

**EXPLORING THE SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF  
INITIATED XHOSA YOUNG MEN IN A  
SECONDARY SCHOOL AT UMZIMKHULU**

**BY  
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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, **WISEMAN GCIZELELA NGCOBO**, hereby declare that this is my own original work and that all sources that have been referred to or quoted herein have been acknowledged, as well as indicated by means of due referencing.

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**WISEMAN GCIZELELA NGCOBO**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Young men's experiences are different, and in particular, so are the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men. Using qualitative research methods, this dissertation seeks to explore the schooling experiences of a group of initiated Xhosa young at uMzimkhulu. Drawing on group and individual interviews, the study explores the relationships between initiated young men and their peers, their teachers; their conduct, behaviour as well their performance in areas of academics and sport.

The study is based on the masculinities theoretical framework. Through the use of literature, the study will include articulation of what different authors say about the significance of the initiation ritual, what influences or places pressure on Xhosa young men to undergo the initiation ritual, and the role of the initiation ritual in reducing Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) infection. In addition, it will elucidate what various authors maintain concerning the role of the South African government in monitoring the initiation ritual, the problems associated with the initiation ritual, and the impact the ritual has in perpetuating gender differences and the formation of other gender forms.

The majority of Xhosa people, it would seem, strongly believe that all Xhosa young men should be traditionally initiated. Initiation is legally done by Xhosa young men in particular, between the ages of 18 to 25. The initiation process, (a marker of manhood) includes circumcision (the removal of foreskin from the penis) which serves as a sign/symbol that distinguishes men from boys. The study examines the contribution of the traditional initiation event to the construction of masculinities, and consequently, educational experiences of initiated Xhosa young men within the school.

It is culturally believed that after initiation, Xhosa boys become young men and are expected to 'behave like men'. These young men also expect to be 'treated like men'. What happens, then, if these initiated Xhosa young men are still at school? These young men carry communal and social characteristics to school, as a result they are caught in a predicament environment.

The study has found that the young men who have been circumcised and have endured the initiation process and survived receiving hegemonic status. So even though there are some initiated boys who do not expect preferential treatment nor do they discriminate against non-initiated boys, they nevertheless benefit from the gains made for all who are initiated.

The study has also found that initiation ritual speaks largely to the event of the construction of masculinities and characterised by a variety of experiences including interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, risky behaviour, the reduction of discrimination, behaviour associated with one's chosen attire, as well as academic and sport performances.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Using qualitative research methods, this dissertation seeks to explore the schooling experiences of a group of initiated Xhosa young men in a secondary school at uMzimkhulu. Drawing on individual and group interviews, the study explores the relationships between initiated young men and their teachers, their peers, their conduct, behaviour, as well as their performance in the areas of academics and sports.

According to Mhlahlo (2009), Xhosa young men tend to construct their masculinities in a unique way, using initiation. The initiation ritual is a cultural ritual which is aimed at conveying a boy to manhood (Beckwith, 1999). Initiation, among other activities, includes circumcision, which is a permanent removal of the foreskin from a male's penis (Gitywa, 1976). Gitywa (1976) adds that circumcision serves as a public affirmation of manhood.

During the initiation process, initiates are taught, among other things, to behave and dress in what is perceived to be a socially acceptable manner, to refrain from associating with 'boys', and to refrain from doing activities / duties which may be stereotypically construed to be associated with women (Mhlahlo, 2009; Papu, 2006). Directly after graduating from initiation schools, most of these young men return to mainstream schools. Most schools that expect learners to dress in school uniform emphasise equity, and make no special provision for initiated learners in terms of their desire to be perceived as higher than others with regard to their 'manhood' status (Papu, 2006). These learners often tend to find themselves caught in a predicament within their school environments, which motivated me to do this study on initiated Xhosa young men. I am interested in understanding their explanations, as well as their attitudes toward their particular schooling experiences.

Through the use of literature pertaining to the construction of masculinities, seen through the lens of the experiences of initiated Xhosa young men, in addition to my own personal experiences and observations as a Xhosa descendent, I will use methods (with the qualitative research method at the forefront) and methodology (focus group and individual interviews) to

outline the context of Xhosa people, explain traditional initiation as part of masculinity construction and the way it is understood by Xhosa-speaking people, as well as explain the significance of the initiation ritual and its role in reducing HIV / Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs). Furthermore, I will discuss the impact the ritual has in perpetuating gender differences, the controversies and challenges surrounding the ritual, the role the South African government and its policies have to play, and the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men. I will present and analyse the data using themes, before embarking on final discussions regarding the ritual.

This chapter provides background information in respect of the rationale, focus and organisation of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review and theoretical framework which underpin this study.

## **1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

For traditional African societies, the passage from one stage of life to the next is marked with important rituals and ceremonies (Beckwith, 1999). The majority of Xhosa people strongly believe that all Xhosa boys have to be initiated as early as at the age of 18. Xhosa people tend to believe that a Xhosa boy cannot mature without undergoing the process of initiation as part of a traditional ritual (Mhlahlo, 2009). Traditional initiation within the Xhosa community is a unique and prevalent way in which Xhosa young men begin to construct their masculinities. However, the media continuously reports on tragedies associated with traditional initiation, despite the availability of modern methods of circumcision; specifically, certain anti-social schooling environments which may give rise to peculiar schooling experiences felt by initiated learners interested me and further inspired me to perform this study.

*Initiation* may well be defined as the ‘introduction of teenage boys to manhood’ by traditional initiators. It takes place in both legal and illegal initiation schools. During initiation young men are circumcised and taught what is expected of them, as they would have been perceived to have reached the stage of being men (Morojele, 2009).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1999, p.729) initiation is a process or action of formally admitting someone into a society or group. The Active Study Dictionary (2010, p.386) defines initiation as the introduction of someone into an organisation, often marked with a special ceremony.

During the initiation process in Xhosa tradition, boys are circumcised. Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin from the penis (Oxford English Dictionary, 1999). Circumcision is seen to be a sign / symbol that distinguishes men from boys. In addition to the circumcision procedure, the boys and young men are often put through a series of survival tests, which sometimes includes exposure to South Africa's winter wearing very little clothing, having their faces painted with clay, and given herbal concoctions to drink, among other tests (Nicolson, 2013, May 16).

Although the traditional initiation of Xhosa young men is often criticised by modern society, initiation is still prevalent in the Eastern Cape and the southern parts of KwaZulu-Natal. I will concentrate on the significance of initiation, what influences and places pressure on Xhosa young men to undergo initiation, the role of the initiation ritual in reducing HIV, and the role of the South African government in monitoring the initiation ritual. Further, I will focus on the problems associated with the initiation ritual and its contribution to perpetuating gender differences. I will use the 'construction of masculinities' as a theoretical framework which underpins this study.

After initiation, Xhosa young men are expected to 'behave like men' (*e.g.* they must be seen to be responsible adults), dress in a socially acceptable manner, carry a stick at all times, avoid associating with boys, as well as avoid any activities which may traditionally be associated with women. Initiated Xhosa young men are also expected to be 'treated like men'.

What happens when these young men are still at school? (The community expects these youths to behave like men but, unfortunately, whilst they are still at school, the schooling system expects them to adhere to the label of being 'school boys', and to behave like learners who are encouraged to participate in schooling activities such as sport and recreation, in addition to their academic pursuits). These learners bounce back and forth between a familiar

home environment, under which they are conditioned to carry themselves as 'men', and a seemingly unfamiliar school environment.

The problem begins at this point. The above-mentioned question triggered this study. Initiated Xhosa young men seem to then expect their teachers and other learners at school to treat them like men. Initiation is part and parcel of the process of masculinity construction; what, then, are the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men in relation to their teachers and other learners?

### **1.3 FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The primary focus of this qualitative study is on exploring the relationships between initiated young men and their teachers, as well as their peers; further, it will shed light upon their conduct, behaviour, and also their performance in the areas of academics and sport, drawing from individual and group interviews in a secondary school at uMzimkhulu. The secondary focus is on endeavouring to clarify the role of society in compelling young boys to undergo the initiation ritual as a traditional practice which contributes to their construction of masculinities, which in turn, promotes gender differences within schools. This research project endeavours to find answers to the main question: **What are the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men?**

Fihlani (2012) describes the rural parts of South Africa as being patriarchal. Societal expectations and beliefs tend to dictate the route that should be followed by all Xhosa boys in their journey to manhood. Unfortunately, some young men are not interested, nor are they willing to achieve social expectations. In consequence of this stance, conflicts appear to arise amongst young men in schools and society at large. Societal expectations are also in conflict with the regular course of school life and activities, as Xhosa culture awards gender power to initiated Xhosa young men.

This study will explore the patriarchal dividends that are received by initiated Xhosa young men in schools, raise awareness about initiation, and finally, create a summary of the experiences of a selection of initiated Xhosa young men.

## **1.4 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

There are five chapters in this dissertation.

### **CHAPTER 1**

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and the purpose of the study. The rationale and focus of the study are discussed, and finally, the chapter provides the organisation of the entire study.

### **CHAPTER 2**

Chapter 2 reviews a wide range of literature on masculinities and explores the theoretical framework which underpins this study.

### **CHAPTER 3**

Research design, methods employed to generate and collect data, validity and reliability are discussed in this chapter. Matters pertaining to permission, the selection of participants, ethical consideration, the data collection plan, data analysis, as well as the limitations of the study are provided in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER 4**

Data presentation and analysis on the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men are provided in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER 5**

Chapter 5 provides a synthesis of the findings from the data analysed in Chapter 4 and presents a conclusion for the whole dissertation.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men are explored in this dissertation. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, the focus of the study, rationale and the overall organisation of the dissertation. This chapter focuses on literature reviewed on the initiation ritual, as well as on the construction of masculinities. It also discusses the theoretical framework concerning the construction of masculinities which underpins this study. This is preceded by a brief description of the context of the Xhosa people.

##### **2.1.1 OUTLINING THE CONTEXT OF XHOSA PEOPLE**

The African continent begins from Cape to Cairo and from Gabon to Somali. It is made up of a number of African tribes, each of which has its own culture and traditions. In the southern part of Africa, among other countries, there is South Africa. South Africa has nine provinces, one of which is the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape Province is made up of two homelands which were created by the apartheid regime, *viz.* “Transkei” and “Ciskei”. The Eastern Cape is mostly rural and dominated in main part by Xhosa speaking people (Papu, 2006) and (Beckwith, 1999).

According to Mandlove (2006), Xhosa people speak IsiXhosa, one of the eleven South African official languages. She further adds that nationally, IsiXhosa-speaking people comprise the second largest language group (17, 9%) in South Africa, after Zulu-speaking people, who comprise the largest group (22, 9%). Xhosas fall under the Nguni language group, which includes Zulu and Swati-speaking people (Mandlove, 2006). Xhosa people, among other groups that occupy the Eastern Cape region, have attracted the interest of, *inter alia*, academics, tourists, those who belong to other racial groups, the state, media, and the international world – for their distinctive ritual called “Xhosa traditional initiation”. According to Mhlahlo (2009), what makes this ritual distinctive is the way it is practiced, its significance to Xhosa people and its resilience through history.

Having described the context of Xhosa people, the following sections present a review of literature in initiation and finally, discuss the theoretical framework which underpins this study.

## **2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.2.1 ETYMOLOGY OF INITIATION**

The English verb “initiate”, which means to start or begin a particular action, event, circumstance or happening, is derived from the Latin word “initium”, which means entrance, beginning or ‘going in’ (Summers, 1996).

Globally, 30% of men are circumcised, mostly for religious reasons (Wilcken, 2010). According to Wilcken (2010), in Africa, male circumcision is carried out by many African societies for cultural reasons, particularly as an initiation ritual and a rite of passage into manhood. Wilcken (2010) further explains that the traditional male circumcision procedure is usually performed in a non-clinical setting by a traditional provider with no formal medical training.

A young man who is being initiated is called an “initiate” or “initiant” (“*Umkhwetha*”) whilst the person who conducts the initiation is known as an “initiator” (“*Ikhankatha*”) (Mandlove, 2006). According to Mhlahlo (2009), initiates are usually between the ages of 18 and 25. There were times when the ritual was outlawed by chief Faku (the chief of the Pondos, one of the Xhosa clans in the Eastern Cape), situated in the Pondoland district, due to tribal wars between the Pondos and Zulus. According to Dispatchonline (2012), Pondoland is one of the districts in the Eastern Cape, which includes Libode, Ngqeleni and others. After King Faku’s death in 1867, some members of the community continued with the ritual (Papu, 2006). Dispatchonline (2012) reveals that the initiation ritual was fully re-introduced into the Pondoland area in the early 1980s, after school children and mine labourers decided to re-introduce it to avoid being ridiculed by those who had undergone the ritual.

Beckwith (1999) conducted a study about African cultures and revealed that anatomic maturation alone is insufficient for adulthood in most traditional African societies. Therefore,

for some traditional African societies, such as those of the Xhosas, Sothos and others, there comes a time when a child moves to the next stage of life and, in turn, assumes more adult responsibility (Beckwith, 1999).

According to Beckwith (1999), the passage from childhood to adulthood for traditional African societies is through initiation. These traditional Africans believe that the initiation ritual helps in breaking down fundamental perceptions of the world and permits another self to be born and to grow (Beckwith, 1999).

Mhlahlo (2009) explains initiation as a 'rite of passage' ceremony which marks the entrance or acceptance into a societal group, and which could also be seen as a formal admission to adulthood in a community, or one of the community's formal components. Mhlahlo (2009) agrees with Beckwith (1999), that initiation, in an extended sense, can also signify transformation, in which an initiate is "reborn" into a new role.

Fihlani (2012) concurs with Beckwith (1999) and Mhlahlo (2009), proffering that initiation, which involves circumcision, is seen as a rite of passage into manhood by some South African ethnic groups. Xhosa males who have not undergone the ritual, he postulates, are not considered real men; instead, they are often ridiculed and ostracised (Fihlani, 2012).

According to Beckwith (1999), initiation also provides the individual with, among others, instructions about what is expected in the next phase of life. It is therefore believed that initiation allows a child to develop with a sense of direction and meaning (Freeman, 2002; Beckwith, 1999). Literature reviewed by Beckwith (1999) revealed that there are a variety of differences in initiation rites across the African continent, but the reason is the same: to produce a physically, mentally and emotionally prepared man in order that he may take up a new and challenging role of being a responsible man. Fihlani (2012), in his article titled, "Hundreds of boys risk death and injury to be circumcised", explains that initiation teaches the virtues of discipline, courage and how to be a reputable man in society.

Both Mhlahlo (2009) and Mandlove (2006) agree with Beckwith (1999), that there is one end result of initiation: the 'coming out' of an initiate as a man. Mandlove (2006), who did a study in the initiation ritual within the Eastern Cape, explains initiation as a Xhosa way of marking the transition of a male from the status of a child to that of an adult.

According to Mhlahlo (2009, p.5), the initiation ritual of Xhosa-speakers in particular, consists of four phases, namely: the “entering phase” (“*umngeno*”), the phase of being an initiate (“*ubukhwethe*”), the “coming out phase” (“*umphumo*”), and the phase of being a graduate (“*ubukrwala*”). Papu (2006) separates initiation into three stages, which are: – Stage 1: “preparation”; Stage 2: “seclusion”; Stage 3: “coming out of an initiate as a man”. According to the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA, 2012), Mhlahlo (2009), and Mandlove (2006), among others, the initiation ritual is usually practiced in June and December and it may take up to three months to complete. Fihlani (2012) also mentions two terms during which circumcision is conducted, *viz.* June/July and November/December.

My observation, from my village in Matatiel, is that the initiation ritual time is a period of compulsory transformation for Xhosa young men. According to Beckwith (1999), initiation ceremonies involve the ritualistic isolation of young males, separating them from the community to prepare them for their transformation, prior to their compulsory period of initiation. Beckwith (1999) explains that young men stay in a sacred place – often a forest on a mountain or a specially built ritual house, and that is where initiates lose their childhood identities and gain their adult selves. She further explains that at this time an initiate is inclined to reflect inwardly and connect with the spirit of his culture, the forces of nature, and the ancestors who will guide him throughout his life. During this time initiates must neither communicate with the outside world nor share the secret knowledge they are gaining with others (Mandlove, 2006).

Beckwith (1999) points out that there are a variety of differences in initiation rites across the African continent, but that the reason is the same: innocent youths undergo the series of rituals and emerge as ‘men’ – physically, emotionally, and mentally prepared for their new roles. In spite of increasing reports about initiates who suffer from medical complications and even death, this traditional practice does not show any sign of abating (Magubane, 1998, p.33). This is confirmed by the recent statistics released by the Department of Health in the Eastern Cape in 2012. About 240 young men, some as young as 13 years of age, died from botched circumcision, whilst 300 were rescued from death (Fihlani, 2012). Despite these tragedies, 20 000 initiates reportedly attend traditional initiation schools in each initiation season, and in July 2013, 30 000 initiates had already registered for the next initiation season (Fihlani, 2012).

## **2.2.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF XHOSA TRADITIONAL INITIATION**

Xhosa traditional initiation brings with it sociological, psychological, educational and religious significance.

### **2.2.2.1 Sociological significance of initiation**

According to GIPCA (2012), among Xhosa people, a boy is not different from a girl until he is circumcised. Therefore, circumcision, which is part of initiation, is perceived as being the defining moment when a boy becomes a man (Carstens, 1982). Initiation is prominently and distinctively expected to transform an ‘irresponsible’ and ‘intractable’ boy into a man with adult dignity and self-respect (Gitywa, 1976, p.203). According to Mhlahlo (2009), initiation, which includes circumcision, is both an agent of transition and the effect of transition. In other words, young men who have undergone initiation bear observable, distinctive signs of behavioural change (Papu, 2006).

The society tends to believe that initiation produces a complete Xhosa man who is now completely accepted by the society (a man who has attained full recognition and status) (Gitywa, 1976, p.204). According to Beckwith (1999), initiation is a key component of Xhosa young men in particular, as it denotes their acceptance within the Xhosa initiated male community and also implies that initiates agree with the requirements prescribed by the Xhosa community.

GIPCA (2012) points out that traditional initiation is compulsory for all Xhosa young men. According to Mhlahlo (2009), some young men may prefer to be circumcised in hospitals. Unfortunately, their option for being circumcised in hospitals is interpreted as abnormality (GIPCA, 2012). According to GIPCA (2012), those young men are called “hospital-men”. In IsiXhosa they are called “*amalulwane*”. ‘*Ilulwane*’ is a derogatory term for a male who opted for hospital circumcision rather than the traditionally sanctioned initiation ceremony. ‘*Ilulwane*’ means “one who floats at night” (GIPCA, 2012).

Initiation is considered necessary for an individual to be regarded as a full member of the tribe (Mhlahlo, 2009; Beckwith, 1999). According to Mhlahlo (2009), an individual may not

be allowed to participate in ceremonies or even in social rituals such as marriage, and a man will not be allowed to marry or have a special relationship with a woman unless he has undergone the ritual.

Deviating from the traditional initiation practice is seen as marking the transition from childhood to manhood of an individual that is confined to sexual purgatory (Mhlahlo, 2009). From my observations, initiation is arguably a tool that is used to force young men to ascribe to a dominant type of masculinity, or “hegemonic masculinity”. Although the practice of initiation is adored by many Xhosa people, the rudimentary conditions and methods used for circumcision means that the risk of infection (whether HIV or post-operative infections) is an ever-present threat, and in many instances, fatal (GIPCA, 2012, p.1).

According to Mhlahlo (2009), the Xhosa society accepts the following hierarchy of manhood:

1. Elderly men (*'amaxhego'*). This is a group of men who are old and who possess less physical power, but who receive the highest level of social status, seen in acts such as sitting on chairs whilst young men sit on the floor, eating the best meat *etc.* They are highly respected for the wisdom that they possess. They are also regarded as executive members of the community.
2. Middle-aged men (*'udodana'*). These men are tasked with monitoring young men in the community during traditional ceremonies, funerals *etc.* They also assist young men in performing their duties.
3. Young men (*'isifana'*). This is a group of young men who may have graduated from initiation school at least 3 years ago. They possess physical power, as they dig graves, build initiation huts and help in the slaughtering and skinning of animals. They are also responsible for watching boys during initiation.
4. The graduates (*'amakrwala'*). This is a group of young men who have recently graduated from initiation.

The entry point to the hierarchy is initiation. Without initiation, even a 50 year old man is not permitted to sit with older men (men of his age) because he is still considered as being a boy (Mhlahlo, 2009).

#### **2.2.2.2 Psychological significance of initiation**

During the coming out ceremony, initiates are anointed by a chosen man who is known for his reputation in the hope that his good qualities and charisma will rub off onto them (Gitywa, 1976, p.204).

In line with Xhosa ritual, initiation is considered to be a part of the fundamental process of change that begins within the person being initiated; it is therefore likened to a simultaneous death and rebirth (Beckwith, 2009). It is believed that initiation leads to the conquering of one's fear of real death (it is seen to produce fearless men) and reveals a world open to the trans-human – a world that is transcendental (Beckwith, 2009).

### **2.2.2.3 Educational significance of initiation**

According to Mhlahlo (2009), there are several activities that take place during initiation. Papu (2006) states that “an important feature of initiation schools is the formal teachings that initiates learn during seclusion”. Teachings during initiation are designed to prepare the initiates for differentiated adult roles, including their marital and sexual roles (Ngxamngxa, 1971).

Physical ordeal and pain is seen as that which teaches young men discipline and prepares them for the hardships of manhood (Mhlahlo, 2009). Fihlani (2012) reviles that some traditional surgeons believe that torturing initiates will make them strong men. Mhlahlo (2009) adds that initiates learn new vocabulary that is only spoken to them during the initiation ritual. Initiates also learn from the teachings done by initiators on how to behave as a man (Ngxamngxa, 1971, p.192).

Initiation is understood to reveal the deep meaning of existence to newer generations and helps them to assume the responsibility of being ‘truly’ men, as well as enhance their potential to participate in cultural activities (Mhlahlo, 2009).

GIPCA (2012) argues that initiation is a non-civilised activity which focuses on circumcision that take place towards the end of initiates' seclusion. Mandlove (2006), on the other hand, disputes the notion that initiation is a tragic event and supports the ritual for its profound teachings.

#### **2.2.2.4 Religious significance of initiation**

According to Carstens (1982), circumcision, which is part of initiation, symbolises purification and masculinity. In other words, men are not regarded as being ‘clean’ nor ‘man enough’ if they have not undergone traditional circumcision (Carstens, 1982).

Initiation discloses cultural / traditional values to the initiate (Mhlahlo, 2009). Ngxamngxa (1971) explains that upon completion of initiation, initiates are expected to enter into a new relationship with their ancestors, as animals are slaughtered during initiation to dedicate initiates to ancestors. It is argued that the strict observation of the initiation ritual by Xhosa people has sustained them from any form of extinction (Ngxamngxa, 1971).

Mhlahlo (2009) views initiation as an essential preliminary stage to the achievement of manhood for Xhosa people in particular. He further adds that although initiation is such a significant ritual, it is, however, used to preserve and enhance perceptions of maleness, by creating a dominant and aggressive image of what a man should be. Therefore, initiation in itself is a part of the construction of masculinity (Carstens, 1982). Carstens (1982) reveals that the next step after initiation is to get married. In marriage, the man is expected to head his family. The patriarchal power of a man over his family is emphasised (Mhlahlo, 2009). One might conclude that the initiation ritual reinforces the power of manhood in the household, community and society in general (Papu, 2006).

### **2.3 PRESSURE TO UNDERGO TRADITIONAL INITIATION**

According to Mhlahlo (2009), young men undergo initiation because of certain ‘forces’ (*i.e.* pressure from the community). Mhlahlo (2009) explains that it is very difficult for Xhosa young men to resist or stand against these forces. He also maintains that although some Xhosa people prefer safer methods of performing circumcision, it is unfortunate that they are pushed into opting for the traditional method. Pressure on the part of peer groups, family and women tend to leave young men with no choice at all except for towing the line (Mhlahlo, 2009). An 18-year-old from Qumbu Village in the Eastern Cape province said,

*“All the boys in my class had (been) circumcised and they bullied me and made me feel worthless because I was still a ‘small boy’. I felt pressured to go to the bush because that was the only way they would respect me.”* (adapted

from 'Why South Africans risk death and injury to be circumcised') (Fihlani, 2012).

According to Dispatchonline (2012), peer pressure compels Xhosa young men to want to opt for initiation in order to avoid being ridiculed, assaulted and discriminated against. It is really difficult for Xhosa young males as they are pressured from all sides, even by their family members, as older brothers would behave cynically to ensure that their younger brothers go for traditional initiation (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) explains that women tend to play a considerable role in compelling young men to go for initiation by rejecting the notion of falling in love with uncircumcised boys, in order to avoid being ostracised by other women.

#### **2.4 THE ROLE OF THE INITIATION RITUAL IN REDUCING HIV INFECTIONS**

According to the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, in 2005, studies conducted in Orange Farm, Gauteng (South Africa), Kenya, and even further afield such as in Europe and India, have proven that circumcision, which is part of traditional initiation, reduces one's chances of being infected with HIV by 50%. These studies have demonstrated that circumcised males have a lower risk of contracting HIV as compared to uncircumcised males (Mhlahlo, 2009). The reason for their lower chances of HIV infection are attributed to the absence of the foreskin; it has been medically proven that the foreskin provides a fertile soil for STIs and HIV as it is composed of special cells called 'langerhans' (Mhlahlo, 2009).

The bulletin of the World Health Organization (2006) suggests that circumcised males have a lower risk of contracting penile cancer whilst protecting their partners from cervical cancer. Circumcision may also protect the penis from being torn in the foreskin region, which would thereby make it vulnerable to STIs and HIV (Mhlahlo, 2009).

Although traditional circumcision has crippled and claimed lots of lives owing to, arguably speaking, unhygienic conditions under which the ritual is performed and the use of crude tools, it has brought hope concerning the reduction of HIV infection (Nyaundi, 2005). Mhlahlo (2009) warns people (young men in particular) to refrain from relying on circumcision as a solution to HIV infection. He suggests that people should take responsibility over their sexual behaviour by using condoms, being faithful or abstaining.

## **2.5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES REGARDING INITIATION**

### **2.5.1 THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

In an endeavour to save lives whilst protecting the dignity surrounding the ritual, the Eastern Cape province developed and passed the Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001. As mentioned in the Provincial Gazette, No.818 (Department of Health, 2001), the Act provides for the observation of health standards in the traditional circumcision event, the issuing of permission for the performance of a circumcision operation, and the holding of 'circumcision school'; it also provides for matters pertaining to incidents that may occur during the ritual.

Although the effectiveness of the act is debated, it has, in some sense, contributed towards the overall regulation of initiation schools and rituals. The Act resulted in:–

1. The closing-down of illegal circumcision schools
2. The imprisonment of those individuals who broke circumcision laws
3. Boys going for medical check-ups before they underwent traditional circumcision
4. Compelling initiators and traditional nurses to register with the Department of Health before they practiced in the initiation schools.

(Mhlahlo, 2009, p.135)

The regulation of the ritual has benefited initiates, as it not only makes provisions for prior check-up and continuous medical supervision, but also for initiators, as they receive training, continuous medical assistance and state acknowledgement, according to the Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001 (Department of Health, 2001).

The Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001 prescribes the procedures to be followed during the ritual. It also prescribes, among other things, penalties for initiates and initiators who deviate from the law. Should initiates or initiators be proven to be in contravention of the act, the Department of Health ensures that the initiate is properly healed; thereafter, it institutes disciplinary measures. According to the Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001 (Department

of Health, 2001), should an initiator be proven to have contravened the Act, he could be awarded a sentence for up to three years in prison or given a fine of R10 000.

## **2.5.2 THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE**

The role of the South African Police Service (SAPS) with regard to initiation is to ensure that people involved in circumcision comply with the Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001. Members of the SAPS perform random visits to the initiation schools in order to check on the age and state of initiates, as well as to check if initiates have their parents' consent to undergo traditional initiation. They also protect the Department of Health officials when they visit initiation schools and do random patrols during the coming out ceremonies (Mhlahlo, 2009).

The custodians of the ritual, however, generally seem to be criticising the South African government's intervention, as they claim that it is unconstitutional and that it is against Xhosa traditional customs (Mhlahlo, 2009). The Eastern Cape Traditional Affairs Minister, Mlibo Qoboshiyane, disputed that the government is interfering with traditional affairs, explaining that it wanted to work closely with the communities in order to tackle botched circumcision. However, if dozens of young men are crippled and even die during every June and December holiday season, it is reported that the state cannot sit as an observer (Monyatsi, 2012). On the other hand some parents, initiates and members of the community have welcomed the regulation of the ritual (Mhlahlo, 2009; Mandlove, 2006).

Monyatsi (2012) questions the effectiveness of the Traditional Circumcision Act 6 of 2001, stating that it seems to be failing to cope in light of the mushrooming of new illegal initiation schools in the Eastern Cape. Monyatsi (2012) adds that the Free State province followed suit with the Eastern Cape province, by passing the Initiation Schools Act 1 of 2004, although it is neglected by most of the rural areas in the Free State. Most South African provinces have their own different legislation regarding circumcision (Mhlahlo, 2009). News24 (July 14, 2011) reported on a call from a different cultural group, requesting a common national legislation on circumcision which could be understood by all citizens of the country.

According to CIRP (2012), the ineffectiveness of the policies regarding circumcision are an international challenge. CIRP (2012) points out that the March 2009 Circumcision Policy Statement of the American Academy of Paediatrics did not help the circumcision victims and

parents of the victims; instead, it ‘helped’ in omitting any mention of possible deaths from circumcision-related causes, thereby keeping American parents uninformed of possible deaths following circumcision.

## **2.6 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INITIATION RITUAL**

One might not want to underestimate the impact of modernisation and westernisation on the Xhosa way of life (Freeman, 2002). Several South African health institutions now perform circumcision as an alternative to the traditional route, but cultural purists see this as westernisation of their custom (Fihlani, 2013). Mandlove (2006) points out that although some of Xhosa people who are in urban areas have assimilated some modern values and skills, most of them continue to hold their cultural heritage very dearly. Initiation is still a very strong tradition in rural areas and, to a lesser extent, in the urban centres (Mandlove, 2006).

Velaphi (July 5, 2012), from the New Age Newspaper, reported that the initiation ritual in the Eastern Cape is clouded by controversy. The prevalence of the initiation ritual in the Eastern Cape has attracted ‘outsiders’, such as the media and the state (Velaphi, July 5, 2012). According to Mhlahlo (2009, p.5), outsiders are perceived as intruders, and as such, their intrusion tends to result in disputes occurring. According to Velaphi (July 5, 2012), the South African government should largely assume the responsibility of curbing the tragedies that take place during initiation. Desperate communities have called for traditional circumcision to be banned, but reportedly, the government has stated that that would be a constitutional violation against cultural practices (Fihlani, 2012). Some of the tragedies related to initiation are: dysfunctional sex organs, the amputation of sex organs, assault, infections, penile wounds, dehydration due to water restrictions and even death (Mhlahlo, 2009). Although the Traditional Affairs Member of the Executive Committee (MEC), Mlibo Qoboshiyane, claimed that the Department of Health is succeeding in reducing the number of deaths caused as a result of circumcision in the Pondoland area, stating that the Department of Health officials in the Eastern Cape region were alarmed by the sheer number of deaths in that province (News24, June 30, 2010).

According to CIRP (2012), deaths occur as a secondary factor to the loss of blood or systematic infection from circumcision wounds. There are a few deaths which are reported in medical literature; most of them are not reported at all (CIRP, 2012). An anonymous teenage

victim, who asked not to be named for fear of being victimised said, “After a week in the bush, I started losing weight and became really weak. I noticed that my penis had become swollen” (Fihlani, 2012).

CIRP (2012) draws our attention to a number of deaths which are attributed to circumcision as it wrote this in its document:

*“There is a reason to believe that many deaths from circumcision are attributed to other causes. For example, if young men were to die of meningitis that was contracted through the circumcision wound, the death may be attributed to meningitis while ignoring the fact that the young men would not have had meningitis if he had not been circumcised.”*

The recent cases of botched operations which fatally went wrong took place in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, where 20 and 33 initiates died respectively within two weeks (SABC, July 9, 2013). These tragic deaths outraged the country, and in particular, the country’s president, Jacob Zuma, was quoted in the Mail and Guardian (South African Press Association, June 18, 2013), saying:

*“The whole country is outraged at this massive and unnecessary loss of young lives at the hands of those who are supposed to nurture and protect them. It cannot be acceptable that every time young men reach this crucial time in their development, their lives are culled in the most painful of ways, in the care of circumcision schools.”*

It is, therefore, very difficult to identify the total number of deaths that occur from circumcision (CIRP, 2012). One senses that one may only be seeing the ‘tip of the iceberg’, with the vast majority of deaths from circumcision being concealed (CIRP, 2012). On the other hand, Fihlani (2012) states that although other provinces do not have proper figures, the Eastern Cape province does have proper figures for that of deaths through initiation, initiation amputations and rescue events.

I have observed that rejecting undergoing traditional initiation provokes social havoc (where initiated men physically attack uninitiated men). According to Mhlahlo (2009), should a young man reject undergoing the ritual, he faces assault, ill-treatment and interrogation.

Therefore, from my observation I can conclude that initiation can promote hatred within the society as members of the society could be arrested after assaulting uncircumcised men.

Some young men are taken to initiation schools against their will. Maponya (June 19, 2013, penned an article that appeared on the second page of the Sowetan Newspaper, writing that:

*“Limpompo taxi drivers are living in fear of being abducted and forcibly taken to initiation schools to undergo circumcision.”*

The media plays a vital role in reporting these tragedies; however, at times they are riddled with exaggeration and bias (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) reveals that it is not true that all initiation schools experience a number of young men who develop medical complications or who die during initiation. Mhlahlo (2009) criticises the media for its incomplete and twisted reports about this rite as they tend not to include the number of young men who complete the ritual successfully.

The custodians of the initiation ritual are very unhappy about the involvement of the state and the media in initiation schools as they feel that their traditional right to practice the ritual with confidentiality is being violated (Mhlahlo, 2009). The role of the custodians of initiation (initiators) is to teach and supervise initiates, conduct circumcision and examine the medical condition and progress on the healing of the wound of an initiate (Mhlahlo, 2009).

Mhlahlo (2009) explains that young men do not have experience as regards initiation as it is a once-off experience; their lives depend on their supervisors who are initiators. Initiators are paid up to R300 and gifted with a bottle of brandy to perform the ritual; however, they fail to own up should something go wrong during the ritual (Mhlahlo, 2009). The current MEC in the Eastern Cape, Mlibo Qoboshiyane, blamed the traditional leaders for partaking in the overall commercialisation of the ritual, and proposed that the payment of tribal chiefs and headmen where initiation atrocities take place, should be docked (Hawker, August 6, 2013). Should there be a serious medical complication or death, often, they just disappear (Mhlahlo, 2009). CIRP (2012) reports that it is evident that traditional circumcisions are carried out by people who do not have medical training. The doctor's report wrote, “If medical doctors complicate the medical procedures, they have to account to the medical board, but traditional surgeons have nowhere to account to” (Hawker, August 6, 2013).

According to Hawker (August 6, 2013), writing for News24.com, the senior traditional leader in the Eastern Cape labelled the Amampondo nation's initiation death toll as genocide and complained that these tragic incidents happen to young people who are still at their prime, looking forward to a brighter future where they could still reach their potential.

According to the Eastern Cape Police spokesperson, Lieutenant-Colonel Mzukisi Fatyela 2012, 4 deaths were already reported by the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2012 (the beginning of the 2012 winter initiation season) from Qumbu, Libode, Ngqeleni and Sbangweni (near Umthatha), in the Eastern Cape. He added that 23 initiates from Kungolo Village, Qumbu, and Ngqeleni (near Umthatha) were being treated at the Ngqeleni and Libode hospitals. By the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2012 SABC News reported that the death toll had sky-rocketed to 34 in the Eastern Cape. The problem worsened, as SABC News (July 9, 2012) further reported that 2 circumcision initiates had died every successive night in the remaining weeks in the Eastern Cape. It became clear to me at the time that that would be the worst season, as South Africans were right in the middle of winter; the death toll had already reached 34, whilst the summer season recorded 36 deaths in total.

The Dispatch Online (2012) reported that there were 36 reported deaths in December 2011. According to the Dispatch Online (2012), most of these deaths were exacerbated by extremely hot conditions and inexperienced traditional surgeons; as a result, 24 initiators were arrested for illegally performing traditional surgery. The South African Medical Association in the Mpumalanga province was concerned that it takes a great deal of time to establish who is accountable for the deaths of initiates, as the causes of death point to negligence (Hawker, May 25, 2013). Hawker (May 25, 2013) penned an article titled, "Doctor: 'Initiate deaths unnecessary'", exposing the 28 unnecessary deaths that had occurred through initiation in the 'name of culture', and remarking that quite often, nobody takes the responsibility.

One may not deny that initiation is enshrouded with a number of problems, as CIRP (2012) provides a list of hundreds of boys and young men who died as a result of circumcision during initiation as evidence. Among those hundreds of young men who have died there are Sello Ntsie and Siyabonga Radebe, who were beaten to death by initiators in their initiation schools, and Patric Hoho, an initiator who was hacked to death by Hoho's circumcision

victims. As aforementioned, Fihlani (2012) states that an anonymous teenage victim who asked not to be named because he feared being victimised said,

*“After a week in the bush, I started losing weight and became really weak. I noticed that my penis had become swollen.”*

News24 (June 29, 2009) reported that an initiate was stabbed to death by a spear after trying to escape from an initiation school in the Lady Frere area in the Eastern Cape, whilst a 21 year old youth was beaten to death by sticks in a Johannesburg initiation school after trying to escape from the school. Moreover, it was reported that initiates stabbed and abducted initiation officials (News24, June 29, 2009).

Young men go up there in the mountains to seek manhood under the supervision of so-called experienced adults; they have no choice – their lives depend on the initiators, whose ‘man-ness’ is questionable and who are afraid of taking responsibility over their wrongdoings (Mhlahlo, 2009).

If an initiate dies during initiation, initiators sometimes shift the blame to an innocent and inexperienced young man (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) asks, “How can an initiate be blamed for his (own) death?” adding that these young men are inexperienced and just want to be accepted by the society.

Meintjes (1998, p.50) pointed out that one out of ten initiates dies during initiation, and that that is taken as normal by the initiators and community; furthermore, the family and community are ‘not allowed’ to mourn the death of an initiate. Mhlahlo (2009) concurs, stating that this means that 10 / 100 young men die during initiation, and that the death of an initiate means that he could not have become a man as he had failed to follow instructions, as suspected, let alone, withstood the hardships of ‘becoming a man’ (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) asks further, “How can a tragic death of a young, healthy man who is looking for maleness be taken as normal?”

According to CIRP, (2012), it is the responsibility of the state to save and protect lives and maintain the dignity of the ritual, as stated before. The conditions under which the ritual is

performed and the methods which are used are criticised, particularly regarding the risk of infections, STIs and fatality (GIPCA, 2012, p.1).

Monyatsi (2012), in his article titled, “What is the National House of Traditional Leaders doing about initiates deaths?” expresses his concern about the ritual, as he writes that:

*“Just when one had reason to expect the end – or at least the curbing of botched initiation school deaths this year, things have become worse and more brutal. Indeed, it seems that the more the years pass, the more young, innocent lives are lost, with other young men losing their manhood due to unscrupulous entrepreneurial ‘shortcut’ practices and cultural exploitation endeavours.”*

Although the Traditional Affairs MEC, Mlibo Qoboshiyane, claimed victory over deaths attributed to circumcision in the Pondoland area in 2010 (News24, July 14, 2011), on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, (News24), reported that the South African Communist Party, African National Congress Youth League, the Democratic Alliance, and Mlibo Qoboshiyane, among others, had expressed their concerns about the escalating number of initiates who were dying in initiation schools during the 2012 initiation winter season.

Mhlahlo (2009, p.6) agrees that traditional circumcision is important to Xhosa young men as it supposedly proves that a man is courageous and brave enough to face future challenges. However, he also suggests that it should not be forced upon boys as it is not naturally compulsory in transforming boys to men. I fully support Mhlahlo’s (2009) suggestion, as a number of African tribes such as that of the Zulus, Ndebeles and Shonas, among others, do not practice the initiation ritual but nonetheless have highly respected men in their communities.

## **2.7 CALLING FOR CHANGES IN THE RITUAL**

Precisely, the community instructs young men to undergo the initiation ritual, after which they will be seen to emerge as warriors, or else they will pay the price of stigmatisation

(Beckwith, 1999). Nevertheless, choosing to opt for traditional initiation puts the lives of initiates at the risk of experiencing initiation tragedies (Mhlahlo, 2009).

Young Xhosa men have a very limited choice, if any; it is therefore very difficult for these young men as they are cornered to seek manhood that, tragically, may not be realised (Meintjes, 1998, p.50). More to this point, Mhlahlo (2009) asserts that, “it is the objective of the initiation ritual to make it difficult for these young men”. He further expresses his concern about the ritual, maintaining that, “it is unfortunate that some young men are unable to survive the pre-set hardships of the ritual”. Some boys realise that they cannot stand the challenges that they are faced with during initiation and they try to escape; this is clarified in a news report from News24 (June 29, 2009), which revealed that an initiate was assaulted to death after trying to escape from an initiation school.

According to Freeman (2002), over the course of the past, African people have undergone different types of changes in initiation. Although all the external factors of initiation still remain the same, there is, however, a fairly radical transformation, as the state has created policies to control the ritual (Freeman, 2002).

Factors such as globalisation, industrialisation and technology compel changes to come about in traditional practices (Freeman, 2002). In some cases, initiation can take up to three months – during these days though, learners need to be at school. Trying vigorously to reconstruct and continue with practices that took place centuries ago might not assist our country in catching up with the above-mentioned factors (Freeman, 2002). Freeman (2002, p.260) suggests that there is a need to construct a plausible model of change and modern ways of approaching initiation.

Thornton (1988) conjectured that culture is a resource, and that it may not be exclusively owned by a particular group; it should be shared. Thornton (1988) bases his claim on the fact that people are not ‘born cultural’; instead, culture is acquired from a particular environment at a particular time. He further asserts that culture is information; if culture is information, information changes with time (usually for the better). Mhlahlo (2009) appeals to the custodians of the Xhosa initiation ritual to refrain from blocking the society and state from accessing information associated with the initiation ritual, and in addition, calls for a change in the mind-set of the custodians of the ritual.

It is clear that laws alone cannot curb the death of initiates; Monyatsi (2012) appeals to the National House of Traditional Leaders to ensure that they assist in curbing the rise of illegal initiation schools in their areas. Monyatsi (2012) also points out that the National House of Traditional Leaders Act (2009) grants their leaders the powers and responsibility to ensure the social well-being and welfare of communities, as well as the transformation and adaptation of customary law. The AmaXhosa King, Mpendulo Zwelonke Sigcawu, has also appealed to traditional leaders to work together with councillors in a bid to curb the unnecessary deaths of initiates, as reported in the New Age newspaper (July 5, 2012).

## **2.8 THE ROLE OF INITIATION IN PERPETUATING GENDER DIFFERENCES**

According to GIPCA (2012), for Xhosa people, the initiation rite is reserved strictly to transform boys in order that they may attain manhood. In other words, Xhosa people have made it young men's prestigious event (Mhlahlo, 2009). This prompts me to ask Xhosa people if there are any prestigious events which promote the status of young women in their local communities.

In other African tribes, such as that of the Vendas, Ndembus, and others, both young men and women undergo initiation (Hammond-Tooke, 1975). Hammond-Tooke (1975) explains that there is a clear difference in the way the initiation ritual is conducted between young men and young women, as young men are initiated as a group (collectively), but circumcised as individuals, usually before puberty. On the other hand, according to Hammond-Tooke (1975), young women are usually initiated individually, during puberty and there are no ceremonies to mark the event; as a result, there is no time that is set for the initiation of young women as they can be initiated at any time. Young women's initiation (which I will not elaborate on in detail), involves teaching young women to be demure, compassionate, productive and caring, among other socially aspired-to attributes expected of women (Mhlahlo, 2009).

The purpose of initiation between young men and women is also different (Turner, 1967). According to Mhlahlo (2009), the main aim of the traditional initiation ritual is "to develop consciousness of manhood". Mhlahlo (2009) questions the position of homosexuals. He asks

if they should undergo initiation or not. Furthermore, if they were to undergo initiation, would it be for a similar purpose?

Mhlahlo (2009) explains that sexual identity is very important in the Xhosa initiation rite, mentioning that initiation ceremonies are strictly reserved for males. The roles of men and women also differ widely during initiation. Turner (1967) avers that men are responsible for almost the entire ritual, except for putting mud on a ritual hut and making home-made beer for the ceremony, which is usually the women's responsibility. In other words, women are there to 'close gaps' (Mhlahlo, 2009).

According to Mhlahlo (2009), the initiation ritual encourages young Xhosa men to be brave, whilst forcing young women to be soft, caring, submissive and shy – seemingly converse characteristics. Mhlahlo (2009) explains that the above-mentioned teachings afford power to men, whilst actively taking power away from women.

## **2.9 INITIATION AND SCHOOLING**

Both traditional initiation schools and formal schools aim at developing a socially acceptable being. However, Gitywa (1976) points out in his literature on initiation that some elements of tension do exist between informal initiation schools and formal schools. Initiated men are exempt from performing roles which are traditionally associated with females. On the other hand, formal schools teach and encourage gender equity (Gitywa, 1976).

Gitywa (1976) adds that initiated men are not expected to socialise with boys, while Mavundla (2009) maintains that the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 makes no reference to that of initiated and uninitiated learners. Tension may arise when initiated learners are instructed to participate in group activities with their peers as expected by the schooling system (Jones, 2007), meaning that initiated learners are, to a certain extent, socialised differently amongst their peers at school than at home.

According to Papu (2006), newly graduated men are expected to dress in a specific way. Specifically, they have to be dressed in long trousers, a jacket, a hat and are expected to carry a stick at all times (Mhlahlo, 2009). Unfortunately, most school policies do not have special

provisions for initiated learners. They neither allow initiated learners to wear hats nor carry a stick at school.

Furthermore, Mhlahlo (2009) explains that men who have been initiated are also distinguishable by their social behaviour and the particular manner in which they speak. Due to a number of different social and schooling expectations, these young men's schooling experiences are bound to differ.

Initiated learners are caught in an odd predicament within their schooling environments, as these are unfamiliar environments to home. Pretorius (2005) criticises schools for failing to transfer cultural knowledge to learners, and for not enforcing fundamental societal values upon learners. Schools, then, are not supposed to reject cultural practices (Pretorius, 2005), which may compel some initiated learners to become violent or leave the school to avoid conflicts. Rather, Pretorius (2005) argues that schools should be the catalysts of cultural preservation and assist in passing culture on to the younger generations.

Having reviewed relevant literature on initiation in South Africa, in the following section I discuss "masculinities" as the theoretical framework which underpins this study.

## **2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is based on construction of masculinities theoretical framework. The forthcoming theoretical framework is provided with the main objective of framing this study.

Initiations are communally and individually performed. This means that initiates experience initiation as individuals, but nonetheless, they always remain as part of the group, or generation, or age of their mates undergoing an identical ordeal. Once all the initiates have emerged successfully from their tests, their generation is given a formal name by which they will be known for the rest of their lives by the society. Initiation is part of masculinity construction, as Carstens (1982) says that, "initiation is used to preserve and enhance maleness by creating a dominant and aggressive image of man".

### **2.10.1 MASCULINITIES ARE SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED**

Gender theorists such as Connell (1994; 1996), Mac an Ghail (1994), Tottem (2004), and Renold (2004), among others, believe that gender-role socialisation begins at birth. Although boys are born biologically as males, there is no boy that is born masculine or feminine. Once boys are born, they are exposed to masculine or feminine behaviours. Boys learn, identify with, and perform masculine behaviours as these are enforced upon them from an early age by the society. Young boys tend to copy what older boys and men do. Beckwith (1999) observes that in nearly all of the African cultures, children play independently from dawn until late in the night, watching each other and imitating their older siblings.

The construction of masculinities is linked to the socio-cultural environment, and is a very complex issue. Children are pushed to identify with the so-called “maleness” label, which is described by Bird (2004) as a core value which includes toughness, self-reliance, physicality and endurance. Other authors, like Hatfield (2010, p.526) use the term “real man” in place of the term “maleness”.

Schools have been implicated by Alsop (2002, p.53) as continuous reproducers of gender inequalities, by promoting social order through sports, uniforms and chores, among others. Ahwee (2004, p.37) agrees with Alsop (2002), as he points out that schools are aware of this practice, which is termed the ‘hidden curriculum’ (unofficial expectations with hidden messages).

### **2.10.2 ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES**

The construction of masculinities is not a passive activity at all. It involves responding to a variety of situations either through negotiation or resistance. According to Bhana (2002), the social construction of masculinities involves a constant battle between the rival meanings of being a boy. Initiation provides the individual with, among other things, instructions about what is expected in the next phase of life. It is therefore believed that initiation allows a child to develop with a sense of direction and meaning (Freeman, 2002; Beckwith, 1999).

Hatfield (2010, p.526) criticises traditional masculine ideals, as they are accused of framing men as only capable providers who have flexible knowledge of the world. Framing men in line with the above discriminates and overlooks the capabilities of females and marginalised

masculinities. Hatfield (2010) also questions the so-called “expertise of maleness” and asks a very critical question, “*What happens to men who cannot physically make things?*” Hatfield (2010) criticises the continuous societal reconstruction and reinforcement of hegemonic dominance, as he says that “society plays a major role in the construction of masculinity”. Therefore, women are not excluded from this activity. Carstens (1982) describes women as agents of men in promoting hegemonic dominance.

### **2.10.3 THE ROLE OF INITIATION IN THE FORMATION OF OTHER FORMS OF MASCULINITIES**

According to Beckwith, (1999) and Mhlahlo, (2009), initiation is seen as a rite of passage to a socially acceptable version of manhood. In other words, initiation is a public affirmation of manhood. Mhlahlo (2009) mentions that initiation instils a male identity in boys and reinforces notions of dominance. Connell (1996) describes males who are dominant over other forms of masculinities, as well as over the opposite sex, as falling under “hegemonic masculinities”.

Renold (2003, p.120) reveals that children do not internalise everything that they are taught. Therefore, some boys do not conform to the prescriptive gender roles presented to them by the society. This tends to result in different forms of masculinities arising, other than the culturally-exalted form of masculinities (hegemonic masculinities), which had been discussed in 2.3.3.1. In other words, traditional initiation plays a major role in creating competition amongst males, pushing some out of the competing hegemonic field whilst at the same time creating an opportunity for the formation of other forms of masculinities in the process.

Masculinities are constructed based on factors such as culture, tradition, society, the economy, race, ethnic group, history, location, religion and so on (Connell, 1987). It is therefore imperative to understand that there is no ‘blanket’ or universal way of constructing masculinities. It is also vital to note that the use of the term “masculinities” implies that there are many forms of masculinities (no single form of masculinity) (Connell, 1996). Connell (1996) identified three forms of masculinity, which he referred to as typologies of masculinities. These masculinities are ‘hegemonic’, ‘subordinate’ and ‘complicit’

## **2.10.4 TYPOLOGIES OF MASCULINITIES**

Due to the fact that children do not internalise everything that they are taught, some are bound to differ in relation to others (Renold, 2003, p.120). Societal teachings may be rejected by some boys as they may not be interested in the existing social order, or are unable to attain the expectations of the existing social order. This paves a way of other forms of masculinities to emerge. According to Connell (2005), most men do not actually meet the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity and in reality, the number of those ascribing to the hegemonic pattern might be quite small. Some Xhosa young men cannot and some are interested in initiation, which produces a socially acceptable hegemonic man (Mhlahlo, 2009). These young men may automatically be inclined to join other forms of masculinities.

### **2.10.4.1 Connell's typologies of masculinities**

Hegemonic masculinity is the highest ranked form of masculinity, which is based on some of the following attributes: toughness, self-reliance, physicality, mental strength, logic and rationale, among other factors. This type of masculinity also includes negative behaviour however, such as violence, power hunger and aggressiveness, to mention a few. According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity represents a culturally idealised form of manhood that is socially and hierarchically exclusive, concerned with bread-wining, provoking anxiety, and enforcing brutality, in addition to encompassing violent pseudo-natural and tough behaviours that are psychologically contradictory, crisis-prone and socially sustained.

Hegemonic masculinities force boys to conform to the stance of heterosexuality, which is a social order (Morrell, 1999; Carstens, 1982). Hegemonic masculinities advance the patriarchal power of men over women and marginalised masculinities. The society wants to maintain its order by encouraging boys to behave as their fathers and older brothers have. Boys have to 'shine' in contact sports such as soccer, go for initiation as of the age of fifteen, and have many girlfriends, to mention a few, particularly in the case of Xhosa boys.

Freeman (2002) tenders that, "initiation often involves confrontation in a form of a test of bravery". Initiates usually go for hunting, among other activities they are generally expected to perform. To them, survival is a victory, which is a sign that they will be brave in their lives". During the circumcision operation, boys are expected to withstand the pain of an assegai which is used to remove the foreskin. Initiation rites play a paramount role in

promoting the idea of masculinity to boys (Mhlahlo, 2009). The process of undergoing bush-school hardship and bearing pain is seen as an important process of becoming a man (Ngxamngxa, 1971).

What happens to Xhosa young men who are not interested in initiation, or who prefer to be circumcised in hospitals? Such boys are perceived as ‘sell-outs’ or boys with feminine characteristics – stereotypes which are enforced by hegemonic masculinities. Boys who do not identify with behaviours which are appropriate to their age and sex are treated harshly, both verbally and physically, by their peers the community alike.

Davis (2009) and Morrell (1999) hold similar views on hegemonic masculinities, as they both believe that hegemonic masculinities are often used to steer boys and men into performing dominant acceptable masculinities under hegemonic guidance; it is very difficult for young boys who are interested in garment-making, for example, to register for these lessons openly. Young men are socially expected to do Mathematics, Science and technical subjects, as well as to play contact sports such as soccer and rugby, or else they are labelled as ‘gay’, or boys who lack stereotypically perceived ‘male’ skills.

Being different either by having feminine traits or by rejecting the notion of subscribing to societal norms is controversial; boys are expected to tow the line, or else they are subjected to hegemonic victimisation. However, Connell (1996) states that “there is no one pattern of masculinity.” Failure to identify with dominant, authoritarian hegemonic masculine behaviours due to a lack of interest, or even incapability, tends to result in the formation of another form of masculinity: subordinate masculinity (Connell, 1996).

Subordinate masculinities are the lowest ranked form of masculinity. They openly reject patriarchal dominance; they are also known as marginalised masculinities. Subordinate masculinities are usually constructed either by choice or force as a response to dominant hegemonic forces. They therefore, function as an alternative form of masculinity to that of the realm of hegemonic masculinities. It is unfortunate that young men who enact subordinate masculinities in communities, schools, sports activities and traditional ceremonies are treated harshly by so-called hegemonic boys. Connell (1996) classifies effeminate or gay young men under subordinate masculinities.

It is worth noting that literature reviewed indicates that subordinate masculinities are not limited to gay young men. 'Weaker' heterosexual young men, depending on a particular setting at a particular time, may be classified as being subordinate due to gender fluidity (Connell, 1996).

Subordinate masculinities are often in direct conflict with hegemonic masculinities; this implies that subordinate masculinity performances are often against the social order. Lesko (2000) affirms Mac an Ghail's (1994) view, that boys who are identified as performing subordinate masculinities are usually ridiculed, bullied, ostracised and beaten up by peer groups which are performing the contested hegemonic masculinities. Some men are not interested in fighting against hegemonic masculinities and, on the other hand, they are not interested in hegemonic dominance. This came to be classified as 'complicit masculinities'.

Complicit masculinities are masculinities which quietly express the feeling of powerlessness. Connell (1996) locates complicit masculinities in-between hegemonic masculinities and subordinate masculinities. Complicit masculinities enjoy a large proportion of the varied forms of masculinity.

It is, however, imperative to note that although complicit masculinities are constructed to avoid risks and tensions, they receive patriarchal dividends from hegemonic masculinities without being openly noticed. Those who fall under the banner of complicit masculinities receive most of the privileges and benefits from that of the dominant hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1996). In other words, complicit masculinities quietly support or complement the dominant hegemonic masculinities in the form of oppressing and discriminating against subordinate masculinities.

Some Xhosa young men may not be interested in traditional initiation due to the fact that children do not necessarily internalise everything that they are taught (Renold, 2004, p.20). The society should surely then leave it in the hands of young men to choose whether they want to be circumcised traditionally or in a hospital.

Unfortunately, in the Xhosa community, young men are guided and coerced into choosing traditional initiation. In some cases, young men who perform other forms of masculinities

eventually end up undergoing traditional initiation due to social pressure (thereby accepting the calls of the existing hegemonic masculinities).

Finally, Connell (1996) mentions ‘protest/oppositional masculinities’. According to Connell (1996), protest masculinities are the marginalised masculinities which cannot be based on the privileges of hegemonic masculinity, but which nevertheless seek to rework the themes of superiority within the context of poverty. He further explains that protest masculinities could also encompass ethnically marginalised men who lack economic resources and institutional power. The protest masculinities focus on displays of active heterosexual practices which, along with the levels of tension that arise from poverty, lead to an milieu of violence wherein boys put together a tense façade, making a claim to power where there are no real resources for power (Connell, 1996).

Connell (1996) ranks the typologies of masculinities according to their dominance as follows:

1. Hegemonic masculinities
2. Complicit masculinities
3. Subordinate masculinities
4. Protest/oppositional masculinities

In order to broaden and deepen our understanding of the construction of masculinities, it is imperative to point out other useful theories on gender and the construction of masculinities that have been employed by other theorists. Morojele (2009, p.67), a gender studies student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), based his studies on the constructivist paradigm. Constructivists acknowledge that the world is under constant change. Therefore the society, social events, cultural beliefs and events, social institutions, as well as principles, cannot be ruled out in the advent of constant change. Social constructivists believe that the three active participants in education (teachers, learners and parents) are social beings. Therefore, they are constantly engaging in social relationships and activities where the construction of masculinities cannot be excluded.

Social inequalities such as sexism, racism and the categorisation of masculinity forms are not acknowledged by social constructivists. Therefore, social constructivists are concerned with the use of power to challenge, change, as well as maintain beliefs and masculinity practices

such as initiation, among others. Initiation awards power to young men over women, uninitiated men and men who were initiated in hospitals – a situation which is, however, disputed by social constructivists.

Masculinities could be constructed in such a way that everybody benefits (*i.e.* nobody is deprived of his rights). This is why Morojele (2009) has also used materialist gender theories as his basis upon which to explain the dynamics in the social construction of gender and masculinities. On the other hand, Bhana (2002) based her studies on the construction of masculinities and femininities on poststructuralist theories. Bhana (2002, p.8) supported her choice of basing her studies on the above-mentioned theories in stating that, “it provides a multidimensional understanding of power.” According to Bhana (2002), postculturalist theories are believed to be more advanced because they go beyond theories that centre on sex roles and reproduction. Bhana (2002) further explains that poststructuralists’ theories suggest that men and women are rational; because they are rational, they can mitigate on issues of power-sharing and are capable of changing societal norms, and therefore have positive relationships with each other (Bhana, 2002).

Bhana (2002, p.10) agrees with Morojele (2009), in averring that people are not passive recipients of socialisation. People actively construct their lives and, in turn, that of others. Therefore, there is nothing that is fixed; power could not be excluded from this. Power dominance does exist; however, it is not static.

Through conceptualisation we learn that individuals may respond unexpectedly in modern ways, which may hinder or reinforce social change. We also learn that participation in the construction of masculinities should not be taken for granted as people may respond in a variety of ways to dominant situations. According to Bhana (2002), being a boy or a girl is not a simple construct which occurs in a linear way; it can involve contradictions. Therefore, power can be exercised for the function of improving gender equity or also for that of oppressing and discriminating against other genders.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

Literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that the Xhosa society uses the initiation ritual as a tool with which to craft masculinity, and that the initiation ritual plays a major role in

perpetuating gender differences amongst Xhosa people. Furthermore, it highlighted the significance of the initiation ritual, outlined that it may reduce HIV infections, as well as revealed that young men are frequently pressurised to undergo initiation, which is still a very prevalent practice in the Eastern Cape in particular.

People possess the ability to learn and unlearn behaviours; a space should be created in which masculinities, identities and sexualities can be interrogated. In that way, the tension between tradition and modernity can be explored.

Evolution of culture is a matter of importance. Culture changes with time; it is not static. Changes in culture should not be rejected. Culture is a resource; it should be accessible to all.

This chapter focused on literature reviewed on the initiation ritual and cast light on the construction of masculinities within the Xhosa community. Literature reviewed was organised according to themes. The chapter also provided the theory of the construction of masculinities in particular, as well as other useful theories, which form the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 focused on salient literature reviewed on the initiation ritual and the construction of masculinities within the Xhosa community. It also provided the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter discusses the research design (qualitative design) and research methods (group interviews and individual interviews), validity and the reliability of group, as well as individual interviews; in addition, it describes the permission procedures followed to conduct the study, and the research site. Further, it explains the selection of participants, ethical considerations, the collection of data, data analysis and limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this study, which is located within the social constructionist framework, I have used the qualitative research design. I seek to understand how participants, as social actors, construct their worlds. I am interested in finding out and gaining a better understanding as to how initiated Xhosa learners view and perceive their schooling experiences. Furthermore, what are their attitudes towards their schooling experiences and what explanations do they offer for those attitudes. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.219) recommend qualitative research for its ability to provide an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meaning, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours. The main aim of the qualitative approach is to understand and describe human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2001) agree with Leedy (1985), in their assertion that qualitative research aims at gathering an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. In addition to this, qualitative research designs garner the reasons that govern behaviour. In other words, qualitative methods investigate the how and why certain decisions are made. Therefore, they go beyond the questions: 'what', 'where' and 'when'.

The qualitative research design was a suitable vehicle for studying the construction of masculinities and the initiation ritual, as these are studied in conjunction with social, historical and economic conditions. It seemed to be the most suitable method of collecting

data, which was done in a natural setting comprising social actors. Probability sampling was used in this study; this involves random selection of the sample.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2011), qualitative research methods produce information on a particular case studied and from that information, general conclusions can be drawn.

Qualitative researchers dispute the idea that qualitative methods cannot be used for hypothesis testing. Qualitative methods are suitable for hypothesis testing and the drawing up of general conclusions. Furthermore, they give voices to participants and probe issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

I used group and individual interviews to collect data. Watts and Ebbutt (1987) support the use of group interviews for their potential to prompt discussion, which may eventually yield a wide range of responses. I also used individual interviews because they were more likely to yield personal responses, other than general opinion. I collected data through scheduled group and individual interviews, which were recorded using a tape recorder, transcribed, analysed, as well as verified, and finally, the report was presented (the analysis, verification and report appear in Chapter 4).

### **3.3 INTERVIEWS**

Cohen and Manion (1985, p.159) describe an interview as a verbal extraction of information from the participant, where both the researcher and participant are actively involved. Cohen *et al.* (2011, p.409) describe an interview as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. Cohen *et al.* (2011), as well as Cohen and Manion (1985), emphasise the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and the social situation of research data.

The purpose of an interview may vary depending on the context. Cohen *et al.* (2011, p.411) outline some of the purposes of an interview as follows:

- To collect data
- To sample participants' opinions

- To assess or to evaluate a person in some respect.

There were a number of considerations that I had to make before preparing interviews, whilst preparing interviews and during the actual course of the interviews. Firstly, I had to deepen my understanding on interviews. Amongst other bodies of literature on interviews, there is Cohen (2011), who articulates the characteristics of, as well as different types of interviews.

### **3.3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INTERVIEW ACCORDING TO COHEN *ET AL.* (2011)**

- Interviews move the research away from seeing human subjects as simply ‘manipulatable’, and data as external to individuals
- Interviews are an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest; therefore, the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production is emphasised
- Knowledge is constructed between participants generating data rather than *per capita*
- Interviews are not simply concerned with collecting data about life, but instead, are part of life, and their human ‘embedded-ness’ is inescapable
- Interviews are known for being flexible tools for data collection; they enable multi-sensory channels to be used *e.g.* verbal and non-verbal channels
- The order of an interview can be controlled according to the interviewer’s discretion, meaning, he / she may allow or not allow for the advent of spontaneity during the interview
- Interviews are time-consuming for both the interviewer and interviewee; therefore, they may be inconvenient for either party
- Fatigue experienced by an interviewer may hamper the interview and as such, the degree of anonymity upheld during an interview might ultimately be different.

### **3.3.2 GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

In this study, I used group and individual interviews with standardised, open-ended questions. This means that the interview questions were worded in more or less the same way and were asked in approximately the same sequence (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

### **Group interviews**

Since I have used group interviews, it was imperative that I had to develop a deep understanding of how they work prior to embarking on them. Therefore, I learnt about some advantages and disadvantages of group interviews from literature deriving from Watts and Ebbutt (1987), as well as from Arksey and Knight (1999). This literature equipped me with thorough knowledge on group interviews.

Watts and Ebbutt (1987), as well as Arksey and Knight (1999), support the use of group interviews because of the following advantages they offer:

- When learners are interviewed as a group, they are free to use learners' language, which makes it easier for them to talk
- Group interviews are quicker than individual interviews, therefore, they save time
- Group arguments during an interview may generate a wider range of responses
- Group interviews promote a conducive atmosphere for each participant in a group to have something to say
- Group interviews bring with them the potential for developing discussion, which eventually yields a wide range of responses
- Participants may be less intimidated by an interviewer if they are interviewed in a group situation
- They provide an opportunity for an interviewer to see how participants influence, complement and relate to each other
- Group interviews may bring together people with varied opinions to one conclusive group opinion
- Participants may complement each other, which leads to the advent of more complete and reliable information being obtained.

On the other hand, Watts and Ebbutt (1987), in addition to Arksey and Knight (1999), have warned researchers about the disadvantages of group interviews. These are some of the disadvantages they refer to:

- Other participants may be very dominant over others; therefore few voices may be heard instead of many views
- Having a number of participants in an interview can propagate a variety of responses, which may be very difficult to codify
- Some respondents may feel uncomfortable in respect of revealing their true feelings in the presence of others, especially that of their peers
- Group interviews tend to result in the hailing of a collective group view, thereby pushing away some honest, true and individual feelings or opinions
- Participants may want to be accepted by the group; they may complement what other members say because they cannot argue with what their peers might have to say.

The school principal gave me an unused classroom for conducting interviews. I started with the group interview by asking participants to sit in a circular form, to create an informal and therefore more conducive atmosphere for discussion. I placed the tape recorder on the chair in the middle of the circle so that it would be able to capture every word that was spoken. Before the interview commenced, I told participants that it was very important to take turns when they wanted to talk because I had to capture each and every word uttered in the interview. To avoid unnecessary verbal fighting among participants, the dominance of some over others, time-wasting, and to encourage accurate data collection, Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggest that interviewers should decide on how participants will get attention. For example, an interviewer should decide upon whether the participants will talk in a certain sequence or if they will raise their hands, or clarify that their names will be called out. In this study, I decided that participants should raise their hands if they wanted to respond. I handed out copies of the list of questions to each participant. Further, I asked questions in English and thereafter translated them to isiXhosa. The interview took the space of approximately two hours and was conducted and captured primarily in isiXhosa; thereafter, I translated and transcribed the text into English. I was well aware that this may limit participants' spontaneity during the interview. Although spontaneity was compromised for the purposes of

trying to maintain better accuracy in data collection, the curbing of spontaneity presented limitations, and as I was very vigilant and quick in picking up on people who were trying to voice themselves more. The atmosphere was relaxed and all participants were vigorously engaged in the discussion, although they were a bit shy at the beginning.

### **Individual interviews**

I also used individual interviews as mentioned above. I therefore drew from Cohen's (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) literature on individual interviews to broaden my understanding of this type of interview. Cohen *et al.* (2011) outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of individual interviews, which I took into consideration when I prepared the interviews, as well as during the course of the interviews.

The advantages of individual interviews, according to Cohen *et al.* (2011), are:

- Individual interviews are very productive for adolescents when it comes to sensitive issues such as sexuality, body, and family, among others
- Shy respondents get an opportunity to express their opinion without being disturbed by the presence of other people during an interview
- Individual interviews usually yield different responses to group interviews as learners may tend to be more candid, and in turn, the information may be more reliable
- One-on-one conversation creates trust and rapport, thereby producing information that may be more valid
- Participants are free to 'speak what is on their hearts' rather than agreeing to public opinion
- An interviewer may be more inclined to take his / her time in understanding an individual's sentiments, and as such, the chances of 'missing the point' may be reduced.

Individual interviews are very productive, but they also have disadvantages.

Some of the disadvantages of individual interviews, according to Cohen *et al.* (2011), are:

- Participants may feel intimidated by an interviewer as they work in the context of a one-one-one interview format
- Learner participants might battle to assert their views as they cannot necessarily resort to using peer language when they talk to adults
- Individuals may withdraw from giving true information as they might not trust the interviewer
- Individuals cannot compete with others in giving responses, as might transpire within a group interview format; therefore, the information given may be inadequate or have gaps.

After conducting a group interview, I used the same room to conduct individual interviews for four days. Before commencing with each interview, I implored participants to feel free to talk, as well as to talk as much as they could. I used three chairs for the individual interviews; two chairs were for me and the participant, whilst the third chair was reserved for the tape recorder. I ensured that participants see the tape recorder and that they knew that our conversations were being recorded. I followed the same procedure that transpired in the group interviews except for the process of having to raise one's hands in order to voice responses. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, and they occurred during breaks and after school.

### **3.4 VALIDITY**

Validity is the extent to which the data collection instrument measures what it is intended to measure, *e.g.* to what extent would a standardised intelligence quotient test measure a person's intelligence? Therefore, validity seeks to answer the question if a data collection instrument such as an interview measures what it claims to measure. One of the causes of the invalidity of an interview is biasness. According to Cohen *et al.* (2011), one way of validating 'interview measure' is to compare the measure of an interview with another that has already been shown to be valid. In this study, I returned the transcribed responses to the participants to verify with them that they were captured and transcribed accurately.

Time was spent with participants, and in those time frames, the information gathered was personal; thus, interviews have the potential to spur a great deal of information on people's beliefs, feelings motives and conscious reasons for certain actions or feelings. Cohen *et al.* (2011) warn researchers that although interviews are interpersonal, it is inevitable that the researcher will have some degree of influence on the interview. Cohen *et al.* (2011) then, suggested that the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible.

### **3.5 RELIABILITY**

Reliability measures the extent to which the data collection instrument yields consistent results when the characteristic being measured has not changed. Therefore, if two or more individuals evaluate the same performance or product, they should achieve similar results. Hence, if the instrument is used in similar situations it ought to obtain similar results. Cohen *et al.* (2011) proffer that the reliability of an interview can be enhanced by careful piloting of interview schedules, the training of interviewers, as well as through the use of closed questions. I was well-equipped, in terms of prior training, to handle interviews during the data collection phase of research.

### **3.6 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY**

With the aim of conducting interviews amongst a selection of initiated Xhosa young men in a secondary school at uMzimkhulu, the researcher requested permission in writing from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education's Research Officer, as well as from the Principal of the secondary school involved – which was duly received.

### **3.7 SELECTION OF THE INTERVIEWEES**

The study was conducted in the deep rural area of uMzimkhulu, which was incorporated into KwaZulu-Natal from the Eastern Cape in 2006. Participants were volunteers from grade 10 and 11. Grade 10 and 11 initiated young men were informed by the principal about the proposed study. The principal asked for 10 and 11 initiated Xhosa young men to volunteer to be interviewed for the study. I then explained how the study would be conducted; reminding the initiated young men that their participation would be voluntary. I issued two sets of

documents to volunteers. Each set had a letter and a consent form (one set for the parent and one for the volunteering learner. Volunteers had to be given permission by their parents to be part of the study by signing the consent forms. Volunteers also had to sign their consent forms and return the signed consent forms to the school clerk on the following day (Appendix C). Upon receipt of the consent forms, I called all the participants to the interview room. I decided to use volunteers because they would be easy to work with, since their participation was voluntary, and they were more likely to give reliable data.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, I gave pseudonyms to all participants. They are:

1. Asanda
2. Esethu
3. Abongile
4. Ayanda
5. Asiphe
6. Enhle
7. Okuhle
8. Aphiwe
9. Ayabonga
10. Yando

In African culture, it is customary for the names of people to change with time (Gitywa, 1976). A certain age group of people would have a certain pattern of names; usually in this age group, most names begin with a vowel. I used the pseudonyms listed above to ensure anonymity and moreover, to identify participants during group and individual interviews. Further, I prepared name tags bearing the pseudonyms to ensure that I was able to correctly identify and differentiate between participants during the interviews.

During group interviews each participant had to raise his hand and mention his name before responding to a question, adding to a previous speaker's words, supporting or arguing against his group member's opinions. Participants had to do so in order to aid in the data capturing (recording) process.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Among other researchers who contributed towards developing a code of ethics or behavioural standards which are to be followed by researchers when they conduct research, are Leedy (1985) and Maree (2009). In their contributions toward the development of a code of ethics, they outlined the following principles:

- The researcher should always endeavour to be objective and honest in his / her reporting
- The researcher should always ensure that participants are protected from any form of harm
- The researcher should always ensure privacy with regard to his / her work
- The researcher should promise and ensure anonymity
- The researcher should always have participants' consent to take part in the research project.

I was well-informed about the importance of an ethical code of conduct when conducting the study and strove to adhere to it. The data accumulated upon permission was treated with the strictest confidentiality. I handed all original data tapes and transcripts to the study supervisor. The study supervisor will lock the data in a 'data lock' mechanism for a period of five years, after which the data will be disposed according to the rules of the university.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

The findings are presented and analysed within the themes that arose from the data. In this study, I analysed data by engaging with personal experiences and observations recollected from the Matatiele Xhosa community, which practices the initiation ritual, and thereafter, I formed themes which emerged from the ideas and experiences of the participants. In an attempt to explore the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men, I used group and individual interviews amongst a selection of grade 10 and 11 initiated Xhosa young men from a secondary school in uMzimkhulu. The experiences of initiated Xhosa young men were captured from both group and individual interviews using a voice recorder device. I then transcribed all interview sessions by replaying them afterwards and translating them into English. Thereafter, I did a comparative analysis to locate major themes which arose from the

data. Also, I did not compare data for consistency or lack thereof; I expected different data to emerge on account of the use of different methods, *i.e.* group and individual interviews. I presented data from individual and group discussion both together as well as separately. However, I noticed that the group interview yielded a range of responses that were mostly general, which could be attributed to the nature of the group interview with the presence of peers, whilst individual interviews on the other hand, yielded direct personal responses which could be attributed to the absence of peer interference.

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

uMzimkhulu is deeply rural and poverty-stricken area, with a very high unemployment rate. Therefore, at times, some respondents were absent from school, due to problems relating to a shortage of transport or transport fare; as such, interview sessions had to be deferred to later dates in some instances.

Most participants reside far away from the school. It was very difficult for them to stay behind for interviews straight after school. In most cases, it was also very difficult to transport them home owing to poor road infrastructure; as a result, some participants had to forfeit their breaks for the sake of facilitating the interview.

Initiated young men were initially reluctant to divulge information about their experiences because they were taught during initiation that they should not give away any information about initiation. I had to explain to them that it was not my intention to study how they were initiated, but rather, to study their schooling experiences after initiation; further instruction was given that the information gathered from their interviews would remain confidential. The researcher had to extend some of the questions in order to ensure that as much data could be attained as possible.

Language was a barrier; I had to ask questions in English and translate them to the vernacular. Responses were also delivered in the vernacular, which required translation into English later, demanding a lot of time and effort.

Finally, the study needed funding, which I personally paid for. Petrol costs from Durban to uMzimkhulu and other research aids (*viz.* airtime, photocopying material and the purchase of a laptop) to conduct the study, were exorbitant.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

The qualitative research design, group and individual interviews employed to collect data, validity, and reliability were aspects discussed in this chapter. Permission to conduct the study, the selection of participants, ethical consideration, the data collection plan, data analysis, as well as limitations of the study, were also provided. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data garnered in this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 3 discussed the method, as well as methodology employed to generate and collect data. In this chapter, I will present and analyse the data generated and collected for this qualitative study through the use of group and individual interviews, with the focus having been on a sample of initiated Xhosa young men from a secondary school in uMzimkhulu. The generation and collection of data was triggered by the following question: ‘What are the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men?’ I analysed the data by forming themes which emerged from the responses. These themes are: the relationship between teachers and initiated learners, the relationship between initiated learners and peers, reducing discrimination, initiated learners’ risky behaviour, the schooling attire and conduct of initiated learners, as well as the academic and sports performances of initiated Xhosa learners who participated in the study.

Having introduced the chapter, I will now present the themes and data analysis.

#### **4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

##### **4.2.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND INITIATED LEARNERS**

According to the data collected for this study, the relationship shared by the young initiated participants with adults – in particular, with their teachers, emerged repeatedly as a theme in both the group and individual interviews. This may be owing to the fact that, among other things that are taught in initiation schools, is the idea of ‘respect’ features prominently. All participants in both the group and individual interviews agreed on the notion that being a ‘man’ is built on the foundations of respect. ‘Respect’, as a virtue, creates a good relationship with the world around an initiated man in particular (Beckwith, 1999). According to the participants in this study, respect forms a fundamental basis for their idea of being perceived as a man, and for the very idea of manhood in itself. This sentiment has been echoed by

Gitywa (1976), in his assertion that initiation transforms an “irresponsible” and “intractable” boy into a man with adult dignity and self-respect

During the group interview there were diverse responses from participants. Some of the participants expressed their awareness with regard to differential treatment of initiated boys compared with boys who were not. Some teachers treated initiated learners with a certain amount of respect, while others had low levels of tolerance for initiated young men.

During the interviews, I asked the participants what they would do as initiated learners if a female teacher were to call one of them and ask him to buy milk for her from the tuck-shop. I directed this question to the initiated young men to specifically gauge whether initiation does serve to enforce obedience irrespective of gender, which might eventually improve the level of respect perceptibly accorded to these young men.

Ayanda said, **“I respect teachers. Respect is very important. I do everything that they tell me to do”**.

Aphiwe agreed with Ayanda, as he stated, **“In the mountains we are taught about respect. We respect adults at all times. I would not feel bad about it”**.

All participants expounded the importance of respecting adults – teachers in particular, in addition to respecting oneself. They suggested that initiated learners who argue with teachers are regarded as men who do not respect themselves. This emerged when I asked them what they would do if a teacher shouted at them in class:

Enhle said, **“I don’t mind them (teachers). I just keep quiet; you don’t talk back to an adult, especially if you are initiated because we were taught about respect”** (emphasis added).

Another response from Aphiwe was, **“I think that the best way to deal with such teachers is to keep quiet; show respect to them, although they know that they should not do such a thing to initiated men. It will not be good if an initiated learner talks back to a teacher – it would mean he does not respect himself”**.

Mfecane (2013), in his article titled, 'Xhosa men must defend their own rituals', explained the importance of initiation, averring that, "the initiation ritual builds character and instils codes of conduct necessary to be a socially responsible citizen." I asked participants if they had noticed any changes in the way teachers treated them after they were initiated.

Asanda said, **"Well, teachers treat us in a similar way as they did before we were initiated. I have not noticed any changes"**.

Esethu agreed with Asanda, **"Me too; I have never noticed any change. The treatment by teachers is still the same"**.

Data presented by participants indicates that most teachers in that school continued to treat participants graduated initiates like school boys, and not as adults, even though they are initiated. This, according to the data at hand, suggests that, that school treats learners equally whether initiated or not initiated. All participants agreed that being initiated does not mean that they should not respect their teachers; actually, initiation imparts an additional responsibility to the participants to respect teachers, even though their community and culture may collectively regard them as adults. Although all participants agreed that respecting teachers is very important, opinions differed about the ways in which they wish to relate with their teachers. They had no specific preferential demands from teachers; in other words, they want to relate to their teachers just like any other learners.

Most participants took a step further by alleging to 'demand' a higher level of respect from their teachers, citing that respect is a two-way process and that they are adults who should be treated as such. For a positive relationship between teachers and initiated learners to transpire, most participants felt that they should respect teachers and that teachers should, likewise, respect them. These participants seemingly prefer to relate to teachers as their equals, for they regard themselves as adults. Initiation granted hegemonic masculinities social status to these young men. Connell (1996), among others states that hegemonic masculinities as the socially and culturally exalted form of masculinity. According to Mhlahlo (2009), straight after graduating from initiation schools, these young men start to practice their expected hegemonic gender roles, like dressing differently, 'chasing after' girls, refusing to take some orders, *etc.*

I asked the participants how they would like their teachers to treat them in terms of respect at school, taking into account that they are already initiated learners.

Okuhle replied, **“I think it is important that teachers have some reservations when it comes to us as initiated men. Although we are all learners, we are different. We are in a different category. We should be respected as initiated men”**.

Abongile added, **“Yes, teachers should treat us with respect and that is according to our culture. We have to be respected as adults”**.

These participants have gone through the essential preliminary stage of manhood conceptualised amongst Xhosa people in particular (Mhlahlo, 2009). Their next duty, then, is to preserve their culture and enhance their perception of their manhood by creating a dominant and aggressive image of man (Carstens, 1982).

When I asked them what they do if a teacher shouts at them in class, Esethu said, **“I feel bad; teachers should never shout at us. We are not boys anymore”**.

Respecting teachers and being respected by teachers is so important to this group of participants, to such an extent that they anxiously observed how teachers related to them after they were initiated. Some of them noticed that certain teachers treated them differently, with newfound respect, which made them happy; furthermore, some of them, according to data presented above, felt that some of their teachers *do* recognise and respect their new, social status within the Xhosa community. Teachers who accept initiated learners are likely to have a positive relationship with these young men and. The positive attitude of teacher towards these men who are caught in a predicament environment may improve the attitudes of these young men and consequently yield to positive schooling experiences.

However, it emerged during the group interview that some participants felt that generally, teachers do not respect them, and that provoked anger towards their teachers. One may not blame teachers for their attitudes towards participants because there are no policies in schools which compel them to treat initiated learners differently to the rest of the learners. Nevertheless, these learners expressed that they knew very well that they should not argue or fight with teachers because they are bounded by their culture, which emphasises that they

should respect adults – teachers in particular, at all times. Drawing from personal experience as a Xhosa descendent, some the initiated Xhosa young men feel that they are exempted from teachers' discipline. A teacher may discipline a learner by shouting at him. This may be misinterpreted as being disrespectful by some initiated learners.

I asked initiated learners if they have noticed any changes in personal treatment by teachers after they were initiated.

Aphiwe responded, **“Although teachers treat learners in the same way, I have noticed that they talk differently to initiated young men as compared to when they talk to boys”**.

Ayabonga agreed with Aphiwe, **“There is a difference. Teachers don't shout at initiated learners or say things like, ‘hey you!’; they call you by your name and they respect you. It makes me happy and (feel) respected”** (emphasis added).

Asiphe noticed that, **“Some teachers were irritated by initiated learners and those teachers always complained about initiated learners, and they show no respect towards initiated learners”**.

On the other hand, very few participants openly rejected that teachers should treat learners as equal partners. They felt that even though they are initiated, they are learners at school and teachers should treat them as such (as learners). They rejected the demand by the majority of participants that they want to relate to their teachers as equals and to be treated differently to other learners on basis of being initiated. This data concurs with (Bhana, 2002), that masculinity is a contested area.

During interviews, I asked the participants how they would like to be treated at school in terms of respect, taking into account that they are initiated:

Asiphe said, **“Learners should be treated in the same way at school. There are no men at school. We are all learners”**.

Yando added that, **“There should be a uniform treatment for all. We are all learners even if you have gone for initiation or not; it does not matter”**.

Participants unanimously agreed that ‘man’ and are inseparable entities, and that a Xhosa man who is disrespectful is not considered to be a ‘complete’ man. Therefore, based on the data gathered, in addition to my personal experience and observation, one may conclude that the virtue ‘respect’ transcends from an individual man to the community and the society as a whole. Previous studies conducted by Mhlahlo (2009), Papu (2006), and Beckwith (1999), among others, affirm that Xhosa men position respect as the most important contributory factor in the making of a hegemonic Xhosa man and Xhosa society. However, CIRP (2012) disputes the importance of the initiation ritual in totality.

In line with Xhosa culture, a man is described as a traditionally initiated male who respects himself, adults, the community and culture (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) further explains to us that initiation promotes respect, which plays a significant role in Xhosa culture, adding that respect is seen as a necessary value for promoting good relationships amongst adults and younger people.

According to Davis (2009), gender roles are socially constructed and are informed by family, the community, as well as by the wider society. Learners then take these gender roles and societal experiences to school (Mhlahlo, 2009). From the researcher’s own personal experience, Xhosa communities tend to treat these young men as old men (in other words, they are accorded “full adult” respect). In the view of Mhlahlo (2009), some of these young men ‘drag’ their communal experiences to school. Data from this study revealed that some of the participants expect an adult-to-adult relationship with their teachers. Should a seemingly disrespectful act be directed toward them, some may feel angry and undermined, which, from my teaching experience, may impact negatively on teacher-learner relations that are necessary for quality teaching and learning to come about. Therefore, disciplining these initiated learners may be a very complex issue and may ruin teacher-learner relations as aforementioned.

#### **4.2.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INITIATED LEARNERS AND THEIR PEERS**

Most of the participants expressed a desire to relate to their teachers as adults. Regarding relations between initiated learners and their peers, the data uncovers that there is, interestingly, a noticeable shift in the manner in which most of the initiated learner

participants prefer to relate to their peers, compared to the way in which they prefer to relate to their teachers.

According to Mandlove (2006), initiated Xhosa young men have undergone the process of a perceptible transition from the status of being children to that of being adults. Therefore, the majority of the participants tend to relate to their uninitiated peers as ‘adults’ regarding minors. Most participants prefer to be respected as adults by their peers. To make their point known, they reject performing some of their class duties, and start to encourage their male peers to opt for the initiation ritual, among other coercive behaviour which they tend to engage in. According to Mhlahlo (2009), it becomes the duty of the initiated men to ensure the reproduction of the ‘complete’ (initiated) Xhosa man, which is a social pattern accepted by the community.

I asked the initiated Xhosa young men who were involved in the study what they do when other boys play soccer during breaks (it was my intention to discover if and how they associate with uninitiated boys). Aphiwe contended that, **“I don’t play with uninitiated boys. I would be defaming my character. I also choose the types of games that are played. I cannot play ‘any’ game because I am a man now”**.

During the initiation ritual, initiates are taught and initiated as a group, which perceivably places them on another category of life, or on the upper level of the Xhosa male community hierarchy (Mhlahlo, 2009). Data from this study shows that some participants refused to play or work with girls and uninitiated boys in particular, after they came back to school from initiation.

Abongile also criticised the idea of associating with uninitiated boys, stating, **“I sit with men, not boys. I don’t play with boys; I associate with young men. We talk ‘men things’ to each other”**.

Enhle concurred with Aphiwe and Abongile, also mentioning a reason why he does not want to associate with uninitiated boys. He confessed, **“I would like to spend time with initiated men at break time. If you are initiated men you should spend time with men, not boys. What can you learn from boys?”**

Most participants reject associating with uninitiated boys unless they are compelled by certain circumstances. For example, Ayanda said, **“If there were many men in my class, I would have associated with them, but they are very few. So, I am also forced to stay with boys...”** These initiated Xhosa young men may be positioned within what Connell (1996) conceptualises as hegemonic masculinities. In Mhlahlo’s (2009) perspective, initiated young men deliberately exclude uninitiated boys to indicate that they are in an ‘upper category’ of the Xhosa manhood hierarchy.

Contrary to the beliefs of the majority of the initiated Xhosa young men who participated in the study, there was a small minority who openly rejects the notion of discriminating against other learners on the basis of them being uninitiated. Esethu avowed that, **“I don’t discriminate against anybody. We are all people, initiated or not initiated; I associate with everybody at school”**.

Initiation is a marker of manhood with those who have been circumcised and have endured the initiation process and survived receiving hegemonic status. So even though there are some initiated boys who do not expect preferential treatment, nor do they discriminate against non-initiated boys, they nevertheless benefit from the gains made for all who are initiated

Yando, who also rejects discrimination against uninitiated learners, elaborated on the reason behind his positive relationship with his uninitiated peers, remarking that, **“I don’t choose, ‘who do I sit or play with?’, whether initiated or not. You are still a person. I don’t like discrimination. Some boys may like to go for traditional initiation but cannot afford it because it is costly...”** Yando raised a very strong point, among others, that some of the uninitiated boys are not against the ritual per se, but rather, they do not have the means by which to pay for it. This data is in affirmation with the initiation research conducted by Mhlahlo (2009) and Papu (2006), among other similar studies, that the ritual is highly commercialised and that subsequently, its commercialisation has closed doors for some boys whilst putting lives of those who can afford it in danger.

Mhlahlo (2009) informs us that it is a deliberate act to discriminate against uninitiated Xhosa young men in traditional ceremonies like weddings and dances, among other cultural activities. Some of the participants confessed that there are, similarly, cases wherein initiated Xhosa young men openly discriminate against uninitiated boys, as well as girls during

classroom activities. In a didactic situation, learners are expected to debate, negotiate, play educational games like quizzes and relate to each other on an equal basis as peers. I am interested in knowing: ‘how do teachers ensure that their learners work together excluding their sexual orientation, traditional beliefs and cultural differences to avoid peer tensions?’

Most participants were also sceptical of performing some class duties, such as sweeping, as well as scraping and polishing the floor, as they felt that these activities are not meant for men. Participants were asked that if certain class members refuse to do their class chores, ‘who will do their share of work?’ Some participants confirmed that sour relations between initiated and uninitiated boys, as well as girls, do emerge at times, as both uninitiated boys and girls feel that they are being abused by initiated learners. Therefore, initiation may promote unfair gender and power relations, as it emphasises the power of manhood in the household, community and society at large (Papu, 2006).

I asked initiated learners what their class duties were, as class members, and whether they were happy to perform those duties.

Some of the responses went thus: Abongile, **“We do classroom cleaning; however, some duties are not meant for men”**.

Ayanda shared the same sentiment with Abongile, maintaining that, **“I do my class duties like cleaning, but it is not easy for me to do that”**.

From personal experience, rejecting partaking in class chores contradicts what is normally expected to happen in most black-dominated rural and township schools, where learners take turns to clean their classrooms due to financial constraints. Therefore, it is worth noting that according to the data from this study, all of the initiated Xhosa young men who comprised the sample agreed that they have to clean their classrooms, as the importance of cleanliness is, in fact, part of their learning during the initiation process.

Therefore, these young men do not totally reject performing their class chores, like cleaning; however, some of the participants reject the idea of engaging with certain cleaning activities, like scraping and polishing the floor *etc.* Some of these participants preferred duties which they perceive to be associated more with males, *e.g.* cleaning the board, carrying water buckets for the girls, moving the desks, and wiping the windows clean.

On the other hand, a few initiated learners had no problem with any sort of cleaning duties. Asiphe said, **“I do my class duties, like cleaning, freely”**. Okuhle did not deviate from Asiphe’s words, remarking that, **“I do cleaning and I do all my duties as required”**. This minority group of participants usually ‘follows the beat’ to avoid being labelled as quarrelsome.

Hegemonic initiated learners tend to assume a guiding role in order to preserve their culture, a behaviour pattern termed by Papu as “cultural reproduction” (Papu, 2006). Most of the participants claim to motivate uninitiated boys to go for initiation; such motivation may have positive intent, but can often manifest negatively. There are both reported and unreported cases where initiated young men bully uninitiated peers (Mhlahlo, 2009). According to Mhlahlo (2009), bullying takes place in various forms, be it in the form of teasing, mocking, pinching, exclusion, tripping up in the corridors, and beating, among other forms of oppressive behaviour. Remarkably, some participants revealed that they are complemented by some girls in mocking and teasing their peers who are not initiated. This revelation from this study supports Mhlahlo’s findings that the bullying of uninitiated learners is not done by initiated learners alone, but that certain girls do mock and tease their uninitiated male peers as well (Mhlahlo, 2009).

I asked these initiated learners what they would say if other boys of their age state that they don’t want to go for initiation.

Ayanda said, **“A boy who does not want to go for initiation is a coward – he lacks knowledge; he does not want to grow and to be a man. I do not argue with them because they are like little boys”**.

Okuhle added, **“A person who does not want to go there is a coward. Going up there is the right thing to do, but some people may fear for their lives”**.

He continued that, **“...I will always advise them to go because it is done. If they don’t go I will treat them like boys, because they do not have the experiences that I have.”**

In Mhlahlo's (2009) view, compelling other learners to engage in hegemonic behaviour and go for traditional initiation may yield detrimental physical, spiritual and psychological outcomes. Words such as 'cowards', 'people who lack experience', and 'little boys', among others, are passed around, aimed specifically at uninitiated boys (Mfecane, 2013). Being called a 'coward' thus means that you are failing to protect the community assets, including the culture, which is an insult to traditional Xhosa constructions of masculinity (Mfecane, 2013).

#### **4.2.3 REDUCING DISCRIMINATION**

According to Papu (2006), discrimination is not a selective phenomenon; therefore, everybody is prone to be discriminated against in one way or the other at some point. In most cases, it is believed that initiated men discriminate against uninitiated men (Mhlahlo, 2009). Mhlahlo (2009) further explains that initiated Xhosa men may not allow an uninitiated Xhosa male to participate in ceremonies or even social rituals such as marriage, and may not even be allowed to marry or have a special relationship with a woman. Some participants revealed, however, that they have experienced being discriminated against for their status of being initiated.

Data from this study revealed that, to avoid being discriminated against, the minority participants prefer to treat their initiation status with confidentiality. They claimed that that was their perfect strategy, which also assists them in their bid to avoid divulging information pertaining to their experiences of the traditional initiation ritual. Mfecane (2013), in his article titled, 'Xhosa men must defend our ritual', explains that in Xhosa culture, the experiences surrounding the traditional Xhosa initiation ritual cannot be shared with anyone who has not undertaken the ritual. Uninitiated Xhosa males, medically circumcised men, women and outsiders are not allowed to access information about certain aspects of the ritual (Mfecane, 2013).

I asked this selection of initiated Xhosa young men how they would prefer their teachers and peers to relate to them at school:

Esethu said, **"I just want to be treated like all other learners"**.

Ayanda concurred, **“I also fear being discriminated against, so I want to be treated like all other learners”**.

Further, Enhle explained why he wants to be treated similarly to all other learners, rejecting the demands made by other initiated learners – he highlighted his need to be treated with respect by both teachers and peers, acknowledging that initiated males generally regard themselves as adults. He said, **“Although I would like teachers to treat me with some level of respect, I just prefer that teachers treat us in the same way, because some learners will not understand why teachers treat initiated learners differently as some of them are against traditional initiation”**.

According to the participants who would prefer to keep their initiation status confidential, confidentiality serves two purposes: avoiding being discriminated against and avoiding sharing the secrets of the ritual with people who are perceived to be culturally ineligible to access such information.

As mentioned before, some of these participants perform all their classroom duties as expected of them even though they may be personally against performing some of those duties, merely to avoid arguing with their teachers and peers, which may render them being discriminated against.

According to some of the participants from the study, initiates are taught in their particular initiation schools that their experiences of initiation are to be kept confidential at all times. Mhlahlo (2009) informs us that it is very difficult to obtain information about initiation experiences from initiates. In their initiation schools they are told that they should not divulge any information regarding the ritual; therefore, the prospect of ‘confidentiality’ is part of initiates’ construction of masculinities (Mhlahlo, 2009).

I have learnt from literature, including, among others, Connell’s (1996) perspectives, and observed that there’re males who fall under hegemonic masculinities but tend to hide under the umbrella which I termed the ‘confidentiality shield’, whilst at the same time, enjoying all the benefits earned by those who fit the description of hegemonic masculinities, *e.g.* being respected by their teachers and peers without demanding respect, and ‘netting’ a number of girlfriends, among other perceived benefits.

#### 4.2.4 INITIATED LEARNERS' RISKY BEHAVIOUR

Data from this study indicates that most of the participants are sexually active and claim to be most preferred by the girls with whom they come to associate with, over uninitiated boys. The majority of the initiated young Xhosa men sampled for the purposes of this study are involved in multi-partner relationships in a seeming bid to prove their masculinity. Having multiple partners is a risky form of sexual behaviour. Multi-partner relationships may result in diseases such as STIs, HIV and penile cancer, among other diseases (World Health Organisation, 2006).

I asked the initiated Xhosa learners how many girlfriends each of them has. Some of the responses went thus: Abongile said, **“4. I am a real man”**.

Ayanda: **“2”**.

Asiphe: **“4 girlfriends”**.

Ayabonga: **“About 5 or 6. Among them, there is a ‘real’ one. If you have a problem with the other one you don’t have to start afresh looking for another one; it makes things easy for you”**.

These participants may be positioned within what Connell (1996) conceptualises as “hegemonic masculinities”, seems to constantly evidence themselves as being the most socially-accepted field of masculinities. Data from this study reveals that, to the participants, having multiple partners is emblematic of and proves how masculine a young man is. This revelation resonates with Mhlahlo’s (2009) angle, when he stated that initiation affords power to men whilst taking power away from women. Although the (Wilcken, 2010) suggests that circumcised men are less vulnerable to STIs, it does not mean that they will not contract the STIs if they engage in risky sexual behaviour (Wilcken, 2010).

Most participants attested that the quest for ‘real love’ is not an imperative issue anymore; what really matters to them, they assert, is the number of girlfriends they have. Drawing from this data, I personally feel that the value of the opposite gender (girls) is diminished to a mere

number. Girls are seemingly made into mere objects for counting. Therefore, initiation perpetuates unfair gender power relations among learners in schools (Mhlahlo, 2009).

Having learnt from a wide range of literature, which, among others, includes an initiation study conducted by Mhlahlo (2009), it becomes evident that initiation generally awards gender power to initiated learners over girls and uninitiated learners. It did not surprise me, from the data which emerged from this study, that among the sample of initiated learners, very few understood the impact of engaging themselves in multi-partner relationships.

Among the participants, only one admitted that he does not have a girlfriend. He openly shared with the group during the group interview that he was not ready to enter into a relationship while he is still at school, even though he is initiated. He said, **“I don’t have a girlfriend because I don’t need one and I don’t think it is the right time for me to have one”**. Other participants from the group laughed at this learner when he revealed this information during the group interview. Connell (1996), among other gender activists, mentions that deviating from the prescribed form of masculinity, which is hegemony, results in stigmatisation, exclusion, and many other types of unfair treatment. Surprisingly, that young man was not scolded at because he has gone through the marker of manhood and survived receiving hegemonic status.

Very few participants were involved in single partner relationships. During the group interview, Aphiwe, Enhle and Okuhle, revealed that they each had **“one”** girlfriend. I noticed that it was not easy for these young men to speak out freely, as compared to those with multiple partners. I noticed, however, that other group members did not direct any negative remarks to these participants who are loyal to their partners. I also noticed their body language; some shrugged whilst others nodded. I had asked them why they did that. Ayabonga among others said, **“Only one wheel? Get more”**. Indicating that it is not good enough for a man to have one girlfriend, but that at the very least, they *had* girlfriends. The fact that these participants had girlfriends, even though they did not have many, granted them acceptance as one of the ‘men’ among group members. These initiated young men have received social status and are high up in the hierarchy of males but they do not have many girlfriends like their comrades, they nevertheless benefit from the gains made for all who are initiated.

Although the South African government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UNAIDS, as well as other institutions, appear to be trying everything possible to reduce HIV infections and to encourage responsible sexual behaviour, such as having a single partner, avoiding sex at an early age and using condoms, the ritual seems to be holding all these endeavours back (Mhlahlo, 2009). Hence, Mhlahlo (2009) suggests that people should take responsibility over their sexual behaviour by using condoms, being faithful to one partner or abstaining.

#### 4.2.5 THE SCHOOLING ATTIRE AND CONDUCT OF INITIATED LEARNERS

Among other themes that emerged from data, was the schooling attire and conduct of the sampled initiated Xhosa learners. Most South African public schools have their specific school uniforms and codes of conduct as prescribed in the South African School. Therefore, learners are expected to wear uniforms according to their specific school dress codes, as well as codes of conduct stipulated in their designated school policies.

All participants agreed that they should wear their school uniform at school. However, the large majority of participants strongly felt that cultural items should be added to their school uniforms, so as to indicate that they are initiated. Most participants felt that displaying or adding initiation symbols to the school uniform bears a lot of benefits. They mentioned benefits such as, *inter alia*, being respected by teachers and peers, and gaining girls' attention.

Aphiwe tendered, **“Just like soccer supporters; they like to wear jerseys for the teams that they support. I would also like to wear cultural clothes (so) that learners and teachers will respect me”** (emphasis added).

This majority of participants suggested that they should at least be allowed to wear 'navata' hats or display *navatas* in the front pockets of their blazers. Mhlahlo (2009) informs us that young men usually start practising their expected hegemonic gender roles (they dress differently, associate with young men, refuse to take some orders *etc.*) straight after they have graduated from initiation schools. These participants dress differently to uninitiated boys when they are at their homes, and are expected to conduct themselves as responsible adults in those special clothes in their communities (Mhlahlo, 2009; Beckwith, 1999).

Dressing differently (as an initiated Xhosa man) is vital to most of these participants because it symbolises the accomplishment of a different category of life. Cultural symbols which are worn by initiated men distinguish men from boys and girls (GIPCA, 2012). Therefore, most of the participants strongly felt that it is very important to them to be easily identified as initiated men through specific cultural attire.

I asked initiated learners if they would like to wear traditional clothes or symbols at school which indicates that they are initiated.

Ayanda stated that, **“I would like to dress in our traditional clothes. They show the stage that you are at. They are very important to us”**.

Abongile concurred, **“At least they should allow us to wear *navata* hats at school”**. The aforementioned benefits seem to encourage the majority of participants to want to display cultural items as an indication that they are initiated. Some of the participants mentioned that in addition to the above-mentioned benefits, displaying cultural symbols can spark a desire for uninitiated boys to opt for the initiation ritual. However, some of these benefits nevertheless steer conflict amongst learners, particularly between initiated and uninitiated learners. Yando, who forms part of the minority group which rejects the addition or displaying of cultural symbols to the school uniform said, **“The school should not allow initiated men to wear traditional attire or traditional symbols at school. All girls will opt for those who are dressed in tradition attire. So, uniform is good; we will be the same. Also, girls laugh at boys who are not initiated. Initiated boys take uninitiated boys’ girlfriends. So, there will be a lot of fights”**.

Besides the rewards of respect and attention that is said to be earned by initiated learners from their teachers and peers, some participants explained that the cultural symbols are believed to be worn by men who are considered as being matured and socially ready to engage in sexual activities. Circumcision, which is part of the initiation ritual, symbolises purification and masculinity (Carstens, 1982). Therefore, some participants felt that girls are preferentially attracted to these initiated learners over uninitiated learners.

Among other things, cultural symbols carry culture (Mhlahlo, 2009). If cultural symbols carry culture, then some of these participants ‘carry culture’ to school through the use of

these cultural symbols. However, it is worth noting that these cultural symbols are associated with good personal conduct and self-respect (Mhlahlo, 2009). All participants agreed that in order to earn respect from their teachers and peers, they have to respect themselves.

The South African Constitution provides for cultural freedom, in addition to ensuring equality and non-discrimination, among other provisions (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993). Few participants argued, however, that if initiated learners are given the right to display or wear initiates' cultural symbols at school, they are likely to receive special treatment over uninitiated boys, girls and other ethnic groups.

#### **4.2.6 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INITIATED XHOSA YOUNG MEN**

Although this study was not meant to focus on initiated learners' academic performance but on general experiences, among the themes that emerged from the data was the academic performance of initiated learners. Literature on general academic performance of boys in high schools reveals that boys are generally under-performing, as compared to girls (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). Jha & Kelleher (2006) further explain that the general academic underperformance of boys could be attributed to factors such as teacher-learner relations, home contexts, personal attitudes and behaviour, girlfriend-related issues, school rules and punishment, substance abuse, and peer pressure. Jha & Kelleher (2006) concluded that the general academic under-achievement of boys in schools is an old phenomenon and one that has been debated for a long period of time. Participants in this research project are not an exception to this challenge. All participants agreed that they have an added burden to their shoulders. They carry the burden of proving their masculinity, like providing for their families, becoming protectors of their culture and community, 'chasing after' girls *etc.* Therefore, most of them acknowledged that they primarily focus on achieving communal expectations, which in turn, tends to negatively impact upon their academic performance and level of commitment to school work.

During the group interview we discussed the value of 'respect' as one of the major benefits of traditional initiation. As the interview progressed, Yando argued that, **“Although respect is taught in initiation schools, some class teachers complain about the behaviour and poor academic performance of initiated learners”**.

Asanda added that, **“Teachers also complain about (the) age of most initiated young men and that they usually repeat classes; so how can we say they respect teachers and their parents if they fail to pass classes?”** (emphasis added)

It is worth noting that these learner have a potential of not doing well or being left behind their age mates. The initiation season begins in June and the other one in December. Some initiates leave schools before writing their mid-year or final exams to prepare for the ritual. Some come back to school in the middle of the term after spending a long period of time at home nursing their operations. During the group interview Ayabonga said, **“Me and my other friends we had to repeat grade 10 because, we could not wait for the final exams. I ran away from home and joined my friends. I could not be left behind my age mates. Everybody was talking about going to the mountain, so I really could not miss it. My friends said teachers will use our year marks, which was not the case”**.

Peer pressure, love relationships and lack of interest in learning cumulatively tend to result in one eventuality: the repetition of classes (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). The Review of National Policies of Education in South Africa (2008) revealed that grade 11 bore the highest repetition rate compared to all other grades, especially with regard to boys. According to the review, there is a trend whereby learners become very depressed when their peers move on to next grades; as a result, some revert to substance abuse, poor behaviour, and eventually, dropping out of school. Therefore, in 1998, the South African Department of Education crafted and issued a policy which stipulated the norms by which learners could proceed through the various grades in school with those belonging to their age cohort (Review of National Policies for Education in South Africa, 2008). The policy makes the provision for a learner to repeat once per phase and calls for a chance for the learner to gain assistance, in order that he / she can keep up with his peers. Having been in the teaching field for more than 13 years, my observation is that learners are continuously being condoned to the following grades, in order that they may join peers belonging to their age group. This occurs even though they are not ready for the next grades, and consequently, they become frustrated and drop out of school or fail grade 12.

#### **4.2.7 SPORTS PERFORMANCES OF INITIATED XHOSA YOUNG MEN**

Although male learners are generally underperforming in academic work (Jha & Kelleher, 2006), they are generally excelling in contact sports such as soccer, rugby and cricket, among other sporting codes (Lasko, 2000). According to Lasko (2000), males get opportunities to publicly demonstrate their ‘masculinistic’ abilities in sports. Judging from the data, the initiated Xhosa male learners who participated in this study are not an exception to this trend.

Data from this study informs that participants dominate school first teams. Unsurprisingly, it is unfortunate to assert that some participants confessed that they intentionally side-line uninitiated boys in those first teams. Most participants rejected playing with uninitiated boys in any form of sports. This means that younger boys and uninitiated boys are denied a chance of playing, as well as excelling, in school teams that are usually dominated by initiated young males. During the group interview when I asked them if they do play soccer during break time, Abongile said, **“Initiated men do not play with boys, we only play for the school’s senior teams. What can people say when a respected initiated men is seen chasing a small boy with a ball? We can’t play with boys. Boys should play in junior’s teams”**.

Most of the participants also choose the types of sports they play. Soccer, rugby, and cricket, among other sporting codes, were preferred as suitable male sports by the large majority of the participants. During the group interview, the large majority of participants agreed with Enhle when he professed that, **“Men play ‘man sports’, not things like netball”**.

They mentioned netball as one of the ‘female’ sports that men should not play. According to Meyer (2008), if men participate in female-dominated sports, they are likely to get laughed off the field, taunted with jeers of ‘homo’, and suggestions that they are ‘not man enough’ to play with ‘real men’ in traditionally male-dominated sports. Therefore, it would be difficult for males to partake in the so-called female-dominated sports (Meyer, 2008). This clearly indicates that hegemonic males use sports to socialise and perpetuate gender inequalities.

Davis (2009) criticises schools for creating an environment in which school sports become too competitive, which results in division amongst learners; he suggests that sport programmes should be identified as one of the tools that could unite learners. Davis (2009) believes that there is room for improvement, and further suggests that schools start immediately implementing programmes which will actively seek to unify learners of all genders and masculinities through inclusivity in sports.

According to West (2001), young boys bear a desire to be accepted by young men. Young boys are influenced by young men to go out and play sports, see movies or work (West, 2001). Most participants believed that younger and uninitiated boys adore, respect and usually look up to their initiated peers. West (2001) affirms that it is very important to monitor boys and young men, particularly in schools.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have presented and analysed data that I have generated and collected for this qualitative study, which was conducted in a secondary school in uMzimkhulu, using group and individual interviews. Six major themes emerged from data analysis, *viz.* the relationship between initiated learners and their teachers and peers, reducing discrimination, how confidentiality reduces the chances of being discriminated against, initiated learners' risky behaviour, the preferred schooling attire and conduct of initiated learners, as well as the performance of initiated Xhosa learners in academics and sport.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, will provide a synthesis of the findings and conclude the whole study

# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented and analysed data which was generated and collected in a secondary school in uMzimkhulu. Group and individual interviews were utilised in the data generation and collection process, involving 10 school-going initiated Xhosa young men. The critical question for this study was: ‘What are the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men?’ In this concluding chapter, I will provide a synthesis of the findings from this research project and conclude the study.

The study revealed that constructions of masculinities are complex and that the schooling experiences of Xhosa young men are diverse. While many participants performed masculinities that suggested dominance over uninitiated boys and over girls, some were against any form of dominance and discrimination.

The study has also found that initiation, a ritual that speaks largely to the advent of the construction of masculinities, is characterised by a variety of experiences, including interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, risky behaviour, the reduction of discrimination, behaviour associated with one’s chosen attire, as well as academic and sports performances.

Chapter 1 introduced the study. Current and historical texts on initiation and the construction of masculinities were reviewed. The theoretical framework which underpins this study was discussed in Chapter 2, and a review of salient literature was provided. Chapter 3 discussed the research method and methodology, where a qualitative research design was employed with group and individual interview instruments to develop and collect data. Data was then transcribed, presented and analysed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provided a synthesis of the findings and concluded the whole study on the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men in a secondary school at uMzimkhulu.

The themes which emerged from data analysis in Chapter 4, as well as the findings from the study, are in line with the perspectives of Davis (2009) and Connell (1995), who asserted that masculinities are fluid in nature and a contested area, based on contextual variables.

## **5.2 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS**

Having introduced this chapter, I will provide synthesis of findings of the study.

### **5.2.1 Relationships**

All these young men are already in receipt of a social status and are high up in the Xhosa male hierarchy. They have been circumcised and have endured the initiation status process and survived. So, even though there are some initiated boys who do not expect preferential treatment, nor do they discriminate against non-initiated boys, nevertheless benefit from the gains made for all who are initiated.

All participants stressed the importance of respecting adults, and in particular, teachers. Most of these young men have received socially acclaimed “hegemonic masculinity” status, demanded that teachers should pay them more respect due to the fact that they had now been initiated. These young men strongly believed that respect is a two-way process (teachers should respect learners and *vice versa*, *i.e.* learners should respect

The study also found that most of the young men show a significant shift in the way in which they relate to their uninitiated male peers, as compared to the way they related to them before they were initiated. Most participants related to their uninitiated male peers as adults and minors. They also tended to intentionally exclude and discriminate against uninitiated boys with the aim of encouraging them to go for initiation. It becomes clear that initiated learners tend to exert peer pressure and narrate myths which attempt to encourage uninitiated boys to look forward to traditional initiation.

Participants believed that if you are not initiated, people do not fully accept and respect you. They assumed that teachers, peers and friends respect young men if they have undergone initiation. The ‘prizes’ of undergoing initiation, in their view, seem to be respect and acceptance to manhood. Therefore, initiation is associated with notions of pride and the ‘prestige’ of being a man. There are other gains of initiation, such as: initiated young men are

rewarded with so much status amongst the Xhosa community and are therefore in a greater position to 'net' as many girlfriends as possible, and that seems to be a socially accepted norm.

### **5.2.2 Risky behaviour**

The requirement for the attainment of manhood in Xhosa culture is understood to be traditional initiation. Initiation is seen as a transition to adulthood and possibly a passage to risky behaviour. The study found that the majority of these initiated young men are involved in multi-partner relationships. Multi-partner relationships are a risky form of behaviour as they put both the lives of young men and their partners at risk of being infected by STIs and HIV, especially if they don't use protection.

Young men who have many girlfriends are seen as heroes, charmers ('*amasoka*') and 'real men'. They also, by default of having been initiated, largely earn the respect of their peers and community. Having many girlfriends is perceived as proof of being a 'real man' and part of masculinity construction. Therefore, the schooling experiences of these young men change as most of them start to concentrate on proving their masculinity by 'chasing after' girls, among other behavioural trends.

Generally boys who are not interested in girls are labelled as 'gays', 'moffies', and not 'real men', among other names, and they face a tremendous amount of discrimination (Mhlahlo, 2009). Ironically, young men who are involved in single-partner relationships and those who are not involved in love relations, are accepted as men, yet still survive being discriminated against by their initiated peers.

### **5.2.3 Discrimination**

The study indicates that young men also experience discrimination at school. Although most participants seem to want their teachers and peers to acknowledge that they are initiated men, few of them felt that it is better to hide their initiation status in order to avoid being discriminated against.

There was a collective feeling, amongst participants, that some teachers and peers discriminated young men. To avoid being discriminated against, few participants decided to do their class duties like all other learners, and avoided any activities and symbols associated with initiated young men. Therefore, hiding their initiation status seems to serve two main purposes: minimising discrimination and avoiding sharing information with uninitiated people. On the other hand, hiding their initiation status may also be their way of preserving the secrecy and self-reflection attached to initiation.

#### **5.2.4 Display of status**

Although very few young men who participated in the study claim to prefer hiding their initiation status, most of them claim to want their teachers and peers to know that they are initiated men. They expressed their wish to be allowed by the school to wear or display symbols which are associated with initiated young men, symbols such as Navata hats, among others.

Traditional symbols are very important to them because they distinguish initiated men from uninitiated 'boys'. They believe that these symbols would command further respect from their teachers and peers, and spur a desire in uninitiated boys to opt for the initiation ritual.

#### **5.2.5 Academic and sport performance**

Regarding academic performance, the study indicates that most participants were generally lagging behind, as compared to their age mates. Their poor academic performance may be attributed to the ritual itself. Learners, leave schools before writing exams or days after the school calendar started, in pursuit of manhood.

Initiated Xhosa young male learners' experiences differ to uninitiated learners because they spend a lot of time trying to prove their masculinity, the study shows. Proving masculinity entails, *inter alia*, providing for their families, protecting and promoting culture, and 'chasing after girls' (Mhlahlo, 2009). Unsurprisingly, focussing on societal expectations impacts negatively on their academic performance.

Although most of the young men sampled in this study are academically lacking, they are generally excelling in contact sports like soccer, among other sporting codes. Some of these young men construct their masculinities by dominating and excelling in sports. They attest to purposely side-lining uninitiated males from first teams, and act as gate-keepers of male-dominated sports by side-lining girls from partaking in male-dominated sports.

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# **APPENDICES**

# **APPENDIX A**

APPENDIX A



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Tel No: +27 31 260 3587  
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03 June 2012

Mr Wiseman G Ngcobo (985182103)  
School of Education

Dear Mr Ngcobo

Protocol reference number: HSS/0247/012M  
Project title: Exploring the schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa boys in a secondary school at Umzinkhulu

In response to your application dated 05 March 2012, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has 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 school/department for a period of 5 years.

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

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee**

cc Supervisor: Dr Shakila Singh  
cc Academic Leader: Dr MN Davids  
cc Mrs S Naicker/Mr N Memela

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# **APPENDIX B**

## LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

P.O. Box 5730  
Durban  
4000  
20 July 2012

**The Principal**  
Rietvlei Secondary School  
Rietvlei, Stafford Post  
4686

Sir / Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I, *Wiseman Gcizelela Ngcobo* (Student no: 985182103), a final year Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus), would like to request for permission to conduct a study in your school. The study will take one week to complete, during school break times, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2012 to the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2012.

My study will focus on Grade 10 and 11 initiated Xhosa young men. This study will be voluntary for the learners and they are at liberty to withdraw at any time should they wish to do so.

My study topic is: **“Exploring schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men in a secondary school in uMzimkhulu”**.

I will provide you with interview questions and feedback at the end of the study.

I am looking forward to exploring the particular schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men in your school.

For more information, you can contact my supervisor, Dr Shakila Reddy, at 031-260 7326 or at [Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za).

Yours faithfully,

WISEMAN G. NGCOBO

[ Tel: 031-908 3638 or 073 130 9797 ; Email: [ngcobow@yahoo.com](mailto:ngcobow@yahoo.com) ]

# **APPENDIX C**

**APPENDIX C**

**LETTER TO PARENT / GUARDIAN AND CONSENT FORM**

Dear Parent / Guardian

My name is *Wiseman G. Ngcobo*. I am a final year Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. I will be conducting a research project during this year. Your son is invited to participate in the study of Xhosa young men's experiences in schools.

This is a voluntary study. Your son may withdraw from the study at any time should he feel that he does not wish to participate any further.

A group of 10 voluntary learners will be selected to be interviewed and answer questions on their personal schooling experiences after initiation.

I will be asking similar questions to all participating learners regarding their personal schooling experiences after initiation. Your son reserves the right to not respond to questions that he may not feel comfortable with. Further, he will not be penalised for not responding or for withdrawing from the study; I will not allow anyone to know that your son was the source of information. Your son's names or any identifying characteristics will remain anonymous. In addition, your son will not incur any costs as a result of his participation in this study.

I am looking forward to exploring the particular schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa young men. Participation in this study will better inform me, educators and other adults on the specific schooling experiences of initiated Xhosa boys so that adjustments will be proposed if necessary.

A summary of my findings will be given to your son.

If there are any questions prior to participation or at any time during the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (031) 908 3638 or 073 130 9797. You could also email me at [ngcobow@yahoo.com](mailto:ngcobow@yahoo.com) or contact my dissertation supervisor, Dr Shakila Singh, at (031) 260 7326 or at [Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za)

If you allow your son to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached form and he may return it to the school clerk. Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Wiseman G. Ngcobo

## **Mzali / Mphathi / Mfundi**

Igama lami ndingu *Wiseman G. Ngcobo*. Ndenza unyaka wokugqibela kwi Masters eUniversity of KwaZulu-Natal. Ndizakube ndenza uphenyo (research) kulo nyaka. Ndimema abafundi bebanga leshumi, neshumi elinanye, abolukile bathathe inxexheba kuloluphenyo.

Oluphenyo alunyanzelekile, umfundi angabuye aluyeke xa engakholisekile ukuqhubeka nalo.

Ndizothatha oma-volunteer alishumi ndiwabuze imibuzo efanayo ngezinto abahlangabezana nazo ezikolweni ngasemva kolwaluko.

Abafundi banelungelo lokingayiphenduli imibuzo abaziva bengathandi ukuyiphendula, kwaye angeke babekwe tyala ngako oko.

Ulwazi olufumaneka kulo oluphenyo kuzokuba yimfihlo. Amagama abafundi angeke apapashwe.

Abafundi abazukubhatalwa, abazukubhatalwa futhi ngokuba yinxalenye yalo oluphenyo.

Ndingwenela ukwazi ngezinto abahlangabezana nazo ezikolweni emva kokwaluka. Ukuba yinxalenye yalo oluphenyo kuzonceda ukundinika ulwazi, notishala kanye nabo abantu abadala ukuthi bazi okwenzeka ezikoleni kubentwana abalukileyo, emva kokwaluka kwabo.

Isishwankathelo semiphumela yophenyo izakunikwa ababeyinxalenye yalo.

Ukuba kunemibuzo ngalo oluhlelo ungandifonela kule nombolo. Tel: (031) 908 3638 / 073 130 9797 / Email: [ngcobow@yahoo.com](mailto:ngcobow@yahoo.com) okanye umphathi Dr Shakila Singh (031) 260 67326 / email [Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Reddysh@ukzn.ac.za)

Ukuba uyamvumela umntwana wakho ukuba abe yinxalenye yalo oluphenyo, ndicela usayine eli form, alibuyise esikoleni. Ndiyabulela kakhulu.

Ozithobayo

Wiseman G. Ngcobo

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## **I form lemivume**

Mna \_\_\_\_\_ mzali/guardian, ka \_\_\_\_\_ grade \_\_\_\_\_  
ndiyamvumela/andimvumela ukuba athathe inxexheba kulo oluphenyo.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent form for the parent / guardian**

I \_\_\_\_\_, the parent / guardian of  
\_\_\_\_\_ in grade \_\_\_\_\_, hereby  
agree / disagree to give permission for my son to participate in the research study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent form for the learner**

I \_\_\_\_\_, in grade \_\_\_\_\_,  
hereby agree to participate in the proposed study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# **APPENDIX D**

<b>APPENDIX D</b>
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## **GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. As an initiated learner, how do you want to be treated by teachers and other learners at school? (To find out what are their expectations on their treatment upon having been initiated.)
2. Did you notice any changes in your personal treatment by teachers and other learners after initiation? If so, what changes did you notice and how did you respond to them? (To find out if learners have noticed any changes in their treatment upon having been initiated, and how have they responded to such changes.)
3. If you were given a chance to choose between going for traditional initiation and not going, what would you choose? (To find out if boys do have a choice)
4. What would you say if other boys of your age in your class say that they don't want to go for traditional initiation? (To find out if they consider boys who do not want to go for traditional initiation as being 'real men'.)
5. What are your duties in class as a class member? (To find out if initiated young men do take part in classroom chores, as well as their attitude towards classroom chores.)
6. What would you do if a female teacher calls you from class and asks you to buy her some milk from the tuck-shop? (To find out how initiated young men respond to female teachers' instructions.)
7. If the other, uninitiated boys play soccer during break, what do you do? (To find out if initiated young men do associate with uninitiated boys.)
8. How many girlfriends do you have? (To find out what perceived love gains they receive at school.)

9. What would you like to wear at school? (To find out if initiated young men want to dress in their traditional attire at school, which shows that they are initiated.)
10. What do you do if other learners misbehave in class? (To identify their level of responsibility and counter-resistance.)
11. What do you do if a teacher shouts at you in class? (To determine the level of respect that these initiated young men expect from teachers.)

# **APPENDIX E**

<b>APPENDIX E</b>
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## **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. As an initiated learner, how do you want to be treated by teachers and by other learners at school? (To find out what are their expectations on their treatment are upon having been initiated.)
2. Did you notice any changes in personal treatment to you by teachers and other learners after initiation? If so, what changes did you notice and how did you respond to them? (To find out if learners have noticed any changes in treatment and, accordingly, how have they responded to them.)
3. If you were given a chance to choose between going for traditional initiation and not going, what would you choose? (To find out if boys do have a choice.)
4. What would you say if other boys of your age in your class say they don't want to go for traditional initiation? (To find out if they consider boys who do not want to go for traditional initiation as real men)
5. What are your duties in class as a class member? (To find out if initiated young men do take part in classroom chores, as well as their attitude towards classroom chores.)
6. What would you do if a female teacher calls you from class and ask you to buy her some milk from the tuck-shop? (To find out how initiated young men respond to female teachers' instructions.)
7. If the other, uninitiated boys play soccer during break, what do you do? (To find out if initiated young men do associate with uninitiated boys.)

8. How many girlfriends do you have? (To find out what perceived love gains they receive at school.)
9. What would you like to wear at school? (To find out if initiated young men want to dress in their traditional attire at school, which shows that they are initiated)
10. What do you do if other learners misbehave in class? (To identify their level of responsibility and counter-resistance.)
11. What do you do if a teacher shouts at you in class? (To determine the level of respect that these initiated young men expect from teachers.)