Their narrations suggest that Ubuntu itself should be the glue that binds South Africans together as a nation. Although Ubuntu seems to be uncomplicated when and where there is uniformity among people, really, Ubuntu should be about finding and focusing on commonalities (Nkondo, 2007; Nussbaum, 2003). According to participants, if Ubuntu was widely accepted by South Africans, the drive for Ubuntu as a South African based value system and way of life would provide our nation with a common goal or cause. The future of Ubuntu was thus conceptualised by these participants as a way of overcoming differences and uniting South

Africans, thus promoting national solidarity and harmony. This understanding clearly shows the importance of Ubuntu as a tool in building the future of South Africa.

S2: Yes, we are from this past but we've got this future!

S3: I think that Ubuntu essentially is also in our hands... it's an ideal that can still be promoted; I mean we don't have anything to lose.

4.4.4. Concluding Ubuntu across time and place

The purpose of this theme was to provide the reader with a useful comparison between the two geographic groups under study. Such a comparison provides insights regarding the understanding, experience and practice of Ubuntu across two different contexts, and thus information regarding the effect differing circumstances may have on Ubuntu. This is important in a country like South Africa where major disparities exist and where the population consequently experiences major contextual dissimilarities which impact their lifestyles (Coertze, 2001; Pietersen, 2005). Understanding how Ubuntu has been influenced over time and place, enriches the understanding of Ubuntu itself.

It was apparent from participants' narrations that time, place, and socio-economic standing, do indeed have an influence on the experience and practice of Ubuntu. Although all participants' basic understandings of Ubuntu were much the same across the two geographic locations under study, the application of Ubuntu was heavily influenced by context. It is apparent that Hlalahle participants experienced Ubuntu in a straightforward way. This uncomplicated experience was attributed to perceptible commonalities amongst envioning persons, familiarity and geographical proximity to envioning persons, and a physical set-up conducive to Ubuntu in informal settlements. As previous generations were seen to experience similar conditions under apartheid to those experienced in informal settlements such as Hlalahle, the Ubuntu of previous generations was likened to Ubuntu as currently practiced outside of urban and suburban areas. However, the disparate socio-economic, political and physical environment experienced by suburban participants in comparison to their Hlalahle counterparts and to that of previous generations led to discernible differences regarding their experiences and personal practices of Ubuntu. Suburban participants' experiences of Ubuntu were perceived to be more complicated. This was attributed to a lack of familiarity with envioning persons largely due to physical barriers put in place to protect material wealth. It was also noted that western ideas had more of an impact on suburban participants, and that this influence rendered the congruous application of Ubuntu fairly difficult.

Despite distinct differences in the *experience* of Ubuntu across time and place, it is evident that the *definition* of Ubuntu is currently comparable across geographic contexts. This shows that while the practice of Ubuntu is influenced by immediate environmental conditions (Gyekye, 2010; Mkhize,

2008), the conceptualisation of Ubuntu is influenced and altered over time according to macro socio-political circumstances (Coertze, 2001; Gade, 2011). Accordingly, participants' definitions of Ubuntu were relevant to the current climate in South Africa today. Similarly, some participants were aware that if Ubuntu is to retain its value and remain applicable in South Africa moving forward, it is necessary that it adapts and evolves to encompass all South Africans in all their diversity, to benefit all South Africans, and promote national solidarity and harmony.

4.5. Reflexive account

In concluding the results and discussion section, it must be noted that the given analysis and interpretation presents my (the researcher's) subjective understanding and interpretation of participants' narrations regarding Ubuntu. Concurrently, it should be clear that the results and discussion do not represent an absolute truth about Ubuntu. Rather, as I (the subjective researcher) was the primary instrument of analysis, this explanation represents a particular interpretation that has been clarified and supported by participants' verbatim quotes. It is therefore important for the reader to be aware of the researcher's epistemological, ontological and contextual positions and how these standpoints may have influenced the research results. This will allow the reader to assess whether or not the resultant analysis is plausible from my perspective, and thus whether, if placed in the same position as me with the same research information, their interpretations would be comparable to those presented above (Kelly, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Tindall, 1994).

Firstly it is important to state who I am, or how I identify myself as this has an impact on my position in the world and how the reader may view me. I am first and foremost South African. In agreement with the participants I interviewed, I believe that this should be every South African's primary defining characteristic as it shows solidarity with one's fellow South Africans, pride in being South African, and a commitment to the future of South Africa. It is one of the reasons I chose to pursue research regarding an inherently South African subject. I feel that as South Africans it is important that we commit ourselves to building and disseminating indigenous knowledge. I am thus partial to Afrocentric research.

Secondly, I am a student of psychology, educated from a largely post-modernist standpoint. As a trainee psychologist, I am drawn to and interested in the human experience. Phenomenological research was therefore appropriate given this interest. As someone who accepted much of the liberal post-modernist education I received, my ontological and epistemological views reflect post-modern ideas. I believe that although there is a reality, this reality can only ever be subjectively known and contextually understood. This standpoint makes it difficult to provide absolute statements or generalizable knowledge. However, in my personal opinion, it is position that promotes empathy

and respect for others as it seeks to understand each person from his or her own idiosyncratic position. This is an advantage in carrying out sensitive intercultural, qualitative research.

Thirdly, I am a white, English-speaking individual. This identification automatically positions me on the outside looking in. I was raised with typically western ideas and ideals where material wealth, individual achievement and independence were seen as praiseworthy. Despite my personal rejection of many of these ideals, the western value system has been normalised for me. Accordingly, an etic approach was inevitable in my research of Ubuntu. Although this concerned me at first, I recognised that this outside perspective, if used with an Afrocentric framework, could be seen as an advantage: the novelty of the research subject gave me no room to revert to common sense assumptions or to take any information for granted. When a concept, or culture, or way of living is normalised, it becomes difficult to view it objectively; and given the explorative nature of this research, such an etic position was useful. This outside perspective was also valuable when interviewing participants as they truly were my teachers. It was both coherent and essential that they were positioned as experts, and I as the student, as this truly was the case.

Furthermore, being white has forced me to recognise the link between the injustice of apartheid and my current privileged position. As a white student receiving post-graduate tertiary education, I acknowledge that there is a debt of knowledge that is owed. I feel that building on Afrocentric knowledge from an Afrocentric perspective, is a way of giving back where Black education was denied and where western research was imposed on African topics.

However, my lack of inside knowledge also meant that I found this research incredibly challenging and time consuming. Despite living in South Africa my whole life, I had learnt deplorably little in terms of Afrocentric knowledge. In order to understand Ubuntu properly, much of my time went into teaching myself as much as I could about this phenomenon within in its Afrocentric framework, and subsequently, my lengthy initial drafts were used to help me to explain this phenomenon to myself. The time and brain power spent on this project though, furthered my commitment to produce good, sound and valuable research that does justice to a subject I have come to love as narrated by the participants who taught me.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter outlines the implications and conclusions of the study in accordance with the guiding research questions posed. It also looks at the limitations of this study, including some of the problems encountered during the research process. Moreover, it sets out theoretical recommendations, as well as recommendations for further research and interventions.

5.1. Implications and conclusions

This study investigated how the concept of Ubuntu was subjectively defined, understood and applied by eight isiZulu-speaking persons from two geographic areas in KwaZulu-Natal – the suburban areas surrounding Durban, and an informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg. This objective was achieved through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of participants' personal narratives, and from within an Afrocentric paradigm.

In accordance with the guiding research questions, the following points have been established in conclusion:

- 1) According to participants' narratives, Ubuntu denotes a quality of being a person that is only made possible through humane relationships with other people, and being a person simultaneously implies interconnection with others and morality. Despite the simplicity of this definition, it encompasses a way of living that permeates all areas of life. It therefore cannot be defined in a singular or simplistic way without limiting it. However, it was also found that Ubuntu has core principles and is therefore similarly conceptualised and described across geographic context. It encompasses particular, definable features such as morality, reciprocity and responsibility, perceived as necessary for personhood and thus Ubuntu. Furthermore, participants' understandings of Ubuntu were in line with the currently endorsed humanistic and collectivist stance on Ubuntu that encompasses all human-beings.
- 2) Although conceptualised in an inclusive way, participants' practiced Ubuntu in a more exclusive manner. Their everyday experiences of Ubuntu involved those people with whom benevolent, mutually beneficial relations were established and/or possible. Consequently, geographic proximity, familiarity, and the ability to demonstrate moral personhood, were prerequisites for Ubuntu. In practice, Ubuntu became about being a person interconnected and interdependent with other people through socially beneficial conduct: behaviours that acknowledged, developed, maintained and protected mutually beneficial relationships. Through an analysis of participants' narrations it was inferred that behaviour that is benevolent, reciprocal, responsible, in solidarity with one's interconnected group, and

conforming to group norms, constitute as both prerequisites and consequences of being a person and thus Ubuntu.

- 3) Although Ubuntu was viewed and understood by all participants as being inherently good and valuable, it was evident that misinterpretations and misuse of Ubuntu do occur. Their narrations show that such occurrences have negative consequences and may result in exclusion, extortion, oppression, and coercion. Consequently, reciprocity, duty, solidarity and conformity cannot be construed as socially beneficial, without benevolence in general. It was therefore shown that benevolence is of utmost importance in being a person and correspondingly, key in defining and understanding Ubuntu. Accordingly, Ubuntu was viewed and understood by all participants as being inherently good and valuable – it was seen to encourage respect, empathy, generosity and unanimity.
- 4) Despite comparable definitions and understandings of Ubuntu, it was evident that participants interpreted, experienced and practiced Ubuntu differently across geographic contexts. Although the same socially beneficial behaviours were seen to demonstrate Ubuntu, the implementation of this conduct, and the emphasis placed on particular socially beneficial behaviours, differed across subgroups. This showed that the function and form of Ubuntu is relative rather than absolute. Participants from the informal settlement found it easy to practice Ubuntu and focussed on reciprocity and benevolence. In comparison, suburban participants found Ubuntu a more challenging practice and emphasised responsibility and benevolence. Through this comparison it was shown that time, geography, physical space and socio-economic factors, affect the practice and experience of Ubuntu.
- 5) Participants provided optimistic and constructive ideas regarding the importance of Ubuntu as a tool in building the future of South Africa. Their narrations indicated that although Ubuntu is valuable in its current state and although the inherent Africanness of this phenomenon must be retained, it needs to be expanded upon and conceptualised more positively and completely going forward so that it can become a lived reality in the daily lives of all South Africans. It was expressed that if Ubuntu was assimilated by everyone and practiced across culture, race, class and creed, that South African society would benefit and change for the better. Such insights show that this type of research is of value in our country, thus providing validation for doing this research in the first place.

5.2. Limitations

This study has a few limitations. It is important to be aware of such limitations for the sake of transparency. The inherent limits that come with choosing a particular methodological paradigm and approach have already been discussed in chapter three. It is therefore pertinent here to discuss problems encountered during the research process.

First it is necessary to consider the dissimilarities amongst interviewers which impacted the interview process. Interviews conducted in Hlalakahle were structured and carried out by Black psychology honours students without previous experience of interviewing. In comparison, interviews with suburban participants were carried out by a White psychology masters student with basic interview training. It is evident that such differences impacted the interview process and the resultant data collected from participants. While interviews conducted in Hlalakahle were relatively short and less in-depth than suburban interviews, the racial and cultural differences between the interviewer and interviewees in the suburban interviews may have impacted the accuracy of the information given.

It is also important to note that of the four interviews conducted with Hlalakahle participants, two were carried out in English and two were carried out in isiZulu. Difficulties were encountered with both English and isiZulu transcripts. In the English interviews, it was evident that although the participants voluntarily chose to be interviewed in English, they were not proficient in the language. Consequently there is some concern that these participants were not able to understand all the questions adequately and/or able to express themselves effectually. The interviews conducted in isiZulu brought up different problems because although these participants conversed in their first language, the interviews were translated into English for the sake of this research. The concern with these transcripts is that a direct translation into English may have resulted in a loss of various nuances. Fortunately, the composition and types of answers given in both the English and the translated isiZulu interviews were comparable. This was taken as an indication that the resultant transcripts used for analysis were accurate reflections of participants' personal narratives.

As this research was qualitative and the researcher was the main instrument of data collection and analysis, it is apparent that this study is limited by human limits and human error. So although every attempt was made to collect and process the information gained accurately, ethically and appropriately, complications and data bias were unavoidable.

5.3. Recommendations for improved policy and practice

5.2.1. Recommendations for theory

The Afrocentric paradigm was used as the theoretical framework for this study. As Sekhesa (2011) points out, Afrocentricity “has been and continues to be a major theoretical perspective used mainly in American (USA) studies” (p.69). Accordingly, Afrocentric-based research needs to be established in South Africa, as it is imperative to develop this theory to include African phenomena, and the experience of Africans, in Africa (Sekhesa, 2011).

5.2.2. Recommendations for further research

Ubuntu is not as of yet a formalised normative theory (van Niekerk, 2009). Currently, some major discrepancies exist between the Ubuntu ideals of home life and what is expected in systems such as education, business, politics and economics (Lutz, 2009). The more Ubuntu can be concretised and practically understood, the more possibility there is to align and implement Ubuntu into all areas of life. Accordingly, a great deal more research on Ubuntu is required.

The first recommendation would be triangulate this research in various ways. One such way would require a Black South African to undertake similar research. This would provide an emic perspective on the research. Results could subsequently be compared and used in conjunction to form a more holistic idea regarding conceptualisations and experiences of Ubuntu as narrated by Zulu laypersons. Another form of triangulation would be to conduct quantitative research conducted on a much larger scale. Such research would produce more generalizable results and provide insights regarding trends.

This research stands as an initial exploration into the conceptualisation, experience and practice of Ubuntu as narrated by Zulu laypersons, and the influence of geographic context on their narratives. Similar research that explores narratives of Ubuntu but makes use of different variables would be useful. Building on this research, different geographic comparisons could be made. However, it would also be valuable if other potentially influential factors such as socio-economic status, education, age, culture and religion, were explored. This would help to develop a comprehensive picture of Ubuntu in South Africa today that would subsequently assist in implementing appropriate interventions.

5.2.3. Recommendations for interventions

As this was explorative research which focussed on producing a launching pad for further research and theory development, there are a limited number of recommendations that can be presented. However, as Cornell and van Marle (2005), Nkondo (2007), Nussbaum (2003) and Ramose (2001)

all argue, African value systems such as Ubuntu should be promoted and effectively implemented in South Africa. This would require the effective operationalization of Ubuntu throughout all spheres of South African life thus giving it real weight, application and implications (Nkondo, 2007). Schooling, business, economic, social and political systems would all need to reflect and promote an Ubuntu ethic thus ensuring congruence between the majority of South Africans' personal value systems with those of the public system. However, before such interventions can occur, it is evident that a lot more research regarding Ubuntu is required. Such research could function to weed out potential problems and conflicts, and find creative solutions or positive reinterpretations where necessary. This initial development of knowledge would work to safeguard the effective and ethical application of Ubuntu in South Africa.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Information and recruitment letter



To whom it may concern

My name is Shayne de Bruyn. I am currently completing my Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal under the supervision of Mr. Thabo Sekhesa. I am conducting research on isiZulu-speaking individuals' personal experience and story of *ubuntu*. I would be enormously grateful for your time and the major contribution you could offer by sharing your personal experiences of *ubuntu* and how it has played out in your life. There is very little information available about how *ubuntu* is experienced, defined and used by people in everyday life. Such information is valuable and participants who are willing to talk openly about their personal experiences of *ubuntu*, are needed. Each participant will be treated with the utmost respect and as an expert on their own personal experiences and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers in this research. I would just like you to tell me about your personal story of *ubuntu* – how you understand, experience and practice *ubuntu* in your life. Involvement is completely voluntary throughout the research process and you are therefore able to opt out at any stage.

I would thus like to ask you to please consider participating in this study. As a participant you will be interviewed one-on-one about your perceptions and experiences of *ubuntu*. You are free to choose how you would like to tell your story, as well as the language you would prefer to speak in. The interview session should take approximately one hour and will be situated in a place appropriate for you and conducive to the interview process. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and used in the results of this study. All your information will be kept completely anonymous and any identifying information gained will be kept completely confidential.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly on 079 882 4157 or via e-mail at shaynedebruyn@gmail.com before 01/07/2014. From there, you will be sent the interview schedule to see the types of questions that will be asked, an informed consent

letter that will inform you of your rights as a participant and the full details of the study, and we can negotiate an appropriate time and place to meet. If you wish to contact my supervisor, you can e-mail him on Sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za

I hope to hear from you soon, your participation would be much appreciated!

Kind regards,

Shayne de Bruyn

School of Applied Human Sciences

Postal Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg 3209, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)33 260 5166 **Facsimile:** +27 (0)33 260 5363 **Website:** psychology.ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX 2: Informed consent letter



To whom it may concern,

My name is Shayne de Bruyn. I am currently completing my Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) under the supervision of Mr. Thabo Sekhesa. I have chosen to look at isiZulu-speaking persons' personal experiences and understanding of *ubuntu*. I feel that this is an enormously important topic which could help form a deeper and more insightful understanding of this concept. There is a lack of knowledge in the literature pertaining to how *ubuntu* is personally defined, understood, experienced and practiced. Accordingly, I hope that you could volunteer some of your time to talk about your personal perceptions and experiences of *ubuntu*.

The purpose of this research is therefore to explore and understand your experience of *ubuntu* so as to gain an in-depth understanding of this subject. It is hoped that this study will contribute to literature on *ubuntu* and consequently aid in several areas such as, educating youth about this concept, forming social policies and building social cohesion in South Africa. Your participation in this study is thus invaluable and would be much appreciated.

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to set aside about hour of your time (dependent on how much time you would like and need) for a one-on-one interview where you talk about your personal experiences and understandings of *ubuntu* in the language and manner of your choice. You will be asked to talk about your experiences in as much detail as possible. More specific, related questions may also be asked to gain further information if necessary. This interview will need to be audio recorded for the purpose of proper analysis. There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your story whatever it may be. I appreciate that I am asking you to talk about your personal experiences, some which may be of a sensitive nature, however, you are not required to answer questions that you do not wish to answer, nor disclose any information that you feel is compromising. The interview session may also be stopped at any time for any reason if you feel that it is necessary.

The results of the study will be released in the form of a thesis handed in to the Discipline of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results will also be made known in a

presentation to students and lecturers within the department. These results will be presented in such a way to maintain your anonymity at all time. Only those researching this area will have access to your personal information and such information will be kept confidential throughout the research process, and destroyed after the study is completed (unless this research is continued, in which case your permission will be asked for first). The results of the study will also be made available to you in the form of a hard or electronic copy, depending on your preference. If this study is published, you will be made aware of this occurrence and will be given access to the published article.

Your participation in this study should be voluntary and you have no obligations to this study or to the researchers. This means that you can choose to opt out of the study at any stage without penalties and that you have full control over the information and knowledge you disclose until the final write-up of the thesis. However, you and your experiences and knowledge about this topic will be respected, and it would be greatly appreciated if you do choose participate. I hope it will be an enriching experience for all involved.

If you have any questions about this study or wish to negotiate any aspect of the research process, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at shaynedebruyn@gmail.com or phone me on 079 882 4157. You can also contact my supervisor, Mr. Thabo Sekhesa at Sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za or Ms. P Xinba on 031 260 3587 from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). Attached are two copies of an informed consent agreement, please carefully read through this agreement and sign both copies if you would like to participate. One copy is for you to keep and the other is for me.

Kind regards

Shayne de Bruyn

UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL
DISCIPLINE OF PSYCHOLOGY
**AGREEMENT BETWEEN
RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH
PARTICIPANT**

I _____ agree to participate in the research project of Shayne de Bruyn on „Ubuntu: An Afrocentric enquiry on lived experiences of *ubuntu*“.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a Psychology Master's student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at The UKZN. The researcher may be contacted on 079 882 4157 (cell phone) or emailed at shaynedebruyn@gmail.com. The research project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and if you should for any reason need to contact this committee, please phone Ms. P Ximba on 031 260 3587. This study is under the supervision of Mr. Thabo Sekhesa in the Discipline of Psychology at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg who may be contacted via email at Sekhesa@ukzn.ac.za.
2. The researcher is interested in my personal experience and perceptions of *ubuntu*.
3. My participation will involve a single interview session of approximately one hour with the researcher where I am to talk about and describe my experiences of *ubuntu* and if necessary, answer further interview questions related to *ubuntu*.
4. I know that I have a choice about answering any of the questions asked of me and that I should only disclose information that I am comfortable with.
5. I hereby agree..... OR do not agree..... to being audio-recorded during my interview with the researcher.
6. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation.
7. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalties – however I will try to commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
8. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, and understandings but the report will be designed in such a way that it will **not** be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date): _____

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

APPENDIX 3: Hlalakahle gatekeeper letter of request

Cllr Rookšana Ahmed
WARD 31 COUNCILLOR

PRIVATE BAG X321
PIETERMARITZBURG
TEL: 033 - 397 2162
CELL: 079 - 3786 958



DATE: 8 th April 2014	REF:
----------------------------------	------

Dear Professor Durrheim

UKZN
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research interviews in Northdale and Hlalakahle informal settlement, provided ethical clearance has been obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Ethics Committee. We note the title of your project is: *"The social psychology of the frontier"*. We note also that this research will be conducted by a number of postgraduate students, who will obtain ethics approval for their individual projects and who will be supervised by Professor Kevin Durrheim and Mr Thabo Sekhesa.

Yours sincerely

Councillor R. Ahmed
(Ward 31 Councillor)

APPENDIX 4: Semi-structured, individual interview schedule



Interview schedule

- 1) What is your personal understanding of the term *ubuntu* (how would you define it)?
- 2) Explain the relative importance of the role that *ubuntu* plays in your life?
- 3) Looking back on your life, please tell me in as much detail as possible about your personal experiences of *ubuntu*.
 - i. How did you come to know about it?
 - ii. How has it been spoken about by different people in your life?
 - iii. How has it been put into practice or practically experienced?
- 4) What are your feelings in regards to *ubuntu* and/or your experiences of *ubuntu*?
- 5) Do you believe that there are negative aspects to *ubuntu*, and if so, what would these be?
- 6) Do you believe that *ubuntu*, as you understand it personally, could embrace all cultural groups in South Africa?
 - i. If yes, please expand on how this would function.
 - ii. If no, please expand on why not
- 7) How do you personally identify acts or behaviours that go against the concept of *ubuntu*?
- 8) How do you personally explain and understand such behaviours?
- 9) Do you think that the concept and essence of *ubuntu* as you understand and experience it, is common to all isiZulu-speaking people and what makes you think so?
- 10) Do you think that *ubuntu* should be emphasized and used in South Africa today?
 - i. What makes you think this?
 - ii. If you do think it is important in South Africa, how do you think it should utilized in our context?
- 11) Is there anything else you wish to add?

APPENDIX 5: Analysis and theme production

Themes: Interview S1

Different definitions: P5, 57, 326-327, 368, 637-638, 687-688, 693 [It's bigger than the definition of it]

Typical ideas: P6-7, 117-188, 118-119

Community focus: P7, 15, 17-18, P18-19, P97-98, 196, 243, 249-251, 266-267, 273-274 [when I'm there I'm part of the community, they know me], 288-290, 355, 358-360, 375-376, 415-416, 748-751, 764-766

Family focus: P170-171, 172, 219, 222, 229-230, 333-334, 459-460

Responsibility & duty: P8, P11-12, 17-18, 108-109, 169-170, 174-175 [Like you can't be like, he's not my responsibility because I'm not his parent, you must understand that I'm now an adult, I'm now responsible], 177, P189-190, 196, 219, 222, 229-230, 266-267, 274-275, 277-280, 282-285, 285-286, 358-360, 459-460, 514, 755-756, 756-758 [say some neighbour becomes a gangster and I become a graduate but we were raised the same way, there'll be questions], P764-766, 768-769, 772, 774-775

Being an example: P183-184 [you saw what I had to do to get to where I am, you need to follow the same route], P222, 227, 228-229

Sameness: P10-11, 183-184, 326, 358-360, 375-376, 415-416, 451 [nobody is more important than anybody else], 468-469, 471-472, 476-477, 483-486, 537-538, 594-595, 597-599, 630-634, P749-750, 764-766, 792-794, 799, 894-895, 986-897, 911-912

Different viewpoints and grappling with contradictions: P25, 107, 109-110 [it's a process because we're in the middle], 113, 214, 217, 221-222, 321, 326, 326-327, 333-334, 342-343, 351-352, 375-376, 378, 386-387, 442-443

Specific examples: P26-27, 108-109, 118-119, 127-128, 141-142, 158-160, 240-242, 249-251 [my mom was like adamant that if I go to school, it must be a good school, I have to. She's always been about that. So there was no money at all! So the people in the street just put money together, put money together so I could go to school], 425-427, 528-531, 607-608, 719-721, 756-758, 783-784 873-874

Knowing people: P30, 32, 178, 206-207, 249-251, 273-274

Differences between areas: P34, 57-62, 74-77, P83-85, 208-209, 537-538, 543-544, 856-857

Generation differences: P37, 59-62, 110-111 [I guess maybe my children...they might not care], P116, 135-136, 218-219, 367-368, 408-409, 809-810, 810, 812-814, 818-820 [back in the day, there was segregation, there wasn't much mixing of other races with our people so you could afford to be the type of community does this. But now we have to accommodate other people], P823-825, 847-848, 894-895, 986-897

Rural Ubuntu: P44 [Because in the rural areas, that's the essence of it]

Suburban Ubuntu: P65-67, 69-70, 75, 80-81, 99, 100-101, 201-202, 234, 240-242, 243 [The people here are actually pretty good now that I think about it], P333-334, 342-343, 630-634

Barriers to suburban Ubuntu: P65-67, 69-70, 75 [You can't knock on my door to come in here], P87-88, 90-91, 99, 205, 221, 243-244, 358-360

Barriers to Ubuntu: P358-360, 365-367, 375, 378, 378-379, 398-399, 408-409, 415-416, 431-432, 476-477, 480-481, 528-531, 537-538, 687-688, 719-721, 725-727, 741, 764-766 [it hurts that much – this person is one of us, he grew up in the exact same community as we grew up and here he is neglecting us], P792-794, 799-800 [you stay at the top by trampling on everyone else. If there's no hierarchy, you're all the same]

Peri-urban Ubuntu: P204, 206, 208-209, 249-251, 282-285, 288-290, 365-367 [the thing about KwaMashu now is that there's not much of a difference, it hasn't moved forward because people get out and leave and never come back], P748-751, 856-857

Possessions and differences in wealth and hierarchy: P80-81, 81-82 [worked so hard for so long to get all your possessions which you think are valuable, you want to guard them], P87-88, 97-98, 99, 153-154, 206, 205, 208-209, 215-216, 221, 282-285, 334-335, 342-343, 343-348, 351, 378-379, 386-387, 393-395 [If you are able to sweat in your business and put in hours and hours and hours, and someone is not putting in the effort, you deserve more than that person because you worked harder, you know. So Ubuntu doesn't cater for that], P407, 431-432, 451, 483, 559-560, 566-567, 719-721, 790, 792-794, 799-800, 873-874, 887-888

Ubuntu as good: P97 [Ubuntu is basically good], P128 [it's respect], P442-443 [I really do think that Ubuntu is a positive thing because, take away the economic side of it, take away everything else, the way of life of it is a good thing]

Ubuntu as a moral code/respect: P116-117, 118-119, 128 [it's respect], P129, 141-142, 144-146, 272, 302, 315, 321-322, 375-376, 442-443, 449, 464-465, 468-469, 514, 615-616, 658, 674-675, 703-704 [Instead of criticising/not having respect for somebody else because something about them is different when as a matter of fact they're just as much human being as I am]

Ubuntu as innately known but evasive: P119, 121-122, 125, 198, 200, 272, 299, 301, 311-312, 326-327, 637-638, 658, 687-688, 688-690, 693 [It's bigger than the definition of it], P694, 698-699

Keeping a sense of Ubuntu: P141-146, 169-170, 228-230, 266, 282-285 [if people before me with much less than what I have right now, much less, were able to put aside their own problems and issues and do something that good for me, what makes me think that I can't do the same thing for somebody else who's in need of help?], P285-286, 351-352, 425-427, 442-443, 514, 866-868, 894-895, 986-897, 900-901

Personal positive experiences of Ubuntu: P158-160, 240-242, 249-251, 259, 425-427

Parents and Ubuntu: P214, 215-219, 272, 326, 333-334, 334-335, 809-810, 810, 894, 986-897

Sacrifice: P274-275 [it was never a matter of me feeling like I had to pay them back, I just did it because that's the way I was raised], 282-285, 285-286, 343-348, 351

Progress: P289-290 334-335, 342-343, 343-348, 351, 355, 365-367 [the thing about KwaMashu now is that there's not much of a difference, it hasn't moved forward because people get out and leave and never come back], P378-379, 415-416, 630-634, 829, 840-841, 900-901, 918-919

Culture or Ubuntu: P300-301, 315, 368, 468-469, 626-627, 630-634, 637-638, 684-685, 687-688

Ubuntu as restricting: P303-305, 315-316, 320-322, 326-327, 626-627, 630-634, P637-638, 644-647, 650-651, 683-684, 687-688, 688-690, 693, 697, 918-919, 911-912

Popularised term: P303, 673, 866-868, 918-919

Ubuntu as an ideal: P373-374, 375-376, 378, 442-443, 464-465, 481, 483, 674-675

Apartheid and Ubuntu: P403-404, 407-408 [we were all made equal and there wasn't much we could really do to come out of it. It worked better when everybody was poor], P415-416, 431-432, 818-820, 894-895, 986-897, 900-901

Expectations: P464-465, 525, 576-577, 743, 764-766

Ability to provide help: P514 [if you're able, you try to help the person], P524-525, 755-756

Give and take: P524-525, 528-531, 552, 564, 566-567, 587-588 [You can't keep asking for something without getting anything in return], P725-727 [Ubuntu is about a give and take...But if you're going to exploit...my kindness because you see a weakness...that's when it's a problem], P729, 737 [it's like an equal social system, 50 people take, 50 people give], 741, 764-766, 790, 842-843, 884-885

Embracing all South Africans: P594-595, 597-599, 603, 607-608, 615-616, 622-623, 626-627, 630-634, 637-638, 644-647, 650, 674-675, 683-684, 684-685 [if you look at Indians, Indians have that very much so, if you look at Indians in their community, they live that, I mean they embody it], P694-695, 698-699, 703-704, 829-831, 840-841, 842-843, 866-868, 911-912, 918-919, 922

Togetherness: P622-623, 630-634, 637-638, 644-647, 650, 660-661, 687-688, 900-901, 911-912, 918-919, 922

Ubuntu moving forward: P697, 809-810 [It (essence of Ubuntu) would be similar but, I think the differences would come in generations], 810, 812, 818-820, 823-825, 829-831, 840-841, 866-868, 900-901, 911-912, 918-919, 922 [we need to call ourselves South African first]

Fear of being taken advantage of: P764-766, 884-885, 887-888

Understanding acts against Ubuntu: P748-751, 755-756, 756-758, 764-766, 790, 792-794, 799-800, 887-888, 894-895 [we were all fighting for the common goal, it was very easy for us to idealistic,], P986-897

Essence of Ubuntu: P812-814 [I think it gets more and more diluted. My grandmother's definition of Ubuntu is different from my mom's – it won't be the same. And my mom's and mine will not be the same. But my friends, my friends, it will be exactly the same], P847-848

Ubuntu in current affairs: P873-874, 884-885, 887-888, 900-901 [We could make that fight now for struggling for Ubuntu – we're all going to live like that, that should be the fight now]

Themes: Interview S2

Broad definition: 8, D69, D102-103, 251-252, 302-303, 347-348, 434, 747-748, 772

Cliché: 9-10, 251-252

Personhood: 9-11, 13-14, 135-136, 251-252, 434, 516-518, 527-528, 585, 630-632, 693-694, 696-697, 747-748, 801, 802, 836-837

Togetherness/ilima: 11-12, 36-37, D70-72, D85-86, 129-132, 138-139, 347-348, 348-350, 370, 815-816, 829-830

Embracing all races: 13, 251-252, 647-648, 649, 649-650, 693-694, 700, 829-830, 842-844

Community care: 22, 23, 27, 28-29, D70-72, D72-73, D83-84, D85-86, 113, 129-132, 370, 434, 467, 513, 566-567, 836-837

Family and Ubuntu: 24-26, 27, 28-29, 24-35, 63-65, 129-132, 155-156, 234-235, 258, 437, 440-441, 444-445, 449, 453-454, 455, 457-458, 475 (calling people immediate family names to embrace them as family and show respect), 485, 489-490, 493-494, 498-499, 562-563, 647-648, 651-653, 655-657, 675-676, 679

Apartheid era: 32, 328-329, 338, 344, 352-353, 846

Rural Ubuntu: 55-56, D83-84, D86, D102-103, 370, 372-373

Way of life: D70, D75, D100-101, D102-103, 113, 251-252, 467, 513, 773, 777-778

Real examples: D70-72, D73, D74, D83-84, D86, 372-373, 460-461, 651-653

Urbanised change/change: D72, 299-300, 303-302, 304, 312-313, 321, 323-325, 328-329, 329-330, 635-637

Offering services at 'no cost': D77, D78, D81, D83-84, D86, D89-91, D93-94, D95, D100

History: D83-84, D86, D89-91, D102-103, 302-303, 338, 467, 801, 829-830, 846

Helping because able to help/ripple effect: D86-88, D89-91, D100, D100-101, 113, 114, 213, 219-220, 254, 255, 260-261, 347-348, 434, 467, 513, 516-518, 527-528, 627, 630-632, 693-694, 696-697, 830-831, 836-837

Give and take: D93-94, D95, D100, 219-220, 513

Ubuntu as innately known: D100-101, 312-313, 432-434, 585, 772-773, 773, 773-774, 777-778

Upbringing: 111, 232, 258, 288, 289-290, 296, 305-306, 312-313, 323-325, 352-353, 367-368, 432-434, 437, 455, 457-458, 489-490, 498-499, 508, 566-567, 584, 592-593, 595-597, 655-657, 773, 773-774, 842-844, 846

Independence vs unity: 111-112, 114, 115, 118-119, 135-136, 138-139, 139-141, 143-145, 147, 148, 148-150, 152-153, 168-169, 170-171, 172, 172-173, 175-176, 180-182, 655-657

Ubuntu as protective: 116, 118-119, 129-132, 232, 234-235, 411-413, 457-458, 513, 584, 651-653, 655-657, 702-703

Understanding origins of Ubuntu: 118-119, 302-303, 801, 829-830

Disadvantages of Ubuntu: 134-135, 139-141, 148-150, 168-169, 180-182, 249-250, 299-300, 346, 390, 419, 423-424, 604-606, 726-727

Battling with contradictions: 138-139, 143-145, 148-150, 170-171, 172, 172-173, 175-176, 197-198, 232, 234-235, 237-238, 258, 323, 508, 525-526, 536-537, 537-539, 726-727

Speaking of independence within Ubuntu discourse: 143-145, 147, 152-153, 155-156, 249-250, 255-256, 702-703

Ubuntu economically speaking: 187-188, 188-190, 197-198, 509-511, 523, 815-816, 819-821, 821-822

South Africa/rainbow nation: 195-196, 197-198, 199-200, 336, 399-400, 642-643, 647-648, 649, 693-694, 700, 730-731, 735-736, 785, 790-793, 819-821, 821-822, 829-830, 836-837

Passing on Ubuntu: 215-216, 254, 508, 516-518, 527-528, 693-694, 696-697, 730-731, 842-844

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APPENDIX 6: Permission from UKZN ethics committee



30 May 2014

Ms Shayne de Bruyn 208505475
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: MSS/0360/014M

Project title: Ubuntu: An Afrocentric enquiry on lived experiences of Ubuntu among Isizulu-speaking persons from different geographical areas

Dear Ms de Bruyn

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 8 May 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take the opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shashika Singh (Chair)

/s/

cc Supervisor: Mr Thabisi Seetharam
cc Academic Leader Research:
cc School Administrator: Mr Sboniso Dima

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