

Yithi Uyindoda! (Say, You are a man!)

An ethnographic study
on the construction of religion and masculinities in initiation schools
in Cape Town Townships

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Declaration Page

I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own original work. I am the author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated). No part of this thesis, either partially or in its entirety, has been previously submitted for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the construction of masculinity in the Xhosa initiation school (*ulwaluko*) in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa from a religio-cultural perspective. This ethnographic study utilized interviews with participants, observations of the initiation school, and is also complemented with documents that are written by Xhosa authors Thando Mqolozana, Nelson Mandela, Peter Mtuze, and A.N.N. Ngxamngxa. The documentary by Mayenzeke Baza and a blog post by Xhosa journalist Luzuko Pongoma were also used. The data collection and analysis was done with the Grounded Theory Approach using Atlas.ti version 7. The ontological and epistemological premise is of the constructivist understanding. The conceptual framework is grounded within the African philosophy of Ubuntu and African religio-cultural underpinnings.

A new term, ancestral masculinity, was given to depict the type of masculinity described by the findings. It is marked by participating in a 'manhood' rites of passage and adhering to its prescribed processes and procedures, according to the 'living and dead' ancestors, in order for one to be accepted and recognized as part of the community. The findings show that ancestral masculinity, in its micro context of 'boyhood', is a searching route to acceptance. The initiate longs and finds acceptance in the initiation school through enduring pain and fostering a relationship with his guardian and teacher (*ikhankatha*). Secondly, ancestral masculinity is seen as the yearning to be African in its macro-context. It was demonstrated by admonishing (*ukuyala*) that helps the initiated to live an exemplary life of honouring (*inhlonipho*) those who are living and dead. This honouring is portrayed by doing everything possible to be helpful and to accord respect and care to elders. *Inhlonipho* also challenges individualist accomplishment and materialist flaunting and any ills that negate relational harmony.

The study reveals challenges in the *ulwaluko* institution and construction of masculinity, such as alcohol abuse; carelessness, neglect, and passivity by elders in the process; exclusivity that discriminates against others; and inflexibility toward other constructions of masculinity. However, opportunities are also present within this institution to encourage dialogue and reconciliation, to create flexibility, and to utilize existing values to promote social cohesion amidst the challenges of the contemporary South African context.

Opsomming

Die volgende tesis ondersoek die konstruksie van manlikheid binne die Xhosa inisiasieskool (*ulwaluko*) in die plakkerskampe en omliggende gebiede van Kaapstad, Suid-Afrika. Hierdie etnografiese studie maak gebruik van onderhoude met vrywillige deelnemers, waarnemings binne die inisiasieskool en word ook verder gekomplimenteer deur dokumente wat geskryf is deur Xhosa outeurs onder andere Thando Mqolozana, Nelson Mandela, Peter Mtuzi asook A.N.N. Ngxamngxa. Verder word die dokumentêr deur Mayenzeke Baza sowel as 'n "blogpost" deur Xhosa joernalis Luzuko Pongoma ook gebruik. Die versameling van data sowel as die analise daarvan was gedoen deur die Gefundeerde Teorie benadering en Atlas.ti weergawe 7 was gebruik. Die ontologiese sowel as epistemologiese premisse is van die konstruktivistiese paradigma. Die konsepsuele raamwerk is gegrond in die Afrika filosofie van Ubuntu sowel as Afrika godsdiens en kulturele onderbou.

'n Nuwe term, voorvaderlike manlikheid, was gegee om die tipe manlikheid uit te beeld wat deur die bevindinge beskryf was. Dit word gekenmerk deur deelname in manlikheid rituele van deurgang asook voldoening aan die voorgeskrewe prosesse en prosedures volgens die "lewende en dooie" voorvaders, om aanvaar en erken te word as deel van die gemeenskap. Die bevindinge dui aan dat voorvaderlike manlikheid in sy mikro-konteks van "seunskap" 'n soekende roete tot aanvaarding is. Die persoon wat die inisiasie moet deurmaak smag na en verkry aanvaarding in die inisiasieskool deur pyn te verduur en om 'n verhouding te kweek met sy voog en leermeester (*ikhankatha*). Tweedens word hierdie voorvaderlike manlikheid aanskou as die hunkering om 'n Afrikaan te wees in sy makro-konteks. Dit was veral gedemonstreer deur vermaning (*ukuyala*), wat die geïnisieerde help om 'n voorbeeldige lewe te lei wat die lewendes sowel as die dooies vereer (*inhlonipho*). Die verering word uitgebeeld deur alles moontlik te doen om behulpsaam te wees en om respek sowel as versorging te verleen aan die bejaardes. *Inhlonipho* stel ook uitdagings aan die individuele prestasies, materialistiese spogery asook enige euwels wat teenstrydig is met die relasionele harmonie.

Die studie openbaar uitdagings in die *ulwaluko* instelling en konstruksie van manlikheid onder andere alkohol misbruik, roekeloosheid, nalatigheid asook passiwiteit onder die meer ouer en bejaarde geslag in die proses; uitsluiting wat diskrimineer teen andere, asook onbuigsaamheid teenoor die ander konstruksies van manlikheid. Ondanks die uitdagings is daar ook geleenthede in die instelling wat dialoog en versoening aanmoedig om buigsaamheid te skep sowel as die bestaande waardes aan te wend om sosiale kohesie te bevorder te midde van die uitdagings van die huidige Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

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This piece of work is dedicated to my grandfather, 'retired' priest Rev. Canon John Patrick Ncaca who served the Anglican Church of Southern Africa for many years. *Tatomkhulu-Yinto naleyo*. It is also dedicated to my father; thank you for being such a caring man, loving father, and exemplary husband. It is also dedicated to the next generation of 'men', including my two boys, who are the reason I decided to conduct this kind of research. And lastly, it is dedicated to the participants who were willing to speak truth to power and were willing to be vulnerable.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Aim of the Study

Religio-cultural ethnographic research was utilized to investigate the understanding and experiences of men who have undergone Xhosa initiation school and its impact on constructing masculinities in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa. A contemporary understanding of the purpose of Xhosa initiation school was sought from the perspective of key stakeholders. Further, the relationship dynamic that initiation schools tend to foster were explored. Grounded Theory was the data analysis tool utilized. The distinctiveness of this thesis is the exploration of initiation schools within a religio-cultural framework. A new prototype of masculinity is proposed to describe the findings from the research. It is named Ancestral Masculinity, and it is meant to describe a type of masculinity within the amaXhosa community. The challenges and opportunities of this type of masculinity are considered.

1.2. Background Information

The role initiation school plays in the AmaXhosa people group in South Africa, particularly younger men, should not to be underestimated. The AmaXhosa are the second largest¹ population group in South Africa. Mavundla et al citing (Miessner & Buso, 2007) say “in South Africa, circumcision is performed much later in life by various tribes as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood” (2009:395). The practice of initiation school has stood the test of time, even though the South African socio-political environment has changed dramatically over the past century. Despite the attempts of many (missionaries, colonists, public health and medical personnel) to halt it, the institution remains. Though its presence continues, it still may bear the impact of a changing society’s influence. This thesis argues that religio-cultural beliefs have undergirded and reinforced its practice in the Xhosa community. The process relies on male relationships within an initiate’s paternal family line, including both living and dead ancestors. It seeks to investigate the township AmaXhosa’s own contemporary understanding of the purpose and function of initiation schools in light of their current context. This includes a political, economic, religious and cultural landscape that bears presence on family and community structure and the dynamics of township life.

After several years of counseling and mentoring young men on the university campus, I have seen the impact of fragmented families and absent fathers on male identity formation. There

¹ According to the census in 2001 <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/CInBrief/CIB2001.pdf> accessed in 24 June 2012

appears a rising trend in male absenteeism in black South African family life, particularly fatherhood (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Holborn & Eddy's report highlights the result of absent fathers on sons and its association with poorer outcomes in many aspects of life (schooling, social sustainability, a higher incidence of delinquency and criminal activities). Another study done by Sharlene Swartz with youth in Langa Township (Western Cape) cites the shame and disgrace felt by young men having an absent father or having siblings from multiple fathers. The participants described jealousy and rivalry between siblings of different fathers. There seems even to be an impact on their views of marriage (2009:35,110). She further mentions that "young people seldom complain about their living conditions despite the lack of privacy and exposure to excessive alcohol use (and accompanying violence) from a young age. Instead they regard their homes as havens and their mothers of extraordinary importance despite inconsistent messages. As a moral environment homes provide little supervision and few male role models" (2009:44). This 'disease of absent fathers' should not be dismissed in the initiation school context, especially as the ritual relies on the paternal family line. How does the lack of male role models impact the Xhosa initiation school? Does the impact affect the initiates' experience, understanding and meanings of the Initiation school? Swartz reports that

Young men especially were ashamed to know that they would not take their father's name when it came to performing traditional ceremonies like *ulwaluko* (see also Ramphele, 2002)²... They also faced a sense of loss at not having their father around when faced with difficulty. Nearly half of the young men said they wanted to be a good and present (rather than absent) father to their children (2009:110).

There is an overwhelming spirit for those who had absent fathers to be present for their son. So it seems to Swartz that initiation school (*ulwaluko*) could be a place where this intervention can be made and a new relationship of respect and honor can be fostered. Swartz says "despite this destructing role of alcohol in *ulwaluko*, the ritual has potential as an inspirational and [a] pedagogic moral influence on young men as they make the transition from boyhood into manhood. The role of 'peer review' amongst young men who have completed *ulwaluko*, too, could be of moral significance" (2009:126).

This study agrees with Swartz's assessment that an inspirational and pedagogic moral opportunity is available within the institution of initiation school. Paulo Freire says "liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (1972:52). The South African context offers up much in need of transformation and pedagogy as Ramphele observes in the threat of "communities undergoing social

² *Ulwaluko* meaning initiation school [Maphela Ramphele in her book: *Steering by the Stars: Being Young in South Africa* Cape Town: Tafelberg 2002]

disintegration” (1992:11). She mentions five factors contributing to social disintegration: firstly “family breakdown, with rising rates of divorce, separation, single-parenthood and teenage pregnancy”; secondly “low performance in all spheres of life including school and skills training”; thirdly “high crime rates and endemic violence at all levels of social interaction: family, inter-personal, neighbourhood and wider community”; fourthly “despair and acceptance of the victim-image”; and lastly “flight of skills and positive role-models from the townships into higher income areas” (1992:11). Morrel & Richter offer some other factors threatening fatherhood, like sexual abuse of children committed by men, absences of men, and the HIV/ AIDS epidemic (2006:6-7).

These are stark realities that need to be taken in consideration as we look at this institution. Phumla Dineo Gqola also mentions “in recent years, South African print media and television news have developed an idiom in their coverage of what has come to be known as ‘botched circumcisions’, a phraseology that relies on heavily medical language to frame and comment on a masculine crisis of identity. Along with citing statistics which reveal that in excess of 6000 youths have been hospitalized in provincial hospitals and more than 300 have died due to botched circumcisions in the province since 1995 (Zuzile, 2005), there have been extensive debates about how to redeem the circumcision stage of the *ulwaluko* ritual into safer forms” (2007: 146).

The reported death of initiates and hospitalization requires us all, most especially the Xhosa men facilitating it, to ask critical questions about the role of the institution. We may not be able to rely on the older men to engage and transform this institution as required by its religio-cultural understanding. Younger men need to be proactive, ask decisive questions, and conduct research to understand the phenomenon. We cannot be fearful and confined to secrecy when injustices happen. Furthermore, particularly in the Western Cape context, there seems to be a vacuum of older African people. If old men (*ookhokho*) are the custodians of the institutions, there are few available to do it. African people are not the aging group in the Western Cape. The population index done by the City of Cape Town reveals:

The index shows that overall for every 100 young people age 14 and below, there are 19 people age 65+. Among the white population for every 100 young people (0-14) there are 73 aged (65+) people. For Black Africans there are only 18 aged people for every 100 young people. The white population is, therefore, an aging population resembling that of the developed regions while the other groups are younger, reflective of developing regions (2003:13).

Finally, the language used in initiation schools has the potential to threaten healthy relationships within the Xhosa (and broader) community. The language used in the school

has religious and cultural beliefs embedded in them. Sthembiso Tenge, in his study, exposes the social pressure, anxiety, and exploitation often experienced by uncircumcised men. The abusive treatment and language of the circumcised toward the uncircumcised (often called boys or dogs) is traumatic (Tenge, 2006). In addition, the initiation school seems to contribute to women being portrayed as (sexual) objects. Could this language used in the 'bush' promote dominance and abuse of women and boys? The language used to refer to other groups, sometimes justified as respect (*nhlonipho*³), needs to be explored. They might be coded for religious reasons for exclusion and making sure "evil ones" do not understand what is happening in the "bush" or mountain. However, the exclusivity and inclusivity of the language itself, can dehumanize the "other". In the preface of Lumka Funani's book it is mentioned that initiation:

For the Xhosa it is 'the formal incorporation' of males into religious and tribal life...in Xhosa tradition an uncircumcised male cannot inherit his father's possessions, nor can he establish a family. He cannot officiate in ritual ceremonies. In fact there is no such a thing as 'uncircumcised man' in Xhosa society. A Xhosa who is not circumcised is described quite simply as a boy, an *inja* (dog) and an *inqambi* (unclean thing)... So uncompromised are the Xhosa people on this that no Xhosa woman would knowingly and willingly marry an uncircumcised Xhosa male (Dwane 1979) (1990: v).

1.3. Problem Identification

In light of the changing context of culture⁴ and urbanisation, the phenomena of 'missing fathers', and the growing problem of hospitalization and death of initiates, how does the initiation school construct masculinity in contemporary Xhosa society? How is it being understood by the partakers of the process? What are the opportunities and challenges that the Xhosa understanding of 'manhood' bear? This study seeks to critically evaluate the role of the above phenomena on initiation schools. This practice relies heavily on the paternal side of the family; the boys/men take their father's clan name and the rituals that are done before, during and after are required to be consistent with that clan name. The ancestors⁵

³ John H. Soga says "with an ingenuity that takes no account of delicacy, a woman as we have seen is termed '*isigqwathi*'- a dry mucous or viscid fluid. A boy and a dog are bracketed with the name '*ibengeza*' to indicate in the coiner's mind an equality of status" (1931:210). He further says "there is little doubt, however, but that in past ages the custom [*hlonipho*] has a more sacred meaning, and much greater judgment in its use as something connected with the tribal religion" (1931: 213)

⁴ Justin Ukpong says "culture is understood existentially in a way that pays attention to its traditional and modern aspects, and to its various manifestations in contemporary life. It means too that culture is seen in terms of both its religious and secular dimensions, and that religious issues are seen as being interrelated with and as having implications for secular ones and vice versa" (1999:108).

⁵John Mbiti says "the 'cult' connected with the living-dead is deeply rooted in African life and thought. In many societies, the approach to God is regarded as a corporate act of the whole community both

[*ookhokho* (living); *kunye izinyanya* (dead)] are linked to the paternal side and they are the custodians and teachers of the customs and traditions. So then, in light of fathers being absent, how is the initiation ritual being imparted? Ramphele says “the reality of South Africa today is that African patriarchs have both Christianity and ‘tradition’ available to them to legitimate the perpetuation of the existing patriarchal system” (1989: 414).

1.4. Research Objectives

- To explore the purpose of *ulwaluko* as a religious-cultural practice of *amaXhosa* people living in Cape Town townships and its impact on the construction of township masculinities (*ubudoda*)
- To consider how the initiation school constructs masculinity in light of the constant alteration of religious and cultural settings
- In light of the theoretical discussion on masculinity, consider alternative ways of thinking about masculinity that may enhance and transform existing cultural expressions such as the initiation schools in the Xhosa community.

1.5. Research Methodology

- **Origins of Grounded Theory**

In 1967, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss constructed a research method that extracted the rich finds from qualitative research, whilst challenging the assumptions of the superiority of quantitative research. Kathy Charmaz argues that the theory shows a “defense for qualitative research against the idea that quantitative research is the only type of systematic social scientific inquiry” (2007:509). She further compliments this work as “revolutionary” because it challenged “a) arbitrary divisions between theory and research, b) views of qualitative research as primarily a precursor of more ‘rigorous’ quantitative methods c) claims that the quest for rigor made qualitative research illegitimate, d) beliefs that qualitative methods are impressionistic and unsystematic, e) separation of data collection and analysis, f) assumptions that qualitative research could produce only descriptive case studies rather than theory development” (2007:511). Glaser and Strauss pioneered the manner in providing transcribed guidelines for orderly qualitative data analysis with clear investigative procedures and research strategies. Glaser and Strauss outlined the underlying principles of the Grounded Theory Method in their book the *Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Christina Goulding, a grounded theorist in business management and marketing, suggests that the

the living and the departed” (1969: 69) Hyo-sun Kwon in his PHD dissertation (2008) reveals the contemporary notions of ancestor worship in Khayelitsha Township in Western Cape.

epistemological claims of Grounded Theory are interpretive and help in phenomena that are not well researched. She suggests that neophyte researchers use the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* as the starting point for understanding the method. Its “guiding principles and procedures are explained in detail and endure as the essential guidelines for applying the method; and secondly other texts, in order to cater for different disciplines/fields, have adapted the method in ways that may not be completely congruent with all the original principles” (1999: 7-8). The *Discovery of Grounded Theory* was the seminal work consulted for this study.

- **Approaches of Grounded Theory**

The history of knowledge acquisition within social science can be described in “five moments⁶ of qualitative research” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 1-17). The third moment (1970s to 1986) was precisely summarized by Merlyn Annels as having the following inquiries or debates:

- ontological, epistemological and methodological (questions)
- debates opening up other paradigms of inquiry in contrast to post-positivism;
- the debate that qualitative analyses are interpretations of interpretations;
- queries regarding the author’s presence in the interpretive text;
- challenging notions of rigour (1997:122)

Merlyn Annels, an Australian grounded theorist from health sciences, advocates that this third moment had an impact on Strauss, which resulted in his collaboration with Juliet Corbin, in the work *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1990). She argues “that the newer mode is, at least in part, an evolutionary response to the prevailing concerns of the third moment, contrary to Glaser’s claim that the newer mode is not even a grounded theory method and also in contrast to Stern’s claim that the new mode **erodes** Grounded Theory Method”

⁶ The five moments of qualitative research are: 1) The Traditional period (1900s to World War II)- “In this period, qualitative researchers wrote ‘objective’, colonializing accounts of field research that were reflective of positivist scientists” (1994:7). 2) The Modernist phase (1945 to 1970s)-“builds on the canonical works of the traditional period. Social realism, naturalism and slice-of-life ethnographies are still valued.” (1994:8). 3) Blurred Genres (1970-1986)-“qualitative researchers had a full complement of paradigms, methods, and strategies to employ in their research” (1994:9). 4) Crisis of Representation (mid 1980s)-“called into question the issues of gender, class and race” (1994:10). 5) The Fifth moment (1990s) is defined by a “double crisis of representation and legitimation” (1994:11). Legitimation contains a thoughtful reconsidering of the following terms “validity, generalizability, and reliability” (1994:11).

(Annells, 1997:122). Strauss and Corbin’s third edition book reveals their epistemological and ontological positions in the introductory chapter. Annells (1997:121) helpfully shows the difference in philosophical viewpoints between classical grounded method and Strauss & Corbin’s grounded theory method in the table below.

	Classical	Strauss & Corbin
Ontological	Critical Realist	Relativists
Epistemological	Modified Objectivist	Subjectivist
Methodological	Usually a first step in research hierarchy leading to experimental or survey research for verification	Construction of a framework for action - localized, provisional and ‘verified’

Corbin & Strauss declare “that knowledge is created through action and interaction” (2008:2). Ontology and epistemology are vital in any methodology discussion. They bring assumptions about ‘what are the presuppositions about our world’ and ‘how do we know what we know’. These are fundamental questions when using the Grounded Theory approach, which prompts these ontological and epistemological questions both to the researchers and to research participants. Corbin & Strauss argue that “our assumptions about the inevitability of contingencies, the significance of process, and complexity of phenomena direct us to examine problematic as well as routine situations and events. Important to us are the great varieties of human action, interaction and emotional responses that people have to the events and problems they encounter” (2008:6). So embedded in Grounded Theory is the assumption that through action-interaction people create and recreate their world around and institutions. Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln addressing the paradigm of research inquiry, define the paradigm as “a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimate or first principles” (italics theirs) (1994:107). The paradigm will address ontological, epistemological and methodological questions. Guba & Lincoln say ontological questions ask “what is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” Secondly, epistemological questions ask “what is the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?” Lastly, methodological questions query “how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes to be known?” (1994:107).

Not all grounded theorists are coming from the same ontological and epistemological framework. Denzin suggests “there are multiple versions: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, objectivist, post-modern, situational, and computer–assisted” (2010: 296).

Whereas Annels shows five options⁷ that can be taken by users of the method. Jenna P. Brekenridge & Ian Elliot. (2012) caution neophyte researchers against a “pick and mix approach” to Grounded Theory, which is what Annels suggests in option three⁸ to option five. Classical Grounded Theorists seem to argue for maintaining the original intent “to conceptualize a latent pattern of behavior”, which is contrary to the constructivist who “attempts to interpret how participants construct their realities and present multiple perspectives” (Brekenridge & Elliot. 2012:69).

Constructivism is the approach adopted for this thesis. Constructivism defines ontological presupposition as relativist (localized) “realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and [are] dependent for their form and content on the individual or groups holding the constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 111). The epistemological question is “interaction and subjectivist” and “the investigator and object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 111).

1.6 Research Design: Application of the Grounded Theory Approach

In the midst of the debates about philosophical standpoints in both religion and theology and in approaches to Grounded Theory, one needs to be pragmatic and conscious of the time frame required for finishing one’s work. Two considerations the researcher must make when determining if Grounded Theory is appropriate for the phenomenon: Firstly, “the focus for a Grounded Theory study needs to encompass social process, social structure and social interactions”. Secondly, the “method is time consuming and should not be hurried” (Annels 1997:177). The phenomenon studied in this thesis, namely construction of masculinity (*ubudoda*), is well suited for the first assumption. Moreover, the phenomenon of masculinity

⁷ Option 1: “Using the classic mode in the neo-positivist form and critical realist ontology as defended by Glaser” (1996:178). Option 2: “This involves applying Strauss and Corbin’s mode with its relativist ontology, constructivist leanings and problem solving product for action, being mindful of Strauss’ pragmatist theory of which underpins this mode”(1996:178). Option 3: “A paradigm driven adaptation of either the classic mode or Strauss and Corbin’s mode is formulated” (1996:179), Option 4: “Some of the procedural aspects of the classic mode and Strauss and Corbin’s mode are blended into one”. Option 5: “This option involves completely fresh procedural elaboration, tangential to but different from the two major modes as discussed” (1996:179).

⁸ As mentioned in the above footnote

requires a method that has “flexible guidelines for data collection and data analysis commitments (must) remain close to the world being studied, and the development of integrated theoretical concepts grounded in data that shows process, relationship, and social world connectedness” (Denzin, 2010:297).

Another determination to be made is whether the research should be qualitative or quantitative? Charmaz says “researchers can use grounded theory methods with either quantitative or qualitative research; however they [Glaser & Strauss] have adopted them almost exclusively in qualitative research” (2006: xii). Birks & Mills report that “Grounded Theory is most often derived from data sources of a qualitative (interpretative) nature” and it serves to “explain the phenomenon being studied” (2011:16). This thesis is qualitative in its character because it analyses the experiences of *ubudoda* and its meaning to the research participants; it further observes the social interactions in the context of the event of initiation school (*ulwaluko*). Charmaz again commends Glaser and Strauss’ aims “to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical framework, thereby providing abstract, conceptual understandings of studied phenomena” (2006:6). This thesis attempts to move beyond the descriptive, toward a conceptual and theoretical understanding of *ulwaluko* from a religio-cultural perspective.

For founding scholars (Glaser & Strauss) there are certain principles that must undergird all Grounded Theory research and Charmaz calls them “defining components”:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction not for population representativeness
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis (Charmaz, 2005:5)

Grounded Theory requires data collection and analysis that incorporates reflexivity and sensitivity. Finlay is quoted as saying reflexivity is the value tool that “examine(s) the impact of the position, perspective and presence of the researcher; promote(s) rich insight through examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:31). Sensitivity is described as “having insight, being tuned in to (and) being able to pick up on

relevant issues, events and happenings in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008:32). The researcher does not come to the data collection and analysis with a *tabula rasa* but with his/her background (social locations, race, gender and class). This thesis aligns itself with Cornel West’s *prophetic pragmatism*⁹, as mentioned by Denzin (2010:297). This researcher hopes that analyzing initiation through the grounded theory approach and from a religio-cultural perspective can be pragmatic and prophetic. It seeks to speak truth to power and theorize about a practice that remains an enigma in many ways. Also, the prophetic pragmatism of this thesis attempts to empower neglected perspectives. This researcher does this from the heart of knowing, experiencing and observing various forms of discrimination within Ancestral Masculinity.

1.7. Data Collection

1.7.1. Sampling

Janice M. Morse says “an excellent participant for grounded theory is one who has been through, or observed, the experience under investigation” (2007:231). All participants in this study were Xhosa men who experienced the AmaXhosa manhood rites of passage. The fieldwork was primarily conducted in townships, in Cape Town, South Africa over five months (March 2013 to July 2013). This included the observation of a key stage of the initiation process, *umngeno*, and also interviews with initiates and older men who have undergone *ulwaluko*. However, the older men interviewed and the documented primary source accounts were not necessarily representing individuals from Cape Town townships. Initiation schools are normally held during school holidays: June/July and December. Sampling made use of key informants and utilized a snowballing technique. Purposive and snowball sampling rely on the initial contacts offering a referral of other potential participants such as family, friends and other acquaintances in various townships. This technique allows entry and has as its advantage earning trust in the community of interest. This researcher, formerly a resident of Langa Township, brought the platform of being a Xhosa man who has gone through the process of initiation school. This likely brought trustworthiness to the informants. Participation was voluntary and participants were given the option to withdraw at any time during the research. The purpose of the research was explained to them and informed consent was given. Discretion and confidentiality were used whilst conducting interviews and observation, being aware of the cultural understanding, ‘things that happen in

⁹ “A pro-phetic tradition I've always understood to be a very marginal one that's linked to certain kinds of energies that could be enacted in re-lation to different kinds of content, one that would borrow certain themes and motifs from religious traditions but would couch them in narratives that tend to hit up against the dominant narratives within dominant religious traditions.” (West & Brown1993:S161)

the bush remain in the bush'. Individual interviews were conducted in a setting where confidentiality was not compromised. Observation of the traditional surgeon as he conducted the rites of passage occurred in the bush, where the rituals were taking place.

1.7.2. Research Instruments

Using an religio-cultural ethnographic¹⁰ approach, interviews and observations were used to gather data and were analyzed. Documented primary source accounts were also consulted and coded using Atlas.ti version 7, namely Thando Mggqolozana's biographical account¹¹ of the initiation process, an article¹² by Xhosa journalist Luzuko Pongoma, the documentary *Ndiyindoda*¹³ by filmmaker Mayezenke Baza, excerpts from Nelson Mandela's autobiography *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Peter Mtuze's play *Umdlanga*, and A.N.N. Ngxamgxa's anthropological article. The importance of ethnographic work within Grounded Theory is elucidated by Charmaz. She argues that "Grounded theory ethnography gives priority to the studied phenomenon or process – rather than to a description of a setting" and "grounded theory ethnographers study what is happening in the setting and make a conceptual rendering of these actions" (2006:22). It aids the researcher in determining what to focus on and observe, and specifies the phenomenon's meaning and experience for each research participant accordingly.

1.7.3. Observation

An *ingcibi* gave permission to be followed as he conducted circumcisions in initiation schools between May and July 2013. He was followed for 10 circumcisions, which took place in various Cape Town townships on several different days in the early morning hours. Observation was made about the physical surroundings, the procedures that took place, the people present, as well as the activities and songs sung by men who accompanied the initiate. Observations were confirmed and discussed with the key informant that accompanied the researcher on all visits.

1.7.4. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with initiates and older men to ascertain their ideas about initiation school, masculinity, religio-cultural beliefs, and their experience with and

¹⁰ Charmaz says "Ethnography means recording the life of a particular group and thus entails sustained participation and observation in their milieu, community, or social world" (2006:21).

¹¹ A Man Who IS NOT A Man (UKZN Press 2009).

¹² New Age newspaper article January 2013 & a post on his blog in July 2012.

¹³ Aljazeera News, *Power and People*, aired on 03 January 2013.

understanding of fathers both inside and outside of initiation school. A semi-structured interview questionnaire¹⁴ was designed for initiates¹⁵ and older men¹⁶ to probe what they have been told by others about initiation and also what they believe about the institution. Other questions explored what initiates and older men believe initiation school taught/is teaching about the transcendent Other, community, and tradition. The following table gives the profile of the participants in this study. Interviewees 1 to 6 are Xhosa men who went to initiation school. Interviewee 7 was not a Xhosa man, but was asked to explain the procedure in hospital for comparison purposes.

Interviewee Number	Age	Year Attended Initiation School	Marital & Parental Status
1	38	1996	Married, 1 child
2	30	2000	Married
3	21	2011	Single, 1 child
4	20	2012	Single
5	29	2005	Single
6	37	1993	Married, 3 children
7	30	2013 (Hospital)	Single

Table 2.1 Interviewee Profile

1.7.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis used Grounded Theory technique as described in the previous section. Charmaz says “the potential strength of grounded theory lies in its analytic power to theorize how meanings, actions, and social structures are constructed” (2006: 151). The ten steps of the Grounded Theory approach needed for data collection and data analysis were followed. They include coding, categorizing, and developing categories, enhancing theoretical sensitivity, memo-writing, axial coding, selective coding and sorting, theoretical sampling, theory building and draft writing.

The strategies used to enhance the steps of the Grounded Theory approach in this thesis were asking questions and making comparisons. Corbin and Strauss say “these two strategies are the mainstay of analysis and are used by us and many other qualitative researchers” (2008:68). Journalistic questions (like who, what, when, where, how and why)

¹⁴ Appendix 2.

¹⁵ 0-5years after initiation.

¹⁶ 5-20 years after initiation school.

were used to enhance the asking questions of the transcribed interviews and extant literature. The strategy of making comparisons was used; for example Mgqolozana's novel as an example of bad things happening in the bush compared alongside Baza's documentary reflecting different men's accounts on the process.

In the data analysis there are three terms that are used: coding, writing memos and theoretical sampling. Coding is defined as "taking raw data and raising it to a conceptual level" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008:66). Further, "memos are a specialized type of written records- those that contain the products of our analyses" (2008:117). Lastly, theoretical sampling was done in comparing the interviews and observations with the extant literature.

1.7.6. Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration was "to treat participants as subjects not as objects of research or as a means to an end, and to ensure our work meets the highest standard of scholarly integrity and accountability"¹⁷ (Anthropology, 2005:142). The principal investigator considered how the issues of confidentiality, privacy, remuneration for participants and conflict of interest would be handled. None of the information provided by participants was or will be linked to them publicly. A consent form was distributed to each interviewee and only those who signed were included. No participant was coerced or pressurized to be part of the study. If participants felt uncomfortable with the questions asked or perceived any prejudice by the investigator, they reserved the right not to answer any questions and they were free to withdraw at any time. There was no remuneration. Thus participants were not compelled to participate because of a financial situation. Furthermore, if they withdrew, it did not negatively impact them financially. Participants were made aware that a copy of the final thesis would be made available to anyone who requests it. The investigator was aware that some participants might be concerned that their views would bring stigma or negatively impact them if heard by other family or community members. As stated earlier, their privacy was protected by not attaching names or distinguishing characteristics with their statements. Also any audio recordings made were kept securely by the investigator and will not be distributed to anyone else or used for any other purpose than this research. Ethical clearance was applied for with the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University and was granted on 11 January 2013. The research project was granted the number and name *HS886/2012*.

¹⁷ <http://www.socanth.uct.ac.za/research/research-ethics> accessed 20 November 2012

1.8. Limitations

This researcher is aware of the politics of initiation school; that it has been under scrutiny from many facets of society and the exposure of the process is an anathema. This may have inhibited participants. They may have been reluctant to be very honest about their experiences and may have tried to cover up abuses and neglect by other men. The contestation about the importance of the initiation school for amaXhosa people has been happening for years (missionaries, public health department and some media houses that run exposés on the practice). This has made people to be secretive and defensive of this practice particularly on religious grounds. This thesis, in its design, tried to counter some of these tendencies of non-disclosure. For example, by using an “insider” as a researcher; and also, using Grounded Theory and ethnographic data collection including pieces from extant texts, which considered the perspective of “insiders” who are interested in transforming the practice. This should have provided a diversity of perspectives in the research. Further, some family relationships may have been exposed in interviews, but some participants may have covered up their family issues. The intensive nature of the Grounded Theory Approach limits sample size, so a larger study might have shed more light. The sample comes from people who live in a limited geographical area and different perspectives may have come out if a different region of the AmaXhosa were studied. However, the participants interviewed have experienced *ulwaluko* in multiple settings (urban, rural, different regions of South Africa) and the families influencing their experience and understanding also come from diverse settings. These multiple stories shape the participants, yet they are expressing their understanding of the construction of masculinities in the same location and impacting the culture of *ulwaluko* in Cape Town Townships.

1.9. Brief Overview of the Following Chapters

The next chapter deals with the theoretical framework of masculinity as it relates to the gender and religion discourse at the global level. It then shifts focus to African Indigenous religion and its influence on the construction of masculinity. The next two chapters probe the findings of the research to uncover the journey and understanding of *ulwaluko*. Specifically, the third chapter examines ancestral masculinity in the micro context, whilst the fourth chapter explores the construction of ancestral masculinity in the macro context, as the yearning to be authentically African. The last chapter presents the implications from the findings including: opportunities for transforming and enhancing ancestral masculinity; challenges that threaten and undermine the very existence of this institution; and recommendations for further studies as it relates to ancestral masculinity.

1.10. Contribution of this Study

This research contributes to a conceptual framework which can be used to evaluate and critically study the construction of masculinity in townships. Ancestral masculinity depicts the opportunities and challenges that exist in initiation school and the Xhosa construction of masculinity. It also underlines the human search for acceptance and belonging. In light of colonialism and apartheid, the struggle for identity is still haunting contemporary people groups and adherents of lived religion. The initiation school seems to be a good place to foster intergenerational and interreligious dialogue. It also shows a potential for reconciliation between family members (father/son or uncle/ nephews relationships). Initiation school could be seen as the second chance for fatherhood. It also brings a linguistic hermeneutic that can be utilized to challenge monolithic understandings of the construction of masculinities. The interdisciplinary approach to religion and masculinity could potentially expose and increase dialogue on issues like homophobia and xenophobia. Conducting research on a phenomenon that is not well studied in a religio-cultural framework, contributes to knowledge production.

1.11. Conclusion

The aim of the study was spelled out and background information was given to set the stage. The problematizing (*making it a subject of research*) of initiation school, in light of the social, economic, political and religious milieu is crucial. The insider perspective was justified and religio-cultural lenses advocated for. This chapter has provided an overview of the research design, data collection techniques, and data analysis process. It demonstrated the appropriateness of both the design and method chosen for this study, namely Grounded Theory using ethnographic tools. Corbin & Strauss' approach has been adopted, whilst, being cognizant of the different ontological and epistemological debates within the qualitative research inquiry. It was also shown how the research plan was executed with ethical considerations. The possible limitations of the study were explored as well as the unique contributions this study can make.

Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical framework that underpins masculinity and men's studies at a global level. It will also look at the regional concepts that are in the African discourse and the interplay between religion and culture in the construction of masculinities. It will argue for the relevance of this perspective and the contribution it can make to the masculinities discourse. The major contribution of the study of masculinities and men's studies has been not only its interdisciplinary approach and flexibility in dialogue with other fields, but also its practical challenge of relationships within masculinity (heterosexual or homosexual or queer), femininity and gender. Firstly, a brief history of the field of masculinities is given, followed by a discussion of 'social theory of gender' as it relates to hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, we glimpse at the interaction between masculinity, gender and religion. Lastly, the chapter will pursue African masculinities and African religions, mainly focusing on the interplay of Western Christianity and African Indigenous Religion.

2.2. Study of Masculinities

The research into the critical inquiry of men and masculinities is quite recent. It began in the late 1980's and owes its parentage to the feminist movements. Reawyn Connell¹⁸ says "the new feminism of the 1970s not only gave voice to women's concerns, it challenged all assumptions about the gender system and raised a series of problems about men. Over the decade since, the disturbance in the gender system caused by the women's movement has been felt by very large numbers of men. A growing minority of men have attempted to grapple with these issues in practice or in the realm of ideas" (2000:3). The period of 1990 to 2000 saw "over 500 books published, the introduction of two specialist journals¹⁹, and a proliferation of websites all providing a particular slant on the condition of men" (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:1). The origin and development of the discussion of masculinities have been dominated by the global north/Western countries such as the United States, Britain,

¹⁸ Demetrakis Z. Demetriou says, "The originality of Connell's 'social theory of gender' has established him as one of the leading theoreticians in the general area of gender relations and more particularly in the emerging field of the sociology of masculinity" (2001:337).

¹⁹ The two prolific academic journals on men & masculinities: 1) *Men & Masculinities*, edited by Michael Kimmel, State University of New York, a Sage publication which began in 1999. 2) *Journal of Men's Studies* first published in August 1992 and edited by James A Doyle. However, since then there has been even more specific journals published, portraying its interdisciplinary approach. For example, the *Journal of Men, Masculinities & Spirituality*, which was birthed in Australia in 2007. Even more recent, *Masculinities and Social Change* (first published in February 2012) and *Religion and Gender* online journal (Utrecht 2011), denotes the newness and growing of the field of study.

European countries and Australia. Most of the publications and websites have their origin in those regions. But also the African continent has been represented by leading scholars²⁰ in South Africa. It was at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in 1997 when Robert Morrell organized a Colloquium for Masculinities in Southern Africa, where twenty nine papers were presented, mainly by South African scholars. This culminated in a book with eighteen articles entitled *Changing Men in Southern Africa*²¹. In 2012, a follow up conference²² was held, called Work/Force, particularly looking at how masculinities are portrayed in South African media. It was hosted by the University of Stellenbosch and organized by Stella Viljoen. It produced and published a special issue entitled *Troubling Masculinity and Media* in the journal COMMUNICATIO Volume 39 (2) 2013.

In the current research on masculinities, the concept of hegemonic masculinity²³ has dominated²⁴ abstracts and been contested by other authors²⁵. Connell & Messerschmidt say hegemonic masculinity was understood as a “pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue”. Further arguing that hegemonic masculinity “embodied the currently most honored ways of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (2005:832). However, other authors find the application of hegemonic masculinity confusing and too general. For example, Demetrakis Z. Demetriou makes the point, “although numerous empirical

²⁰ As mentioned, Robert Morrell’s research office at the University of Cape Town. Rob Pattman, at Stellenbosch University, has a research interest in Young Masculinities. Kopano Ratele, University of South Africa, has studied ruling masculinity and sexuality. Sandra Swart, Stellenbosch University, has looked into Afrikaner masculinity.

²¹ *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, edited by Robert Morrell. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 2001.

²² “Work/Force was an interdisciplinary conference that aimed to serve as a platform for the discussion and analysis of the manner in which diverse South African masculinities are constructed in the post-apartheid media. The conference asked how discourses might be engendered within the South African context, around concepts of culture, race and class as they pertain to the articulation of masculinities in mainstream and niche media entities, both locally and internationally. The primary concern of the conference was the question of how South African masculinities are constructed within the representational cultures of media entities such as newspapers, film, advertising, art, magazines and blogs. Keynote speakers included: Robert Morrell (University of Cape Town) and Sean Nixon (University of Essex) on the 13-14 September 2012” Conference Poster.

²³ ‘the culturally idealized form of the masculine character’ (Connell, 1993) exemplified in homophobia and ‘the dread and flight from women’ (Donaldson, 1993) as cited Whitehead (1999). Whitehead further says “For the concept of hegemonic masculinity goes little way towards revealing the complex patterns of inculcation and resistance which constitute everyday social interaction” (1999:58).

²⁴ “Database searches reveal more than 200 papers that use the exact term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in their titles or abstracts” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:830).

²⁵ “The concept has also attracted serious criticism from several directions: sociological, psychological, poststructuralist and materialist (e.g. Demetriou 2001; Wetherell and Edley 1999)” Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:830).

researchers have made use of this concept, there has been almost no attempt to evaluate its theoretical merit” (2001: 337).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used as normative. For example, it was used in all eighteen articles of *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Has this term only helped in the analysis of domination or subordination? Does this term adequately explain other non-Western constructions of masculinity? Does this concept or theory take into account the thought patterns of other cultural backgrounds? “One cannot simply assume that the nuances of primal thought and understandings of reality are readily reducible to the categories of western language and the kinds of thought that our linguistic forms presuppose” (Staple cited in Wanamaker 1997:283).

Hegemonic masculinity is dominated by the analysis of power²⁶ because its early formulation was influenced by the gay liberation movement. Even though the concept hegemonic masculinity discusses in its reformulation issues like gender hierarchy, the geography of masculinities, social embodiment & the dynamics of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt), it may not be enough to conceptualize the construction of masculinities in Cape Town townships. Hegemonic masculinity is a very helpful concept, but at the epistemological and methodological²⁷ level questions need to be raised. Its epistemology is hedged on Western individualism and materialistic assumptions. But for an African, “ontology and epistemology must be understood as two aspects of one and the same reality” (Ramose, 2003:230). Methodologically, it can be viewed as an ‘imperialist’ or a ‘one size fits all’ term that would define all constructions of masculinities. Methodologically, the following questions can be posed: Should the phenomenon that is studied give us some explanatory power? Should the theory²⁸ emerge from the empirical data gathered? This thesis admits in learning the concept of hegemonic masculinity as the informative theory of understanding, but construction of masculinities in township spacing will seek to use concepts derived from

²⁶ Antonio Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony was political in nature. “The term ‘hegemony’ is certainly not new to western political discourse, and has traditionally signified domination of one sort or another. In Gramsci’s case, however, the pedigree can be traced specifically to the political vocabulary of the Russian revolutionaries in their turn-of-the-century polemics. The term was introduced by Plekhanov, Axelrod, Lenin, and others in their dispute with the ‘Economists’ over the issue of ‘spontaneity’.” (Bates, 1975:352)

²⁷ Charles A Wanamaker, a South Africa religious scholar, makes the point “those familiar with the study of religious traditions with sacred texts cannot help but be struck by the complete absence of such texts in relation to African traditional religions. African traditional religions historically have not written texts because Africa had, and by and large still has oral culture, though this is changing. The small scale, stateless societies of pre-colonial Africa neither required nor generated written languages” (1997:282)

²⁸ This is the question that intrigued the pioneers of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967). So following in their footsteps, I am asking this methodological question about my findings. Is ancestral masculinity similar to hegemonic masculinity or is it non-hegemonic masculinity?

the context. This 'methodology from below' approach seeks to theorize inductively instead of deductively. It is the hope of this thesis to develop a concept that will be easily understood by the practitioner of *ulwaluko*; and also give the academic community a way to explain and analyze the construction of masculinity in the township, specifically by the amaXhosa. Even though the practitioners of *ulwaluko* tend to have a traditionalist²⁹ and essentialist³⁰ view of men, this needs to be challenged by using the Xhosa proverb "*Imizi ayifani ifana ngehlathi kuphela*"³¹ as the hermeneutic principle. This hermeneutic principle is embraced and embodied by the philosophy of Ubuntu, that 'a person is person through others (*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*)'.

In this thesis, what is investigated is the system of beliefs practiced by AmaXhosa people³² to cultivate their identity. Its construction may reveal more than just dominance over women³³, but also a quest for survival. The construction of this belief system and its form of masculinity, have been and continue to be a means to preserve and protect an indigenous knowledge system. As the South African democratic society was dawning, the claim and incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems became a priority. Being aware of one's system of belief became critical to survival. However, to be seditious in that political milieu was crucial. African Philosophy³⁴ became a political tool³⁵ to train those who were willing to fight the apartheid³⁶ system. Rituals provided a place where African identity³⁷ was recreated

²⁹ Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher says "traditionalist approaches seek to re-capture a 'lost' sense of 'authentic' manhood. Often these studies have an ambivalent relationship towards feminist critiques of sexism; citing the sense of loss of a 'deep masculine' as one of the regrettable consequences of the women's movement in contemporary society" (2009:439).

³⁰ The essentialist view "seeks to revivify and reground males in a notion of an 'essence' of masculinity deeply rooted in our psyches" (Baker- Fletcher, 2009:439)

³¹ "The household does not look alike but they all have a kraal" (literal translation). This is the proverbial statement used to explain differences in essence and acknowledgement of different religious-cultural practices by people.

³² "There is no doubt that the average African in South Africa today is more or less modernized, in the sense: that she is more or less familiar with most, or least a good many, of the trappings of modern Western technological society. There is thus knowledge of Western culture on the part of contemporary Africans" (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2003:226).

³³ As in the case of hegemonic masculinity, which has this dominance as its focus.

³⁴ "*Ubuntu* is the root of African philosophy. The being of an African in the universe is inseparably anchored upon *ubuntu*" (Ramose, 2003:230).

³⁵ "In the sphere of politics, the veritable arena for making law, *ubu-ntu* is reaffirmed as the basis judgment in the three mentioned domains (i.e. ethical, social and legal) of human life by the maxim: *kgosi ke kgosi ka batho* [in Xhosa, inkosi yinkosi ngabantu], meaning, the source and justification of royal power is the people" (Ramose, 2003:232).

³⁶ "The fact that apartheid has been tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and deliberate oppression makes the problem much more complex. Material want is bad enough, but coupled with spiritual poverty, it kills. And this latter effect is probably the one that creates mountains of obstacles in the normal course of emancipation of the black people" (Biko, in Aelred Stubbs(ed), *I write what I like*, 2007:30).

and powers such as Western culture³⁸ and philosophy were undermined^{39,40}. African philosophy was developed and taught and practiced through ritual practices. Our research seems to reveal that AmaXhosa constructed a system of meaning that equipped them for the challenges of life and death issues in all aspects of life (e.g. it countered what was happening spiritually-African Religion was undermined and attacked by Western Christianity; socially-colonialism and apartheid when used for white supremacy; economically-capitalist looting; and politically-colonialism). This system of belief resisted and subverted this ruling ideology and was articulated through the religio-cultural lenses. Steve Bantu Biko, an esteemed African (Xhosa) philosopher commented about the construction of masculinity in the township:

Black people under the (Jan) Smuts government were oppressed but they still were *men*. They failed to change the system for many reasons... But the *type of black man* we have today has *lost his manhood*. Reduced to an *obliging shell*, he looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the 'inevitable position'. Deep inside his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction-on his fellow man in the *township*...In the privacy of his toilet his face twists in silent condemnation of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master's impatient call...All in all the *black man* has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity (2007:31) (*Italics my emphasis*)

³⁷ "The oneness of community, for instance, is at the heart of our culture. The easiness with which Africans communicate with each other is not forced by authority but is inherent in the make-up of African people. Thus whereas the white family can stay in an area without knowing its neighbours, Africans develop a sense of belonging to the community within a short time of coming together" (Biko, 2007:32).

³⁸ Steve Bantu Biko says "No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the 'dark continent'. Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars" (2007:31).

³⁹ Wilson and Mafeje made three categories of people in Langa: "1.The migrant labourers some of whom have never been to school at all, others who have had up to eight years at school. 2. The semi-urbanized, with some education, who aspire to become townsmen. 3. The urbanized whose homes are in town. Townee or tsotsi type, are further subdivided on the basis of age into *ikhaba* and *ooMac*." (1963:15).

⁴⁰ "In urban East London, South Africa, there were (maybe still are) two distinct groups of amaXhosa, rural people of the Xhosa tribe who had come to work in the city (Mayer 1972). The one group, known as the 'red Xhosa', clung to traditional ways and though they knew everything they needed to know about European ways, they practiced them just as far they were obliged to and returned to tribal ways whenever they could. The other group, known as the 'school Xhosa' were just the opposite in that they adopted European ways enthusiastically, and showed no preference for traditional customs... The conclusion to be drawn from this, is that a person may have a thorough knowledge of culture, even live within it, and yet assess it as undesirable and unacceptable" (Kaphagawani & Malherbe 2003:226).

It is this religio-cultural background that needs to be taken seriously in the contemporary construction of masculinities in the township context. These religio-cultural lenses seek to create social harmony with the ‘not-yet born’, the ‘living’ and the ‘departed’ for the purpose of social cohesion and prosperity.

2.3. Masculinity, Gender and Religion

Masculinity is a subsection of gender studies, which has been made a field of study within the discipline of religion. Masculinity is not maleness but a cultural construction of behaviors and expectations in male role formation. Sue Morgan, a feminist scholar, says “it is worth noting the differentiation made by feminists between *sex* and *gender* (emphasis her own), with *sex* denoting biologically given attributes and *gender* the cultural perceptions and expectations of what is to be male or female” (1999:43). Gender does not operate in a vacuum; it is reinforced and handed over to different generations through cultural and religious systems. The schematic below helps demonstrate the relationship between these different aspects (masculinities, gender, and religious/cultural systems). Masculinity is the critical⁴¹ study of men, in dialogue with gender studies and which includes religion. Bjorn Krondorfer says “a critical study does not disapprove of religion in general but, instead, questions the implicit and normative gender assumptions of *men* as they engage in, and are engaged by, religious traditions” (2009:xi). This thesis is an attempt to engage with the construction of men in amaXhosa religious traditions. The writing of the thesis within a religio-cultural framework is an act of subversion to the mysticism and secrecy around initiation school. It is an attempt to expose injustices and negligence promoted by it and question its relevance in the pluralist society in South Africa.

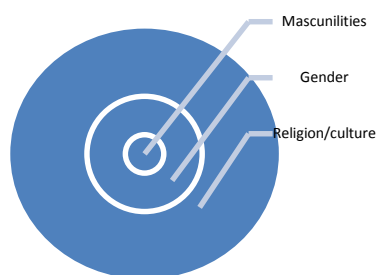


Figure 2.1 The Interplay of Religion, Gender, and Masculinities

⁴¹ Krondorfer says “critical men’s studies in religion exhibit not only a reflective and empathetic stance toward men as individual and communal beings trying to make sense of their lives within the different demands put upon them by society and religion, but it must also engage these issues with critical sensitivity and scholarly discipline in the context of gender-unjust systems. Such systems like patriarchy, androcentrism, the oppression of women, heterosexism, masculinist God-language, homophobia, xenophobia, religious discrimination, colonization or enslavement- can operate in subtle and overt ways, and they benefit certain men in certain historical and political circumstances. These systems need to be kept in mind when working in this area” (2009:xvii)

Masculinity is not a universal concept but is localized and contextual. This thesis' position is a concept of masculinity that is complex, ambiguous and fluid. David Buchbinder says "masculinity has traditionally been seen as self-evident, natural, universal; above all as unitary and whole, not multiple or divided" (1994:1). The idea that there is one single manhood or masculinity (i.e. portrayed as macho, dominating, and violent) needs to be challenged. 'Manhood' or 'masculinity' is diverse across different cultures and even within a singular culture, and it is shaped uniquely in each context. There is a back and forth aspect of constructing and deconstructing (the process of learning and relearning). There is a saying in Xhosa that best describes this phenomenon as "*Imizi ayifani ifana ngentlanti kuphela*"⁴². This proverb can be used to justify diversity within the constructions of masculinity and different practices in shaping masculinity. Connell says "gender"⁴³ is a way in which social practice is ordered. In gender process, the everyday conduct of life is organized in relation to a reproductive arena, defined by bodily structures and processes of human reproduction. This arena includes: sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity" (1995:71). In the South African context the discussion of gender needs to be aware of the construction of race and ethnicity.

Clifford Geertz suggests that religion needs to be seen as a cultural system. Geertz's helpful definition situates culture as "an historical transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which means men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitude towards life" (1993:89). Rituals⁴⁴ are the means in which these symbols are enacted and gatherings of people are used to show support and encouragement to the participants. In the Xhosa language there is a close link between culture (*izithethe namasiko*) and religion (*inkolo*). Hence, Geertz is very helpful in showing that linkage, describing religion as

A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1993:89).

⁴² "The household does not look alike but they all have a kraal" (literal translation) This is the proverbial statement used to explain differences in essence and different practices by people.

⁴³ Connell further elucidates this point, "Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do; it is not social practice reduced to the body" (2000:27).

⁴⁴ Van Klinken says "the narratives, beliefs, and rituals from religious traditions, which are told, taught and performed in religious communities, may shape all men and masculinities in complex and dynamic ways" (2013:14).

Furthermore Ezra Chitando says “Religion is a major force in the construction of masculinities across Africa (and in other parts of the world). As a guide to belief and action, religion equips its adherents with ethical standards. African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam all have certain expectations regarding men”⁴⁵(2011:4).The point made by Chitando is that religion is not a monolithic entity; and in the townships, the coexistence of religious pluralism is evident. African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam have a common underpinning is the constructions of masculinity. He says these religious phenomena “construct men to be the leaders and to control women and children. As with most other religions in the world, they are decidedly patriarchal through their sacred writings, oral traditions, myths, inherited beliefs and practices; they posit men as being superior to women”(2011:4). In light of this, it is important to locate the locus of religion with African people and mainly African Indigenous Religion⁴⁶. John Mbiti says:

Because traditional religions permeate all departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seedlings or harvesting a new crop, he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament (1969:2).

Consequently religion and culture are pervasive in how Xhosa people construct their world. The critical engagement of the constructions of masculinity need to embrace this perspective. But we also need to be aware of the history of religion as complicit in colonial conquest⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact/genderequality2011/new/Ch6-Masculinity-Chitando.pdf>

⁴⁶For this author, African Indigenous Religion is the preferred term over African Traditional Religion. Indigenous is used to encapsulate the changing religion of African people. The term ‘traditional’ is often viewed as demeaning and assuming that there are no changes and adaptations in the practice of religion. Religion is not static; it changes with time and is reinterpreted by practitioners. Adherents of African Indigenous Religion are also people who are going to churches on Sundays and embrace some aspects of Christianity. Wanamaker says “At the core of all African traditional religions of South Africa, as with almost the whole of sub-Sahara...are the beliefs and practices associated with the family or group ancestors...The vast majority of Xhosa Christians still accept that their ancestors can and do influence their lives...and the same appears to be true of the other groups” (1997:281).

⁴⁷ “Historian David Chidester has described how ideas about ‘religion’ were mobilized in the conquest of South Africa: tribes in possession of coveted lands and resources were said to be without ‘religion’, which meant without culture or morals, thus marking them as not fully human, which not only legitimized but virtually mandated domination. Then under British rule, these peoples were nostalgically said to have possessed a primitive religiosity that was interpreted and preserved by Westerners. The reconstructed religions of dominated peoples became objects of Western desire” (Orsi, 2003:171).

When approaching the shaping of masculinities within the Xhosa people, initiation school⁴⁸ is understood as the transference from boyhood⁴⁹ to manhood. In the study of masculinities in the colonial past and postcolonial contexts, the writings of Steve Bantu Biko are pivotal, because of his fortitude towards racism and colonialism. Biko distinguishes the practice of African Indigenous Religion from institutionalized Christianity: “Again we did not believe that religion could be featured as a separate part of our daily lives. We thanked God through our ancestors before we drank beer, married, worked, etc. We would obviously find it artificial to create special occasions for worship...We believed that God was always communicating with us and therefore merited attention everywhere and anywhere” (2007:49).

Initiation school is part of ‘lived religion’. Robert Orsi defines the study of lived religion.

(Lived religion) directs attention to institutions and persons, texts and rituals, practice and theology, things and ideas-all as media of making and unmaking worlds. The key questions concern what people do with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them, and how, in turn, men, women, and children are fundamentally shaped by the worlds they are making as they make these worlds (2003:172).

It is the understanding of ‘lived religion’ that is advanced in this thesis; that religious practices embrace all activities and life experiences of the amaXhosa people. William Johnson Everett (1999) distinguished types of religious organization as institutional, communal and associational. According to his categorization, African Indigenous Religion (AIR) falls under a communal form⁵⁰ of religious organization. James Cochrane, a South African religious scholar, summarized Everett’s view:

Communal forms of religion are almost always bound by blood relations and kinship structures, most often orally transmitted and structurally fluid in that they are not

⁴⁸ Initiation school is part and parcel of the religio-cultural institution. Biko says “our culture, our history and indeed all aspects of the black’s man life have been battered nearly out of shape in the great collision between the indigenous values and Anglo-Boer culture. The first people to come and relate to blacks in a human way in South Africa were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to ‘civilise and educate’ the savages and introduce the Christian message to them. The religion they brought was quite foreign to the black indigenous people” (2007:103).

⁴⁹ For example, Biko says “Conversation groups were more or less naturally determined by age and division of labour. Thus one will find all boys whose job was to look after cattle periodically meeting at popular spots to engage in conversation about their cattle, girlfriends, parents, heroes etc. All commonly shared their secrets, joys and woes. No one felt unnecessarily an intruder into someone else’s business. The curiosity manifested was welcome. It came out of a desire to share. This pattern one would find in any age group” (2007:46).

⁵⁰ “A communal form of religious organisation makes only slight distinction between ‘religion’, family, governance, economics, and science. There is little differentiation among these aspects of life. The distinction of public and private yields to the all-embracing idea of community. Moreover, there is essentially no religious pluralism. The life of the community is integrated around what outsiders call their ‘religion’” (Everett 1999:66).

expressed through formal public identities but through the rhythms of daily life. In constitutional democracy, or liberal democratic order in general, where some formal means of representation in a pluralist context is vital to an effective public presence, such forms of religion have a hard time being noticed, even if they have considerable currency among the populace (as is the case in South Africa). They are forced, if they want to make their presences publicly felt, to *find* some institutional form by which to represent their interest and lifeworld in public; but this is both difficult and counter-intuitive for them (2004:230).

The post-apartheid government's establishment of The House of Traditional Leaders⁵¹ and Traditional Health Practitioners Act 35 2004⁵² can be seen as an attempt at the institutional integration Cochrane speaks of. It recognized the role of indigenous knowledge system⁵³ and created a department that deals with the provincial governance and traditional affairs, including such things as initiation school, registry and regulations of traditional surgeons and tutors. In light of the increasing deaths of initiates in the mountain or bush, this department formulated legislation that criminalized abductions and grants licenses to those who are recognized as traditional surgeons (*ingcibi*). It also serves to preserve and protect the indigenous knowledge system. Initiation schools are a good place to do empirical research on the indigenous knowledge system, because they capture both its essence and the changes currently taking place within the institution. Cochrane poignantly says communal forms of religion face the challenge in development and growth:

(It) inevitably, and inexorably, means a transformation of their own history, traditions and practices, (an) often painful process filled with acts of resistance to the process. The alternative—disappearance from the public sphere and marginalization in society—is possible and often actual, but also fraught with difficulty, not least that of keeping alive the very things one seeks to protect as society continues to change around one. At the same time the 'hidden transcripts' that such forms of religion often represent may be the source of future eruptions into the public sphere, with significant social impact (2004:230).

⁵¹"The Constitution mandates the establishment of houses of traditional leaders by means of either provincial or national legislation. The National House of Traditional Leaders was established in terms of the National House of Traditional Leaders Act, 1997 (Act 10 of 1997). Its objectives and functions are to promote the role of traditional leadership within a democratic constitutional dispensation, enhance unity and understanding among traditional communities, and advise national government." <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/tradlead.htm>

⁵² <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=67974>

⁵³ Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane say "indigenous knowledge systems that have their origins in the social formations of precolonial Africa still organize thought and exercise the imagination of many of Africa's people." Further, they say "indigenous knowledge systems exist and, particularly amongst those who have a historical connection with the social processes and institutions that gave life to them, they remain significant" (2005:7).

Although circumcision⁵⁴ is part of the process, initiation school is understood to be more than just the cutting of the foreskin. It involves stages of preparation of the 'boy's' understanding of his stage (meaning, experiences and expectations) before going to the 'bush', the meaning of the rituals and his experience in the 'bush', and his homecoming ceremony & expectation of *ubukrwala* (the graduated state). The construction of manhood does not stop after those stages, but for the purpose of this thesis, those three categories were the focus of research. Mavundla et al argues that "Xhosa strongly believe that ritual circumcision is a sacred custom" (2009: 408). In the initiation school, the Xhosa religious beliefs are handed down and reinforced. For example, caution against 'the evil one' (*umthakathi*) is maintained; the 'evil one' is the negative malevolent spirit which inspires 'evil behavior' in people. For example, if someone gets sick while at an initiation school. Sickness is never perceived as natural cause; it is linked to a supernatural causation which may be a representative view of many people of Sub-Sahara. Ncube V. (2003) cited in Vhumani Magezi saying:

Many Zulu's illnesses are deliberately caused by enemies (*izitha*) or ancestral anger (*ulaka lwabaphansi/abadala*) because of jealousy (*umona*) or neglect (*ubudedengu*) by family members. Hence the efficacy of the medicine is made possible by studying correctly one's surroundings and taking proper cautions (2007:32).

The question that is often asked, 'have we done the correct rituals for the initiate?' and if not, 'who do we appease in order for the sickness to be averted?' *Inhlonipho* (*honoring*) which is under the umbrella of *Ubuntu* philosophy, is the overall principle espoused in this institution. Ramose says "*Ubuntu* philosophy is the understanding of the be-ing in terms of three interrelated dimensions...of the living—*umuntu*—which makes speech and knowledge of be-ing possible...those beings who have passed [died or departed] from this world of the living [and lastly]...yet- to- be- born" (2003:237). This elucidates a unique understanding of what it means to be human in an African worldview⁵⁵. It is in this understanding that African religions are in dialogue or conflict with each other in their construction of masculinity. Initiation school depicts the essence of the world of the living, full of mixed sensations (sorrow, sadness, pain, ecstasy, joy and fear), solidarity or solitude and sickness or health. The major question faced in this discourse is how someone becomes a human being (*umntu*) in the world of the living. It is through going to the 'bush or mountain' that one is accepted as a

⁵⁴ Silverman begins his review of anthropology and circumcision: "Foreskins are facts", writes Boon (1999), 'cultural facts'. Indeed, the male prepuce is a serious fact, whether wretched or praised, severed or stolen, cultural or biological, depending on your perspective" (2004:419).

⁵⁵ David Hesselgrave says worldview is "the way we see ourselves in relation to all else. Conversely, it is the way we see all else in relation to ourselves" (1991:199). And earlier cited Michael Kearney as defining the worldview of people as " the way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world" (1991:198).

human being in the world of Xhosa men. Ramose says “In *ubuntu* philosophy a human being in the world of the living must be *umuntu* in order to give a response to the challenge of the fundamental instability of the be-ing. *Umuntu* cannot attain *ubuntu* without the intervention of the living-dead. The living-dead are important to the upkeep and protection of the family of the living” (2003:237). The institution is able to usher someone into the world of the living.

This thesis adopts a constructivist approach to better understand masculinities in the Cape Town township. The Constructivist perspective states that human culture is constructed and that human knowledge can be acquired through participation. “As the gender concepts or models for people in the culture, masculinity and femininity are not unchanging and trans-historical but depend rather on current cultural, political, social and historical determinants” (Buchbinder, 1994:3). Connell describes masculinity as “configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change” (1995:44). It is in light of the history of apartheid and current post-apartheid discourse that ancestral masculinity is fashioned and constructed. The social constructivism framework has been helpful in the research and development of masculinities. In unearthing the diversity as portrayed by different academic fields, it has aided in the understanding about the plurality of masculinity. This way of understanding has shown pitfalls with essentialist ‘sex role theory’⁵⁶ and serves as an acknowledgement of a plurality of cultures.

2.4. African (Indigenous) Religion, Gender & Masculinities

The critical study of religion and gender lends itself to be interdisciplinary in its approach. Tina Beattie says this field finds itself in a “complex interface between two contested fields of scholarship, and those who work in this area continue to develop increasingly refined methodological skills to address the problematic issues of ethics, representation, subjectivity and power that cluster around such a controversial field of study” (2004:65). The conceptual framework needs to be multifaceted when exploring the construction of the patriarchal⁵⁷ system and its impact on township masculinities. The theoretical understanding of this study is that gender⁵⁸, religion⁵⁹ and culture⁶⁰ are always in constant flux of change; as opposed to

⁵⁶ ‘Sex role theory’ is an essentialist view and takes masculinity to be unchanging and the same in every male.

⁵⁷ Margrethe Silberschmidt in *African Masculinities* says “although the main axis of patriarchal power is still the overall subordination of women and dominance of men, the deteriorating material conditions have seriously undermined the normative order of patriarchy in both Kisii and Dar es Salaam” (2005:195). Even though the observation was made in East Africa it seems applicable to the South African township.

⁵⁸ Connell says “so we cannot think of womanhood or manhood as fixed by nature. But neither should we think of them as simply imposed from outside, by social norms or pressure from authorities.

the static nature of the three (i.e. Gender, religion and culture) that seems to be advocated by traditionalists (essentialists). Ezra Chitando says

The Africanization of religious studies faces a number of challenges. First, (as discussed earlier), one has to realise that the discipline has its origins outside of Africa. This poses a major challenge to the discipline in an African context. African practitioners of the discipline are unavoidably heavily influenced by the formulations of the (Western) pioneers. The vision, procedures and goals have already been framed, forcing most practitioners to utilise pre-existing categories and concepts. This 'burden of history' has meant that most African practitioners of the discipline are content, or are forced to be content, with rehashing the methodologies and conclusions that were reached by the European ancestors of the discipline. Since 'African ancestors' of the discipline are still too few, African practitioners of the discipline have had to become merely 'mediums' of European ancestors (2011:6).

It is within this view of the Africanization⁶¹ of religious studies⁶², that this thesis aligns itself with contemporary practice. The inquiry⁶³ of religion and culture needs to situate itself within the rituals and practitioners of those religious practices. The inquiry of religion needs to be seen as an interreligious dialogue of Western Christianity, African Christianity, African Religions, Islam, etc. Bosch suggests that dialogue should be embraced by seven attitudes:

People construct themselves as masculine or feminine. We claim a place in the gender order-or respond to the place we have been given-by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life" (2002:4).

⁵⁹ Laurent Magensa (1997:70-71) highlights the characteristics of African Religion as firstly "embraces the whole life"; secondly, "communal"; thirdly, "the bond between the living and the ancestors remains intact...for preservation and continuation of life"; and lastly, "to see to it that things are right between the visible and the invisible world and in the visible world itself".

⁶⁰ Paul Dover in *African Masculinity* says "if we take gender to be the social construction of masculinity and femininity, in which culture elaborates on the sexed body, then socialization and enculturation are the most important formative process" (2005:174).

⁶¹ Tinyiko Maluleke argues for a coherent identity and shows that the quest to be authentically African has a long history. He says "It is important that we view African theology's wrestle with identity issues against the larger quest for identity in Africa and African-America at large. This quest can be traced back to the earliest notions of pan-Africanism (in the mid-nineteenth century) and negritude (in the early (in the early twentieth century) as well as the philosophies of African personality" (2001:31).

⁶² Religious studies, within the African continent, require James Cochrane's conviction, as depicted in his book *Circle of Dignity*. He says "A fundamental conviction behind this work (book) is that local wisdom, expressed here mainly through theological categories, is not overwhelmed by dominant intellectual paradigms. It attempts to reclaim local wisdom as it appears in religious language, and to challenge certain dominant positions concerning the nature of the theological task and the doctrinal claims embodied in its result. It grounds and vindicates a particular kind of voice, not so much against other voices, but against their silencing effects wherever they overwhelm or simply ignore the marginalized or subjugated voice" (1999:2)

⁶³ Jawanza Eric Clark seems to suggest an inquiry that is dialogical when he says this "encouraging a dialogue between traditional African religions and Christian theology and seeing the possibility for constructive theological work between these two thought systems, I affirm the dead are not dead, and that indigenous Africa has much to contribute to contemporary Western theology, Black theology, and the theologies of twenty-first-century African-American Christians generally." (2010:142) I will add to this: the interaction between religion and masculinities, in general.

1)“acceptance of the co-existence of different faiths and to do so not grudgingly but willingly”; 2) “dialogue presupposes commitment”; 3) expectation to “meet up with God”; 4) humility; 5) “dialogue and mission should recognize that religions are worlds in themselves, with their own axes and structures; they face in different directions and ask fundamentally different questions”; 6) “dialogue is neither a substitute nor a subterfuge for mission” and 7) an “admission that we do not have all the answers and are prepared to live within the framework of penultimate knowledge, that we regard our involvement in dialogue and mission as an adventure, are prepared to take risks, and are anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides into fuller understanding” (Bosch, 1993:483-489). The initiation schools are attended by adherents of different religions. The fieldwork and observation seems to give the first account of the practices. The in-depth interviews also facilitate a way to critically engage with participants' understanding of the meaning of the school. It is also this kind of inquiry that has seen the practitioners as the ‘living documents’ that need to be read and understood. In order to be able to read and understand the practices and meaning, a linguistic competency is required. A Xhosa proverb is used as the hermeneutic key: ‘*Imizi ayifani*’, meaning households are diverse in their practices of religious and cultural systems. For example the initiation rituals and practices are done at different times of the day and season accordingly to household or clan. However, the similar ways in which the kraal, the *ongqu phantsi* (hut), and the *ibhuma* (initiates hut) are built, symbolize the similar understanding about the sacred place (*ifana ngentlanti kuphela*). Thomas Barrie says

They (religion and religious practices) can be understood as intrinsic to the archetypal human endeavor of establishing a ‘place’ in the world. Sacred architecture has incorporated similar agendas – providing meaningful places that embody symbolic content, often precisely built at specific locations with the hope that connections would result and the otherwise inaccessible accessed (2012:80)

The kraal is one of the sacred places where the ancestors are consulted and the religio-cultural practices are done. In my observation, I noted that the architectural structure of the kraal is similar to the ‘*ibhuma*’ where the initiated reside. But also in the rural setting, the residential area is round shaped housing called ‘*ongqu phantsi*’. This phrase ‘*ongqu phantsi*’ could mean to honor the departed. The round shape could also communicate the importance of community. It seems to illuminate the communal understanding of the human being. The space is not divided into rooms but shared communally. Further, the presence of the kraal side by side with the ‘*ongqu phantsi*’ might also depict the ‘sharing’ of space between the living and the departed.

Next, we shift to look at the understanding of being a human. The idea that human beings have dignity is crucial and religio-cultural rituals enhance the dignity of a human being (*isidima*). Firstly, the idea of greeting and acknowledging somebody is central; when people are not acknowledged and greeted, they take offense. The reason for taking offence is that only animals and things are not acknowledged. The greeting of a person⁶⁴ captures and revitalizes this view of man as communal and connected to others. It could be explained that a person is representing the clan (the living and the dead). But also, addressing people by their clan name shows that they belong to a community of both the living and the dead. It is Gabriel Setiloane who captures this unique understanding of the human person in a communal way when he says,

Physically perceived, the human person is like live electric wire which is ever exuding force or energy in all directions. The force that is thus exuded is called 'seriti'- 'isithunzi'. 'Seriti' has often been translated to mean dignity or personality. Actually, that only describes the end result of the phenomenon. It is derived from the same word-stem 'riti' as 'moriti' – 'umthunzi' which means 'shadow' or 'shade'. *It is a physical phenomenon which express itself externally to the human body in a dynamic manner.* It is like an aura around the human person, an invisible shadow or cloud or mist forming something like a magnetic or radar field. *It gives forth into the traffic or weltering pool of life in community the uniqueness of each person and each object.* (1986:13) (*italics my emphasis*)

If these concepts of understanding the human being are not taken seriously, then the Africanization of the inquiry of religion will remain an elusive dream.

African religion is experiential and knowledge is passed on through participation in rituals and ceremonies. There are no spectators, but people have defined roles. So teaching about religion is not based on a script or text, but on older men and women and chiefs who are custodians of the indigenous institutions. But the challenge is the migration of people between the rural and urban setting. In the urban setting, there seems to be less defined roles and a lack of structures to model how those roles are lived out. And yet the way people use language assumes this structure is in place and it reinforces that the world should be seen in two ways: visible and the invisible. The belief systems are daily communicated and lived out, whether it's in how food is eaten (e.g. not individual plates but children having a common dish), the sharing of space (whether forced or not) and the interconnectedness of people through clan names. The communal nature of religion makes it hard to be spectators and one's ability to choose whether to participate is limited.

⁶⁴ For example, greetings include: *Bayethe* (meaning 'Hail!'), *Siyabulisa* (meaning 'we are greeting'), *ilali iyabulisa* (meaning the village sends or passes its greeting)

Klaus Nürnberger, a South African religious scholar, elucidates the dynamic nature of African religion, when he says:

African religion is experiential and not speculative; the sphere of existential relevance (ancestors, sorcery, witchcraft) is clear and explicit, while the mythological canopy is usually vague and variable. The reason is that myth works with metaphors that point to an elusive deeper meaning, while in the sphere of existential relevance one finds straightforward descriptive statements. Proximate ancestors belong to the sphere of the existential relevance. They have been personal participants in the network of social relationships until very recently. One knows them. They are part of the family. They are superiors. The living and the deceased communicate with each other in some form or other. One expects their support and fears their punishment (2007:30).

So one's identity⁶⁵ is linked to rituals⁶⁶, ceremonies and being a clan member. These rituals are linked to the visible and invisible being. The crucial role of ancestors is understood to be a guardian and mentor to those who are visible and invisible. For example, in the initiation school, the *ingcibi* (*restorer or builder*) serves to initiate and incorporate the initiate to the 'living-dead rank' or pyramid of relationship. And the *ikhankatha* serves as the guardian and mentor (priest, teacher and friend) as experienced by participants of this study. The *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* seem to fulfil the role of the visible and invisible being. The *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha*, as officiators of initiation school, have been trained and mentored by their fathers who have departed. There is continuous interaction of the visible *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* with the departed (invisible). Selitoane says "the interaction of one's 'Seriti' (vital force) with those of other people in the community does not terminate with death. Even after death, 'the vital participation' of the deceased is experienced in the community in general and in the home and clan circle in particular" (1986:17). It makes the officiators of these offices to be respected and feared at the same time.

The constraint of lived religion, like initiation school, is the instilling of the 'fear of punishment' if you break ranks with it. It is fear that seems to be a challenge for any lived religion. Fear⁶⁷ does not seem to be a good motivator but a hindrance and will indeed create people who want to rebel and challenge the system because there are unhappy with it. The clan name

⁶⁵ Gerhard van den Heever says "identity is not a factual given. It is a social fantasy produced in the act of narrating history and making myth. Identity is *believed* and *perceived*" (*italics his emphasis*) (2001:5)

⁶⁶ Jaco Beyers says "rituals become the symbolic actions that define the relationships in which humans stand; not only relationships with the divine, the ancestors or spiritual beings, but also societal relationships with other humans and with nature and everything therein" (2010:7).

⁶⁷ Wanamaker says "the influence of Christianity has reshaped aspects of traditional ancestor belief. For example, the evidence exists to suggest that Christianity has helped overcome much of the fear that people have had of their ancestors in the past, though it does not lead them to reject them" (1997:285).

also makes it difficult to break ranks, because any future suffering will be attributed to the severing of one's clan. Suffering and illness can be interpreted as punishment from the ancestors for breaking ranks and not maintaining a social order. There is also a common understanding that if one does not do certain rituals and ceremonies, that person can suffer from mental illness (*ukuphambana*-diverting from set patterns or *ukushiywa zingqondo*- to lose one ability to reason). Initiation school rituals and ceremonies are regarded as having this efficacy of maintaining social order. Social order is seen as the harmony between the visible and invisible. It is also honoring of the living and the departed. It is shown by continuously serving them through participation in family rituals and ceremonies.

The concept of ancestor is central to the African Indigenous Religion and has a history of being contested. The honoring and service of living and dead (ancestors/parents) has been inaccurately defined as worship⁶⁸ by those who are influenced by urbanization and an 'individualistic' understanding of Christianity⁶⁹. The ancestors are offering a sense of belonging for those who are to perform the rituals and practice. The participation also gives the initiates the sense of dignity and respect as part of the community of the living and the departed. Initiation school plays a restorative and participatory role of religion. For example, initiation school restores a 'boy' to his community and to participate in his 'own healing' as guided by guardians (visible and invisible).

Kwame Bediako, an African Theologian, says

So the cult of ancestors may be said to be beyond the reach of Christian argument. If the cult of ancestors is valid, here is the solid ground on which traditional religion can take a firm stand. It is precisely here that the problem lies. In what does the validity of the cult of ancestors consist? Since not all become ancestors but only those who lived exemplary lives and from whom the community derived some benefit, are not ancestors in effect a projection into the transcendent realm of the social values and

68 Setiloane says "Africans, unless they have grown to internalize the 'Westerners' view of themselves, strongly resent the suggestion that they 'worship' *Badimo*. They argue that the European word for 'worship' does not properly convey the same meaning as that 'service' (*tirelo*) which they perform in relation to their ancestors. That service which is rendered to *Badimo* is in fact of the same quality and level as that rendered to one's parents while they are living...The logic of this is that *Badimo* are merely our 'deceased parents'. But it needs to be noted that parenthood in the African concept is not limited to the physical relationship. It spells authority over one which originates beyond the two parties concerned. Parenthood, even while the parent is living, is an intermediary rank and a channel of forces which span the various levels of being in this life, across the homes and clans in the total community of the village and tribe as well as with the unseen world of *BoModimo* (Divinity) which is strongly inclined to be identified with the underground *Mosima*: The Abyss, from whence the first people came and to which all go" (1986:19).

69 Jawanza Eric Clark says "I contend that the Black Christian's alienation from this African heritage can only be overcome by exploring the rich theological and philosophical legacy of indigenous African thought systems and affirming their legitimacy for Black Christian theological discourse and practice" (2010:142).

spiritual expectations of the living community? Since traditional society views existence as an integrated whole, linking the living and the departed in a common life, such a projection is understandable. Yet the essential point is that ancestors have no existences independent of the community that produces them. The cult of ancestors provides the basis for locating in the transcendent realm the source of authority and power in the community and gives to leadership itself sacred quality (2000:30)

The concept of Ancestor⁷⁰ shapes and impacts on religious and cultural systems, specifically initiation school. The construction of masculinity is embedded in the story of *Somagwaza* (the originator and proto-ancestor of *ulwaluko*) and the roles played by *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha*. *Ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* are ancestral roles that are passed on from one generation to another. It is this understanding that is believed and perceived to be normative for the construction of this type of masculinity. The similarity of the architectural structure of the *ibhuma* (hut) to the '*ongqu phantsi*' (residential hut) should not be taken for granted. It points to the honoring and service of those who are living and also the departed. The round shape seems to portray the communal understanding in this construction of masculinity. This thesis seeks to advance a different understanding of masculinity than hegemonic masculinity proposes.

Ancestral masculinity is the concept developed by this author to depict the form of masculinity described by the research of this thesis. It is distinguished by participating in the ritual act (rites of passage) to manhood, according to the prescribed process and procedures of that community and the authority of the 'living and dead' ancestors, in order for one to be accepted and recognized as part of the community. If a person decides for a schooling that does not include the prescribed way nor is acknowledged by the ancestors, then that person is deemed an outcast and does not qualify to be an ancestral 'man'. For example, our inquiry focused on AmaXhosa people. For them it means, if one does not get circumcised according to the prescribed way of the living and dead ancestors, then that one cannot be included and accepted as a man in their religio-cultural system.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the development of the study of masculinities at a global level was reviewed and hegemonic masculinity was interrogated. A specific look was taken at the development of masculinities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Robert Morrel's contribution as the key scholar of

⁷⁰ Clark further says "The ancestors are spiritual extensions of one's living parents. They are a part of one's kith and kin. Just as parents expect obedience, respect, and a certain amount of attention from their children, so do the ancestors, by extension. They behave, therefore, in a parental manner; thus, the notion of how to be a parent becomes cemented in the consciousness of people for generations. The ancestors become the norm for and definition of parental authority." (2010:152).

masculinities was mentioned. The interplay between masculinity, gender and religion was discussed. The relevance of the relationship between African (indigenous) religion, gender and masculinities as social constructs, was explored as it impacts on how amaXhosa construct ancestral masculinity.

Chapter 3 Ancestral Masculinity: Micro-Context

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the findings of the research conducted in March through July 2013 in the Cape Town townships with amaXhosa men who have experienced initiation school. The findings illuminate possible answers to the questions: what is the meaning of initiation schools to amaXhosa men? And how is this type of masculinity constructed? The term Ancestral Masculinity is used to capture the type of masculinity described by the findings. The role of the ancestor has been the major emphasis of maintaining these initiation schools. The ancestor is defined here as older men who are living (*ookhokho*) and those who are dead (*izinyanya*) as well as clan name, '*isiduko*'^{71,72}. Initiation School can be understood as the stage where an individual is grafted into his ancestral lineage. The figure 3.1 below is an attempt to visualize the three major phases that the individual must undergo in order to be accepted into the lineage. This chapter attempts to explain how ancestral masculinities are constructed: firstly, by a searching route to acceptance and secondly, by finding acceptance in its micro context. The next chapter will highlight the last phase, and how they are constructed within the macro-context.

Initiation school is an institution that seeks to carve identity. It has procedures and processes, religious and cultural rituals that forge identity formation. Chief Holomisa⁷³ advocates for this view when he says identity markers for being a Xhosa man entails the ritual of initiation. Initiation school is a journey, similar to the way that school systems have

⁷¹ Sitembile Alfred Mtontsasa Mcetya: "The *imizi* extend and multiply into the clan or *isiduko*. The term *isiduko* comes from the verb *ukuduka* meaning 'to get lost' or 'go astray'. The collective term *isiduko* is used to keep a group together and protect its members from going astray. The children of a man who, on his death, leave several homesteads may call themselves by their father's name. The offspring of the senior son may in turn rename his clan after him. In this way clan names may change and expanded" (1998:28).

⁷² Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje say "Traditionally clan identity was constantly asserted by the use of the *isiduko*, the clan name, as the polite greeting and children grew up knowing very well which of their friends and contemporaries fell within the prohibited degrees of marriage and which did not. In the country, *iziduko* are still commonly heard in greeting, and conservatives in town, the pagan migrants, and elderly people will use it, but among townees, and younger people generally, *iziduko* are out of fashion. The use of clan names has been largely displaced by the use of surnames which are required in all official contexts, and in dealings with whites" (1963:76). But I have observed in the post-apartheid political landscape, there has been a resurgence of the public use of *Iziduko*; for example Nelson Mandela known as *Madiba*, Thabo Mbeki as *Zizi* and Jacob Zuma as *Umsholozzi*.

⁷³ "This is the only tradition that gives us what we call identity. It helps to know who we are and what Xhosa people are all about. If you do not follow this tradition (ritual) you can grow old and be successful (but) you will be always a boy (*Inkwenkwe*) in Xhosa culture." www.aljezeera.com/peopleandpower.

different tiers-primary, secondary, and tertiary. Boyhood can be seen as the preparation state, or primary school, for *ulwaluko*. *Ubukhwenkwe* has two foundational philosophical schools of thought (one that advocates to 'leave the boy alone' and the other seeks to be 'involved in boyhood formation'). *Ubukwetha* serves as the 'secondary school' and involves certain key relationships, sacred land and specific language for the formation of the initiate. In order for an initiate to qualify to enter the tertiary schooling, as depicted by The Pyramid of Relationships (later demonstrated in Figure 4.1), he needs to do 'well' in the bush. If he does 'well', completes initiation and is 'accepted' by the ancestors, he enters the phase called *ubukrwala*. Figure 3.1 below depicts this journey, revealing the codes found in the data to explain each category. This is how data gathering and analysis was done. The meaning and experiences were extracted through the initial coding; for example, "inja", "no decision", and "treated like a child" were initial codes. The axial coding helped in developing the diagrams below and attempted to connect each category.

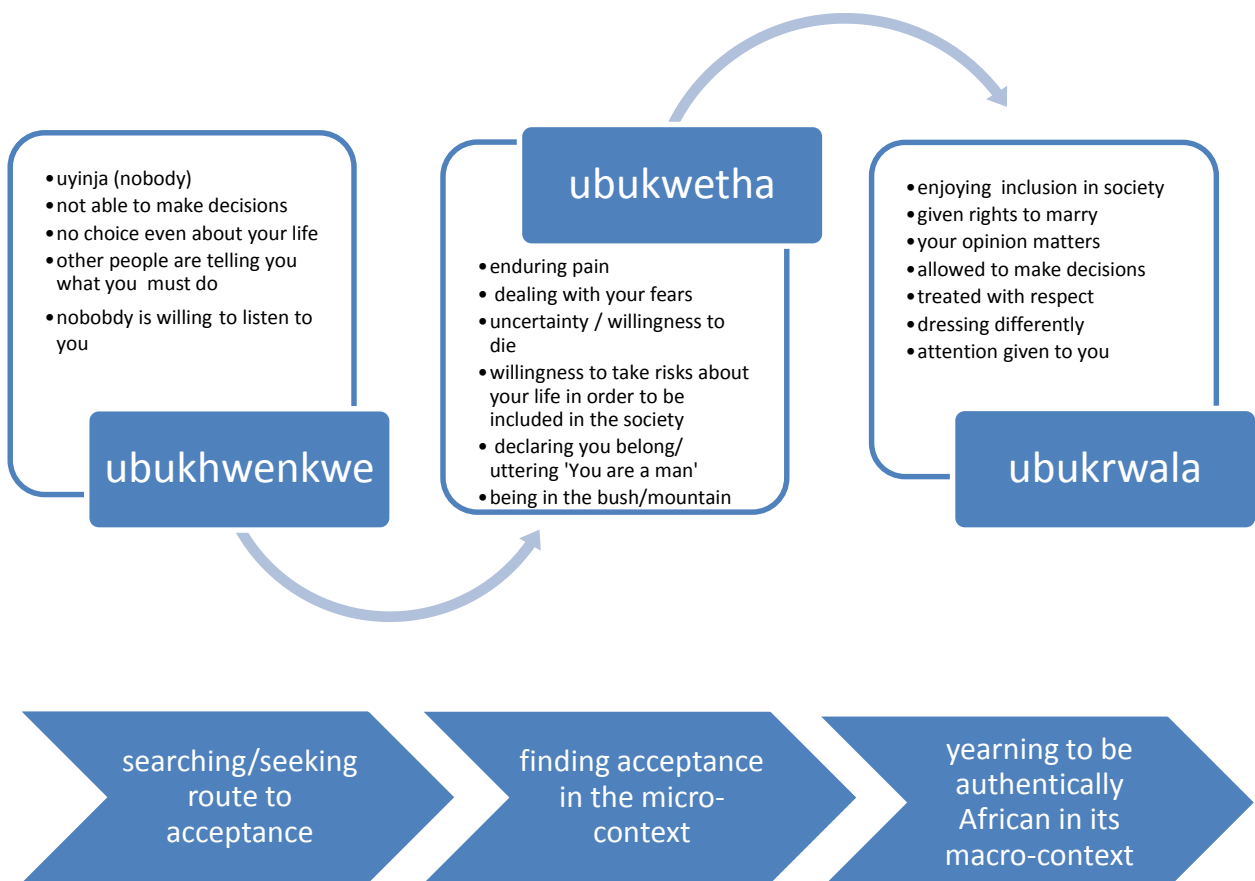


Figure 3.1 The Journey to 'Manhood'

3.2. Searching a Route to Acceptance

Some researchers have reduced the practice of *ulwaluko* (initiation school) to be about circumcision or a surgical procedure. Circumcision and its necessity, itself brings great debate. Some would even argue it “violates the integrity of the body”⁷⁴; whilst others advocate for its place in the prevention package for the HIV epidemic.⁷⁵ However, the manner in which circumcision is done in *ulwaluko*, draws attention even from proponents of circumcision. For example, one urologist⁷⁶ implied it is a clumsy procedure, equating it to a guillotine.

However the diagram above captures the phases of *ulwaluko* as described by the participants. *Ulwaluko* can be more accurately understood as a journey than as a singular event of circumcision. Nelson Mandela defends this point:

An uncircumcised Xhosa man is a contradiction in terms, for he is not considered a man at all but a boy. For the Xhosa people, circumcision represents the formal incorporation of males into society. It is not just a surgical procedure, but a lengthy and elaborate ritual in preparation for manhood. As a Xhosa, I count my years as a man, from the date of my circumcision (1994:24).

From a religious and cultural perspective, *ulwaluko* can be understood as the seeking route to acceptance for a ‘boy’ into his family, his society and by his living-dead ancestors, which need to be appeased and honored. This is what makes it so engraved in the Xhosa construction of masculinity.

It must be considered why the “uncircumcised man is a contradiction in terms”. Participants reflected on negative experiences they had gone through in that ‘boyhood’ stage, and in some cases described the exclusion they felt in their families and communities. An example is interviewee 2, who described some emotional scars because his father died before he went to the bush. To complicate things further, his parents were divorced. He was staying

⁷⁴ Adriaan Van Klinken says “The idea is that the removal of the foreskin would efficaciously reduce the sexual transmission of the virus. This prevention strategy is controversial because circumcision, according to critics, violates the integrity of the body” (2013:1) A German court has been reported as banning infant circumcision and saying that “according to the court ruling, ‘the fundamental right of the child to bodily integrity outweighs the fundamental rights of the parents.’” (<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/06/27/12446284-german-court-bans-male-circumcision-sparks-outrage-among-jews-muslims?lite>) accessed 10 July 2012

⁷⁵ “There is a significant body of evidence showing that medical male circumcision reduces the risk of HIV infection by more than 60% (Auvert et al, 2005; Bailey et al, 2007; Gray et al, 2007; Siegfried et al, 2009; Wamai et al, 2011), but the evidence on traditional male circumcision is less well developed” Harriet Deacon and Kirsten Thomson (2012: 3).

⁷⁶ “The safest techniques are those in which the glans (head of the penis) is in full view when all incisions are made. This is not the case during the guillotine type of circumcision where the foreskin is pulled forward and chopped off. Ritual adult circumcision as practised in traditional Xhosa culture is usually of the guillotine type.” *Dr Pieter J. le Roux*
<http://www.health24.com/Medical/Diseases/Circumcision-Client-20120721> accessed 03 March 2013

with his aunt and had to negotiate his way into the bush and decided to go to the bush without telling his paternal family. He talked about his experiences of feeling lonely due to his parents divorcing and coupled with that he felt that he was not accepted as a human being in his society. He was relegated in decision making about his father's funeral, noting that there are people who are consulted and only their opinion is taken seriously. The older men and women discuss the details about the funeral dates and a place of burial. He posed: Wouldn't you want to be part of the decision if your father passed away? This is how he articulates his experience:

Ubukhwenkwe busoloko budefine(wa) nge negative terms, uyinja, lento awuna decision awuna choice even nangobom bakho, so kusoloko kukhw'abantw'abakuxelelay'uba uzokwenza lento and akho mntu unwilling ukuba akumamele. So ukwaluka kukunika lo opportunity yoba finally ndizakwenza idecisions endifuna ukuzenza ngobom bam ngohlobo lwam. And ndizabanayo nevoice kwifamily yethu uba xa izinto ziqhubeka ndingacebisa and now ndizaba neright capacity uba ndimamele whereas xawuyinkwenkwe uveluxeleluba hey amadoda ayathetha phuma kwedini. Even if eza decisions zi affect wena nefamily yakho nentoni. I think intweyenzeka ngoku tata wayeswelekile zange kubuzwe kum noba ucinga ntoni idate yomngcwabo nentoni. Ndaxelel'uba utatakh'uswelekile ungcwatywa ngolu suku bantu bani bazomthath'ekapa bamzise maxhoseni.
Interviewee 2

[Translation— Boyhood is always defined in negative terms, being a dog. You do not have a capacity to make your own decisions and you cannot make your own choices about your life. You are always told what you must do and no one is willing to listen to you. So going to initiation school gives you the opportunity (privilege) to make your own decisions and in your own way. And you will be able to make your contribution in your family and your advice can be taken seriously by men in your family instead of being chased away like a boy (dog), even if those decisions directly affect you. I think what happened when my father passed away, I was just told that he will be buried on this date and these people will take his body from Cape Town to *Umthatha*. No one asked me what do I think or feel at all.]

The 'boy or *inkwenkwe*' is thought to be an untrained dog, someone that cannot contribute positively to society because of his tendency to misbehave. This is the most important word to understand for our analysis. What is a boy in Xhosa culture? A boy is 'a nobody', someone who has no rights and privileges, but he must be given certain duties that he must fulfill. He is often called a dog, reasoned by the observation that the penis of the dog is covered and the dog does not care who is there--- it will urinate anyway, it will have sex anyway, with no respect for its environment and has no language to articulate his views. A dog is thought to be just an animal but, a different kind of animal; one that is domesticated

and is useful for chasing things and protecting a family. The same applies to the understanding of boys. They are exploring life and they are bound to make nonsensical decisions and are not able to express themselves fully. It is relevant to point out that there, in *general*, is a different understanding and caring for dogs among Xhosa people and by white people in South Africa. Some may argue there is a distinction between the untrained dog and the trained dog but amaXhosa seem not have that in their vocabulary.

For the Xhosa boy, the only route to acceptance by family, friends and his community, is to go to initiation school. It is believed that one's relationships depend on how one: deals with pain, fear and the possibility of dying. The general belief is that if the initiate dies in the bush the ancestors were not happy with the way it was conducted. Some initiates get so overwhelmed by fear and of being "cut", that they decide to run away or go to the hospital. But the majority of boys rationalize their willingness to take the risk, by deciding that they are not willing to preserve their lives at the expense of ridicule. They would rather risk dying.

As the Xhosa boy, for me to understand, for me to believe, and for me to know, from the position [I am] in right now to the position I am going to be in, the position to be able say that I am on the way to becoming a man, I have to go through circumcision in the ways and practices of my culture. The most obvious part of it is that they cut your foreskin [chuckles] and other than that, I do not know anything. That's all boys know. Sibusiso Gaca

There are ranks that cannot be crossed between boys and men. For example, boys and men do not share the same bathroom or communal shower or even the toilet. Boys are required to be respectful and honor men. Boys need to make sure that they are in no position to view men's genitals (*Ukuhlonipha ubudoda*) and men need to conduct themselves respectfully and dignified in order to protect the custom (*isiko*). Custom then becomes a nuance word because it refers both to the institution and the actual scar left by the assegai cutting off the foreskin in the genitals.

The difference between men and boys is emphasized by two school of thoughts, one says "a boy is the father of a man" and the other says "*Yiyeke inkwekhwe izonwabele*" ["leave the boy alone to explore and discover (enjoy) life"]. This came to mind, as participants related how they understand "*ubukhwenkwe*", the boyhood stage. "A boy is the father of a man" is the school of thought that believes that a boy needs to be helped and to be treated fairly and respectfully. The rationale is that boyhood is fundamental in making a responsible man. The boy needs guidance in how to conduct himself. He should be befriended and not treated harshly. Interviewee 3 tells of how he was treated when he was a boy: "People used to treat me very well while I was a boy. Maybe it was the way they saw me I don't know. Even now that I am a man, the respect is more."

So some people are willing to treat boys in a decent way, but they will be quick to remind him that he is still a boy. Interviewee 3 says, “That’s how I see it from myself; because when you were a boy people used to talk carelessly with you.” Even though he acknowledged that he was treated with respect, when he was spoken to, he was still was not given a high regard. This school of thought, as much as it is trying to improve the treatment of boys, will maintain the division between boys and men. Boys should be treated fairly. They can be sent to fetch things, but it should not be abused or overdone. Here misbehaving is not tolerated. For example, in Thando Mqolozana’s book, he describes how he and his friends were belted by their coach for stealing and perhaps smoking and doing drugs.

Let me tell you, there was no Shining Stars Football Club without the three of us. That is why *Ta-Diski*, the coach, called us into his kamer and treated us to a long belting session when he heard of wayward actions outside the *kasi*. He was the first to suggest that what we needed was *uKwaluswa*-to be circumcised. Among traditional people, *uKwalusa* is commonly held to be a remedy for mischievous behavior like ours. *Ta-Diski* wasn’t interested in excuses that we were starving. He just regretted the wasted talent and brains (2009:17)

The other school of thought, that says “*yiyeke inkwenkwe izonwabele*”, seems to be the more dominant school. Below are comments referring to how the boys are treated, or “controlled”, or relegated as nothing and not listened to because they were considered an untrained dog. Interviewee 1 says: “The boy stage is about being controlled [and] also you were being told to do this and that. A person who is not circumcised doesn’t get listened to. There’s nothing he can say. He does not have a contribution in the society.”

And this is what he says about a family man who never went to the bush: “So according to me, I know he does not have a contribution. You are nothing. You are the same as a little boy, though you are an adult. Even if you are an adult, even if you are a man who owns a house or home.” He cements it this way: “When you are a boy, you don’t have any contribution. You don’t say anything. You don’t participate in anything in your family.” For example, it is allowed for a boy to misbehave. He can steal and destroy other people’s property. It can be excused, because he is a boy. A boy, “*inemikhuba or imikwa*”, means he cannot reason well and has tendencies to mistreat things. Interestingly, this attribute, at times, is even exploited for the purpose of initiation school. Mandela describes:

A custom of circumcision school is that one must perform a daring exploit before the ceremony. In days of old, this might have involved a cattle raid or even battle, but in our time the deeds were more mischievous than martial. Two nights before we moved to *Tyhalarha* we decided to steal a pig. In *Mkhekezweni*, there was a tribesman with a

typical old pig. To avoid making a noise and alarming the farmer, we arranged for the pig to do our work for us. We took handfuls of sediment from homemade African beer, which has a strong scent much favoured by pigs, and placed it upwind of the animal. It was so aroused by the scent that he came out of the kraal, following a trail we had laid and gradually made his way to us, wheezing and snorting, and eating that sediment. When he got near us, we captured the poor pig, slaughtered it, and then built a fire and ate roast pork underneath the stars. No piece of pork ever tasted as good before or since (1994:25).

Interviewee 1 echoes this sentiment: “*Ndawagqibela kudala nalento kuthwa ngamatshitsha ndandisemncinci kuqala ubukhwenkwe wawubutshitshisa uvunyelwe ubethi nkukhu zabantu.*” [It has been a long time since I have seen the stage of ‘a daring exploit before the ceremony’. I was young when boys were allowed to have ‘daring exploits’, where you were expected to do mischievous acts like stealing a chicken.]

Mqolozana mentioned that in the township living condition “*ubukhwenkwe*”, seemed to be lived as a ‘daring exploit’ and an adventure. Though there are no pigs or chickens to be stolen, life lived in the streets offers things like drugs & alcohol, unprotected sex and partying. And this is not the only experimenting that happens. Others may choose to do mischievous activities like stealing cars and being part of gangs. Interviewee 4 relates about this stage of boyhood in the township:

I’ll start from boyhood things that I did when I was a boy. I really acted like a boy. I remember I was drinking but not smoking during weekends. I was never seen at home. I used to go to parties and clubs. I was just walking around. You’ll never find me on weekends. I used to be at home in the week during school days only. When you are a boy, you just do anything. When you become a man you are being shown by older people than you. Your older brothers, they are showing you the way of how you behave when you are a man.

The driving force or motivation for some boys is that they are going to achieve something and will be taken seriously. As mentioned, in neither of these two schools of thoughts are boys fully accepted. The only difference is the treatment of boys: one advocate’s for boys’ needs to be treated harshly and the other, gently. The one, allows the dog to run and do whatever it wants to do; however the other, will encourage the dog to be chained and given shelter.

This worldview of boyhood is emphasized by the rituals required before going to initiation school to demonstrate his ‘cleansing’. *Imbeleko*, *umngcamo*, *ukuqatshahula*, the cutting of hair, and *umguyo* all build toward the path of preparing the initiate for acceptance by the ancestors. Most of these rituals require an animal and its blood in the act of *ukugxegxeza kwabaphantsi*, which means the need for animal blood to be spilled in order to plea for

inclusion and acceptance⁷⁷ in the lineage of ancestors. The spilling of animal blood is also a symbol for guidance through the process of *ulwaluko*. Furthermore, human blood is also spilled, when it comes to *ukuqiniswa komkwetha* (to be protected against evil forces) through *ukuqatshulwa ligqirha* (to have a diviner make slight cuts on different parts of the body). Even the circumcision⁷⁸ itself is the sign for entry into manhood and acceptance to the lineage of the ancestors (clan) in someone's clan. Peter Mtuze says "Chief Matanzima once suggested that initiation is the time when the ancestors are asked to accept a child into full lineage membership – if they decline to do so, for whatever reason, the initiate dies; To try and cheat the ancestors with antibiotics and hospital circumcisions, deny them their right and duty to accept or reject" (2004: 53).

Firstly, the boy must be introduced to the ancestors (*ukuchaza and imbeleko*). The timing of these rituals can vary by family, by clan and by setting (rural/urban). For example, the Amapondo do a practice earlier when the child is born. Mcetywa says "The child is introduced to the ancestors at six months through a ritual, *ukuchaza*, which places him or her in their care" (1998:29). Another introductory ritual, *imbeleko*, is also part of *ubukhwenkwe*. It can happen at any time between the ages of two to eighteen. Mcetywa describes,

This is another ritual to introduce an infant to the ancestors. In this case, the ancestors are invoked through the shedding of the blood of a goat or a sheep. The infant places his/her hand on the animal before it is slaughtered through stabbing the side of the chest near the heart with a spear. The cry of the pierced animal is regarded as a means of communication to the ancestor. The animal's cry is accompanied by a short traditional prayer in the form of a praise song, ie. *izibongo or izinqulo*. A portion of the meat is given to the child and a part of the skin is neatly cut and tied around the neck and the arms of the child. If the child is still an infant, a blanket is made for the child from the skin of the sacrificed animal which is used to tie the child to the mother's back ie. *ukubeleka*. Sometimes the skin may be used as a sleeping mat for the child (1998:30).

However, in the township, *imbeleko* often takes place two to three weeks before the initiate goes to the bush. And in most cases, it is the first time the boy is the centre of attention in his household.

These rituals, *imbeleko* and *umgcamo*, can sometimes become complicated when there are fractures in family relationships. For example, if a child grows up with only the mother or the

⁷⁷ Soga was cited by Ngxamngxa "on completion of the seclusion, the young men's relationship to their ancestor spirits is stressed in a valedictory address by one appointed for this duty" (1931:248)

⁷⁸ Ngxamngxa says "circumcision also performs a religious function by putting the initiates in touch with ancestors" (1971:197)

mother's side of the family. Traditionally, rituals must be done by the father's family, which defines the boy's clan name and identity. In light of these issues, which are more common in contemporary Xhosa culture, there is a way to go to the bush without parental consent or knowledge. It is called *ukuziba*. A boy can just join his friend who is being circumcised. Perhaps he senses the father or paternal family do not want to take responsibility for his initiation school. It may be that the paternal family does not have the economic means to host. This is what interviewee 2 chose to do:

The person I spoke to was my aunt. It came up as casual as well. So it was in June 2000. Anyway I started in April 2000: 'I am thinking of going for circumcision this year you see'. She said, 'Why are you thinking of wanting to be circumcised?' I said, 'My mates in St John's are all circumcised; it's only me in my class. My mates in my village are all circumcised.' I made it different as well and people said you are doing it secretly, it is where you go before the family celebrations and the celebrations would follow later... What happened a year before I went to my dad's place to say that I wanted to be circumcised, you see. So what my uncles thought, was like, 'Circumcise me! I want your money!', you see. Everybody pushed a responsibility around, you see. So that's why I never...these people are making me to go around the corner, so let's do that.

Regardless of how or when the introduction rituals are followed, there are also ritual preparations that are made in the last week or hours before the initiate enters the bush. Again these are means for appealing to the ancestors and cleansing and preparing the boy. *Umngcamo* or *ukugcamlisa* is a "sacrifice believed to convey blessings" (Ngxamngxa, 1971:186). There is also a symbolic shedding of childhood, demonstrated in the shaving of the head (*umngeno wenkwenkwe*) and leaving the things of childhood behind (clothing, blankets, & even one's mother). Lastly, *umguyo* which ultimately leads to the singing of *Somagwaza*, as the boy is escorted to the bush.

Nowadays, there is also an inclusion of a medical health checkup from a clinic, where the initiate is checked for HIV status and Sexual Transmitted Infections. Mqgolozana attested to this: "the next step was to visit the Sada clinic for a blood test. They were going to test me for HIV, and whatever else it is they test for in the blood of the prospective initiate" (2009:71). He must show his certificate that he has done this before he is circumcised. Interviewee 6 says:

On Monday I visited the hospital again and I was confirmed to be HIV negative, and since I was a virgin, I had no STI's. The doctor looked at me and said "*Kwedini unewonga*". He told me three things: to stay away from alcohol, to stay away from girls, and to centre my manhood on Jesus (I really did not understand what he meant about the third one).

Umngcamo involves the slaughtering of an animal in the kraal in the backyard of the initiate's house. Here is where the boy's head is shaved. "The *ukubingelelwa* (to be sacrificed for) called *umngcamo* among Thembu and in traditional Xhosa is a propitiatory sacrifice to the ancestral spirits as mediators between man and God – UmDali-Creator, so that he may ward off evil from the boys undergoing the rite. There is also a prayer introducing the boys to the notice of the ancestors, and a request for blessing them when they enter into manhood and throughout their lives" (Ngxamngxa, 1971:198). This ritual has been observed to be done on Friday afternoons⁷⁹ ⁸⁰. Ngxamngxa further reports that "Each initiate is given the roasted *intsonyama* (a strip of meat cut from the right foreleg)" (1971:187). The initiate is also given a necklace, *ubulunga*⁸¹ ⁸², made from the tail hair of the animal, placed around his neck for protection.

In my observation, I realized that the blanket the initiates are given when they go to the bush has symbolism. The initiate is covered with a white blanket with a red strip at the end, which denotes the spilling of blood that will happen. In some families, the boy is given the old blanket that he used as a child, knowing that the blanket will not come back. Interviewee 6 recounts:

Early in the morning, on Friday, my father woke me up, gave me two new blankets- the grey one *yangaphantsi* [for underneath] and the white one with two red stripes. He told me to take off all my clothes, put on the blankets and followed him to the kraal.

This blanket will be burnt in the bush, when he is ready to come back. This blanket bears the symbolism that the old things have passed. He will be given a new blanket for his homecoming celebration. The cutting of hair⁸³ is a sign of ritual cleansing and the giving away of his clothes to other boys is a sign of leaving boyhood. This marks what is called

⁷⁹ Wilson and Mafeje concur: "The ritual is geared to the regular working week and begins on Friday afternoon" (1963:106).

⁸⁰ Ngxamngxa further reports that "*ukungcamisa* is observed with a slight tribal differentiation, Fingo boys having *umngcamo* on Friday afternoon and Xhosa on a Saturday morning" (1971:187).

⁸¹ "Pieces of skin are also cut from the goat to tie around his wrist and ankles; these are 'protective knots'; and hairs may even be taken from the tail of a European-owned cow to provide him with the traditional protective necklace of cow hair" (Wilson & Mafeje, 1963: 106)

⁸² Hunter cited by Ngxamngxa "each boy puts a necklace of the hairs made from the sacred cow (*inkomo yobulunga*) of his father, an appeal to his ancestors. This is said will give him health and wisdom of his ancestors (*ubulumko bezinyanya*)" (1936: 538)

⁸³ Ngxamngxa says after *umngcamo*, "the next ritual act is shaving of hair from the boy's body" (1971:187) and as it was mentioned earlier, the cutting of hair is done in the "enclosure built in the backyard at the boy's home" or "cattle – kraal" (Wilson & Mafeje. 19963:106).

*umngeno wenkwenkwe*⁸⁴, the preparation of the initiate for being included in the lineage of ancestors.

*Umguyo*⁸⁵ is the singing and dancing the night before, where there is feasting of the sacrificed animal. It is a celebration of the boy's farewell to childhood. This is done under the strict supervision of *abafana and amakrwala* to make sure that the initiate does not escape. The initiate sits on a grass mat (*ukhuko*) on the floor, surrounded by *abafana* and *amakrwala*. His friend's and other boys dance and sing farewell songs to their counterpart. They are occasionally interrupted by the bowl of bread, meat, and beer or soft drinks. When they eat there is no order, and the boys will grab and eat whatever they can get. Interviewee 2 said "When you are a boy they put meat in front of you each person grab a piece and run away with it but when you are a man you must have dignity and act in a certain way. You take turns. You have an order."

Food is provided to them so that they can continue to sing the whole night and bid farewell to their colleague. The father of the boy might be in a different room, also surrounded by his age-mates and older men, who are sitting around beer and some meat. The father of the boy, as principal host (*usosuthu*), has an important responsibility. As explained by Ngxamngxa "*inchibi [sic]* (surgeon) and *amakhankatha* (guardians) are the officiates, selected by the father of the boys who are to undergo circumcision" (1971:186).

The older women will be with the mother of the boy in different room. The younger women and girls will be busy with preparing food and cleaning dishes. The older women are there to give moral support to the mother of the boy. In my observation, women are worried about their sons and are asking whether this will be the last time they will see them. Hence, the role of older women is to assure and support the mother of the boy, counseling that the boys do come back from the bush. They often share their own experiences, when their sons went to the bush, and how they coped with this separation from them. Ngxamngxa says "circumcision is also considered by informants as a means of detaching a youth from his mother" (1971:201). Some women are anxious about the possibility of their child dying in the bush. While there is the understanding among men⁸⁶ that circumcision stands for the 'death of childhood' not the literal death.

⁸⁴ Wilson and Mafeje say "All who choose, come to dance and sing and feast on the meat, as well as on beer, soft drinks, bread, and cakes, which are provided. The goat's flesh must be finished that night and the bones burned in the morning, as in a traditional sacrifice" (1963:106).

⁸⁵ "Among some of Xhosa-speaking groups an *umguyo*...the ceremony of bringing together the boys, is held and is characterized by all-night dancing and singing" (Ngxamngxa, 1971:187).

⁸⁶ Ngxamngxa says "one informant stated concerning his son, 'as he is circumcised he dies, and after spending some weeks in the veld he is reborn and brought back into our home as a man'" (1971:201).

In the early hours of the morning, the boy is taken to the bush and accompanied by a group of initiated men singing *Somagwaza* and dancing⁸⁷. This song has been used on different occasions, especially in war⁸⁸, but has been synonymous with initiation school in the contemporary construction of masculinities and throughout the history of the institution. The myth (narrative) depicted in this song is that the ancestor, called *Somagwaza*⁸⁹, was so heroic and fearless, he cut off his foreskin using his assegai (or a sharp stone) and that he was the first man to introduce *ulwaluko* to the Xhosa people. This song⁹⁰, when it's sung, is meant to help the initiate be fearless and courageous like the first ancestor and he's reminded that he is not alone in this journey. The singers are a sign of company into manhood and the courage required to survive and be accepted in this journey. This song is sung, together with the initiate, whilst he leaves everyone left at home, carrying a stick. The initiate(s), surrounded by this group of dancing and singing men, is escorted to the bush or the mountain. When they approach the bush, the lyrics are changed to not only "*gwaza*" meaning 'stab' but to "*dlanga*" meaning 'cut off or circumcised with the Assegai'. "*Somdlanga ngalomdlanga... Hayi ho etc.*" It can be argued that it is not meant to scare the initiate, but to alert him of what is imminent. It is a symbol that he has entered the sacred place where *isiko* can be legitimately done. Nomsa Satyo citing Ntshinga "...*ivunywa ngedili nesidima. Esi sidima singumqondiso wokuba la makhwenkwe angena kwinqaba elibalulekileyo ebomini* [*translation- It is sung with dignity and respect. This respect denotes that the boys are entering an important rank in their lives.*]" (1998:22). The boys who were singing most of the night are left behind. In the case of a boy going to the bush without consent from the parent (*ukuziba*), this is usually the time when he joins the group of men and it is well known

⁸⁷ Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje say "An initiate's hut, a *boma* is built beforehand 'in the bush' outside Langa, and there the initiate is taken very early on the Saturday morning. He is accompanied by a party of initiated men, singing a traditional song, *Somagwaza*, and sparring with sticks, in the traditional fashion" (1963:106).

⁸⁸ A.N.N. Ngxamngxa says "Sometimes the *igwatyu* (a war song) is sung by Xhosa men accompanying the boys to the spot" (1971:187).

⁸⁹ "Boys sing '*Somagwaza*' at their manhood-initiation ceremony. As the young men are receiving instruction about the duties and responsibilities of adult citizenship, they live apart from the rest of the village. During this time, the teachers daub their students with ceremonial clay. When the training is over, the boys-now officially men-race down to the river to wash, singing '*Somagwaza*' as they go. This song's words, like those of many ceremonial chants, have lost their exact meanings, but their effectiveness remains. It is felt rather than understood." (http://baryoreck.com/materials_handouts/Somonguaza.pdf) But this chapter will argue that people understand the meaning of what they are singing and they are symbolically telling a narrative.

⁹⁰ This seems to be a contemporary understanding in Cape Town townships as I have discussed with men. For example "*Somagwaza* was held to be the first man ever to be circumcised the proper way, a long time ago. He'd actually stone-cised himself. He'd laid a stone between his legs, pulled the foreskin over it and pounded the damn thing with another pointy stone until it fell away. He'd then used certain leaves and herbs to nurse his circumcision, and he emerged a man. *Somagwaza* became the god of men" (Mgqolozana, 2009:70). *Somagwaza* is the ancestor which is like the 'god of amaXhosa men' because he pioneered initiation school.

that he wants to become a man, as in the case of Interviewee 1, who said “I left in the morning before sunset.”

This becomes an interesting point, I was not sure before observations what he was saying and I did not even look at it as important. It is only after observation that it occurred to me that he may be referring to a time like between 3am -6am. It is worth considering why some people insist on doing the circumcision in the dark. What is the significance of doing circumcision in these early hours? Could this be a belief that witches are not active at these hours? Some people still believe that witches are working hard between 12 am and 3am. For example, Wilson and Mefeje say, “On the way, the initiate runs through the cold showers at barracks, to chill himself thoroughly, and the party avoids roads as far as possible since they are contaminated with *umlaza*, the ritual impurity associated particularly with women and sexual activity” (1963:106). The reason I was not alert is because my experience and family did it differently. We take a boy in midday noon, for a 1pm ritual. The different times could be accounted in terms of difference groups: amaXhosa, abaThembu and amaFengu. Ngxamngxa says “regarding time when the operation takes places there are variations. The Fingo [*sic*] perform it before sunrise; the Xhosa in the afternoon” (1971:187). The initiate has to run through a cold shower or wash in the river or have thrown water over them before circumcision. Mgqolozana says, “I took off my clothes and uncle sat me down. He and Ta-Yongs threw river water over me, to raise the gooseflesh that would help to numb my skin”(2009:77).

The saying “*Imizi ayifani ifana ngehlanti kuphela*”⁹¹ becomes fundamental. Another thing noted by authors is that *ingcibi* and *amakhankatha* would accompany the group of men; but in other places the *ingcibi* will be met at the bush. In my field work, *ingcibi* was often met there at the bush. Wilson and Mafeje say “At the *boma [sic]*, the circumciser, ‘the ogre [*isigebenga*] from the bush’ is called upon to operate.” (1963:106). Ngxamngxa explains “the *inchibi [sic]* takes the foreskin in one hand then severs it from the penis with the sawing movements with *umdlanga* (assegai or very sharp knife)... as soon as the prepuce is severed the *inchibi [sic]* says ‘*Yithi uyindoda*’ (You are a man) and the initiate answers ‘*Ndiyindoda*’ (I am a man)” (1971:188).

3.3. Finding Acceptance

The climax for acceptance and inclusion is when the *ingcibi* says “*Yithi Uyindoda (Say you are man)*”. These are encouraging and soothing words for which the boy has eagerly

⁹¹ “The household does not look alike but they all have a kraal” (literal translation) This is the proverbial statement used to explain differences in people, both in essence and different practices by people

awaited (for 16 or more years). The cutting of the foreskin is one of many steps required to be a man. Immediately after being circumcised, the initiate is required to say “Ndiyindoda” (I am a man!) without flinching or a change in voice. This could be understood firstly, as the utterance to entrance into ancestral masculinity and, secondly, as the declaration of membership and official inclusion to the family clan. This is how Mandela explained his own experience:

I looked directly into his eyes. He was pale, and though the day was cold, his face was shining with perspiration. His hand moved so fast they seemed to be controlled by an otherworldly force. Without a word, he took my foreskin, pulled it forward, and then in a single motion, brought down his Assegai. I felt as if the fire was shooting through my veins; the pain was so intense that I buried my chin in my chest. Many seconds seemed to pass before I remembered the cry, and then I recovered and called out, ‘Ndiyindoda!’ I looked down and saw perfect cut, clean and round like a ring. But I felt ashamed because the other boys seemed much stronger and firmer than I had been; they called out more promptly than I had. I was distressed that I had been disabled, however briefly, by the pain, and I did my best to hide the agony. A boy may cry; a man conceals his pain (1994: 26).

While in the bush, the initiate encourages himself to stand by the decision he has made, of wanting to be incorporated and needing to be resolute in a time of pain.

During my observations of the initiation school and circumcision, the same procedure was repeated again and again. The assistant of *ingcibi* went before the *ingcibi* and wrapped the thong around the waist of the initiate whilst holding a torch to provide light. The men accompanying the initiate formed a semi-circle around him, whilst he sat with his back against his hut. The *ingcibi* came unsuspected and cut the prepuce with his spear. He does this so fast, like lightning. He has disinfected it and had water to clean his spear afterward; he then wrapped it with a clean, white towel and put it in a different place in his bag. He used different kinds of spears for each initiate, if they were more than one. When he was finished, he remained for about twenty to thirty minutes. Everyone seemed to respect him. The men who accompanied the initiate sang a song which asks, “Who is your restorer or chief in manhood?” They continued to sing using the initiate’s clan name and singing “*Inkosi yami ngu ...*” (meaning “My chief is *clan name inserted*”). *ingcibi* smiled, packed his bag, and continued to watch what other people were doing. Usually there were roughly twenty men and the *inkakhatha* took over, smearing the initiate with white clay. Everyone watched this young initiate and the younger men had to light the fire so that the hut is warm and smoking. The principal host (father or elder from the initiate) talked to the ‘*ingcibi*’ and thanks him for a job well done and gave him his monetary gift. The ‘*ingcibi*’ made his rounds again a day later to inspect whether the initiates are okay. In my observations, the majority of men who were

accompanying the initiate to the bush were drunk. In each observation, there were only two to four men who were not drunk. Interestingly, the '*ingcibi*' does not drink alcohol and on one occasion was very stern with the men around him about their drinking and the well-being of the initiate.

Finally the boy has become a 'man'. He is part of the clan. But there is still work to be done. This is the beginning of the journey to acceptance. The manhood is secured only in 'enduring' the entirety of the school. That includes taking care of the wound, enduring the pain and negotiating the living conditions which are different. In order to succeed the initiate must, listen well, be quick to observe, and execute strategy for survival. He has already said he is a man, now he needs to prove it. This is a difficult eight to ten days. Sleep is limited. The initiate must sleep like a soldier, ready to defend himself whilst being mindful of caring for his healing wound. The role of the guardian-care giver is crucial here. The guardian must be both knowledgeable and available⁹². The initiate, also must be humble and comply, taking heed to all that is instructed. The fire must be sustained, and the smoke can become painful to the eyes. The initiate must remain smeared in cold white ochre or clay. If alone, depression and dehydration are threats, particularly in the hot summer months like November to January. Wilson and Mafeje observed "In Cape Town the winter is too wet for camping, so boys are circumcised during the summer, and escape the ordeal by cold, but they are reminded of what is required" (1963:108). This is not the case in the contemporary setting. Initiation schools are run in both winter and summer season because of school holidays. Whilst many go in summer, others opt to go in winter which is the quiet season. The purpose of fire is to keep the body warm and the belief that the smoke keeps evil spirits away. The white clay is also believed to act as a disguise. This is how interviewee 1 explained his experience:

This kota [white clay] would be smeared on you; then you won't be noticed who are you. I think its belief is for the witchdoctors not to notice that this is so and so, you understand. Another [reason you are] under that kota [white clay], is you look so beautiful. When you are leaving, they would say he's fat [and] he's beautiful. In the olden days, many months, like six, used to be spent there; but now we are staying just for a month.

The first eight days are called seclusion (*ukuzila*). They are difficult and exhausting because there is no proper sleep. Every twenty minutes the 'bandages' need to be changed,

⁹² Themba Lloyd says "the person who looked after us had no time because he was working and only came in the afternoon. He even used to dress our wounds with a rope. On the fourth day, I felt there was something wrong I could not feel my penis. I called my brother and I told him that I had a problem. I could not urinate because the rope was too tight" (<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2013/01/20131211736199557.html>)

depending on the equipment⁹³ used. In some contemporary settings, the use of herbs has been substituted with some medicine, like the ointment betadine and hospital bandages may be used. Wilson and Mafeje noted that "...in dressing the wound some concession is made to *modern ideas by the use of a disinfectant*, but initiates prefer to conceal; all the emphasis is on following tradition exactly" (italics my own emphasis) (1963:107). Ngxamngxa remarks "the attendants bandage the wound with *izichwe* or *izigqutsu* leaves and in the case of an acculturated Fingo initiate a whitish powder was applied to the wound, which was then bandaged with a piece of brown paper and tied with thread of cotton" (1971:188). In this period, the initiate is trained to take care of his "child" (*umntana wakho*) or "custom" (*isiko*). The emphasis is on being able to execute correct care for the wound. That is: what makes a man a man, is being willing to sacrifice sleep and endure pain for the sake of the well being of his 'child'. The child, in this instance, is the wounded genitals and it is through the delicate care of the wound that discipline and focus are demonstrated and developed. Interviewee 2 says about his experience:

During the night you don't sleep. You are planning so that your baby can be well. I think that's what they mostly emphasized to us. That you are a man, your family comes first and you sacrifice for them. So the signs and the words they refer to are your body parts and it's your family...That's what our ikhankatha was always saying, that you must look after your family and sacrifice for it. Also, no drinking water for eight days.

There are other challenges in this period. Dietary and water restrictions are another mountain that the initiates must climb, also requiring endurance. Interviewee 1 attests,

We arrived at *ebhumeni* (the hut). We stayed. We were not allowed to drink water for eight days. If you were thirsty you would mix soil and mud. A belief says water would wet the wound, so that it would take a [longer] time to heal, you understand. So we were not drinking water for eight days. We ate food without oil [and] without salt.

The fortitude required in this period grooms *umkwetha*. He is not to complain, but he has to endure and manage pain well. Wilson and Mafeje says "Candidates must not show fear or cry out at the operation, or complain of the rough treatment, lack of drinking-water, poor food, and cold, to which, traditionally, they were subjected" (1963:108). Interviewee 5 describes the pressure to not show pain:

So even everyday ube everyday apho bazabe bekutsintsha khona bekutshintsha ngama bandage ayi ngamabandage like ngama bandage zonke ezo zinto zingathi zi cause more pain more pain funeku nyamezele and the medicine now I think I think

⁹³ "the special equipment is singled out e.g. *umdlanga*, *izichwe*, *ithonto* (recently changed to *ibhuma*)" (Ngxamngxa, 1971:194).

sasibenza ipowder bullet ja so lonto leyo nemedicine eza kunceda ibuhlungu so i cuse so much much so funekunyamezele ezo zinto ezo. And unyamezelapho and kukwabanyabantu ongene nabo and abo bantwabo funekuzibonukuthi ustrongo kubuzaphuma ukhale pha uzawuphum abakuhleka abo bantu. And awukwazi nokuthi even nobutyhafe njani ukuthi hayi makubizwi ambulance kuba lonto izozizihlazo kuwe izohlaza nefemeli yakho so kuyafuneka noba kwenzeka ntoni no matter uthi hayi kunzima kakhulu or ndiweak or kubuhlungu kakhulu funeku nyamezele without until udlule eso stage so kukho lo pressure so ja until like two weeks at least ja two weeks three weeks funekuhambile” [So every day they will change your bandages, there is more pain. The more the pain, you are required to endure it. When they pour that powder, which is painful, but yet it is helpful. The other initiates are watching, so you need to be strong; because if you cry, then you bring shame to yourself and family. You need to act strong no matter what happens, when you face hardships or you are feeling physically weak. You need to endure until this stage passes on. You are under this tremendous pressure, yes ...until the second week and you are hoping the third week you are going home.]

An initiate is helped to cope with the pain (*ukuyamezela*⁹⁴) and dietary restrictions by the frequent visitors and the company of the guardian, who keeps him entertained by telling him stories. Some guardians are able to weave in stories and teachings about *ulwaluko* through songs. This helps *umkwetha* to forget about the pain and acclimatize to this new environment. Interviewee 6 says:

Ikhankatha focused on teaching about what it means ukuba yindoda i.e indoda kufuneka ibunyamezele ubunzima; kufuneka ithenge iinkomo ifuye; mayahlukane nemikhuba yobukhwenkwe efana nobusela, imilo, ukuhambilala, kufuneka iwazi amasiko akowayo; kufuneka ibenomqolo; iyabanjwa indoda ethembisa intombi igqibe izophule izithembiso njalonzalo. Kwiintsuku zokuqala I did not like elixesha lokufundiswa kuba iintlungu zimenza umntu abenengcwangu but as the time went, I started to enjoy our conversations. [My guardian was focused on teaching about what it means to be a man. That is, a man needs to endure pain. He needs to own cattle and be willing to be a farmer. He needs to be freed from the mischievous behaviour of the boyhood stage like stealing, fighting, and not sleeping at home. He needs to know his home traditions and customs. He needs to have a backbone and a man who does not keep his word is not taken seriously. In the first eight days I did not like this teaching time because pain made me grouchy; but as I was getting better, I enjoyed our conversations]

The goal for the *umkwetha* is to get to day eight or ten, depending on the family. This is the day where an animal is slaughtered for him to celebrate both the achievement and the

⁹⁴ To endure pain

promising recovery of the wound (*umojiso*). He is given his portion of meat to eat and he can finish it all at once. But it is often impossible for the umkwetha to devour the whole *umkhono*⁹⁵ of the sheep or goat. Ngxamngxa says “the *ukosiswa* ceremony has as its main object to release [as in breaking the fast] the initiates from certain food and other taboos⁹⁶ [as being allowed to visit other initiates]. An animal is killed by the host and pieces of serrated meat are roasted on a special fire of *umthathi* (sneeze-wood). This is eaten by the youths ... have finished their portion before any of the congregation may begin to eat” (1971:189).

After this feasting, the initiate now knows that he is preparing to go home. The wound healing is nearing completion and he is starting to eat food with no restrictions. The initiate can now see his privileges. Requests can now be made to his parents or those who cook for him. And the initiate is now free to engage other fellow initiates, is allowed to visit other ‘huts’, and ‘go for long walks’ or ‘hunting’. He is now preparing for the outside world. He is thought now to have the skills required to survive in society, articulate his identity, and present himself in a respectable way. Hence, the schooling, in the last three weeks in the bush, has as its main focus: How to talk and conduct oneself with different people, depending on their identity (gender, age and people group).

Nangoku xa singabakhwetha like xa sithethay’uba okay xa ulikwala uthetha njani iya influence(a) lintoba indoda nguzimele geqe ungafung’angajiki. So it’s all about you now and the emphasis is on that this is like your child and you must take care of it as if it’s your child. This strong emphasis is on you taking your own decisions and these decisions are about you and you must make sure that you execute them. (Interviewee 2)

[Even when we were the initiates, we were discussing what it means to be in the stage of ubukwala. How does he conduct and articulate himself? This is influenced mainly by the thinking that you can make your own decision and you need to know how to stand for your decision.]

The men who spend time with initiates whilst in the bush are influential. Men who are not thoughtful and reflective about life may lead initiates astray. Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Nkosi Ngangomhlaba Matanzima, warned that the tendency of young men loitering at initiation schools needed to stop. “That is where the problem starts. Then

⁹⁵ Shoulder and foreleg.

⁹⁶ Some of the taboos that Ngxamngxa mentions include “not to walk about unpainted (with clay), not to quarrel in the hut, not to let fire go out by night, not to allow boys to watch while the wound is being treated” (1971:189).

they start smoking drugs. Respectable men must go there to monitor the situation, and teach the initiates about their responsibilities when they return home.”⁹⁷

The role of *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* could be classified as a religious role. It requires the *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* to adhere to some religious activities before they perform the act of circumcising and caring for the initiate. Ngxamngxa says “*inchibi* fasts in preparing for the operation; he must also not come into contact with women, nor drink beer or smoke... *inchibi* and *amakhankatha* have to fast from two or three days prior to the operation until after *ukosisa* (ritual killing marking the healing of the wound)” (1971:187).

The *inkhankatha* is tasked with explaining his role in teaching the initiate and also acting as a father to those lacking a fatherly presence due to death, absence, or dysfunction.

“And he was a like, [in] between you and your family because you’re my family unless your family has a lot of men. If your family doesn’t have a lot of men, then your *ikhankatha* substitutes the role of your father.” Interviewee 2

He teaches, advocates, and cares for the initiate and he relates like a ‘mentor’ to the initiate. He was once an initiate himself and some of the caring skills are derived from personal experience and tutored by older men. *Inkhakhatha* finds *approval*, through the initiate’s performance. The initiate needs to endure pain and *inkhakhatha*’s role is to equip him and give him strategies to deal with pain. *Ikhankatha* plays a pivotal role not only in the first eight to ten days, but also in the last three weeks. His responsibility is to go ‘hunting’ and help train the initiate to change his bandage himself. Interviewee 1 describes “our *khankatha* would go and look for herbs (medicine). They said it is ‘hunting’ and ‘the medication was a leaf they called *isichwe*. He [*inkhankatha*] would put it on the wound.” This is contrary to the experiences of Themba Lloyd and Thando Mqgolozana who were left to care for their wound by themselves. Their outcomes were due, in part, to this lack of attention and neglect by the guardian and principal host.

The role and responsibilities of *amankhankatha* are evaluated by how well the initiates heal. For example, if the initiate is not healing, the care-giver is interrogated. Whether the initiate is lazy or scared, the *inkhankatha* must be able to encourage a change of attitude and solicit other men, as well, to encourage him. *Usosuthu* (principal host) is also required to come often, even daily, to evaluate the situation. These are the monitoring and evaluation systems to see the progress of the initiate. Interviewee 6 has fond memories of his father visiting him while he was an initiate. He says “But the most enjoyable times were when *uTata* (my father) was visiting and sharing with me, man to man about his story. I learnt a lot from those.”

⁹⁷ <http://luzukopongoma.blogspot.com/> accessed on 06 February 2013

The role played by *inkhankatha* was described by participants as a 'priest, guardian, teacher, friend, and mentor'. They reported they had learned a lot from their *amakhankhatha* (plural), and saw them as people who would advocate for them; people who would teach them how to deal with others; and as companions who would share life with them. In most cases, this is the first time the 'boy' [now initiate] can genuinely relate with 'men' [initiated men] on equal terms. It is also the first time the 'boy' can be encouraged and given advice about how to live in this new stage of manhood. Many would respect and not question anything the *amakhankhatha* says because he is thought to know best and he has taken care of the initiate. The *inkhankatha* has paved a way for the initiate into manhood.

You can call ikhankatha as a person who is a priest or teacher, [who] teaches us, *ebhomeni*, how to do things. He would also look at this custom (a cut wound is being called culture or custom when they call it). He would examine its healing... he gets traditional herbs to heal it. (Interviewee 1)

The *ingcibi* is also an important person in the process. *Ingcibi* is a very interesting word in the Xhosa language. Many researchers have translated it as *traditional surgeon*, but the word is comes from the verb *ukungciba*. *Ukungciba* is to restore or seal or build something new. So, maybe the role of *Ingcibi* needs to be understood as the Restorer and Builder of new 'men'. Or it can be taken as someone who is crafting a new person. Perhaps the 'translation' of *ingcibi* as traditional surgeon is not a translation but rather a description rooted in the framework of the Western medical system. The term doesn't necessarily capture the religious nature of the role. But then the question will be how does he do that? How does he 'restore' or build a new man?

In a strictly physical sense, *ingcibi* uses a cutting instrument. The instrument of circumcision may be an assegai (according to PT Mtuze) or a spear (*umkhonthe*). However, it is given the name *umdlanga* because it is made special in that it is consecrated to the ancestors. Cattle are slaughtered dedicated to *ingcibi* and his instruments. This emphasizes the spiritual position of both the instrument and its user.

If *Ingcibi* means "restorer", it connotes that if you are a 'boy' you need to be restored and grafted into 'real' manhood. Interviewee 2 says, (*about ingcibi*) "it's a person who builds; for instance, *ingcibi* is a person who builds the house...There is *ingcibi* which circumcises the idea there is that, as a boy, you are not perfect, you see. *Ingcibi* comes there and moulds you and takes you to the next step of perfection."

In some cases, the *ingcibi* reside with the initiates and other cases not. This can impact how the initiate experiences the role of *ingcibi*. For example, Interviewee 1 seems to describe the restorer by his tools and not in relational terms:

Ingcibi ndingathi ngumntu yena mhlambu ngugqirha osikayo ozokwenzioperation ozokwenzi operation ngesilungu. Ngulomnt'uzosika asike kelento kuthwa lijwabi ayisuse uyayiqonda." [Restorer is the person, I can call him a surgeon, who comes and does the operation. He is the person who cuts the prepuce, you understand.] "Ingcibi kaloku ngumntu lo wolusawo ophatha lento kuthwa ngumkhonto wakhona kuthwa ngumdlanga. [Restorer is a person who circumcises and he carries his assegai which is called umdlanga.]

He continues to explain his belief about the role of *ingcibi* by making a comparison with the hospital. "Xa zawuthungwa ayiloluko lwamaXhosa njeng'ba ndithi *ingcibi isebenzis'umdlanga endikholelwayo'uba yinto engafani nofana naleya yasesibhedlele.*" [If you are going to be stitched, that is not circumcision according to the Xhosa people. The restorer uses an assegai, in which, I believe, they do not use it in hospital.]

But in the case where *ingcibi* resides with initiates, his role maybe described more broadly. "Ingcibi knew the wisdom because he was taught from his dad and his father's dad, says Interviewee 2. He is described as wise because of his training and skills which were received from the older generation. The other quality of the restorer is that he needs to demonstrate his ability with his own children first. . Interviewee 2 says further, "Ingcibi from Engcobo must start with his child, firstly [to] circumcise his family before circumcising other people." He adds how *ingcibi* and *inkankhatha* have helped build his identity and understanding of the genealogy of his clan name (*iziduko*). "So *ikhankatha* and *ingcibi* helped me a lot in terms of discovering more about the history of *Mqoco* and *Zikhali*. Why they say we are *Zikhali*? Because, during *Hintsa* times, we were making axes. Those things came when I was there. It was an initiative of *ingcibi* and other people adding on that."

What are the credentials of the *ingcibi*? Muvandla et.el says "In Xhosa culture, for a person to become an *ingcibi*, he must be a respected, upstanding member of the community, and meet certain cultural standards of wealth (e.g., have cattle, land, etc.). The skill is passed down through generations and is taught by elder practitioners through apprenticeship."⁹⁸ The *ingcibi* needs to be known by the community and men especially. Mgqolozana says "The nurse first wanted to know who was going to circumcise me. I told her that it was *Gecangotolo*. He was apparently well know at the clinic and held to be a respected traditional surgeon" (2009:72). And also in the documentary, Fikile Cekiso Liwani⁹⁹ articulates his credentials and popularity:

⁹⁸ "Not anyone is allowed to cut. This is his trade and nothing else. As you can see how big is this village, you will be surprised to realize that we only have three men qualified and acceptable to cut the prepuce. No matter how many boys are to be circumcised, the village utilizes these three men only to perform circumcision." Mavundla et. el. (2009: 400)

⁹⁹ (<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2013/01/20131211736199557.html>)

When he (his father) was not there, I would do the work by myself. I get called from different places to initiate boys. I go to those places and circumcise the boys and leave them. But if anybody wants me to take care of their child then they can bring them here [referring to his school]. And I can take care of them. If you mention my name, even in Cape Town they call me to come and cut their boys. The whole nation knows me.

A contrast in terms can be noticed in the literature¹⁰⁰ of the past twenty years; in the post-apartheid era compared to early literature¹⁰¹. *Amakhankatha* and *ingcibi* have been translated as “traditional nurse or guardians” and “traditional surgeons”, respectively. This change must be interrogated. Why now are they called ‘traditional’ and how should one understand the use of the adjective ‘traditional’? One must also bear in mind that the purpose of the adjective (traditional) is to describe and modify the noun (*ingcibi*). Does this adjective have a negative connotation of *untrained* caregivers/surgeons? Whether ignorantly or deliberately, are those who use this prefix being influenced by an agenda which seems to communicate that African practices are obsolete or archaic? For example, in public health discourse, “Davis (2003) defines a traditional (non-physician) practitioner of male circumcision as *unlicensed*, who neither *keeps statistics on the numbers* of circumcisions performed nor the *rates of infection or other problems*” (Mavundla et.al., 2009:400). Deacon and Thomson mention “The paternalistic approach rejecting engagement with TMCI [traditional male circumcision and initiation] practitioners is not in fact sound ‘in theory’ and the focus on educating traditional circumcision practitioners in biomedical procedures has been unproductive in creating common ground, collaboration and trust between biomedical practitioners and traditional healers (Wreford¹⁰² 2005, 2006, 2007)” (2012:7). The hospital terminology belongs to the ‘western scientific institution’, so the usage of words like ‘surgeon’ and ‘nurse’ outside this institution needs explanation and qualification.

We have discussed the personnel at the bush or mountain and how the participants view them. We have looked at the role played by *ikhankatha* and *ingcibi* in shaping a particular

¹⁰⁰ Feri Gwata (2009), Loïuse Vincent (2008), Luvuyo Ntombana(2011), Mavundla et al (2009), Stembele Tenge (2006) and Andile P. Mhlahlo (2009).

¹⁰¹ Soga (1931: 252-253) and Ngxamgxa (1971:186) translate it as surgeon & guardians. Wilson and Mafeje (1963:106) translate *ingcibi* as circumciser. Mandela (1994) refers to *ingcibi* as a circumcision expert and *ikhankatha* as an attendant or guardian.

¹⁰² Jo (Thobeka) Wreford’s major work deals with traditional healers (*amagqirha* and *amaxhwele*), not guardians and restorers, per se. However, her findings and discussion portrays what AmaXhosa men express, that of feeling undermined. Hence, they argue for secrecy.

type of ancestral masculinity. Now we will look at the place or land where initiation school happens which illuminates the issues that make hospital circumcision unpopular¹⁰³.

The first space (or land) used in the process of initiation is the kraal (*ubuhlanti*¹⁰⁴), a place that is considered sacred. The initiate is introduced to his ancestors and is prepared at the kraal for the initiation school. He arrives dressed with his blanket and shaved of all of his body hair. It is here where he eats his meat and is dressed with the necklace described earlier. The kraal is the place where the *intsika* (pole) or *ixhanti* (pillar of strength) is placed. It is at this pole where communication with the ancestors often happens. This pole has the horns of all the cattle, goats and sheep that were slaughtered in the past for an occasion related to communication with the ancestors. Wilson and Mafeje say “A goat, preferably white in colour, is killed in an enclosure built for the purpose in the backyard of the boy’s home. This enclosure represents the cattle-kraal, and it is here that the initiate is then shaved, all his hair being removed” (1963:106). The enclosed sacred space of the kraal is sacred; hence, where the blood of the slaughtered goat or cattle falls is sacred. There are certain people who are allowed in this space: fellow clan members and elders, but there are those who are barred from it (namely, women, boys, children, and uncircumcised ‘men’).

Secondly, the bush or the mountain has been seen as the only place where true manhood can be achieved. This is the land where the ‘cutting of foreskin’ happens. The land where the blood of the initiate falls is deemed as sacred land. It is through the spilling of blood in the bush or mountain and how he handles suffering, that a man is constructed. In my observation, the venue or location where circumcision happens came up again and again. This debate¹⁰⁵ happens as a result of those families who are entrenched in urban living and have no family connections in the rural settling. When we (key informant and I) visited the bush, we found that it is surrounded by a fence. It is between the Athlone power station, the N2 highway, Bhunga Lane and the Roman Catholic Church. The rationale for fencing it was to

¹⁰³ Wilson and Mafeje say “A few parents send their sons to hospital for the operation, but to acquiesce in this is regarded by many men as somewhat soft and unmanly: the great majority of boys growing up in the township either go to relatives in the country for their initiation, or a ritual is celebrated for them on the outskirts of Langa itself” (1963:105). It is my observation that the rural and urban debate is maintained. For those who still have relatives in a rural setting, family will advocate for the boy to go to the mountain instead of the bush.

¹⁰⁴ Maphela reports on the usage of the term. “Another symbolic practice that is still said to be widespread is the barring of women from the ‘cattle kraal’ in deference to the departed, who used to be buried there. The ‘kraal’ is also an exclusive male area where meetings are held. ... (women are) barred from the common ‘front’ room during certain periods, on the grounds that it was ebuhlanti (‘the kraal’) which men used for meetings and discussions” (1989: 401).

¹⁰⁵ Wilson and Mafeje describe a “cleavage that is between the townspeople, the migrants, and the half-and-half type who are in process of being assimilated as townsmen but are not yet accepted. The townsmen live in houses as members of families, the migrants as single men in the barracks and zones, and the half-and-half group in the flats, spilling over into the zones, since space in the flats is limited or scattered around wherever they can find a lodging or put up a shack” (1963:14).

avoid dumping of waste (littering), criminal activities (dumping of stolen vehicles) and making sure that women do not enter (or cross it when they walk from Athlone). The fence was protecting the sacred land. There is no river in this space, but in the middle there is a shower. There are debates of what makes initiation school authentic: Does the place where it occurred make it authentic? Distinctions between the mountain and the bush are often made. The disparity between the bush and mountain seem significant. For example, the proponents for mountains (*entabeni*) will claim that mountains are far from home, scary and dark at night. And also they are dangerous because of wild animals and the belief that it is a playground for witches. For recreational activities, hunting is possible and the river is used for cleansing the initiate. It is argued, that the bush, however, is not as scary and it does not offer as many challenges for initiates. Gwata says

In South Africa traditional circumcision is often referred to as 'going to the mountain' or 'going to the bush' since traditionally, initiation schools were situated in a secluded location far from the community, somewhere in a relatively wild, uncultivated area. These days however, because of the limited availability of space some initiation schools are located within close proximity of the community, making them highly unpopular with prospective initiates as they diverge from the traditional practice of going to a secluded place. This is particularly true of initiation schools in the Western Cape and was mentioned in the interviews conducted as part of this study as one of the main reasons why the Eastern Cape is the preferred location for traditional male circumcision (2009:5).

Though there is debate around the difference between those who go to the bush (urban) and those who go to the mountain (rural), going to the hospital is not tolerated. Hospitals are not seen as sacred places. There are different personnel there, including female staff and doctors who do not know anything about the custom. The way circumcision is done in the hospital is privatized and also the anesthetic that is given before the cutting of the foreskin is deemed to be inappropriate in constructing a 'man'. It is often seen as 'cheating'. For example, Mgqolozana accounts, "MC-squared emphasized that I should avoid landing up in hospital at all costs. 'It is better to die than to go to hospital. It would be the end of you anyway,' he warned me. There is no living space for failed men in our society. Either you become a man the expected way, or you are no one at all." (2009:65). Sibusiso Gaca¹⁰⁶ concurs, "Hospital-- I will call it a last, last, last resort....What if I die? What IF I die? At least I will die knowing that it's something I wanted. Would I like to die? No!!! Would I like to come out of there fully fledging into manhood in my culture? That would be the biggest

¹⁰⁶ In the interview with the filmmaker in the documentary <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2013/01/20131211736199557.html>

achievement. That is my ultimate goal.” When considering going to the bush, Interviewee 2 tried to avoid consultation with those who have done it in the hospital. He says:

So I talked to my aunt. Then we decided and we called one man whom we knew that he understood Xhosa culture, because in Mthatha *there are families who go to hospitals, so we didn't want such men*. But, there are men and families whom we know that they always go to *Ingcibi*.

The understanding is that the hospital does not construct ‘men’ but it makes those who want to be called ‘men’ without the challenges of being a man. These groups of men are called *Oosondoda* (‘wanna be men’).

In the bush, initiates are told how to articulate what it means to be ‘authentic men’ in order to be distinctive from *Oosondoda* and ‘boys’. It is taught that an initiated man is to have few words and think first before he says anything. Interviewee 2 says it is important

How you speak as young men from the bush, where you are being seen whether you are a real man or you went to the hospital. So I was taught talking for a long time would affect you, when you get out of this meeting with other young men.

The difference between the initiated and hospital men is visible in the stitching of the scar of the penis.

Hayi kaloku, andizutsho mna ngoba kaloku into yokwalukele s'bhedlele ngokwabantw'abamnyama vele yinto efika mva bebevele besalusa uyaqonda. Andinakuthi bayibona esibhedlele uyayiqonda ngoba kaloku es'bhedlele andiyazi kuthwa kuyathungwa nothungwa. Xa zawuthungwa ayiloluko lwamaXhosa. [No, I do not believe in the hospital circumcision. According to black people it is a recent practice which (has) come while black people have (been) circumcising. We cannot argue that black people are imitating what is happening in the hospital, because in there it is said they even stitch. When you are stitched, according to Xhosa understanding, that is not circumcision] Interviewee 1

It is believed that another difference between a boy or *Oosondoda* and initiated men is how conflict is resolved and also one's ability to articulate his manhood.

You must persuade people [and] argue your case, so that they don't fine you. They think you are right. There was a lot of: ‘you must know how to talk with people in a right way’. ...But there was a huge emphasis on the thing of talking; and even the difference between a boy and a man, in talking, is because a boy thinks things can be resolved by a stick and an axe. But when you are a man, you resolve things by talking with people; try to agree with people, and take one direction. (Interviewee 2)

There is also distinctive language taught [in the bush] that is used to emphasize the belief that there are differences between men and women. It is taught that men should conceal their pain and manage it differently from women. Women are called *isiqwathi* in the bush,

while men are called *incentisa*. *Incentisa* is a word used as a sign of respect towards a man. Meanwhile, the meaning of *isiqwathi* is 'snot', the mucus in the nose. Interviewee 2 says

Girls, it was worse than is'gqwathi. What was it? I forgot, but women were is'gqwathi. I forgot for the girls. So you respect men but there's a sense that *women mean nothing* when you are an initiate; but it changes when you are a man coming from the bush. In fact an initiate demonizes girls...because if you think about them, it will cause you an erection and other things. (Italics my emphasis)

Why is the same gender (mothers, aunts) that has raised the participants and provided for them, given such a low status? Is it because they are taught to be fearful of women and demonize girls? Witchcraft is also associated with women and the fear of it is heightened when initiates are in the mountain. Soga says "Death and sickness in human beings are never ascribed by the Xhosas to natural causes, but always to human instrumentality; to some person who is the source of evil influences, who acts malevolently, bringing or sending, by direct or occult means, sickness and death to families" (1931:179). Interviewee 2, when he was asked was there anything he could change in the initiation school lamented:

I think how women are being treated and spoken about must be looked at [and] be modified; especially, when you listen to the news about the abuses against women. Sometimes it [*initiation school*] creates that impression that women are there to serve you. And they are not important in our society besides that. For example, even though you call girls is'gqwathi, also other bad names, but they are the ones who cook for you when you are an initiate.

The table below attempts to show how relationships are viewed and maintained in the bush.

<p>Quadrant 1:</p> <p>Relationships (including land) that are regarded as sacred because of special rituals done dedicating their duties to the ancestors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingcibi • Amakhankatha • the kraal • land where initiation school is held 	<p>Quadrant 2:</p> <p>Relationships that are esteemed as a result of going to initiation school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders • Older men • Abafana (younger initiated men)
<p>Quadrant 4:</p> <p>Relationships that are viewed with suspicion as a result of fearing witchcraft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Girls • some animals (owl,snake, and baboon) 	<p>Quadrant 3:</p> <p>Relationships that are disregarded as a result of NOT going to initiation school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oosondoda • Amakwenkwe

Table 3:1 Quadrants of Relationship

In these quadrants of relationship, the first quadrant represents relationships and land that are regarded as sacred because of the special rituals they carry out and the dedication of their duties (tools and space) to the ancestors. Crucial to the process of being made a Xhosa man is staying in the bush/mountain and yielding his residency to the wilderness and its animals. The sacred kraal and land that is stained with the blood of sacrifice (both the beast and the initiate). The sacred relationships in the bush require the initiate to remember *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* because these men have introduced him to manhood. They have left a mark in his understanding about initiation school (*isiko lolwaluko*).

The second quadrant reflects the relationship of the initiate with other initiated men. These are the relationships that are esteemed and respected in the (Xhosa) society as the result of initiation schools, in large part due to the teachings of the school. Initiates are taught to respect older men and to be able to speak to their ancestors. They are to manage conflicts with other men without ever compromising their identity. Manhood is seen as a journey with different destinations. When one arrives at a particular destination, he must be sure to respect those who are older and respect other men who have gone to the mountain as well, like Amahlubi and AbaSotho. Interviewee 2 reveals:

A Sotho was given more respect in Mthatha than a Zulu. Amahlubi, we respected them because, Amahlubi do circumcise and they are real men themselves. But we

were not sitting together on the same table talk as men, because ours don't mix with them.

The third quadrant reflects the relationships that are disregarded as a result of not going to initiation: Oosondoda (the hospital 'man'), amakwenkwe (boys), and the un-initiated (i.e.Zulus). These are the individuals which the initiate must distinguish (or separate) himself from. Here, the initiate needs to be able to articulate his manhood as distinct from the un-initiated, in such a way that he would not be mistaken as one of them (a boy, a hospital circumcised man or an un-initiated man). The boy is regarded as a dog and the hospital man, *oosondoda*, as the one who is afraid of pain and makes himself to be a man, yet is not. The fourth quadrant depicts relationships that are viewed with suspicion (both human and animal) in part due to beliefs around witchcraft. This includes women, as they are associated with *umlaza*, *umqwaliso* (both words untranslatable) and *ukuthakatha* (witchcraft) and also particular animals like the snake (*evil*), owl (*signaling evil activities* in proximity) and baboon (*sign of misfortune*).

Ancestral masculinity is formed and defined by the public rituals and the community participation which endorses and approves these types of masculinities. The overall understanding is that unless someone has gone through initiation school, which has been passed down from generation to generation, then the person will not be granted 'membership' to community. Gabriel Setiloane, an African religious scholar commented about the Sotho-Tswana initiation school (*mophato*):

Socially '*mophato*' separates youths from the life of childhood and brings them to the threshold of adulthood. It conditions them emotionally to the mores of the group and molds them into unified age-sets. It strengthens the authority of government by imparting social values, a proper respect for elders, faithfulness in observing taboos and the rules of conduct in all relationships. At the same time it introduces to the supreme right of adults – that of communicating direct with 'badimo', who plays such an integral part in their lives. In contrast a "man" who has not been initiated is a perpetual boy- Moshimane, and the women a Lethisa. In the past not such a one could marry, nor partake in the councils of men or women. Uninitiated men were spurned by women as incomplete beings and uninitiated women despised by men and other women (1976:38).

In the construction of this type of masculinity, the man must be able to articulate his masculinity according to events such as these to gain acceptance in his community. Though Ancestral Masculinity can be constructed with multiple variations (for example Abasotho and Amahlubi, rural and township settings), its common core holds that the

gateway to manhood is rooted in allegiance to the living/dead ancestors and yielding to their requirements of qualification for manhood. In the Xhosa culture, this includes circumcision through initiation school. In South Africa, it is simultaneously practiced by Sotho, Pedi, Venda, and the Tsonga as well.¹⁰⁷ There is an acknowledgment by interviewee 2 that this type of ancestral masculinity will make sense to those who are in and from this micro-context:

So when I do all those things [rituals], there is a value in a person who is Xhosa, who grew up in the location and in rural areas, about circumcision. But I'm aware that if you have not grown up in rural areas and townships, but grew up in the suburbs, some don't have the same value.

Townships are a metropolis where many different language groups (Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, and Hlubi dialect) and cultures are found, all of which construct their masculinities accordingly. But there is interpolation and interconnectedness with the cult of ancestors in these groups. Ancestral Masculinities seems to depict this commonness and interaction between these groups, at school, work, public transport, churches, shebeens etc.

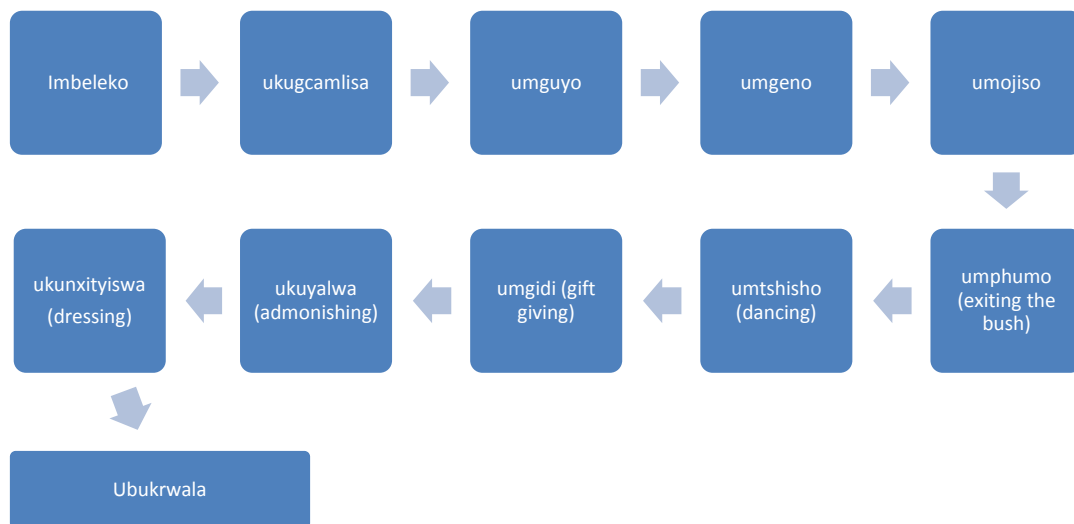


Figure 3:2 The Xhosa Process of Ancestral Masculinity

It is this journey that boys and initiates need to travel in order for them to be accepted as being fully human (man) in their community. In the next chapter, the home coming celebration, particularly the '*ukuyalwa*' (teaching) piece, is examined along with its appeal of yearning to be authentically African in the macro-context.

¹⁰⁷ "In South Africa, the tribes that commonly practice this custom are the Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, Venda, and the Tsonga (Taylor et al., 1996 cited by Mavundla 2009:396).

3.4 Conclusion

The idea that Ancestral Masculinity is linked to the living-dead ancestors and clan name was introduced. The essence of the boyhood stage is the searching for acceptance. The two schools of thought on boyhood were reviewed, as well as their impact on shaping this phase of 'manhood' for each initiate. The role and the relationship played by the *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* in constructing Ancestral Masculinity were emphasized. The rituals and practices that are done for initiates and the sacred place where these occurred, including their symbolism, were noted.

Chapter 4 Ancestral Masculinities: Macro-Context

4.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to further explain how ancestral masculinities are constructed in the last phase of *ulwaluko* by a yearning to be African in its macro-context. Public figures (politicians, religious leaders and indigenous custodians, like chiefs) in South Africa have been vocal about the moral regeneration of society and have made an appeal to indigenous knowledge systems. Initiation school has been seen as fitting within the broader protection of indigenous knowledge and also a place for the handing over and impartation of indigenous values to the next generation. But the challenge has been that this institution has relied on a system of communal religious organization which was never recognized by the colonial structures or the apartheid system. In the post-apartheid era, the democratic government has attempted this by creating a department that deals with indigenous knowledge system preservation and incorporated it into a pluralistic and multicultural society.

4.2. A Yearning to be African

In this section it is argued that ancestral masculinity is undergirded by a yearning to be authentically African. In particular, the teaching (*ukuyala*) offered in the homecoming celebration will be examined in an attempt to investigate what is thought to make ancestral masculinity African. In the public discourse in the post- apartheid era, the question of what it means to be African has been advanced by politicians¹⁰⁸ and religious leaders¹⁰⁹. The event of *ukuyalwa* (admonishing) is informed by the larger context in which AmaXhosa find themselves. This event becomes an opportunity to educate and conscientize the young initiates about social ills. They are advised on how not to collude with evil powers that

¹⁰⁸ This yearning to be African was articulated in the speech made by former president Thabo Mbeki at the coronation the South African constitution. I am an African 8 May 1996.

<http://www.thabombekifoundation.org.za/sitepages/print.aspx?ID=917>

His attempts to capture this yearning can be further seen in an appeal for an African Renaissance 1998 <http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/docs/1998/tm1998/tm980813.pdf>

Mabogo P. More reported that “in response, white opposition leaders such as the former president of the apartheid regime, F.W. De Klerk, also declared, ‘I am an African.’ This response subsequently led to a question that has been at the center of popular discourse in the country and has a bearing on the conception of African philosophy: who is an African?” (2006:149)

¹⁰⁹ Reconciliation is the premise in which human dignity can be forged. “South African black theologians, such as Simon Maimela, Desmond Tutu, and Allan Boesak, have argued since the 1970s that liberation of black people would lead also to the restoration of the human dignity of whites” (Botman, 2006: 74). The formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the public hearings that began in 1996 were the culmination of that school of thought.

erode social cohesion. This can be done by an appeal and argument for being uniquely African¹¹⁰. One distinctive of being authentically African may be by embracing the principles of *ukuhlonipha* and the philosophy¹¹¹ of *ubuntu*¹¹². *Ukuhlonipha* is the counterpart of *ubuntu* philosophy. It is what undergirds it. *Inhlonipho* is often rendered as ‘respect’ in an English translation, but a closer representation of Xhosa etymology might describe it as honoring people. Honoring becomes the basis for *ubuntu*. Sharlene Swartz failed to recognise this reciprocal relationship “Young people described *ubuntu* as ‘respect’, doing things for others without expecting payment, ‘not stealing from neighbors’, sharing money and food with neighbor (‘if I see them- they are suffering’), and ‘to be kind, talk with people’” (2009:127). What the young people in Swartz’s study are expressing is *inhlonipho*, which is the value that drives *ubuntu*¹¹³. The argument this paper advocates for it that *inhlonipho* is the basis for *ubuntu*. Initiation school seems to advocate for *inhlonipho*, which can be pictorially described as the handle of the umbrella *ubuntu*.

¹¹⁰ “Ubuntu is a philosophical concept forming the basis of relationship, especially ethical behavior. ... It is a traditional political-ideological concept referring to socio-political action” (More. 2006: 157) Louw says “Ubuntu (a Zulu word) serves as the spiritual foundation of African societies. It is a unifying vision or worldview enshrined in the Zulu maxim, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, i.e. ‘a person is a person through other person’ (Shutte, 1993:46). ... This traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes human being as ‘being-with-others’ and prescribes what ‘being-with-others’ should be all about. As such, Ubuntu adds a distinctly African flavor and momentum to a decolonized assessment of the religious other. In fact, the various overlaps between such an assessment and the African way of life as described/prescribed by Ubuntu, make this assessment nothing but an enactment of the African Ubuntu.” <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Afri/AfriLouw.htm> *Ubuntu* is not only a Zulu word but also an *Nguni* and Xhosa word meaning ‘*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*’. In Sotho, it is called *Botho*.

¹¹¹ David Suze Manda had a helpful explanation of philosophy: “Etymologically, philosophy basically means the search, the love, the passion for wisdom. In ancient Greek, *philo* meant friend and *sophia*, wisdom. In other words, it is the longing and thirst to become wise when dealing with different situations, realities, whether being connected to human beings or to the rest of the cosmos, universe.” www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=20361

¹¹² Desmond Tutu (1994 & 2000), Teffo L (1996), Louw, Dirk (1998) and Swartz S (2006) have referred to *ubuntu* in their writings. For example Swartz says “*ubuntu* has become entrenched in the discourse surrounding rebuilding and transition in South Africa. With its lack of ‘lust for vengeance, no apocalyptic retribution ... A yearning for justice, yes, and for release from poverty and oppression, but no dream of themselves becoming the persecutors, of turning the tables of apartheid on white South Africans’ (Teffo, cited in Louw, 1998, no page numbers), it is not difficult to see why this is so” (2006:561).

¹¹³ “We Africans speak about a concept difficult to render in English. We speak of *ubuntu* or *botho*. You know when it is there and it is obvious when it is absent. It has to do with what it means to be truly human, it refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available for others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other persons” (Tutu, 1994:125).

When the initiate comes back¹¹⁴ from the bush alive, the event is celebrated through *umphumo* (exiting the bush), *umtshisho* (indlu yesibane) (dancing), *ukayalwa* (admonishing) and *umgidi* (celebrating and gift giving). These activities denote that the new man has officially been incorporated into the 'living-dead rank' or pyramid of relationships (Figure 4.1). *Uphumo* is the 'exiting the bush' event that enables the initiated to be reintroduced to the community. There are symbolic rituals that are performed by elders to the initiate. When men come to fetch him, a cleansing ritual is done, rationalized by the idea that everything that belongs to the bush is left behind. The initiate runs to the river and washes the white clay which has covered him his entire time in the bush. When he is done in the river or shower, he will go back to his hut and be smeared (anointed) with butter. The chosen elder needs to be exemplary and would anoint the butter on the initiate while conveying his hopes and wishes about the life in which the initiate should emulate. Literally the old men say to the young lad, 'observe my conduct and do as I do'. He will be presented with a white blanket by the principal host (*usosuthu*). Afterwards, *Umtshisho* takes place: Other young men (*abafana namakrwala*) come and dance for the whole night with girls, but here the initiate is taught by them how to treat girls. The *abafana* play a role in teaching and being exemplary to the young initiate and also welcoming him to manhood.

The initiates then go to the kraal (*ebuhlanti*) where older men admonish them (*ukuyala*) and congregate according to their ranks. Ngxamngxa says "at the kraal of the host, the initiates are taken to a hut or to the cattle kraal where men have gathered to admonish (*ukuyala*) them. In the admonitions the initiates' new status as men is stressed, the duties which they have to assume and behavior expected of them toward wives, in-laws and tribal authorities" (1971:191). Mgqolozana explains, "The elders sat in order of seniority. But there were more complexities to the seating arrangements. It wasn't just physical age, but the age at which a man had been circumcised and got married that determined who sat next to whom. And there were many more factors to take into consideration too" (2009:168). *Ukayalwa*, as a ritual expresses the understanding that initiation school introduces the initiate to the pyramid of relationship¹¹⁵ (*amanqanaba nezilimela obudoda*). For example, when the community gathers for a celebration or funeral, ranks are observed. These ranks and seating arrangements reinforce this construction of masculinity in this particular pyramid of

¹¹⁴ The length of stay in the bush has changed over time, with a definite reduction in the contemporary schools. Ngxamngxa notes "When Thembu circumcision takes places in autumn the seclusion lasts three months, when in spring up to twelve months... today there is shortening of duration" (1971:190)

¹¹⁵ Wilson & Mafeje say "Cooking and washing up is done by young men, *amakrwala* (newly circumcised), or boys, *amakhwenkwe*, and the young men are served with a dish separate from that of the senior men. As senior man: 'the wheel of fortune rotates, we have also been juniors.' The normal division is on the basis of age, but an educated visitor may be invited to eat with the seniors, even though he is a contemporary of the juniors" (1963:50)

relationships (*amanqanaba nezilimela zobudoda*). In AmaXhosa society, if you have never been in the bush or mountain you are not ranked and you cannot sit in the kraal (*ebuhlanti*) with men. Even though there are exceptions for other people groups, if you are umXhosa and not circumcised, exclusion is justified and even abduction to be circumcised¹¹⁶ can be arranged. Table 4.1 later describes the distinctives of each group.



Figure 4.1 Pyramid of Relationships: Living-Dead Rank

The content of admonishing (*ukuyalwa*) varies from place to place, but the undergirding principles normally relate to *inhlonipho* (honor and respect) and *ubuntu* (what it means to be human). Admonishing covers personal conduct and behavior, societal expectations and national expectations¹¹⁷. Setiloane says “the method of teaching is often negative, emphasizing the “don’ts”, respect for taboo and the consequences to individuals and the community for ignoring it, rather than what they are expected to do as new members of the community” (1976:37). Admonishing seeks to show how social cohesion could be attained and relational harmony needs to be sought after and advocated for at home, in the

¹¹⁶ The example of abduction was done to a high profile politician, the Minister of Sports and Recreation, Fikile Mbalula. “Former ANCYL president and NEC member Fikile Mbalula was abducted for initiation. The Gugulethu man who circumcised him, Maduna Nqabeni, has confirmed that the vibrant Mbalula was initially not aware that his time had come when his fellow comrades picked him up on Saturday evening.” <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Mbalula-kidnapped-for-initiation-20080914>

¹¹⁷“Nqabeni said he was told by [Tony] Yengeni, [ANC] NEC member Nyami Boo, and provincial secretary Mcebisi Skwatsha to circumcise Mbalula. He further said, ‘We need our leaders to intervene and help protect our traditions, but there is nothing they can do if they are not men themselves.’” <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Mbalula-kidnapped-for-initiation-20080914>

community and at a national level. Three examples of speeches made at ukuyalwa are examined below.

“Today, my boy, you are man, and a man is not a man just by circumcision, but by *his actions*. A man fears to do anything bad or disgraceful; he refrains from using obscene language and indulging in unbecoming behavior. From henceforth we should see no more of you at the street corners, nor should we see you hanging on bus decks, or whistling and running up the street in the evenings. On your return from work you should come straight home and you should sleep at home every night. *Look after your parents and obey them*, remembering that to them you are not a man and will remain a boy. *Look after your younger brothers and sisters*; they should never starve while you live. Don’t squander your money on drink! Don’t buy a car! If a boy once has a car he will sleep away from home” (1963:107) (*italics my own emphasis*) (Wilson and Mafeje)

The themes and concepts of *ukhlonipha* and *ubuntu are present*, as the major marks to being a man in this construction of masculinity. The speech relays that relational conduct and action speaks louder than words. But words should also reflect an understanding of respect and honor. The actions that are deemed to be honorable and acceptable are those that seek to care for parents and siblings and the usage of material possessions must be for a greater good, not selfish gain¹¹⁸.

The initiates are also admonished not only to respect and care for their own parents; but anyone who is older or of the same age of parents, must be treated as parents. *Inhlonipho* is demonstrated in how one addresses and treats older people.

Interviewee 2 says about inhlonipho

“The old man, like in your father’s age, we were calling them fathers....But in Mthatha, people who are under five years younger than you, so after five years, you get more rights. Like now, you are a bit older man, you must be listened to....Then, people who are over five years, you would say, for example, brother *Ncilashe* [clan name (*isiduko*)] or brother *Nkwali* [clan name (*isiduko*)], you see. You still have that respect that he is a brother, but you must add his clan name to show that even though he is a bit older than you, I can call him brother so and so when I speak with him. When you are a boy, you are not allowed to say *Mvulane* [clan name (*isiduko*)]. You say ‘brother’. That’s it! But when you are a man, you can say ‘brother’ and call his name or his clan name to show that, yes I respect him; though we are in one level. We can talk together. So that is how you were talking to another man.”

¹¹⁸ Setiloane says “All initiands (initiates) are grouped together- children of chiefs and commoners, of rich and poor. There is not differentiation.” (1976:37)

Even though this participant has lost his biological father, he is aware that he needs to respect/honor older men. He calls those who are his father's age 'tata', as a term of endearment and as an acknowledgment that his father belongs to a certain group of men which probably went to the same initiation school. Also, he is given permission to address other older men by their clan names (*Iziduko*). The importance of addressing men by their clan is to evoke this connection with his clan. The interconnection of people by initiation school seems to be continuous to the departed. Lesibe Teffo, a South African philosopher says: "The collective consciousness or communalist worldview of Africans, though adulterated in modern days, still characterizes the African. Human beings never appear, in fact, as isolated individuals, as independent entities. Every person, every individual, forms a link in a chain of vital forces, a living link, active and passive, joined from above to the ascending line of his ancestry and sustaining below him the line of his descendants. Humankind is a communal being, and s/he cannot be conceived apart from his/her relationship with others" (1995: 5).

Mtuze says,

"ukwaleka nje umsundulo ndingathi asikukho nokuba buxatyisiwe ubudoda apha kwaXhosa. Kuthi akufikelela kwelo nqanaba unyana kaNatsi ubone kwesekubetheni konyawo lwakhe phantsi ukuba kuhamba indoda, ewuvula nje umlomo, uve ukuba kuthetha indoda. Ayifakwanga luphawu lubonakalayo indoda koko ibonwa nengesimilo sayo esiqaqambileyo ukuba ikolo didi lokulwela ukulungelwa komzi kaNtu ngokumela okona kuhle esizweni,ngokuhlonitswa kwesithethe nokuxatyiswa kwesiko. Yonke laa mikhuba nemikhwa yobukhwenkwe ibisakungcwatywa akufikela kwelinqanaba urheme. Ukususela mhla wanyhilwa kuya kulindeleka ukuba abonakalise imbeko engaphezulu kubo bonke abantu abadala. Yiyo loo nto ibininyanzelisa ukuba alibukule eliya qela lingakabethwa ndodini"(1984:63). [Just to add few words, it is not that we respect manhood as Xhosas. But when the initiate enters that rank, the way he walks and talks reflects what it means to be a man. He is not given a visible sign, but the way he conducts himself reveals that he entered the stage of respect by standing for justice in his nation and advocates for his custom and tradition. It begins on the day of the "homecoming" celebration that he needs to show high respect to all the elderly. That is why he was forced to remove himself from the group 'the uncircumcised'.]

Initiation school is what sets apart the men from boys. The initiate is given some words to live by and expected to remember the nuggets of what it means to be man. Setiloane says "Manhood is a matter, not of birth or material prosperity, but of human relationships" (1976:40). These words are a sign of entering the "living–dead rank". The words need to be understood as the foundation of manhood and belonging to the community of the 'living–

dead'. The 'pillar of understanding' of how an initiate is to behave is what is said in the admonishing. When the initiate misbehaves and does not treat older people with honor, people start to question, among other things, 'was he admonished?' or 'who admonished him?' (*Uyaliwe okanye wayala ngubani elikrwala or lomfana*). Hence, men who admonish the initiate are older men whose conduct is beyond refute and exemplary in the community. Wisdom is not the only main criterion but an esteemed men is the one who "follows the accepted pattern of social living, who shows equanimity and maturity" (Setiloane, 1976:40). Setiloane explains the criterion for those who admonish in Sotho culture. The criterion of which is similar to amaXhosa:

"He is generous and kind, but also strong; not only physically, but morally and spiritually... His advice in the 'kgotla' [men's gathering] is weighty. He has established his 'moste' (household) but see it as '*moste wa barra*' (household of my fathers), whose foundation is mutual respect and regard for order. He supports his household, while they in turn support him with honour and service" (1976:40).

Wisdom is identified in longer life and an ability to craft a memorable speech (*igwevu eliciko*). Mandela shares what he remembers Chief Meligqili said at his *ukuyalwa* ritual:

"There sit our sons," he said, "young, healthy, and handsome, the flower of the Xhosa tribe, the pride of our nation. We have just circumcised them in a ritual that promises them manhood, but I am here to tell you that it is an empty, illusory promise, a promise than can never be fulfilled. For we, Xhosas, and all black South Africans, are a conquered people. We are slaves in our own country. We are tenants on our own soil. We have no strength, no power, no control over our own destiny in the *land of our birth*. They will go to cities where they will live in shacks and drink cheap alcohol all because we have *no land* to give them where they could prosper and multiply. They will cough their lungs out deep in the bowels of the white man's mines, destroying their health, never seeing the sun, so that the white man can live a life of unequalled prosperity. Among these young men are chiefs who will never rule because we have no power to govern ourselves; soldiers who will never fight for we have no weapons to fight with; scholars who will never teach because *we have no place for them* to study. The abilities, the intelligence, the promise of these young men will be squandered in their attempt to eke out a living doing the simplest, most mindless chores for the white man. These gifts today are naught, for we cannot give them the greatest gift of all, which is freedom and independence. I well know that Qamata is all-seeing and never sleeps, but I have a suspicion that Qamata may in fact be dozing. If this is the case, the sooner I die the better because then I can meet him and shake him awake and tell him that the children of Ngubengcuka, the flower of the Xhosa nation, are dying" (1994: 27)

The behavior of the initiate is linked to freedom and land. The freedom to practice one's custom and tradition is fundamental to the philosophy of *ubuntu*. The freedom to practice hospitality, sharing with others, warmth and generosity requires land ownership. In order for someone to host unexpected visitors and conduct his ancestral rituals requires spacious land. The argument about land leads to the earlier discussion of the mountain and bush emphasis in initiation school. For the initiation school to be authentically practiced, requires the sacred land and seclusion from the community. But also, men need to work to assist in the well-being of their families and the community at large. Initiation school also prepares people for communal governance. And yet with the arrival of settlers, people were stripped of their land and their ways of religio-cultural organization were disrupted. Interviewee 4 comments of what he was taught at the event of his admonishing (*ukuyalwa*), in which these things been reduced to economic provision and being useful at home.

“There are different ways of respecting people; like you respect a woman in a certain way; like you respect a man in a certain way. A person who's younger than you, you respect in a different way. Ookhokho nabo into abandifundisa yona kuhlonipha ndingatsho nako nohlobo lokuziphatha xawusendlini (okanye). Izinto xa zifunekayo endlini funeka nam ndibekhona ndizame ndibe involve noba yintoni ndizame endikwaziyo ukuyizama. Ndididize xa sendiyibeka ngolunyu hlobo, ize yonkinto efunekayo aph'endlini yabo. Ndingayekeli nje ndibukele ndiyekele umntu ongumama okanye ndingatsho kodwa ndiyakwazi nam ndinalo ihlobo lokuncedisa(inaudible) aph'endlini.” [There are different ways of respecting people, like you respect women in a certain way, like you respect a man in a certain way. A person who's younger than you, you respect in a different way. Older men have taught me to honor and the way to conduct myself in the household and community. For example, when there are things required at the household, I need to be involved and willing to contribute anything. I need to 'man-up' to put it differently. When there is a shortage of things at home. I need not to be passive and allow women folk to do everything. I need to work and make sure things are done at home.

The emphasis is on respecting others according to their ranking and expected responsibilities. To be a 'man' is to provide and make sure there is no passivity. There is so much pressure for 'men' to come with a plan in making sure that their family is cared for. The expectation is that men are solely responsible for provision and protection, not allowing help from 'women'. In this framework of masculinity, allowing a woman to help in this regard can be detrimental to their evaluation of manhood, and by extension, detrimental to their self-worth. But getting involved in the household is not only limited material provision. In the contemporary setting, it also involves men to get their hands dirty with house work (cleaning, cooking and doing laundry). To 'man up' could mean that there is not a distinction in daily

housework from women and men, but only when there are rituals. Men and women need to congregate accord to their standards.

This diagram below attempts to show those standards and achievements

Stage	Age or Years after initiation	Status	How Evaluated by the Community	Concern
Abafana	2-5 years after initiation school	Single/Married with younger children	Responsible & community participation	How can I best serve the community?
Amadoda	5-20 years after initiation school	Married with older children	Ownership & how many	Who is next in line to lead family or clan?
Amaxhego	60-75 years of age	Grandparent	Belonging & legacy	How is the family legacy going to be carried to future generations?
Ookhokho	75-85 years of age	Great-grandparent	Respected & Aged well	Passing wisdom
Izinyanya	85 onwards years	Dying/ Aged Transitioning from being a 'living' to a 'dead' ancestor	Stories	Will my stories be normative?

Table 4: 1 Standards and Achievements

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that ancestral masculinity is marked by a yearning to be African in its micro context. The pyramid of relationships in the living-dead rank depicts what is at stake for the initiates. The construction of this masculinity is seen as a journey and there are standards that need to be maintained and accomplished for recognition and acceptance as a 'man' in Xhosa culture.

Chapter 5: Implications

5.1 Challenges

There are challenges that presented themselves from this study's findings on the construction of masculinity within *ulwaluko* and within ancestral masculinity in the Xhosa context. Namely, the impact of socio-economic challenges, as seen in alcohol abuse, economic strain, and potential extortion of the tradition for economic gain; the impact of absent or missing fathers and male elders; a language and teaching that may discriminate against others; and a potential inflexibility toward other constructions of masculinity.

The initiation school is not immune to the socio-economic challenges that townships and the South African public are facing. The challenge of substance abuse seems to be bearing presence in the institution. Abuse of alcohol could be an alteration and potential threat to this school. Alcohol usage in all the rituals needs to be seriously questioned. The issue is not about banning alcohol, but the amount of consumption by stakeholders needs to be considered. Traditional beer has always been a part of the institution. However, drunkenness has not. As indicated in the findings, the main facilitators of the school, *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha*, are to be respected members of the community and even must abstain from alcohol in the days before their involvement in *ulwaluko*, as spiritual preparation for their role. However, in present day applications of *ulwaluko*, in some cases the *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* are remunerated with a bottle of brandy and money for their jobs. Interviewee 1 confirms, "I had a bottle of brandy as a form of *ingcibi's* payment". The young men who normally accompany the initiate to the bush are rewarded with alcohol. Are there creative ways of thanking people without encouraging a culture of substance abuse? As mentioned previously, in each observation of circumcision in this study, the crowd of supporters for the initiate only included two to four men who were not drunk. And one occasion called for '*ingcibi*' to issue a stern plea to the men around him concerning their drunkenness, advocating for the well-being of initiate. This abuse of alcohol can create insufficient care of the initiate (poses health risks) and also does not inculcate the pattern of responsible living advocated for by the institution.

Also amidst the backdrop of the economic challenges of the township, the initiation school has the potential to become a money making scheme, which is far from its origins and traditional purposes. Fekile Cekiso Liwani says, "For each child that I circumcise I charge 150 Rand. If he is going to stay with me, I will charge R300". Coupled with that is the economic pressure it puts on families and initiates. The feasting, 'payment' of *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha*, and the present context pressure of the admonishment period can often become

a place where families display their wealth and gifts given to the initiates. The gifts range from clothes, money, new beds and cars that the initiate takes on as he leaves the 'old boyhood' things behind. There can be competition and rivalry about clothes (fashion) and status with the initiates when they come back from the bush/mountain. Interviewee says "*Ubukrwala bam* was low profile. I did not like mixing (socializing) with *amanye amakrwala* (other initiates) mainly because I could see that there was competition *ngesinxibo* (with attire) and I did not have nice clothes. To cover for my lack of nice clothes, I used the money *endandisokwe ngayo* ("homecoming" gifts) to buy myself a uniform." To a certain extent, this materialism and competition is in contrast to the principles taught in the school and in the admonishment: for responsibility and provision and against the entrapments of materialism; to prioritize providing for the basic needs of others before luxuries of self (as cited earlier in the example of a speech given during *ukuyalwa*). The financial burden that this institution has become may also alienate people who cannot afford to attend. This also may be further complicated for an initiate with estranged or strained relations with his paternal family, as mentioned by Interviewee 2.

The language and teaching of the school can be oppressive and divisive to anyone who does not conform to the form of masculinity prescribed by it. An example is portrayed in the words used to refer to women—*isiqwathi*. Many of the participants were shocked by the meaning and referring to their mothers, sisters and girlfriends as that. The language used could potentially result in justification of abuse. Interview 2 says

I think how women are being treated and spoken about must be looked at and be modified. Especially when you listen to the news about the abuses against women and children sometimes it creates that impression that women are there to serve you. And they are not important in our society besides that...for example even though you call girls *is'gqwathi*...they are the ones who cook for you when you are an initiate. Boys do not cook for you, girls cook for you; but how you are being taught about them is that you must look down on her, but she is the one who cooks for you. So I think if that can be modified a bit".

Furthermore, the language used to refer to any other non-initiated or 'unsuccessfully-initiated' man is dehumanizing. The words such as '*inja*' (dog) and '*inqambi*' (unclean thing) and *oosondoda*, relegate the person to a non-human status. This can create space for xenophobia, violence and condescending attitudes against 'others'. This categorization lends itself to a lack of acceptance of other constructions of masculinity. The understanding of the 'other', needs to be reformed to affirm individuals throughout the changing South African contemporary context. It needs to yield to an acceptance of other constructions of masculinity (for example: those with non-ancestral forms of masculinity, boys, non-initiated

men, those with 'failed' circumcisions, those with variable understandings of manhood as taught by the school Initiation, and those who were 'successful' in *ulwaluko* but do not find acceptance within the micro or macro context). The school also needs to embrace the health complexities that initiates could have previously undergone, and allow for alternatives within the institution.

5.2 Opportunities

Although there are challenges within *ulwaluko* and the Xhosa construction of ancestral masculinity as described in this thesis, it also presents great opportunity. This study revealed that initiation school and the process of *ulwaluko*, creates space for dialogue, teaching and change that can promote reconciliation, flexibility, cultural identity, and social cohesion in the challenges that confront the contemporary South Africa.

The school itself prompts a dialogue about belief systems. It is possible when initiates/personnel are in the bush they are confronted with and learn about different belief systems of the other initiates and personnel. As mentioned in the study, initiation school is attended by Xhosa young men of various religious backgrounds. It is a possibility that people (initiates and personnel at the bush) can share their beliefs and practice their convictions without harassment. The Xhosa proverb that says "*Imizi ayifani ifana ngentlanti kuphela*" can find its fulfillment at the bush when a fostering of dialogue happens. For example, Interviewee 2 demonstrates that the *ulwaluko* personnel informed them:

"We won't force you to put a herbal medication or traditional doctor's herbs. Our *ingcibi* allowed us that [if] you [were] a born again Christian, you won't put this. But you are not going to sleep. I want to see if you are eating (inaudible). So there was that conflict about ancestors but they never compromised on the issue of your background. They said you are a born again Christian, but you must know that you are uMqoco, where they come from, and how are they?"

The dialogue could result in tolerance of pluralistic views of beliefs without trying to 'convert' or demonize the other. There also seems to be potential for learning about one's history and identity without compromising religious beliefs. Interviewee 2 seems clear about things that are important to his belief of not using herbal medication for protection. But he was also given a platform to articulate his beliefs and able to identify things that are in contradiction. He said the 'born again' Christians were given opportunity to live out their faith in this space of plurality. However, Interviewee 2 was also challenged to directly communicate and ask for help and protection from the spirit of his 'dead' father and grandfather. He said "So there was a time of a conflict that you are part of this [initiation school]. The [particular] rules must be

followed but my belief doesn't allow me. I am not going to talk to my granddad and not I am going to speak to my dad. Especially, when they heard that my dad passed away they said, 'speak to your dad now. This is the time you need of him.'" He did not reject everything, but was also willing to embrace his clan name as his cultural heritage. Initiation school could be a place where people are engaged in dialogue about their convictions, but also open up a space of learning. This attitude of humility and tolerance could be extended to homophobic and xenophobic tendencies that are symptomatic of traditionalists and essentialists views. This could be transformative for a society that is desperate for inclusivity and authentic dialogue. The school does promote a cultural identity that could be affirmed without creating fear of other.

The *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha* are the crucial custodians that also drive the teaching of the institution. It is demonstrated by this study that they are, together with the elders, key informants and gatekeepers of the Xhosa community and of the construction of Ancestral Masculinity. It would seem essential to facilitate any change of the institution together with them and through them. They are also a changing community. So this generation's initiates are the elders of future generations, and will most definitely bring their own experiences and interpretations of culture to bear. The *ingcibi* have already been incorporated into public health initiatives as sited earlier in this thesis, namely, that they must be registered with the health department and initiates have to go for a health check-up and testing before initiation. These processes have required buy-in and compliance from *ingcibi*. To further emphasize and develop an attitude of tolerance within the school, *ingcibi* and *amakhankatha* could be further trained and helped to be more informative and dialogical in the experiential training of *ulwaluko*. It may be more helpful if the 'curriculum' is structured and some way complementary with 'education of the *ubuntu* philosophy' and appeals to already embedded values (*inhlonipho*, social and civic responsibility, giving dignity to others). The same holds true for the language reform that is needed, creating a space for change and elimination of language that is abusive to the other. In light of the economic issues that plague the township and undermine some of what is taught in *ulwaluko*, there could also be an opportunity for skills development where the value of *ukunyamezela* (*endurance*) could to be linked to a craftperson's skills, like carpentry or plumbing.

As highlighted by this study, the problem of missing and absent fathers in the South African township, bears a huge challenge to the construction of ancestral masculinity described here. However, *ulwaluko* can pose an opportunity for the multi-generational dialogue and potential developments of trusting and loving relationships. *Inhlonipho* (honoring) could only be possible if relationships of trust and care are cultivated. There are also opportunities for the father/uncle (as principal host) and son/ nephew to rekindle relationship and bond afresh.

It can offer a re-engagement point for elders and sons. This could be a chance for reconciliation between the 'absent' father and son relationships. Further, there is opportunity in the boyhood stage before initiation for those of the school of thought that says 'a boy is the father of a man'. They can seize the opportunity to build genuine relationship between those initiated men and uninitiated. Responsible 'penis talk and usage' and dealing with life questions requires multi-generation dialogues.

Furthermore this thesis contributes to the Africanization of the inquiry of religion and theology. In the academic study of religion and theology, the question of ancestor has been paramount; for example the discussion of Ancestral Christology and ecclesiological issues like ancestral worship or veneration. This study contributes in how this conceptual discussion could be approached.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Study

This study sheds light on areas of expansion and further research. Women also play a crucial role in the construction of ancestral masculinity. They also admonish the young initiates at the "homecoming" event. There is opportunity for further study in looking at the role played by women in the construction of ancestral masculinity and their understanding of the initiation school. This study could also investigate the women's experience of the language and attitudes taught about women in the school and the perceived impact of it.

An expanded study could be utilized to cover a larger group within the Xhosa community, to further explore alternative masculinities within the ancestral masculinity framework. This might include uninitiated Xhosas men, initiated Xhosas who were 'unsuccessful' (so called botched circumcisions), and initiated Xhosas that were 'successful' but did not feel accepted afterward. There is also opportunity to explore other expressions of ancestral masculinity that are found outside the Xhosa community.

5.4 Conclusion

In this thesis, the experience of individuals undergoing the religio-cultural rituals of boyhood to manhood, have been examined. The symbols and procedures have been explained and their meanings reflected on through the lens of first-hand accounts. These have been interwoven with existent documents in an attempt to identify and depict a type of masculinity being formed by initiation schools, which this author names ancestral masculinity, and uniquely describes the amaXhosa version of this ancestral masculinity. The three stages of initiation school: boyhood (before initiation school); initiate (in initiation school); and manhood (leaving initiation school and the welcoming into the community as a man) where further examined as a journey into manhood. The boy stage has been summed up as an

individual's search for acceptance. The 'boyhood stage' was marked by two schools of thought regarding the treatment of 'boys'. One school promotes the total disregard of boys conduct and gives total freedom to them to craft their own values. The other school of thought promotes a more hands on approach and wants boys to be treated differently, but with respect. The second stage examined the religio-cultural rituals that are required for a boy to transition to being an initiate and his subsequent initiation school experience. It was shown that this stage is marked as a path for the initiate to find acceptance within his family and community. The finding of acceptance is demonstrated by importance of process, place and procedure in which one needs to adhere to in order to find acceptance at a micro level. It also exposes the dynamics of relationships in the bush or mountain which are summed up in Table 4.1, the quadrants of relationships. Lastly, the third stage is examined amidst the macro context in which the construction of this type of ancestral masculinity finds itself. Hence in each school the institution of *ulwaluko* is important for crafting and mentoring initiates into a contemporary version of this form of 'manhood'. However, consistent with this type of masculinities throughout time, is a distinctive of yearning to be African in the macro-context. It was shown that within the amaXhosa version of ancestral masculinity, 'being African' is marked by the philosophy of *ubuntu* and values of *inhlonipho*.

APPENDIX 1



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Approval Notice Response to Modifications- (New Application)

14-Jan-2013
NCACA, Mawethu

Protocol #: HSS86/2012

Title: An ethnographic study on the construction of religion and masculinities in initiation schools in Langa township.

Dear Mr Mawethu NCACA,

The Response to Modifications - (New Application) received on 12-Dec-2012, was reviewed by members of Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on 11-Jan-2013 and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: 11-Jan-2013 -10-Jan-2014

Standard provisions:

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your protocol number (HSS86/2012) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

After Ethical Review:

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required.

The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Clandette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health (healthres@pgwc.gov.za Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health (Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard (awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za, Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC.

Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX 2

Semi Structured Interviews

- Tell me, what was / is your experience in the initiation school?
- Tell me, how did you make a decision and who did you tell that you want to come to the bush?
- What was the role played by your father (absent father) and uncles, for preparation, during and after?
- What rituals were done for you before, during and after?
 - o Before coming to the bush
 - o During
 - o After
- What was the significance of these rituals?
- Would you do them to your child/son?
- If you were to change something about the school, what will it be?
- If you had a son, what would you want to him to know before he goes to the 'mountain'?
- What were you taught in the school regarding the:
 - o Ancestors (Izinyanya nokhokho)
 - o Men (Amadoda-Amaxhego, Abafana and Amakrwala)
 - o Women (Oomama neentombi)
 - o Boys (Amakwenkwe)
 - o Other people who never do this? (e.g. Amazulu, Amafrika avela kwamnye amazwe, Abelungu)
- What was your relationship with your traditional nurse like?
- Would you recommend him for someone else?

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