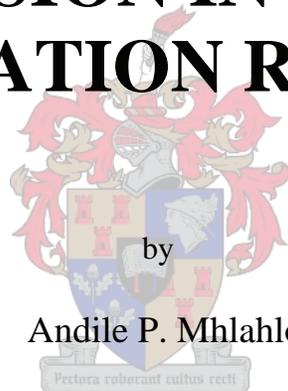


WHAT IS MANHOOD? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL CIRCUMCISION IN THE XHOSA INITIATION RITUAL



by
Andile P. Mhlahlo

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Philosophy in Community and Development

at

The University of Stellenbosch

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Supervisor: Prof. C.S. van der Waal

March 2009

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 3 March 2009

Copyright © 2009 Stellenbosch University
All rights reserved

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie tesis is om te poog om die begrip manhood te verstaan in die konteks van Xhosa-pratende mense; en om waarom te ondersoek dit betekenisvol vir hulle is om tradisionele besnydenis in die man te gebruik inwyding ritueel.

In die konteks van die navorsing probleem, die doelwit is om te verstaan: ek i) Hoekom tradisionele besnydenis belangrik is in die uitvoer van hierdie ritueel, ii) mense se gelowe omtrent die begrip manhood, iii) hoe die inwyding ritueel in die huidige dag, iv) inge oefen word die geskil en debatteer om die inwyding ritueel in die Oosterse Kaap, en v) die rol van die regering se beleide in die reguleer van hierdie plegtigheid.

In terme van navorsing ontwerp en metodiek, het ek kwalitatiewe navorsing gebruik. Die monsterneming metode insluit kloostersuster-waarskynlikheid monsterneming-dat is oorgemerk of oordeel monsterneming. In die navorsing proses het ek individuele onderhoude fokus gebruik groep onderhoude deelnemer waarneming, en enige letterkunde wat ter sake vir dit was studeer. Die navorsing is aangevoer in Mchubakazi Stadsgebied in Butterworth Oosterse Kaap.

As agtings die navorsing bevindings die volgende data uit gekom: eerstens, manhood verwys na betreffend na 'n groepe mans wat 'n sekere dorp inwoon. Hierdie mans word gekenmerk deur ondergaan te met die inwyding ritueel vernameklik deur tradisionele besnydenis te gebruik. 'N man wat het ondergaan hospitaal besnydenis is meer waarskynlik om vernedering en disrespek uit die ortodoks te ondervind Xhosa-sprekers. Hulle debat in ondersteuning deser verklaring is dat hy nie enigste helfte is nie 'n man.

Tweedens, word tradisionele besnydenis waargeneem soos word betekenisvol in hierdie ritueel dit is 'n nodige avontuur 'n man moet gaan deur ten einde word 'n man. Dit is basies 'n daad van moed. Dit is nie noodwendig verpligte in die proses om 'n seun te transformeer in 'n man nie, maar dit is belangrik vir sy beeld in die oog van die gemeenskap nie.

Derdens, die inwyding ritueel van Xhosa-sprekers bestaan uit vier fases naamlik: die ' die binnegaan fase (umgeno) 'die fase van word 'n ingewyde (ubukhwetha) ' die koms uit fase '(umphumo) en die fase van word 'n gegraduateerde (ubukrwala).

Vierdens, word hierdie ritueel met geskil en debat het. Die dispuut wat het arisen is op die betrokkenheid van afgeslotenes. Hierdie afgeslotenes is die media en die regering. Beide is hierdie instellings na hierdie ritueel aangetrokke deur die dood en hospitaliseer van ingewydes. Die media wat mik word om die kwessies te blootstel omliggende hierdie tragedies na die openbaar.

Andersyds, regering se vertel betrokkenheid om in plek beleide ten einde te geplaas red die lewes van die ingewydes ruk wat die waardigheid wat van die ritueel wat. Die voogoë wat hiervan handhaaf plegtigheid was baie ongelukkig omtrent die betrokkenheid van die media en regering in die begin skole. Hulle het geredeneer dat hulle heiligte ritueel steur is met deur die betrokkenheid van afgeslotenes. Hulle gevoel dat hulle tradisionele reg om hierdie plegtigheid met vertroulikheid te oefen is skend.

Die debat deser navorsing is dat manhood na 'n groepe mans wat in 'n besondere stadsgebied of dorp. Elke van hulle bly verwys het ondergane inwyding ritueel en word deur die besnydenis sny onderskei. Manhood speel 'n rol in die gemeenskap, deur verseker dat tradisionele funksies en seremonies egalig plaasvind. Tradisionele besnydenis is belangrik in die inwyding ritueel. Dit bewys dat 'n man nie dapper is nie; is hy dapper genoeg vir gesig besnydenis pyn nie. Egter, behoort dit nie wees geforseerde vir sene nie soos dit nie verpligte is in die transformeer van 'n seun in 'n man.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to understand the concept of manhood in the context of Xhosa-speaking people; and to investigate why it is significant for them to use traditional circumcision in the male initiation ritual.

In the context of the research problem, the aim is to understand: i) why traditional circumcision is important in executing this ritual, ii) people's beliefs about the concept of manhood, iii) how the initiation ritual is practised in the present day, iv) the controversy and debate around the initiation ritual in the Eastern Cape, and v) the role of the government's policies in regulating this rite.

In terms of research design and methodology, I used qualitative research. The sampling method includes non-probability sampling – that is purposive or judgmental sampling. In the research process I utilized individual interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation, and any literature that was relevant to this study. The field research was conducted in Mchubakazi Township in Butterworth, Eastern Cape.

As regards the research findings, the following data came out: firstly, manhood refers to belonging to a group of men who live in a certain village. These men are characterised by having undergone the initiation ritual, especially using traditional circumcision. A man who has undergone hospital circumcision is more likely to experience humiliation and disrespect from the orthodox Xhosa-speakers. Their argument in support of this statement is that he is only half a man.

Secondly, traditional circumcision is perceived as being significant in this ritual; it is a necessary adventure a male must go through in order to become a man. It is basically an act of courage. It is not necessarily compulsory in the process of transforming a boy into a man, but it is important for his image in the eyes of the community.

Thirdly, the initiation ritual of Xhosa-speakers consists of four phases, namely: the 'entering phase' (*umgeno*), the phase of being an initiate (*ubukhwetha*), the 'coming out phase' (*umphumo*) and the phase of being a graduate (*ubukrwala*).

Fourthly, this ritual is clouded by controversy and debate. The dispute that has arisen is on the involvement of outsiders in this ritual. These outsiders are the media and the government. Both these institutions were attracted to this ritual by the death and hospitalisation of initiates. The media aimed to expose the issues surrounding these tragedies to the public.

On the other hand, government's involvement relates to putting in place policies, in order to save the lives of the initiates while maintaining the dignity of the ritual. The custodians of this rite were very unhappy about the involvement of the media and government in the initiation schools. They argued that their sacred ritual was being interfered with by the involvement of outsiders. They felt that their traditional right to practise this rite with confidentiality had been violated.

The argument of this research is that manhood refers to a group of men who stay in a particular township or village. Each of them has undergone the initiation ritual and is distinguished by the circumcision cut. Manhood plays a role in the community, through ensuring that traditional functions and ceremonies take place smoothly. Traditional circumcision is important in the initiation ritual. It proves that a man is courageous; he is brave enough to face circumcision pain. However, it should not be forced to boys as it is not compulsory in transforming a boy into a man.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	2
OPSOMMING	3
ABSTRACT	5
DEDICATION	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 Introduction	13
1.2 Motivation for the Study	13
1.2.1 Personal Experience.....	13
1.2.2 ‘Initiation Tragedies’.....	14
1.2.3 Stigmatisation.....	18
1.3 Research Problem	19
1.3.1 The Significance of Traditional Circumcision in the Initiation Ritual amongst Xhosa-speakers	19
1.3.2 Beliefs about Manhood	19
1.3.3 How the Initiation Ritual is Practised today among Xhosa-speakers.....	20
1.3.4 Controversy and Debate about Traditional Circumcision in the Eastern Cape	20
1.3.5 Government Policies	21
1.4 Aims of the Study	21
1.5 Research Design and Methodology	21
1.5.1 Research Design.....	21
1.5.2 The Research Process.....	25
1.5.3 Data Analysis	33
1.5.4 Document Study.....	34
1.5.5 Shortcomings, Sources of Error and Limitations of This Research	35
1.6 Overview of Chapters and Their Logic	36
1.7 Conclusion	38
CHAPTER 2: INITIATION RITUALS IN THE LITERATURE	39
2.1 Introduction	39
2.2 Defining Concepts	39
2.2.1 Initiation Rituals.....	39
2.2.2 Male Circumcision	41
2.2.3 Tradition and Culture	42
2.3 The Three Phases of Initiation Rituals	47
2.3.1 The Phase of Separation.....	48
2.3.2 The Phase of Transition	48
2.3.3 The Phase of Incorporation	50
2.4 The Meaning of Symbols in Rituals	51
2.4.1 The Symbolism of the Liminal Phase	52
2.4.2 The Symbolism of Space	55
2.5 Initiation Rituals and Gender	56

2.6	The Role of Circumcision in Decreasing HIV/AIDS	59
2.7	The Link of Initiation Rituals with Power, Authority and ‘Communitas’	62
2.8	Traditional Circumcision In Relation To Human Rights	63
2.9	Conclusion	65
CHAPTER 3: THE XHOSA INITIATION IN THE LITERATURE		67
3.1	Introduction	67
3.2	Differences in Views Concerning Traditional Circumcision	67
3.3	Social Pressure to Undergo Traditional Circumcision	69
3.3.1	Pressure from the Peer Group	70
3.3.2	Pressure from a Boy’s Family.....	70
3.3.3	Pressure from Women.....	70
3.4	Initiation Rituals, Bravery, Hardship, and Masculinity	71
3.5	Initiation Rituals, Hierarchy and ‘Communitas’	73
3.6	The Initiation Rituals and ‘Building a Homestead’	75
3.7	Initiation Among Xhosa-Speaking People and HIV/AIDS	78
3.8	Initiation Rituals and Christianity	81
3.9	Conclusion	83
CHAPTER 4: FIELDWORK RESULTS – INITIATION RITUALS AND MANHOOD		85
4.1	Introduction	85
4.2	A Discussion of Manhood	85
4.2.1	People’s Views about the Concept of Manhood	85
4.2.2	The Purpose of Manhood	87
4.2.3	Stages of Manhood – The View of the Orthodox Xhosa-speakers	87
4.2.4	<i>An Injoli</i>	88
4.2.5	The Responsibility of Manhood during Traditional Rituals.....	89
4.2.6	The Principles and Teachings of Manhood.....	90
4.2.7	The Link between Circumcision Pain and ‘The Voice’	92
4.3	Results of Interviews on Manhood	94
4.3.1	A Description of a Man.....	94
4.3.2	The Unique Benefits of Undergoing Traditional Circumcision	98
4.3.3	People’s Perception of a ‘Hospital-Man’	99
4.3.4	Perspectives on Men’s Expression of Emotions	100
4.3.5	Perception of Traditional Circumcision as a Risk.....	102
4.4	Personal Observations about the Journey towards Manhood	103
4.4.1	The ‘Entering Phase’ (<i>Umngeno</i>).....	104
4.4.2	The Phase of Being an Initiate (<i>Ubukhwetha</i>).....	107
4.4.3	The ‘Coming-Out Phase’ (<i>Umphumo</i>)	114
4.4.4	The Phase of Being a Graduate (<i>Ubukrwala</i>)	117
4.5	Umphumo: The Case Study of Wanda and Nko	119
4.5.1	Introduction	119
4.5.2	The Start of the Family Ritual.....	119
4.5.3	Clans and their Procedures.....	121
4.5.4	The Role of Manhood Principles	122
4.5.5	Communication with Ancestors	123

4.5.6	The Process of Washing Boys in the River and Burning the Initiation Hut.....	124
4.5.7	The <i>Somagwaza</i> Song	125
4.5.8	The Admonitions.....	126
4.6	Conclusion.....	126
CHAPTER 5: CONTROVERSY AND DEBATE AROUND GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PUBLIC VIEWS REGARDING INITIATION RITUALS.....		131
5.1	Introduction.....	131
5.2	Controversy and Debate about Traditional Circumcision in the Eastern Cape	131
5.2.1	The Media’s Involvement in the Initiation Rituals – A Case Study of <i>Umthunzi Wentaba</i>	131
5.2.2	Government’s Initiatives in Regulating Initiation Schools	135
5.3	Government Policies on Initiation Rituals	136
5.3.1	The Role of Government through the Department of Health.....	136
5.3.2	The Role of Government through the South African Police Service	142
5.4	Conclusion.....	143
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....		145
6.1	Introduction.....	145
6.2	Summary and Discussion of the Main Points	145
6.2.1	A Description of Manhood.....	145
6.2.2	A Description of a Man.....	147
6.2.3	The Unique Benefits of Undergoing Traditional Circumcision	148
6.2.4	People’s Views about a ‘Hospital-Man’	149
6.2.5	People’s Views on Men’s Expression of Emotions	149
6.2.6	People’s Views on Traditional Circumcision as a Risk	151
6.2.7	The Four Phases of the Initiation Ritual.....	151
6.2.8	Controversy and Debate about Initiation Rite.....	155
6.2.9	Government Policies on Initiation Rituals	156
6.3	Recommendations	158
6.4	Conclusion.....	159
REFERENCES.....		161
APPENDICES		167
a)	Definition/Clarification of Terms	167
b)	Research Interview Questions.....	167
c)	The Circumcision Act 2001	167
d)	DoH Forms	167
e)	Photographs	167

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the Mhlahlo family at home in the rural former Transkei in the Eastern Cape. This includes my extended family, Mbonjeni and Malgas. My message to them is, “Poverty will eventually be defeated if we continue fighting together. Great achievements involve taking risks. Persistence is the name of the game if you want to succeed in your adventure”.

I also dedicate this document to all the boys who have lost their lives, while others end up being hospitalised because of traditional circumcision. May their parents be able to make peace with what happened to their sons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. C.S. van der Waal, for his guidance in writing this research. He challenged me to develop the skills of writing and to do research. These skills are very valuable in writing up all the documents for the community development consultancy that I am starting.

I thank the initiates, the ‘men-of-the-bush’, and the community members for being willing to participate in this study. I also thank the officers from the Department of Health (DoH) and The South African Police Service (SAPS) in Butterworth, for welcoming me when interviewing them. A sincere word of gratitude also goes to my research assistant, Mr. Ndoda “Khwai khwai” Jekubeni. His support in the bush (fieldwork) is greatly appreciated.

At the time of writing this research, my arms were not functioning properly. For many years, I had a pain that kept on growing in my limbs, with no help from the attempts made by the consulting medical practitioners whom I visited. It continued to the extent that it became difficult to use my arms and legs properly. As a result I could not write and type this document by myself. Hence there was a considerable delay in submitting it.

This challenge made it necessary for me to rely on other people to write down for me what I was dictating to them. Therefore, I would like to thank my wife to be, Thembisa Sompeta, for being so dedicated in typing (and making amendments to) most of this document. I also express my gratitude to her family members who made their contribution to this thesis. In addition, I thank my family members for their support in helping me to do my fieldwork and in the writing up of this research.

Further, I would like to acknowledge the support of staff members at Stellenbosch University. In Humarga: Mr. Jan Louw (Manager) and Mrs. Pedro (Senior Admin Officer); and Mrs. Marsha Lyner-Cleophas (Head of the office for students with special learning needs - disabilities). They collaborated in lending me a laptop that has voice-recognition software. Their aim was to help me overcome the barriers that would have limited me in doing this research.

I also acknowledge the financial support I received from the bursary office at Stellenbosch University. The contributions from this office were invaluable.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide background information on this thesis. The motivation for conducting this research is explored and the problems this study aims to address are also highlighted. As this is a foundation chapter, it is necessary to give details regarding the aims of the study. The next section focuses on the research design and methodology. The research that has been used in this study can be termed qualitative. Individual interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation will be discussed. To conclude, there will be an overview of all the chapters and their logic, in order to detail the rationale of the thesis.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

There are several reasons that made me interested in studying the Xhosa initiation ritual. These are, i) my own personal experience with the ritual, ii) media reports on death and injuries in 'bush-schools', and iii) the stigmatisation of men who were circumcised in hospitals. Examples to illustrate these are provided.

1.2.1 Personal Experience

I have the experience of growing up in a community that values traditional circumcision when performing the initiation ritual for boys. This gives me a strong basis of experience to investigate this topic. Like most Xhosa-speaking males, I have gone through this ritual the traditional way. This empowered me with hands-on experience that was useful and indispensable in this study.

I spent most of my childhood years in an area (Butterworth, Eastern Cape) that was characterised by conflicts around the issues of traditional circumcision. For example, it was common to see a male who was circumcised in hospital being assaulted by a group of men (traditionally circumcised ones), or to find that a certain male has been forced to undergo traditional circumcision against his will. These conflicts would sometimes be very intense, to the extent that people resorted to fighting each other. This would result in

people being hospitalised and jailed, while there would be ongoing resentment amongst certain individuals in the community.

1.2.2 'Initiation Tragedies'

The ongoing reports about death and hospitalisation of initiates have attracted me to do research on this ritual. These reports have been made through the media. In this study, I will use the concept 'initiation tragedies' when referring to these deaths and the hospitalisation of initiates. In other words, the heading 'initiation tragedies' implies issues that put the health and life of initiates at risk when they are in the bush.

These include dysfunction of sex organs, amputation of sex organs, hospitalisation of initiates, death in the bush-schools, assault of initiates by the traditional guardians, and so on. The 'initiation tragedies' are associated with infection and injury of/to the circumcision wound (on the penis), dehydration (because of water restrictions), and sometimes the lack of proper care from traditional guardians. Every year, the South African media carry reports on the tragic accounts of initiates' death and hospitalisation.

The initiation school usually takes place during the June and December holidays. An extract from a newspaper indicates the irregularities in the initiation schools:

"All I wanted was to be a man," said one of the teenagers, on the verge of tears. "I'm not going to see that dream come true." Each year doctors at Greys hospital in the Eastern Cape treat dozens of boys for horrific disfigurements inflicted during tribal circumcision ceremonies. These are usually carried out over Christmas when the youths return home on holiday from jobs in the cities. In recent weeks the quest for manhood has left more than 50 young Xhosa men suffering infections and severe blood loss. At least two have had to have their penises amputated. Every year a number of boys die from their injuries" (Block 1996).

There could, of course, be some doubts whether the media reports are a true representation of the facts about this ritual in South Africa. For example, this same London *Sunday Times* article (quoted above) says that each year there are dozens of boys that are treated in Greys hospital as a consequence of medical problems that are associated with traditional circumcision. This argument appears to be a generalisation based on the great number of boys who went at a particular time to this hospital. It may not necessarily

always be the case; there could be years when there are few boys (or no boys at all) who are treated by doctors for the complications associated with traditional circumcision.

Sometimes hands-on experience is valuable when writing about certain issues. In this instance, the report by this newspaper could have been written by someone who stays in London or in a foreign country and may not have firsthand experience of this ritual and South African issues. Beyond this, the writer could be a nonXhosa-speaker and not even an African, while writing about the culture of the Xhosa-speakers in South Africa. These factors would put this writer in a less advantageous position in providing a true representation of the facts about this initiation rite. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that this information may have come from a trustworthy source.

In another report, by *City Press* (December 28, 2003), four events that occurred during the November and December initiation season in 2003 were noted:

- (a) Five Eastern Cape boys had their penises amputated after circumcision that went horribly wrong. This took place in the middle of December 2003.
- (b) Less than a week after these amputations, two Northern Cape boys died, following similar botched circumcisions.
- (c) Seventeen other youths were admitted to hospital in North-West Province. They suffered from septic wounds.
- (d) Health officials rescued more than 100 boys from illegal schools in Pondoland in the Eastern Cape.

The media play a great role in our lives. It investigates, then portrays various issues that affect our lives. The initiation ritual is among these issues, and it has appeared in the media many times. However, sometimes the media present information that is incomplete or twisted when reporting on this rite. In reporting these tragedies, the authors do not explain further concerning the circumstances surrounding them.

Most of the time the focus is on figures, that is the number of deaths and hospitalisations that happen in a particular circumcision season, and these are prioritised. In general, these tragedies happen because

initiation guardians and traditional surgeons, who have little knowledge and few skills to perform this rite, are the ones who take care of the initiates.

It is common knowledge these days that those who are hungry for money use this ritual to fill their pockets. When things go wrong, they disappear. Thereafter, the whole ritual is blamed for being outdated, barbaric and dangerous. Therefore, what the media say is not always a true reflection of what is happening on the ground.

Nyaundi (2005: 174) adds that traditional circumcision is usually carried out under unhygienic conditions using crude tools. She goes on to say that during this process there is no anaesthesia that is being administered. She notes that each year there are reports of deaths and severe irreversible physical damage that is caused by circumcision.

This situation could be dreadful to Xhosa-speaking boys of today, who still have to go through this ritual. They are faced by a dilemma. If they choose to undergo the traditional way of circumcision, they face the risk of experiencing 'initiation tragedies'. Alternatively, they could avoid this by making use of circumcision through a private doctor or in a hospital. Should they take this option, they face the risk of being 'stigmatised' by the community members.

It is important to highlight that although there are tragic events that take place in the initiation schools, the majority of adolescent boys and young men still continue to undergo this ritual. *City Press* (December 28, 2003) says that despite the 'five amputees' tragedy' in the Eastern Cape (see 1.2.2 (a)), hundreds of young people were still flocking to the initiation camps.

The *City Press* said this can be attributed to the pride and prestige that is associated with being a man. A common reason for undergoing this ritual is mentioned by Meintjes (1998:56): "If you have not undergone circumcision in the Xhosa culture, you are not man enough".

Nyaundi (2005) adds that through the use of myths and peer pressure, boys are conditioned to look forward to the initiation rites with positive anticipation. This is done through undermining the status of an uncircumcised person, while a circumcised one is conferred a high social standing. Nyaundi says in all

tribes (in Kenya) there are words that are used to distinguish between circumcised and uncircumcised males. She says these words tend to describe the uncircumcised in a derogatory way. She gives an example of this scenario among the Maasai of Kenya. She goes on to say that in Kenya, a circumcised male is referred to as *ol-murani* (young warrior) and an uncircumcised one as *olayoni* (a small boy). A circumcised female is referred to as *esingaki* (a maiden) and an uncircumcised as *entito* (a small girl). This perception causes uncircumcised people to live with a stigma in their communities.

Parker (1995) provides evidence that suggests that the negative association with being uncircumcised is also applicable to females, where female circumcision is a customary ceremony, as in her study of female circumcision in Northern Sudan. She says a girl who is not circumcised is perceived as ‘unmarriageable’ and would bring undying shame to herself and her family.

In her village, people would describe her by using unpleasant names. These are *Kaaba* (bad), *Waskhan* (dirty) and *Nigsa* (unclean). This does not end there; she would also be taunted by friends and relatives wherever she goes, in order to make her life intolerable (to push her to go through circumcision). Parker notes that circumcision is bound up with beliefs about honour, shame, purity and cleanliness. Therefore, she strongly feels that it is these beliefs that need to be examined and questioned, if one wants to intervene in this custom (Parker 1995: 510).

In short, a community in which a boy or girl grows up may prescribe to them that they must undergo initiation rituals. In a traditional Xhosa-speaking community, the prescription is not just about undergoing circumcision. Instead, there is a high expectation for boys to go through traditional circumcision. The price of not being circumcised the traditional way can result in them being stigmatised by the community members.

Simultaneously however, choosing traditional circumcision puts them at the risk of experiencing initiation tragedies. These are the factors that affect a boy in deciding on choosing traditional circumcision or hospital circumcision. Thus, a part of this study needs to explore whether a boy has the option and freedom to choose traditional circumcision or hospital circumcision.

1.2.3 Stigmatisation

As a Xhosa-speaking male, my experience of growing up in a Xhosa-speaking community was that there was a dominating negative attitude towards a male who was circumcised in hospital. He would not be recognised as a man; instead he was called a boy. He was treated in a derogatory manner by the traditionally circumcised men. He would be treated with disrespect by other men and even by women. This negative attitude made me curious about this rite. That is, to attempt to find out more about it. In this study, the negative attitude is called ‘stigmatisation’.

Stigmatisation in this context is a negative attitude that community members have towards the uncircumcised males (see ‘hospital-man’ in section 2.2.3). Dijker and Koomen (2006) have a better definition of this concept. Stigmatisation refers to a process whereby people categorise another person as belonging to some category or group with a negative connotation. A victim of stigmatisation may include a disabled person, an HIV-infected individual, an uncircumcised male, etc. Perpetrators of stigmatisation tend to see the person on the “basis of information about the person’s category that is stored in stereotypes” (Dijker and Koomen 2006: 298). That is, this person is thought to behave in a negative manner. For example, an uncircumcised male is expected to be antisocial in his behaviour (e.g. by raping children).

In the view of orthodox Xhosa-speakers, the uncircumcised and the ‘hospital-men’ are unworthy of being recognised as ‘real men’. This perception is accompanied by ill-treatment, which suggests that these ‘non-real men’ are sub-human beings. Sometimes this ill-treatment is accompanied by acts of violence, e.g. circumcision by force, assaults and interrogations about one’s manhood.

Tradition-oriented Xhosa-speakers believe that a man who is not circumcised is a boy (*inkwenkwe*), a dog (*inja*) and an unclean thing (*inqambi*). In fact this perception goes on to suggest that there is no such thing as an uncircumcised man in Xhosa culture. The belief about circumcision is so strong that an uncircumcised Xhosa-speaking male past the age of circumcision (+/-25 years) may be overpowered by other Xhosa-speaking men against his will and forced to submit to circumcision (Funani 1990: v).

Van Vuuren and De Jongh (1999: 5) support this view in their discussion of initiation rituals in South Africa. They say an uninitiated man remains an object of ridicule for the rest of his life. They mention that

an uncircumcised boy is regarded as “an unclean thing, an *inqambi* or dog, a half-witted person of whom no good can be expected”. If this boy decides to get married, his marriage will remain stigmatised for the rest of his life.

In conclusion, the three topics that are covered above provide a point of departure for this research. My personal experience brings firsthand knowledge which is valuable when digging more deeply into this subject. The situation of the initiation tragedies brings to light the existing health challenges that accompany this rite: hospitalization of initiates and the HIV/Aids issue. These points have all contributed in shaping the aims of this research.

1.3 Research Problem

The research problems that are dealt with in this research are, to understand i) the significance of traditional circumcision in the initiation ritual among Xhosa-speakers, ii) beliefs about manhood, iii) how the initiation ritual is practised today among Xhosa-speakers, iv) the controversy and debate about circumcision in the Eastern Cape, and v) government policies in this regard.

1.3.1 The Significance of Traditional Circumcision in the Initiation Ritual amongst Xhosa-speakers

It is interesting to note that traditional circumcision is still the preferred method of circumcision when conducting the initiation ritual among Xhosa-speakers. This method of circumcision has not changed despite the availability of safe and hygienic medical alternatives. Traditional circumcision has shown its resilience against the influence of western cultural forms, education and urbanization. The question therefore is “why is it important to use traditional circumcision in conducting this ritual?”

1.3.2 Beliefs about Manhood

The initiation ritual among Xhosa-speakers is accompanied by certain beliefs about manhood. These beliefs are linked to the view that in order to be a man, one has to undergo traditional circumcision. If a male is circumcised in hospital or by a doctor, he is perceived as not being a real man. Therefore the cardinal issue is: “What beliefs do community members have about manhood?”

1.3.3 How the Initiation Ritual is Practised today among Xhosa-speakers

There are many changes that take place in society as time goes on. These changes influence the way the initiation ritual is being practised. For example, the presence of HIV/Aids and the hospitalisation of initiates both have an effect on the way the initiation ritual is practised. Therefore, it is necessary to collect updated information on how this ritual is practised today. That is, how does it take place, who is involved and what meanings are attached to it?

1.3.4 Controversy and Debate about Traditional Circumcision in the Eastern Cape

There are individuals and organisations that challenge the initiation ritual. Their concern is motivated by media reports about initiation tragedies. The ongoing repetition of these tragedies makes these challengers to be among the role players in the rite. Government and the media are the major players in challenging initiation.

The role of the media is to collect news and bring it to the people. A part of the media's responsibility is to investigate and expose certain issues. The initiation ritual is one of the topics that had been revealed to the public. This disclosure takes place despite the fact that initiation is a sacred rite, while its custodians insist on keeping it secret.

There is a conflict of interests between the media and the guardians of the initiation ritual. The media's viewpoint is that the public has a right to know about the malpractices that occur in the initiation school. For example, the ill-trained *ingcibis* inflict botched circumcision wounds on the initiates. On the opposite side, the leaders of the initiation rite become furious at the interference of their sacred rite by the media. They feel that the initiation is a private practice that should never be disclosed to the public. Thus, the relationship between the two camps becomes unavoidably contentious.

Government is another institution that imposes a challenge to the initiation ritual. Through observing the health and safety standards, as in the Eastern Cape in the media, traditionalists find government's intervention to be sacrilegious (see government policies below). In the light of these points, it is necessary

to expose the dispute between the guardians of the initiation ritual and those organisations and individuals that challenge this ritual.

1.3.5 Government Policies

The Xhosa initiation ritual today is accompanied by many problems that put initiates' health or life in danger. These include death and the hospitalisation of initiates due to medical complications that arise in the 'bush-school' (due to infection, or injury, of circumcision wounds). Because of these challenges, the government is intervening by regulating the procedure on how this ritual should be managed.

Hence the Circumcision Act of 2001 was adopted in South Africa (see document on the Circumcision Act 2001 in Appendices). Therefore, it is important to get details on how government gets involved in regulating this ritual.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are to achieve the following:

- 1.4.1 To provide an understanding of why it is significant that Xhosa-speaking boys should be circumcised in the traditional way.
- 1.4.2 To investigate the beliefs of Xhosa-speaking people about manhood and the reasons for orthodox Xhosa-speaking males to stigmatise "hospital-men".
- 1.4.3 To explore the controversy and debate around male circumcision in the Eastern Cape.
- 1.4.4 To explore the role that government plays in dealing with problems that they are faced with due to the ritual.

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

1.5.1 Research Design

This section is divided into three sub-sections. These are: a) Qualitative Research, b) Interviews, and c) Sampling.

a) Qualitative Research

As mentioned before, the type of research design that is used in this thesis is qualitative research. A qualitative research design is research that attempts to study human actions from the perspective of social actors themselves. Its primary goal is to describe and to understand human behaviour (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270). In the view of Newman (2000: 122) qualitative research is done in the language of cases and context. That is, in doing research, the emphasis is on getting a detailed examination of cases that arise in the course of social life.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 282) say that through this type of research researchers present a more authentic interpretation that is sensitive to specific social-historical contexts.

A qualitative research design was preferred for this study. The motivation is that it allows research participants to be observed in relation to the environment they live in. In this study participant observation was done in the 'bush-school'. The initiation ritual was observed together with the environment in which the initiates lived. In addition, the initiation ritual was studied in conjunction with the social, historical and economic conditions of Butterworth, Mnquma Local Municipality and the Eastern Cape.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) note that the unit of analysis in a case-study research is rarely isolated from the environment in which it exists. In order to understand and to interpret case studies, the researchers need to describe the contexts in detail. Observing a case study together with its background environment allows for a full understanding (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282). De Vos et al. (2003) also provide an input on this. They point out that a qualitative research project adopts the stance that no individual or group alone is ever only an individual or group. They imply that each case must be studied against the background of universal social experiences and processes. In another way, to study the particular, is to study the general. In qualitative research any case that is being studied has attributes of the universal (De Vos et al. 2003: 334).

Qualitative Research Design was preferred for this study due to the following reasons: i) The most suitable method of collecting data was done in a natural setting of social actors (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270). Putting it differently, it was best to observe the daily activities of the research participants in the 'bush-

school'. ii) Qualitative Research allows an understanding of social action in term of its specific context (instead of attempting to generalise to some theoretical population (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270).

In this study the focus was not just on the initiation ritual in Mchubakazi Township; instead, a variety of other factors were included. For example, government policies in monitoring initiation rituals, historical and economic aspects of Butterworth (Mnquma Local Municipality) and the Eastern Cape, Christianity (history) and its influence on initiation rituals, and the local people's views were considered in this study. In short, initiation rituals do not operate in isolation, they exist in a specific context. Many other factors come into action and influence them.

b) Interviews

A qualitative interview method was used in collecting data for the fieldwork. A combination of unstructured and semi-structured interviews was used. An unstructured interview is essentially a conversation. The interviewer establishes the general direction for the conversation. She/he does this while pursuing specific topics that are being raised by the respondent or that are listed (by him/her) beforehand.

This is more of an open interview that allows the object of study to speak for himself/herself, rather than through a battery of pre-determined questions (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 289). On the other hand, a semi-structured interview is useful when the researcher wants to gain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs about a particular topic.

It is also helpful when the topic of study is controversial and personal. In this type of interviewing, the researcher brings to the interview "a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule." These questions are basically used as a guide by the researcher, instead of being dictated by them (De Vos et al. 2003: 302).

The motivation for using qualitative interviews was that to collect qualitative data for this study, it was necessary to probe more deeply into people's beliefs and views about traditional circumcision and initiation rituals.

Open-ended interview questions were adopted with the aim of encouraging the participants to express their views more broadly while the researcher was guiding them to the relevant issues. This was a way of encouraging participants to express their views without limiting them to specific answers. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 233) note that these are questions whereby the respondent is asked to provide his/her own answers. De Vos et al. (2003) add that these types of questions allow participants to express themselves freely.

They note further that one of the advantages of using open-ended questions is that participants become free to finish what they say and proceed at their own rate of speaking and thinking. In regulating each interview, an 'interview guide' was used. De Vos et al. (2003: 297, 302) refer to this as a checklist to ensure that all relevant topics are covered. It becomes a guide in the process of conducting interviews. In this case, a list of interview questions was arranged in advance. The covered topics would be ticked off one by one as interviews went on.

De Vos et al. (2003) say that through this approach, the researcher is forced to plan ahead and to think explicitly about what the interview should cover. They argue further that this also encourages the researcher to predict the potential difficulties that might come up from the interviews, e.g. in terms of question wording or sensitive areas. This method allows the researcher to determine all the issues that should be tackled in the interviews.

In conjunction with the interview guide, information from the interviewees was documented by using field notes.

c) Sampling

In this research project a non-probability sampling method was used. This is a sampling method that does not require the subjects of the study to be chosen from a list (a list that contains the names of everyone in the population that is being studied). It is the opposite of a probability sampling, which involves the selection of a random sample from a list (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 166). The sampling method that was used in this thesis is a purposive or judgemental sampling.

This type of sampling is based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the aims of the research. It is based on the researcher's judgement and the purpose of the study (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 166). In the case of this study, I grew up in the town (Butterworth) where the research took place. As a result, I have an understanding of its population dynamics, the social, cultural, and political aspects. This is a valuable experience that became useful in conducting this research.

1.5.2 The Research Process

This section deals with the process that was followed in collecting data for the research. Before going into the details of this process, it is necessary to first discuss the issue of access to respondents: How did I reach the people in the research areas?

Various research tools were used which included individual interviews (with community members and representatives of organisations), focus group interviews and participant observation. At the end of this section, there is a discussion on the timeframe, i.e. "How much time did I spend on the fieldwork and how did I organise it?"

In addition, it is worth mentioning that I received the support of a research assistant during this study. The research assistant was a Xhosa-speaking male, who had gone through this rite himself the traditional way. At the time of doing the research, he was a teacher by profession and was aged about 37 years. He was known by the community members where the fieldwork took place (as he used to stay in the area before).

a) Access to Respondents

i) Individual Interviews with Community Members

In terms of data gathering, it was not difficult to get participants for this study. Many people were walking up and down the streets, while others remained in their homes. Respondents were approached at random and asked for interviews. Sometimes interviews were made by appointment, whenever necessary. The people in this community were curious about what we were doing, as we (researchers) were carrying documents walking up and down the streets. Some people would even ask us "Why are you carrying

documents during the December summer holiday?” Other participants referred us to potential interviewees while some volunteered themselves to participate in the research.

ii) Individual Interviews with Representatives of Organisations

It was not difficult to make contact with representatives of organisations. One often happened to be in the right place at the right time. In other words, one visited the organisations’ offices when representatives were available. Fortunately, they were willing to participate in the interviews. The offices that were visited were the SAPS (South African Police Service) and the DoH (Department of Health). These were the ones monitoring initiation activities during the time of this study.

iii) Focus Group Interviews

As with the representatives of organisations, I experienced no difficulty in gaining access to focus groups. The study used four focus groups. The first and the second interviews took place in the initiation school. Access to research was already granted by the custodians of the school. Therefore, to put people together into groups was not a difficult project. The third group took place in the township in the house that was going to have an *umgidi* on the following day. Concerning the fourth group, I invited participants to the house where I was staying. No difficulties were experienced in getting them together.

I was able to visit ‘bush men’ and was lucky to find them sitting together with other men. As a formality, permission was requested in order to do the focus group interview. Additional men in the nearby area were requested to join.

iv) Participant Observation

Gaining access to the initiation school was not difficult due to certain advantages that I had. These advantages made it possible to do participant observation. That is, I stayed in a house that was located close to the school. The walking distance from this house to the school was not more than five minutes. I spoke the same language as that of the interviewees. Therefore, there was no need to have a translator. I had undergone the rite myself (the traditional way), which earned me the necessary respect from the ‘bush

men.’ Further, Butterworth is where I grew up. I grew up in the Mchubakazi Township (in another section of Butterworth) and attended school there from primary grades to matric.

Interestingly, two men in this school could remember me from my school days. This became an opportunity to gain access to the school. In addition, the support from the research assistant made such access even easier, as he was known to most of the men there.

Despite these advantages, I still had to first receive permission from the people who were involved in this ritual. During the first visit (first day) at the school, myself and the research assistant did not have a problem about getting access to start our observations. We just approached the first initiation hut we came across and requested permission to begin research. The research on that day included interviewing two initiates and their traditional nurse. Permission to do so was asked from the traditional nurse as he was in charge of the two initiates. Subsequently, interviews were done with the two initiates and the traditional nurse, while observations of the hut and its surroundings were also noted.

During the second and third visit/day, permission to continue with research was not easily granted. On both days, we came across a group of men in this school. These men were sitting in the shade as it was very hot and smoking dagga. When visiting on both days, we had to explain the purpose of our visit. It was necessary to do so, because the group on each day comprised some new people (men) who were not present the previous day. In terms of giving us permission to proceed, the ‘bush men’ were willing to do so but felt the need to ensure that we did not expose the secrets of this school to the public. Their concern was disclosed through different questions:

“What is it that you want to know about this ritual?”

“Are you not linked to the media?”

“What issues do you want to focus on?”

We as researchers were only allowed to continue after these men were happy that the secrets of the school would not be revealed. That is, they were convinced that the focus of the study would not deal with the circumcision wound. Instead, it would be based on the social and cultural elements of this rite. Afterwards, we became daily visitors to this school in order to continue our research.

b) Individual Interviews: Community Members

An individual interview is a means of data collection that involves interviewing individual participants. The target group for this research included the community members in Mchubakazi Township, Butterworth. The total number of interviewees was 18 (11 males and seven females). Of the males, there were three educated people, and eight less-educated individuals. In terms of age groups, three were elders, three were middle-aged men (*amadoda*) and five were young men (*abafana*). One the females, there were two educated individuals and five less-educated individuals. There were two elderly, one middle-aged (*umana*) and four young women (*iintombi*).

Each interview consisted of one to three participants per session. In organising interviews for community members, there was a process that had to be followed. This included creating convenience for them and to ensure that they were willing participants. The date, time and venue were organised according to their needs. Simultaneously, this arrangement was organised to serve the interests of the researchers. The participants' localities became the interview venues (homes and the 'bush-school').

On the timeframe per interview, one did not put restrictions on the maximum and minimum amount of time spent on each respondent. Each participant was allowed to take as much time as he/she wished until there was no more information to give.

c) Individual Interviews: Representatives of Organisations

There were two organisations involved in regulating the initiation rituals in Butterworth. These were the local DoH and the SAPS. Interviews were conducted with representatives of these organisations. These representatives were approached at random without any appointments being made to see them (see access to respondents, 1.5.2 (a)). I visited each of these offices and was lucky to find the relevant officers available and willing to participate in the interviews. Documents that were relevant to this study were requested from these representatives. I received copies from the DoH, i.e. application forms for registration of initiation schools and and forms for boys to undergo circumcision, that is the consent forms for initiates, parents and *iingcibi*.

d) Focus Group Interviews

De Vos et al. (2003) discuss this as a form of data gathering that involves group interviews. They argue that the participants in the interview are selected because they have certain characteristics in common. These characteristics relate to the topic of the focus group. This group is studied because it involves some kind of collective activity. The use of focus groups involves collecting data through group interaction on a particular topic that is determined by the researcher.

This type of interviewing has its own advantages. It is useful when multiple viewpoints are required on a specific topic. This enables information to be obtained in a shorter period of time than with individual interviews (De Vos et al. 2003: 305-306). It also brings forward discussions and debates between participants. For the purpose of this study, four focus group interviews were conducted. The first three groups consisted of men only, while the fourth group consisted of females as well.

i) The First Group: Males

This focus group was not planned; it took place in the first week of the study. The two researchers were just visiting the 'bush-school' to conduct individual interviews and for some participant observation. In the 'bush-school' there was a man who was willing to participate in the research. Because it was a hot day, he took us to a certain spot that had shade (for sitting) in order to do the interview. To our surprise, we came across a group of eight men sitting together in the shade, and smoking dagga (as noted before). They were curious about a variety of issues: "Who are these people?" "Why are they carrying documents when they come to this school?" "What is their purpose here?" After we explained the reason for our presence in this territory, they became willing to participate. This group consisted of three *udodana* (men) and five *abafana* (young men).

ii) The Second Group: Males

This focus group also took place in the 'bush-school'. This second focus group (nine participants), together with the third focus group was conducted only by me without the help of the research assistant. The second group consisted of 'men-of-the-bush' and initiates. There were four men and five initiates.

iii) The Third Group: Males

This focus group took place in the township, in a house where the 'coming-out ceremony' was going to take place (the following day). Firstly, I was visiting 'men-of-the-bush', only to find that they were not in the veld but were gathered in this house. Therefore, I left the veld and tried to find the house where they were. They were found at the back of this house next to the kraal. It was a group of ten men, diverse in terms of age and educational level. There were three elderly men, one middle-aged man, four young men and two graduates. These graduates were more educated as they had already finished their Matric.

iv) The Fourth Group: Females

This group consisted of seven females. There were three middle-aged women, three young women and one girl. In this group there were three educated people and four less-educated.

e) Participant Observation

Participant observation is a data-gathering method whereby a researcher is an inside observer of the population that is being studied. The researcher collects his/her data while she/he is simultaneously a member or a guest of a group he/she is studying (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 293). In this study, two initiation ceremonies (*imigidi*) were attended and the 'bush-school' was visited.

Before beginning the research, it became necessary to request the consent of the people involved (in this rite) and to fully explain the aims of the study. It is also worth noting the procedure that is used by Xhosa-speaking people when conducting their traditional functions. To them, guests need not ask for permission to attend these (including the initiation ceremonies). Instead, any member of the community may attend even without being given a formal invitation.

Throughout the ritual process I was an active participant in the activities of the ritual as required, like anybody else. Simultaneously, I would be writing down notes whenever it was possible to do so (e.g. right next to the participants). The process of writing and participating made people (those who were observed)

curious about what I was doing. They wanted to know why I was writing down notes. I explained to them that it was fieldwork for my Master's degree. Afterwards, it was noted that they felt able to go back to their activities in the rite.

With regard to participating and observing, the fieldwork involved more observation and less participation. In order to document valuable data, it became necessary to focus on gathering notes based on observation. That is, to keep on watching what people were doing, and then write down the observations immediately. Participation took place when the need arose. For example, drinking traditional beer when other men were also drinking, being part of the conversation where people were talking, etc.

Because participant observation was conducted mostly in the 'bush-school', it is necessary to provide a brief background to the initiation huts that were used. The study was done in the initiation huts of Mchubakazi Township in Butterworth, Eastern Cape. These huts are made of black plastic material. They are located next to each other in a scattered manner, in no specific order. The area in which they stood was a green bushveld next to a semi-forest. Because it was during summer, the grass in the veld was long and green. In viewing these huts from the distance, they looked like a village in the veld. These initiation huts were located in the veld that is next to the township. The township and these initiation huts were separated by a road that joins different townships, namely, Mchubakazi, Cuba and Ibika. Next to this road there was a railway line that ran parallel to it. Other roads that were close to these initiation huts were the national road (that joins Idutywa and Butterworth), and the side road that branched off from the national road into Mchubakazi township (see the map in appendices).

At the time of visiting the 'bush-school' there were seven initiation huts. This was during the first week of December 2006. In these huts there were nine initiates. Two of these huts contained two initiates, while the other five contained one initiate per hut. We were told that there were 36 initiation huts in the area in the middle of November 2006. They decreased as time went by due to the graduation of initiates.

By the end of the day, on 31 December 2006, there were only two initiation huts left. For these two remaining huts, the 'coming out ceremonies' (for the two boys) were scheduled as follows: 06 January 2007 for the first boy, and 15 January 2007 for the second one.

f) Time Frame for Conducting the Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted over a period of six weeks. It started on Monday 04 December 2006 and went on until Friday 12 January 2007. For three weeks, including the last week, the fieldwork was conducted with the help of a research assistant. During this period, myself and the research assistant did participant observation and individual interviews together. The time schedule for this study follows below:

Week 1 is the week that involved myself and the research assistant doing data collection together. We started with participant observation in the initiation huts. The first step was to visit the 'bush-school'. The aim was to familiarise ourselves with the environment of this school. Furthermore, we wanted to introduce ourselves to the participants in the school and to start doing observation immediately. As we were visiting, we also got an opportunity to do a focus group interview. It was not planned, but developed spontaneously out of this process.

The activities of week 2 were a mixture of participant observation and individual interviews (with community members). Half of this week was spent on participant observation, while the other half was used for individual interviews. All this was done based on convenience and followed no specific order.

After each interview or observation, we had to write our field notes. This was done immediately afterwards (this applies to the entire study). This process of writing the draft notes was a challenge. We had to first discuss what was observed and gained from the interviews, and then write down our findings. The amount of time that was spent on discussion and note-taking amounted to 1 to 2½ hours per interview or observation. This was basically the time span followed in taking draft notes and writing the main document.

This procedure was applied throughout the fieldwork. In asking questions in the interviews, we used 'research topics' to guide us (see the research topics in appendix). In doing participant observation, we drafted guidelines on what to observe (see appendix). In addition, we had to note if there were any additional points of interest that required inclusion. Most of the individual interviews lasted for about 30 minutes, while the focus groups took about 1½ hours.

During week 3 the research activities were almost the same as those in week 2. That is, we did participant observation and individual interviews. Observations included attending two 'coming out ceremonies' and visiting a 'bush-school'. The interviews consisted of interviewing men in the initiation school.

From week 4 onwards, the fieldwork was conducted without the research assistant. At this stage one was happy to do it by oneself. At least by now one was familiar with the majority of the men in the 'bush-school'. In fact, most of the activities that required the services of the research assistant had been covered by then. The activities of this week involved doing participant observation in the initiation huts and an interview with the SAPS in Butterworth. One spent most of one's time interacting with 'bush men' in the veld.

At this stage, there were only three initiation huts left, as most of the boys had already graduated. In comparison with the earlier weeks, the interviews of this week were conducted on a less formal basis. That is, data were collected by holding general conversations with 'bush men', then writing notes later at home. For convenience, one carried a small writing pad in one's pocket. It was much easier to conduct this research at that time, as all these men were familiar with me.

During week 5 there was more writing that took place, as a continuation from the previous week. The data-gathering method involved interviewing officials from the Department of Health. Observation in the 'bush-school' also continued, at least twice this week. Lastly, the focus group for men was conducted.

Week 6 was the last week of fieldwork. There was only one initiation hut left. It consisted of one initiate who was waiting for his 'coming-out ceremony' to take place on the 15th of January 2007. The focus group which consisted of women was also conducted. The research assistant was asked to come back for his services. He helped in organising the focus group and taking notes. In addition, the process of writing down ideas and developing a theoretical understanding continued.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

In this research, coding (open coding) was used as a method of doing initial data analysis. Before going into details about coding in the study, it is necessary to first explain it. Coding involves creating certain

categories that relate to segments of a text. Each of these categories has dimensions, properties and consequences (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 499). Babbie and Mouton go on by giving an example of coding a phrase, “I stared at this sudden apparition with my eyes fairly starting out of my head in astonishment.” In this context the word ‘astonishment’ may be used for coding this phrase. They also note that this category has various properties, such as intensity, duration and so forth (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 499), coding (in qualitative research) involves two procedures. That is, asking questions and making comparisons. They argue that coding begins when taking a segment of a text and labeling it according to a meaningful category (a code). This is done through asking certain questions as you are looking at a particular segment of a text. For example, “What is this?” or “What does this represent?” They say that after getting answers to these questions, the researcher can proceed and compare other segments of the text. The aim of this exercise is to find those segments that have similar answers to the questions.

With regard to coding, data analysis was conducted as follows: Firstly, the research topics (see appendix) were used as a framework to begin data analysis. After gathering data, similarities were identified in the responses. Topics were created based on the categories of similar responses. In addition, certain sections developed into sub-sections. Secondly, much extra information that was also relevant in the study came up. This information became a building block in developing a grounded theory for this study.

Concerning sources of data, the study made use of primary and secondary sources. The former consist of data that were collected by me in person. The latter refer to the use of literature that was relevant to the research topic. Primary data relate to the research methodology discussed in section 1.5.2. On the other hand, secondary data refer to document study, as discussed in section 1.5.4.

1.5.4 Document Study

This form of research includes reading and analysing a variety of documents that are relevant to the study, which are:

a) Academic Books and Journals

These are academic pieces of literature on initiation rituals, male circumcision, socio-cultural, economic and political issues that relate to this topic. They are found in academic libraries.

b) Mass Media Documents

This type of documentation includes information that is freely available to the public and individuals. These are newspaper articles, magazines, television, etc. (De Vos et al. 2003: 324). In this thesis, the newspaper articles, journal articles and news readings from the Internet were used. Newspaper articles and Internet readings were valuable in writing the section on controversy and debate around this ritual..

c) Official Documents from Organisations

These were documents that were maintained on a continuous basis by big organisations, e.g. government and NGOs. They were more structured and formal in nature. Examples include minutes and agendas of meetings, financial reports, annual reports and so on (De Vos et al. 2003: 303-324). For the purpose of this research, documents on interventions in initiation rituals were used, i.e. circumcision laws.

1.5.5 Shortcomings, Sources of Error and Limitations of This Research

My knowledge of this ritual sometimes limited me in digging more deeply into certain issues. I found myself just accepting certain ideas as they came up, without questioning them further. I would realize later-on (when writing) that I could have probed more deeply into a particular issue. For example, a traditional nurse may say “An initiate should eat food without salt for the first eight days”. Because I knew the reason for this, I would not ask for an explanation on this point. Perhaps many more points would have come up if one had dug deeper. The process of digging deeply would have resulted in additional information that could enrich the quality of the data.

Moreover, being a Xhosa-speaker while studying this ritual could create a bias in regard to the data being presented (to the reader of this thesis). That is, there is always a possibility of being protective of this ritual

and the cultural ritual that is practised by Xhosa-speaking people. That is, the danger of not representing data fully and objectively. One could hide what reflects negatively about this rite, and use more information that is positive. This kind of protection creates the risk of compromising the quality of the data collected.

In terms of the timeframe, one soon realised that a period of six weeks was not long enough to do this study. It takes time to do participant observation, to conduct interviews, to do follow-up work (interviews and participant observation) and to write down field notes. It took more than one and a half hours to write up each of the draft sets of notes that were collected, per single interview or observation.

As a result, I managed to interview only 18 people (individual interviews) within the six-week period. One difficult part of the research was to pretend one did not know the ritual, in order to gain new knowledge about it. One had to ask information about issues that seemed obvious. It was feared that this kind of asking could create doubt about one's own manhood status. For example, some men could have thought that I had not undergone the initiation ritual myself, and that I therefore should not be allowed to visit the school again. Fortunately, there were men who happened to know me in the school; therefore this was not a problem.

It was also difficult and an awkward situation to be writing down notes, while other people were celebrating around me. The celebratory mood of people made it difficult to focus. The environment was also not comfortable for writing, as there were no tables and chairs.

Some women looked uncomfortable when responding to the research topic. They felt that this research topic was a male domain, and not one for women. We explained to them the purpose of the study and the significance of getting a diversity of views. That is, that there was a need to include both men and women, young and old, educated and the less educated.

1.6 Overview of Chapters and Their Logic

This section brings forward a summary of the content of each chapter in this study. Chapter One has already been discussed in the introduction (refer to sub-section 1.1).

Chapter Two begins with a definition of concepts. That is, it elaborates on concepts that are not used in the common language. This discussion proceeds to theories of initiation rituals across cultural settings in the world. Authors from whose work views are drawn are: Van Gennep (1960), Hammond-Tooke (1974), Victor Turner (1967), Rasing (1995), Birx (2006), and Cox (1998). The idea is to develop a general understanding of initiation rituals, across cultural groups in the world.

In addition, various topics that relate to these theories are discussed. These are: a) the meaning of symbols in rituals, b) initiation rituals and gender, c) initiation rituals create boundaries, d) the role of circumcision in decreasing HIV/AIDS, e) the link of rituals to power, authority and 'communitas', and f) traditional circumcision in relation to human rights.

Chapter Three deals with the theoretical views on initiation rituals as they relate to Xhosa-speaking people. The topics that are discussed are: a) controversy about traditional circumcision, b) initiation among Xhosa-speaking people and HIV/AIDS, c) social pressure to undergo traditional circumcision, d) initiation rituals and physical pain and gender (masculinity), e) the link of initiation rituals to power, authority and 'communitas', f) initiation rituals and building a homestead, g) initiation rituals and their role in creating boundaries, and initiation rituals and Christianity.

Chapters Four and Five focus on the results of the fieldwork. The topics that are discussed are: a) a discussion of manhood, b) results of interviews on manhood, c) personal observations about the 'journey towards manhood', d) *Umphumo*: A case study of Wanda and Nko, e) Controversy and debate about traditional circumcision in the Eastern Cape and, f) Government policies on initiation rituals.

Chapter Six contains a summary of the findings that arose out of the fieldwork. A discussion of findings takes place. This chapter also looks at the relationship between literature (theory) that has been used (in Chapters 2 & 3), and the findings of this study. It also focuses on the recommendations that are proposed in this study.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter is a point of departure for the rest of the thesis. It is a map that guides in reading this document. It gives the background and the purpose of this research. This is also the chapter that provides information regarding the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 2: INITIATION RITUALS IN THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The discussion of the literature is divided into two chapters (2 and 3). The first deals with the literature on initiation rituals in general. This refers to initiation rites across the world. The second focuses on initiation rituals in the context of Xhosa-speaking people. Each of these literature discussions is long; hence the discussion is divided into two chapters.

This chapter begins with a definition of concepts, that are not part of everyday language. The next part is a discussion of the literature. The discussion of the literature is organised around three theories (which are covered in sections 2.3. to 2.4.).

The first theory is that of Van Gennep (1960), whose focus is on the three phases of initiation rituals (see section 2.3). The second is that of Victor Turner (1967), who discusses the symbolism of the liminal phase (see section 2.4.2). The third theory is that of David Hammond-Tooke (1975) (in section 2.4.3). He talks about the significance of space when symbolising certain aspects of people's lives. The following sections (2.5 to 2.10) are organised into themes. Each of the themes includes the views of various writers (including Victor Turner and David Hammond-Tooke).

2.2 Defining Concepts

As indicated, the study makes use of terms that are not familiar in common language. Therefore, the aim of this section is to define those terms and give examples where this is necessary. This section covers the following topics: Initiation Rituals, Male Circumcision, Tradition and Culture.

2.2.1 Initiation Rituals

Initiation rituals are defined as events that are performed in a community in order to mark the passage into a new stage in the life of an individual. These events have a social meaning and are accompanied by

symbolic acts (Rasing 1995: 34). Davies (1994: 1) says an initiation ritual is a process that accompanies the movement of people from one social status to another. Such a movement could involve a change from being a boy to a man or from being a married woman to a mother. These rituals are also called 'rites of passage' or 'initiation rites'. Birx (2006) adds that rites of passage are done to mark the transition from one stage of life to another. That is, from birth to death and even afterwards. These rites signify changes in individuals' lives, while confirming their identity and status in the community. Through these rituals individuals are taken from one state of physical and social being to a higher one (Birx 2006: 2013). Examples of these rites are: the installation of a king, the passage from being an unmarried woman to a married woman, and so on.

Grimes (2000: 104-105) elaborates by saying that there are different kinds of rites and each of them emphasises different moments. For example, funerals are rites of separation, weddings and births are rites of incorporation, while initiations are rites of transition. As a rite of transition, the male initiation ritual includes a boy being taken away from his village (separation), and placed in a secluded area. In this area he goes through the hardship of learning about manhood (transition). Eventually, this boy is taken back from the secluded area to his community. This is where he is conferred the adult male status (incorporation).

Moreover, through initiation rituals, boy and girl children are transformed into young adults. They are transferred from conventional space into ritual space and back again. They step over a threshold by making use of a ceremony, into a symbolic (heated) situation beyond the routine. In this ritual space, some infantile being within them must die, before they can actually become adults. In the case of boys, initiation rituals are generally conducted by older men. These older men facilitate the transformation from children into young adults. They help boys to move from their mothers' world into their fathers' world. In this instance, men are the ones who create a second birth for boys, from being a boy into a man. This implies that a woman can change an embryo to a boy, but it takes a man to change a boy into a man (Pinnock 1997: 18-19). In another way, to undergo an initiation ritual is like dying and then being born again.

In short, various writers have different definitions of the concept of the initiation ritual. Despite all this, they imply the same thing. That is, an initiation ritual is a rite that facilitates transformation from one state to another. Through this rite, boys and girls are changed from being children into adults. This rite dictates

that a boy/girl must throw away his/her previous life of childhood and adopt a new life, that of becoming an adult.

2.2.2 Male Circumcision

Circumcision is a surgical process that involves cutting off the foreskin of a man's penis (Allen 1990). This has been ritualistically practised by a wide variety of people in the olden days, as well as by people in modern days throughout the world. Circumcision took place in Asia, northern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, southern Africa, America, Europe, Australia and Polynesia. It operates on two levels, that of the sacred and that of the secular level. Sacred circumcision is compulsory; the secular aspect is elective. The supporters of sacred circumcision deny its health benefit, and claim it to be a religious ritual instead. In other words, they may claim a health benefit as an associated benefit. In contrast, those who practice secular circumcision deny its religious connotations; instead they claim the health benefits (Lightfoot-Klein 1989: 184-185). This discussion will focus on two examples, i.e. male circumcision of Jews and Muslims.

a) The Jewish Circumcision

According to Jewish people, circumcision is a ritual process that is performed on every male who is eight days old, although on the eighth day this is not always possible. The Jews view circumcision as a sign of adherence to the Jewish tradition and the covenant sworn between God and themselves. To them circumcision does not necessarily imply cleanliness and health. Instead it is hallowed as a religious act that builds a contract between God and His chosen people (Aldeeb Abu-Sahliem 2001: 48). Furthermore, according to the biblical Old Testament covenant, God commanded Abraham and his descendants to observe the practice of performing circumcision on every male amongst them. Every baby boy is faith-bound to be circumcised as soon as he is eight days old (as noted above). This procedure would apply even to those slaves born in Jewish homes or those slaves brought to them by foreigners (Bible. Genesis 2004: 16).

b) Muslim Circumcision

To Muslims, male circumcision started as a practice long before the birth of Mohammed. It has a hygienic and purification connotation to them. They practise circumcision with less religious formalities, compared to the Jews and Xhosa-speakers. However, their circumcision is sometimes accompanied by great festivities. The male circumcision of the Muslims involves cutting the foreskin so that the glans can be uncovered. If the part which has been cut seems to be insufficient, it may be necessary to re-do it. In addition, if the foreskin happens to grow after circumcision it may be necessary to cut it again (Aldeeb Abu-Sahliem 2001: 133-134).

2.2.3 Tradition and Culture

Because circumcision and initiation rituals are often linked in discussions to culture and tradition, it is necessary to give a brief discussion of these two concepts.

a) Tradition

A tradition is a process of transferring ideas, conventions and practices repeatedly, which are needed by people in social interactions. By doing this, culture is passed across generations. The assumption about tradition is that it is age old and has been unchanging since its inception. One element of tradition is that it is vague about time. It implies a boundless timelessness which stretches beyond recorded history, for example the phrase ‘traditional hunter gatherers’. At the same time, there is a possibility that tradition may have been created quite recently. Therefore, it is not easy to qualify ideas or practices as being traditional or not. This is because “one cannot specify that these ideas and practices must have existed for a specific period or a number of generations” (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 40-41).

i) Perspectives on Tradition in the Past

Traditions are assumed to be “caused by traditionalists or conservative thinking” (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 41). They are also linked mostly to certain population groups and specific geographic areas. For example, Zulu-speaking people in KwaZulu-Natal are thought to be traditional. Spiegel and Boonzaier

(1988: 41) point out that this was the “aspect that formed the key element in the use of tradition in the dominant political discourse in South Africa”. During the apartheid years in South Africa, this term was part of the political argument. The argument was that Africans are “still traditional in outlook and can therefore not be incorporated into the Western (white) political system” (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 41).

The idea of Africans being traditional was exploited by the apartheid government “to mystify the crucial political and economic processes” (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 42). This resulted in the inequality gap between black and white people of South Africa. The former became underprivileged, whilst the latter gained more privileges. The need for separate traditions therefore justified the economic and social development of the white minority, while the black majority was excluded from access to the main economy.

Furthermore, the 20th century anthropologists had indicated that traditional beliefs and practices were a rational response to wider political and economic constraints. The example of Lesotho is used to elaborate this point. Historically, Lesotho experienced many years of underdevelopment, which resulted in it becoming almost totally dependent on export of labour to South Africa. This situation resulted in men being absent from their homes for a long time (e.g. two years). Their aim was to earn wages (which were minimal) by means of finding work in the mines. Within this context, the tradition of paying bride-wealth was maintained. That is, it involved a man having to pay bride-wealth to his fiancé’s family prior to him marrying her. This bride-wealth therefore, became a mechanism by which migrants were investing in the long-term security of their rural social system. Furthermore, relatives in rural areas also gained an opportunity to make monetary claims on the men who worked in the mines. For example, a team of delegates during lobola negotiations expected to be compensated with money (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 47).

ii) Tradition Today

Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) argue that tradition changes as does everything else in a society. They acknowledge that people may recognise the changes that have taken place. The people assume that “where there is some resemblance to earlier forms, the new forms still represent continuity with the past” (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 47). In other words, a natural process of adapting to changed circumstances takes

place. For example, Santa Claus has been incorporated into today's traditional Christmas. Another example is the change in the role that was played by a chief (*morena*) in Qwaqwa. During the 19th century, a chief was a political leader whose authority was based on his ability to maintain his followers' loyalty. Furthermore, he would assume his position by strength of his lineage. Lineage in this context refers to the accepted custom and belief that one is born a chief. Normally, a man becomes a chief if his deceased biological father was a chief (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 48). However, the role and source of authority for a chief has changed over time. His responsibility places him in the role of "bureaucratic administrator, rather than that of being an autonomous legislator and mediator. In addition, a chief is an appointee of a central government. His role includes having to pay attention to the wishes of those whom he leads" (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 49).

iii) The Resilience of Tradition

Certain traditional practices seem to be resilient to changes that happen in the society, for example, initiation rituals and African traditional healing. Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) note that at the dawn of modernisation in certain parts of the world, there was an assumption that education in general and scientific training specifically would wipe out traditional beliefs widely held in African countries. This means, "as the western type of education grows in Africa, people will distinguish between true knowledge and superstitious beliefs" (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 43).

It is interesting to note that beliefs about certain traditional practices and ideas gained popularity instead. For example, in South Africa today, there are still population groups that practice traditional circumcision. Also, a large number of black African people still prefer diviners to cure certain illnesses.

To sum up, tradition may look as if it is continuous, but in fact the customs associated with it are changing. Furthermore, tradition seems to be controversial, especially since there are differences of opinion in populations about which customs should be retained and how adaptation to new conditions should happen. The strength of certain practices that are upheld as traditional need to be explained in terms of why they continue to be so resilient.

b) Culture

The concept of culture may be defined as “learned adapted symbolic behaviour which is based on a fully fledged language associated with technical inventiveness” (Skelton and Allen 1999: 2). It is also perceived as being a complex of skills that in turn depends on a capacity to organise exchange relationships between communities (Skelton and Allen 1999: 4).

i) The Old Meaning of Culture

According to plural and relativistic theories, the world is divided into many cultures, where each of them is valuable. The argument is that an individual human being is a product of the culture where he or she has lived. Therefore, the differences between human beings can be explained (but not judged) in terms of differences in their cultures (Skelton and Allen 1999: 3).

Thornton (1988: 25) talks about ideas that are confused and not contributing to a useful understanding of culture. He refers to ideology about cultures and organisms. He says these ideas have influenced each other in the development of evolution theories (both biological and cultural). He goes on to say that these ideas support the view that nations are endowed with unique cultures. Therefore, these cultures must be protected in order to preserve society. Largely, these ideas have been used to justify repressive and brutal forms of government. They (these ideas) are used to argue that each culture or nation must defend itself against internal and external enemies, just like organisms do (Thornton 1988: 9).

This ideology (of cultural differences and the defending of one culture against another) was dominant in South Africa during the apartheid years. For example, there was a cultural divide amongst mine workers who were sharing hostels in Johannesburg. These hostels were inhabited by people from a diversity of cultural categories. There were the Zulu people, the Shangaan people, the Xhosa-speaking people, and people from the neighbouring countries. Amongst these categories of people, violence often occurred. It was linked to cultural issues, caused by competition in a situation of alienation. For example, some people would claim that other people were less intelligent (in comparison with them), while Xhosa-speaking men would claim that Zulu males are boys since they are uncircumcised.

Furthermore, the apartheid South African government used the idea of culture to locate people in segregated areas for specific agendas. For example, Xhosa-speaking people were placed in the Transkei and Ciskei, the Zulu people in KwaZulu-Natal, the Coloured people in the Western Cape, and so on. This was that government's approach towards pursuing its political interests. In the apartheid policy the aim was to encourage 'separate development'.

The idea of placing people in segregated areas is not different from the view that culture is unique and bounded. In other words, it is associated with a single society or nation that is unchanging. This view was common in the past. In writing about culture, anthropologists were initially focusing more on people who lived in remote areas, such as islands, or areas that were isolated from others by forests or mountains. This concept of isolation would also be visible even when they wrote about people who were not isolated. The isolation was indicated by the titles they used in their books, which were suggestive of physical isolation. Examples of such titles are: *The Life of a South African Tribe* (Junod 1912), *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* (Schapera 1937), etc. (Thornton 1988: 22).

To sum up, it has been generally accepted that culture belongs to specific population groups which live in certain geographical areas. This perception continues to the extent of having to say that people are born with specific cultures. Therefore, they are expected to protect their culture against other cultures who might want to dilute it or take it away. Even anthropologists have contributed in perpetuating this ideology. In their writings (for example), they would present certain populations (that chose to practise a particular culture) as being something that is located in a specific place and belonging exclusively to certain people.

ii) The New Meaning of Culture

In addition to the previous perspective, Skelton and Allen (1999: 4) argue against the view that culture is fixed, coherent or natural. Instead they view it as being dynamic and changing over a period of time and space. Therefore, their view on culture is that it is a product of ongoing human interaction.

Furthermore, each culture is unique because of its group's response to environmental conditions and their specific historical developments. Thus, it is a product of history and social forces. It is not attributed to people's biological characteristics. Putting it differently, cultural identities are not "inherent, bounded or

static” (Wright 1998: 8-9). Instead, they are dynamic, fluid and are created situationally in certain places and times (Wright 1998: 8-9).

Thornton (1988: 25) supports this view when he discusses the evolution of culture. He argues that cultural resources are controlled and limited in many different ways, by social and environmental factors. Hence culture changes. He notes, culture evolves over a very long term. He says evidence for evolution is indicated by the resources that are used by people to cope with each other and with their environment. These resources go through a dramatic evolution “from simple stone and wooden implements, primitive drawings and simpler languages (although there are no records or evidence of these now) to the complex forms we see everywhere today” (Thornton 1988: 25).

Thornton claims that culture is a resource. He views it as a resource that is similar to sunlight, energy, air and food. Therefore, he says it cannot belong exclusively to any particular individual or group of individuals. He says all individuals and groups “must have access to at least some of these resources to survive”. His argument is that culture is a resource (information) which human beings are not born with. It is an essential resource that facilitates people’s interaction with each other in their social life. He says culture must be available for people to learn it during the long “process of education, socialization, maturing and growing old” (Thornton 1988: 24).

In short, culture is not something people are born with. They learn it in that particular environment where they live at a certain time. It changes as time goes on. Culture is a resource that is similar to information. Different population groups who live in the same environment need this resource in order to interact with one another.

2.3 The Three Phases of Initiation Rituals

This section will be based on Van Gennep’s (1960) three phases of initiation rituals. These are, the phase of separation, the phase of transition and the phase of incorporation. The views of Hammond-Tooke (1974), plus additional authors will also be used to elaborate this discussion. The order of this discussion includes initiation in general, followed by initiation in South Africa.

2.3.1 The Phase of Separation

The initiation ritual involves a boy being removed from the community. He is then taken to a specific place where initiation takes place. This is a process that has procedures with symbolic meanings (Pinnock 1997: 19). Pinnock notes that the phase of separation is usually dramatic in nature and involves procedures that are noticeably different from those of everyday life. Rasing (1995: 5) adds that this phase is characterised by symbolic behaviour that represents the detachment of an individual from his earlier phase of belonging within the social community.

In the words of Van Gennep (1960), the first activity in the initiation ritual is the separation of a novice from his previous environment, the world of women and children. This separation includes placing him in a special space, usually a secluded area in the bush. It may appear to be an experience of sadness, as a boy may be taken away from his mother violently, while his mother weeps. The aim of this process is to bring about a momentous change in a boy's life, while a connection with his mother is being broken off.

The idea is to create a new life of adulthood for a boy, whereby he will be attached to men instead of women. This separation involves the cutting away of all games and sports he used to play; now he has to assume the duties and responsibilities of being an adult (Van Gennep 1960: 74 -75).

Hammond-Tooke (1974: 229-230) notes that the ritual of separation is characterised by symbolic acts which signify the separation of an initiate from his previous environment. He says that among the Pedi, Tlokwa, Venda, Tsonga and Bomvana, the symbolic acts include boys' heads being shaved. On the other hand, the South Sothos and Bomvanas perform a ritual killing and a feast. These acts mark a separation from the previous environment. Hammond-Tooke argues further, to those people who practise circumcision, this operation is what finally separates a boy from his childhood life.

2.3.2 The Phase of Transition

During this phase, a novice has been removed from the community and stays in a secluded area (usually in the veld). In this area, he is taught the principles of being an adult. However, he lives in an in-between stage. According to Rasing (1995: 37), an initiated male no longer falls into the category of boys, and is not

yet classified in the category of men. He is not a boy because he has gone through circumcision. He is also not a man as he has not yet taken all the necessary steps towards becoming a man (in the initiation school).

Birx (2006), talks about the 'Liminal Phase'. He says it is characterised by the radical separation of a person being transformed. This person enters into an intermediate state whereby he is neither a student nor a graduate, neither a child nor an adult, not married nor unmarried. He does not belong in the previous life of being a child, while he does not yet belong to the new life of adult people.

Furthermore, a transition phase is characterised by the dramatic reversal of ordinary behaviour. This means that an initiate adopts a specific behaviour that is appropriate to this phase. This sometimes involves symbolic violence and exaggerated humour. For example, he may use a specific language, whilst dressing in a certain manner. The aim is to make him/her to step outside of the normal society and socialised frameworks in order to alter his social position (Birx 2006: 2022-2023). In order to enhance the transition from childhood to adulthood, an initiate has to go through all the activities of the Liminal Phase. It is this experience that detaches him from the previous life of childhood and attaches him to the new life of adulthood.

Van Gennep (1960) discusses the order of rites followed during this phase comparatively. He acknowledges that an initiate is normally kept in a place that is separate from his previous environment. In this place, an initiate may be subjected to seclusion, intoxication, religious discipline and may be considered socially dead. Transition rites are also observed. A novice often goes through bodily mutilation, e.g. circumcision. He may also experience body painting, i.e. in white and red, etc. Further, he must also "go about naked". He cannot go out of his place and reveal himself to people in the outside world. Lastly, an initiate is also subjected to dietary taboos and he should only speak a special language (Van Gennep 1960: 81).

Sullwold (1998: 309-310) argues that the liminal phase is almost an adventurous growth. He says throughout this phase initiates are pulled towards an adventurous growth, although the meaning and purpose of it is confusing and strange. He says that during this phase an initiate becomes disoriented which makes him reluctant to turn back to the previous stage. Consequently, his life of childhood is lost.

Often the liminal phase goes together with circumcision. Circumcision is not just a cut; it is a mark that has a symbolic meaning. It is a separation of a part of the body from a boy. In this case the foreskin is removed from a boy's penis. This cutting symbolises the detachment of a boy from being mothered, while attaching him to potential paternal symbols (Silverman 2004: 423). Van Vuuren et al (1999: 2) say circumcision is often an integral part of initiation. To some cultures, the absence of circumcision renders the initiation ritual incomplete.

To wrap up, the Transition Phase is the heart of the initiation ritual. It is where an initiate learns about issues of being an adult. However, learning does not come in a comfortable manner. He is subjected to behaviours and practices that are unusual and uncomfortable. For example, walking around semi-naked, learning a special language, etc. Thus, the continuous repetition of these practices and behaviour is what eventually turn a boy into a man, or a girl into a woman.

2.3.3 The Phase of Incorporation

This phase involves an initiate leaving his secluded area (the initiation school) to join the community with the new status of being a man. At this stage, the initiation ritual comes to an end.

Cox (1998: xii) gives his input about the Incorporation Phase. He says that at this stage, an initiate is presented to society with a new status, new names, new clothes, sometimes a new place of residence, new rights and duties. In my own experience, however, the Xhosa-speaking initiate does not necessarily receive a separate new place of residence. Instead a separate room within a household is reserved for him.

This phase contrasts with the Liminal Phase. During this phase, initiates are in a stable state once more; they have rights and obligations that are clearly defined and structured in type. These individuals are assumed to be adults, and are expected to behave according to certain customary norms and ethical standards (Turner 1967: 94).

In the view of Van Gennep (1960), this is the re-integration into the previous environment. Among the activities of re-integrating, an initiate bathes in a stream and his sacred hut is burned. All these portray closure of the transition moment. On the other hand, he gets an opportunity to reconnect with the outside

world. In fact he is no longer an initiate, he is a man; but he is now a new man, a graduate. He is assumed to be born again. Being a new person (born again) is exaggerated, as indicated by Van Gennep (1960). He says during this phase he (a graduate) acts as if he is 'newly-born'. He is in a state of relearning all the gestures of ordinary life. In fact he sometimes even pretends as if he does not know how to walk or eat. Therefore, he has to relearn the basics of life (Van Gennep 1960: 81).

Hammond-Tooke (1974) says the incorporation period is marked by rites that release a boy from the previous phase. There are many ways of marking these rites. There are rites that exist commonly to all South African population groups who practise initiation. There is a ritual burning of the seclusion lodge (*ibhuma*). This sets a boy free from the 'bush-school' to go back to the community. He is welcomed with feasting and celebration.

There are also rites that exist that are common to most African population groups in South Africa, except the Lobedu. These include a boy washing himself in a river in order to remove the white clay (*ingceke*). He is smeared with red ochre from head to toe afterwards. In addition, some rites are practised by specific groups, i.e. a boy's head is shaved. This takes place among the South Sotho, Lobedu, Venda, Tsonga and Pedi. Other initiates are given new clothes. This is practised by the Tswana, Tsonga, Bomvana, Thembu, Mpondomise, Mfengu and Xhosa-speakers (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 231).

The theory of Van Gennep provides a useful background to the understanding of how the Xhosa initiation ritual is practised. It gives a framework for investigating the stages that are involved in the Xhosa initiation rite. It also assists in digging deeply into other issues that relate to manhood.

2.4 The Meaning of Symbols in Rituals

When rituals are performed there are symbols that are associated with them. Turner (1967) says symbols go together with rituals. He says symbols are characterised by objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures and spatial units. Each ritual has symbols, and among these symbols there is the one (or some) that play a great role in ritual activities. This becomes the 'dominant symbol'. For example, the 'milk tree' is a dominant symbol in the *Nkang'a* ritual. The *Nkang'a* ritual is a girl's puberty rite that is practised by the Ndembu of Zambia.

The Ndembu women attribute several meanings to this tree. To them it represents the human breast milk and the breasts that supply the milk. In addition, it symbolises the unity and continuity of Ndembu society (Turner 1967: 19-20). This discussion will be divided into two sections, i.e. The Symbolism of the Liminal Phase, and The Symbolism of Space.

2.4.1 The Symbolism of the Liminal Phase

During this stage there are symbols that are used, which are complex and bizarre. They are part and parcel of the activities that take place in this phase. Without them the ritual might be incomplete.

a) The Liminal Phase Symbolises Death

During this stage an initiate may be presented as possessing nothing. He is naked, or wearing only a slip of cloth to demonstrate that he has no status or property. This nakedness aims at humiliating him, as he is a non-person who should be teased and treated badly. At the same time, the aim of this treatment is to make an initiate strong.

This prepares him to bear all the disappointments and pain he will experience in the near future. The near nakedness symbolises respect to ancestors. The textile clothing is something that is presumed to come from long distance trade and is equivalent to wealth. This phase symbolises the womb, the invisibility, the darkness and the bisexuality of an initiate (Rasing 1995: 35-36).

A discussion on this liminal phase is also provided by Victor Turner (1967: 96) in his book *The Forest of Symbols*. He says during this phase the neophyte is structurally dead. He may be treated as a corpse for a variable amount of time. This treatment is meted out as if he were a corpse; his treatment would customarily be similar to how a corpse would be treated in society. The Ndembu symbolism is drawn from the biology of death, decomposition, catabolism, and other physical processes. All these are perceived as having a negative effect, as is also the case with menstruation (Turner, 1967).

Furthermore, this argument is similar to that of Van Gennep (1960), in his book *The Rites of Passage*. He says during this phase the novices are considered dead. This death consists of a physical and mental weakening, with the aim of making a novice lose all connection to his childhood. They (the novices) embrace the symbolism of death by moving about naked. They may neither leave their retreat nor show themselves to men. He also says novices are expected to speak a special language and to eat special food, adhering to dietary taboos.

Van Gennep notes further that the novices remain 'dead' for a fairly long time (Van Gennep 1960: 81). Therefore the symbolism brought by this phase implies that an initiate is worthless. His worthlessness is the equivalent to that of a dead person. At the same time, death might mean the dying of the previous life to the initiate in order for the new life to emerge, once this phase is over.

Thus, the Liminal Phase is a transitional stage to the novice; it is expressed with the symbolism of death. The way he is being treated suggests that he is a dead person. It is assumed that after this death a new person will be born. This new person will then be a socially responsible adult.

b) The Liminal Phase Symbolises 'Statuslessness'

One of the structurally negative characteristics of this phase is that an initiate owns nothing. He has no status, property, rank, kinship position and nothing to demarcate him structurally from his fellows (Turner 1967: 98-99). Because of having nothing, he has no status. The assumption is that the ownership of something leads to a higher status. According to Rasing (1995: 36), this phase forces an initiate to experience 'statuslessness'. Afterwards, however, he is promoted to a high status position.

In short, this phase emphasises the symbolism that an initiate has no sense of ownership in the society. Once something is taken away from anybody, its value becomes visible. The loss of status of the initiates makes them desire the feeling of owning it. The repossession of status becomes a reward to them once they pass the Liminal Phase. In fact, they do not just get back their status, but are celebrated and honour is conferred on them by the adults of the community.

c) The Liminal Phase Symbolises Submissiveness

During the Liminal Phase, an initiate occupies an inferior position. He becomes submissive to the authority of men, who teach him about adulthood as a man. Rasing (1995: 36) says this authority (of adults) is assumed to represent the entire community. It represents the storage of cultures, values, norms, attitudes, sentiments and relationships in the community. It also represents the generic authority of tradition in the community (Rasing 1995: 36).

Turner (1967) adds to this view; he talks about the unequal relationship between initiation instructors and the initiates. He says between the instructors and the neophytes there is always a complete authority and a complete submission. The instructors have absolute authority over all the neophytes (Turner 1967: 99). Moreover, the submissiveness is aimed at making the novices inferior. When they are inferior, it becomes easy to subject them to the teachings of this phase. It is these teachings that are assumed to transform boys into men, but only via the Liminal Phase. Thus, the symbolism of submissiveness is not aimed at victimising them. Instead, it is a part of the plan towards changing the novices into adults.

d) The Liminal Phase Symbolises 'Sexlessness' or Bisexuality

During this phase initiates are symbolically either sexless or bisexual and they may be regarded as being sexually undifferentiated (Turner 1967: 98; Rasing 1995: 37). This is reflected by the absence of marked sexual opposites. In contrast, I argue that the initiates are not sexless or bisexual. If that were the case, why would there be different initiation schools for boys and for girls?

Several studies have demonstrated that the role of the initiation rituals is to enhance manhood and womanhood for initiates. For example, Rasing (1995: 38-39) notes that initiation rituals contribute greatly in affirming adult status to initiates. This is done according to gender categories. To a certain extent the idea of sexlessness or bisexuality may be true, but it refers only to children. During childhood boys and girls do play together while they are naked. To them there is no (or not much) consciousness of gender differences. As children grow up and get closer to the initiation stage the society instils in them the idea of manhood and womanhood. This idea is based on sex categorisation.

2.4.2 The Symbolism of Space

Hammond-Tooke (1975: 29) discusses Xhosa (Cape Nguni) symbolism and rituals. He talks about the importance of space in symbolising certain aspects of people's lives. He argues that this space constitutes three spheres. Firstly, there are two opposing spheres, The Homestead and The Forest. Secondly, there is The River that separates these two.

a) The Forest

Hammond-Tooke says the forest symbolises danger. It contains the untamed wild animals, that cannot be eaten, and evil witches. In contrast, there are many ways in which the homestead benefits from the forest. The same forest that symbolises danger is also used by diviners to get herbal medicines in order to heal people in the homestead (Hammond-Tooke 1975). The forest is also the place in which to chop trees (*ukugawula*) in order to build cattle kraals for the homestead. It is also used to fetch firewood for cooking. In the context of initiation rituals, the forest is where initiation rites take place.

b) The Homestead

Hammond-Tooke writes that the homestead symbolises safety to its inhabitants. He says that the homestead is associated with domestic animals (cattle) (Hammond-Tooke 1975). The cattle are used in the homestead to enhance communication with ancestors. They are slaughtered when doing rituals, and at night are kept in a cattle kraal, which is also a symbol of ancestor spirits. Thus, Hammond-Tooke describes the homestead as being a ritual centre that is responsible for nurturing the social life of individuals; it is a safe space where an initiate returns to as a man.

c) The River

According to Hammond-Tooke, the river is a link between the homestead and the forest. He says certain rivers are believed to have spirit people who stay in them. These people are called '*people of the river*'. They are sometimes associated with ancestors and are assumed to have supernatural powers. The river is

characterised by water animals, which are perceived to be threatening. For example, crocodiles, snakes, etc. These water animals are used by the river people to pass messages to the homestead.

Hammond-Tooke notes that there is a relationship between men and nature. This is portrayed by the two opposite spheres, that is, a homestead and a forest. He says the wide space is symbolically represented by the forest. The warm nurturing space of the human society is represented by the homestead. As noted before, he speaks about the relationship between the homestead and the river. He says people from the homestead can influence 'the river people' through rituals, usually when they slaughter cattle, goats, etc. The river people on the other hand, communicate their requests or demands by sending their messengers, e.g. crocodiles.

I have observed the channel of communication between people and the ancestors. It does not only involve crocodiles in the process of communicating between ancestors and the people in the community. The *sangomas* pass their messages from the ancestors (the river people) to the people in the community (the homestead). The initiate spends the last part of his initiation school days in the veld (this unsafe place), to learn the lessons of manhood. If the initiate experiences medical problems, the diviner/healer takes the responsibility of treating him. When the period in the bush comes to an end, an initiate has to wash himself in a river. This is the space that is characterised by the feared water animals. It is also a way of testing the courage of an initiate, as there is a possibility of contacting water animals in a river. This ritual is concluded when a beast is slaughtered in order to invoke the ancestors.

The theory of Hammond-Tooke is relevant to the Xhosa initiation ritual. It involves a boy being removed from the safe place of his homestead, to stay in grassland close to the dangerous forest. In his journey of coming back home, he has to go via the river. This river is also characterised by the danger of the water animals. It becomes a connection between the 'bush-school' and the community.

2.5 Initiation Rituals and Gender

The initiation rites involve both boys and girls, but they are mostly conducted differently according to sex. Turner (1973:7-8) argues that boys and girls undergo initiation ceremonies of which the form and purpose

differ widely. In his Ndembu examples, boys are initiated collectively whilst this is done individually for girls. Note that it is not always the case that a girl's initiation is done individually.

Hammond-Tooke points out that it can be done collectively. In his example, he talks about *vusha*, a Venda rite of passage. He says it "may be postponed until two or three girls have begun to menstruate, and they then go through the ceremony together". He says boys are usually initiated before puberty, while girls' initiation takes place at the onset of puberty (Hammond-Tooke 1975: 226).

Rasing (1995) adds that 'sexual identity' is important in initiation rituals. He indicates that the concept of sexual identity is significant to adult status in all societies. It determines the allocation of social roles to men and women everywhere. Social roles are explained and justified by reference to ideas that concern individual sexual status. This refers to divisions of labour based on gender. The initiation ritual therefore becomes a dramatic exercise. It enforces sexual distinctions that are designed to underline the separation of genders. It plays a great role in affirming adult status, in terms of gender categories (Rasing 1995: 38-39).

The orthodox perspective on sexual identity and initiation rituals has become a challenge today. The aim of rituals is to develop a consciousness of manhood and womanhood. Where do homosexual people fit into this context? Are they supposed to undergo the initiation rituals or not? If they go through these rituals, would they go to boys' or girls' rituals? If the community does not allow them to participate, is that not gender discrimination?

Moreover, in conducting initiation rituals, gender differences become more visible. Turner (1973) says a striking difference exists during the initiation ritual, between boys and girls. Boys are encouraged to endure hardship. With girls the emphasis is on obedience, sexual behaviour and reproduction (Turner 1973: 7).

Dover (2005) supports this view, he discusses masculinity in relation to femininity in a Zambian village. He argues that the human body has sexual characteristics (sexed body). These (characteristics) were used as departure points in the socialization and enculturation of boys and girls into men and women (Dover 2005: 174). For example, boys were encouraged to be tough and self-reliant in order to prepare them for future positions of being heads of households. In contrast, girls were taught to be humble, shy and to respect men. Consequently, this situation resulted in male superiority. Dover entitles this 'hegemonic

superiority'. Thus, initiation rituals perpetuate this type of masculinity; they create male dominance in society.

In the modern day, the allocation of responsibilities according to gender is being challenged. For example there are women who do jobs that were originally known as men's jobs (e.g. working in the mines, driving buses, etc.), and vice versa. In addition, there are organisations that campaign against social inequality that is perpetuated by sex differences. In this way the orthodox gender symbolism is challenged by new experiences and a new symbolism.

Grimes (2000) adds to the issue of gender difference by commenting on the way initiation rituals are conducted. He says it results in a greater level of same sex bonding to boys compared with that for the girls. However, boys' initiation tends to be less frequent because of their collective nature. That is, boys have to wait for other boys of the same age group in order to undergo the ritual together. In addition, he says boys' ceremonies tend to be more public in nature. They last longer and are marked by a high level of dramatisation (Grimes 2000: 108-109).

Although there are gender distinctions in these rituals, there is interdependency between male and female participants. This interdependency is referred to in a study done by Mark et al. (1998). He points out that in Jola, the men's initiation ritual, in Casamance region, Southern Senegal, is preceded by dancing, which includes not just the men but a whole group of sisters, female cousins and aunts. The presence of women in this dance provides a wonderful and cheering musical beat, which would not be complete without them (Mark et al. 1998: 15). Therefore, men and women are often interdependent on each other, during the ritual processes and in other spheres of life.

In conclusion, the initiation ritual plays a big role in perpetuating gender differences in society. It enforces specific behaviour patterns for boys, which are different from the ones that are allocated to the girls. Social identity is built during this ritual that is strongly linked with gender roles. Boys are shaped towards masculinity, warrior and economic independence. Females, on the other hand, are nurtured towards being feminine and being good wives.

2.6 The Role of Circumcision in Decreasing HIV/AIDS

According to the latest research, male circumcision decreases the chances of being infected by the HIV virus. This idea is supported by research findings that were conducted in various parts of the world - to highlight some of the areas where fieldwork took place: Kenya in Kisumu region and Uganda in Rakai region (2005 till 2007), in Orange Farm in South Africa in 2005, and in Gauteng in South Africa, 2005.

According to a study done in Kenya and Uganda, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that circumcised males have a lower risk of contracting HIV (compared with uncircumcised ones). This study involved heterosexual men in these two countries. The study was conducted as follows:

“About 8 000 heterosexual men in Kenya and Uganda were divided into two groups: circumcised and uncircumcised. Both received safe-sex education and were tested regularly for HIV. The results – a 53 percent lower rate in HIV/Aids infections among circumcised males in Kenya” (Author unknown 2007, Contemporary Sexuality).

The *Daily Dispatch* also presented a brief report on the trial that was done in Kenya and Uganda. This report noted that male circumcision dramatically reduces the risk of HIV infections by up to 50% (*Daily Dispatch* 20 December 2006). Furthermore, support for male circumcision was also shown by the trial that was done in Gauteng Province in South Africa. It involved men aged 18-24 years. It was funded by French Agence Nationale de Recherchers sur le SIDA (ANRS). The results indicated a promising protective effect of adult male circumcision in reducing HIV infection (Author unknown 2005, in *Indian Journal of Medical Science*).

a) Biological Explanation

Research also indicates the reasons that render an uncircumcised male to be at greater risk of contracting HIV. The argument is that the foreskin (in a man’s penis) provides a fertile ground for the HIV virus and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) to settle. The *Population Reports* (2001) (author unknown) notes that the foreskin provides a “ready portal of entry to HIV and other pathogens”. It goes on by stating that the inner surface of the foreskin is rich in special cells called Langerhans cells. These cells are more vulnerable

to HIV and seem to be the main means through which HIV enters the penis (Author unknown 2001, *Population Reports*).

Another biological explanation is presented by the Bulletin of the World Health Organization (July 2006). It suggests that men with foreskins are more likely to experience infections that are linked to sexually transmitted infections (which enhance the HIV transmission). Further, male circumcision is also associated with less risk of penile cancer. For example, female partners of circumcised men have a low risk of cervical cancer (Author unknown 2006, *Bulletin of World Health Organization*).

Another argument is that “the foreskin also suffers small tears during intercourse”. This condition makes it vulnerable to HIV (*Contemporary Sexuality* 2007). An additional theory is that circumcised men are more likely to wear condoms, in order to protect the sensitive tissue. In other words, without a foreskin, a man ends up with sensitive tissues. This argument may be true to a certain extent. It could be incorrect to generalise and say circumcision results in sensitive tissue in men’s sex organs. Instead, as time goes on (e.g. at approximately a year), the tissues of a circumcised penis can become hard. A condom may be needed for practising protected sex, rather than to protect sensitive tissue. However, it may also be incorrect to deny that there could be certain individuals who might experience the need to have extra protection due to the sensitiveness of some tissues (Author unknown 2007, *Contemporary Sexuality*).

b) Caution about Relying on Circumcision as a Preventative Method Against HIV

The news that is brought by research (decreasing HIV through circumcision) brings hope in the struggle against the HIV/AIDS problem. However, it is still a little early to be excited that the solution has been found. In fact criticism developed from various individuals and organisations, about the danger of raising people’s hopes about circumcision as a solution. *Contemporary Sexuality* (2007) noted behaviour and lifestyle choices play a great role in determining the infection rate by the virus. This argument opposes the view that circumcision necessarily decreases the rate of infection by HIV.

Indeed, individuals have a responsibility to take precautionary measures, to ensure that they are not infected. For example, the use of a condom is still the best solution to those who have many sex partners. Being faithful to one sex partner is another proven solution. Or else, those who can manage to abstain from

sexual intercourse are most likely to prevent infection from the virus. Thus, it is up to individuals to choose an option they are comfortable with, to ensure that they are not infected.

Furthermore, the *Daily Dispatch* (20 December 2006) noted that circumcision is not a magic bullet that should be treated in isolation from other HIV preventative measures. This argument is presented in response to research findings from Kenya and Uganda indicated above. The article goes on by saying that if a male is circumcised there is still a 50% chance of getting HIV. Simultaneously, the one who is not circumcised is exposed to double the risk of being infected (*Daily Dispatch* 20 December 2006). In other words, the use of protection during sexual intercourse is still the best option. In fact prevention is better than cure!

c) To Sum Up

The findings from these studies provide hope in the campaign to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, the concept of using circumcision as a solution in decreasing HIV infection is still being considered. So far there is no conclusion about adopting circumcision as a preventative tool against HIV. Government has not included this idea in their policy. Therefore, the use of protection when people engage in sex is still the best solution in the fight against HIV.

The findings indicated by the study above also embrace the usefulness of the initiation ritual of Xhosa-speakers. Circumcision as a preventative measure against HIV is among the reasons that made/make Xhosa-speakers to believe in it. These findings come at a time when there is controversy and debate about the usefulness of this rite. As noted before, the opponents of this rite argue that it should be banned, if it leads in some cases to the death of the initiates. Perhaps they might change their minds and support it, as it is a part of a solution towards HIV/AIDS (see quotation from the newspaper below).

“Initiation has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons because of the deaths and injuries resulting from botched circumcisions each year. On the other hand, scientists and academics have recently been campaigning for circumcisions to be encouraged after researchers proved that it reduces the chances of males contracting HIV by 65%”(*City Press*, 17 June 2007).

Simultaneously, traditional circumcision is also associated with the risk of boys being infected by HIV. As pointed out before, certain traditional surgeons use one *assegai* to circumcise more than one boy at the

same time. This assegai is not even sterilised before circumcising the next boy. The possibility of infection is high, should one of the boys (circumcised earlier) be already HIV positive.

2.7 The Link of Initiation Rituals with Power, Authority and ‘Communitas’

Societies that operate a system of hierarchy are structured in nature. This creates a situation whereby people have seniors above them and juniors below them. Simultaneously, there is a certain degree of formal respect between people of equal status. This relationship is sometimes non-hierarchical and an informal interaction can exist between people. In a society where there is a system of hierarchy and formal structure, life becomes a chain of power and authority. It is made up of seniors who are the superiors and juniors as subordinates. Examples of seniors are parents, teachers, managers, etc, while juniors are children, learners, employees, and so on (Davies 1994: 4).

In her book, *Passing on the Rites Of Passage*, Rasing (1995) talks about power and authority. She argues that rituals exist to confirm the power of certain individuals. During the initiation rituals, the superiority of the older people go together with the power and authority over the ones who submit to them. The performers of these rituals play the role of being ritual teachers. The legitimacy of ritual teachers is therefore derived from their traditional knowledge. This knowledge becomes the source of information, understanding and experience which is necessary to ensure the correct performance of the ritual.

The wisdom of ritual teachers is built through regular conducting of the initiation rites. The evaluation of the ritual teachers’ performance is measured by the outcome of the rituals, whether they are a success or not. If rituals manage to transform individuals from one stage to another, they become a demonstration of ritual knowledge to the ritual teachers. Therefore, rituals are a success (Rasing 1995: 39).

Although there is inequality in the relationship between ritual teachers and the initiates, there is a spirit of comradeship and equality among the initiates themselves. Turner (1967:101) notes that there is a complete equality that is usually characterised by the relationships amongst neophytes. This takes place where rites are collective, and this equality is similar to comradeship. Turner says that during the Liminal Phase initiates become a community of comrades with no structure of hierarchically organised positions.

The comradeship and equality are similar to what Davies (1994) calls a sense of 'communitas'. 'Communitas' is an intense awareness of being bound together in a community of shared experience. During the transition phase initiates share the experience of hardship. The intense pressure of this experience eventually causes them to be friends, with a sense of being equal to one another.

In short, the initiation ritual leads to two kinds of relationships between the participants in this school. Firstly, it is the inequality within the relationship between the custodians of this school and the initiates that is unavoidable. Initiates ought to be submissive to their custodians, as they depend on them to acquire knowledge and experience about this rite. Secondly, initiates who share the same school also share the same experience of pain and hardship. Interestingly, it is also this unpleasant experience that brings them together as friends.

2.8 Traditional Circumcision In Relation To Human Rights

The discussion in this section connects with the research problem as mentioned in section 1.3.4. It also proceeds to the next section. There are many reasons that come up in opposition to traditional circumcision rites. One of them argues that it violates human rights by inflicting unbearable pain on boys. It also subjects boys' bodies (private parts) to be touched by other people without their consent.

Nyaundi (2005) agrees that traditional circumcision violates the human rights of boys. She argues that it violates the right to privacy and bodily integrity. She defines the right to privacy as being the right to be protected from unwelcome interference with one's body without consent. Furthermore, circumcision marks a boy with ritual mutilation. This process takes away the right to a functional body, especially if it is done to the genitals.

This ritual also violates the right to choose whether to be marked with the scars of that particular culture. She argues further that circumcision removes the right to be protected from cruel and inhuman treatment. She says this rite is an act of torture and inhumanity. It is a degrading treatment and is a punishment to its victims. The excruciating pain they endure during this ritual cannot be justified in modern society. This becomes worse in cases where there is no anaesthesia applied to the circumcision wound (Nyaundi 2005).

Elvis Nyapele (in *City Press* 30 June, 2002) supports this perspective. He talks about the use of a spear as a traditional instrument for circumcising boys. Nyapele argues that it is improper to assume that a spear has always been used as a traditional tool of circumcision. He says a spear is an instrument that came later on in order to adapt to changes in the society. Before it, something else must have been used. When it was adopted, culture must have conformed to changes in the society.

He takes the example of a biblical story. He says Abraham circumcised himself by using a piece of stone. It means that people who practised circumcision during the Stone Age used stones as traditional instruments at that time. Those in other ages used what was considered traditional then. Therefore, he questions why certain population groups do not adapt to modern-day instruments in circumcising their boys. These instruments are razors, Malaysian tara clamps, and so on (*City Press* June 30, 2002).

Moreover, male circumcision rites receive a lot of criticism, just as the female circumcision does. These criticisms are voiced through academic books, medical journals, newspapers, etc. Lightfoot-Klein (1989) talks about the role Islam plays in fighting against female circumcision. He notes that according to Islamic principles, human beings should not suffer any harm, physical or mental. He says the Islamic law protects human beings from everything that causes hurt. Therefore, female circumcision is a bad practice that should be fought as it violates the basic human rights of women. Some people in Islam therefore, propose a campaign against this practice through public awareness programmes. These are mass media, conferences, and suchlike (Lightfoot-Klein 1989: 169 -170).

It has been argued before that culture is dynamic; it changes and moves over a period of time. Perhaps the problem with the initiation ritual is that some people are trying to make it static and not allowing it to adapt to changes in society. Those people may be feeling insecure, due to fear of losing political power and financial gain that are associated with this rite.

In short, the practice of traditional male initiation may put boys in a position of losing their basic human rights. In the name of culture/tradition, a boy may find himself being forced to undergo circumcision. The moment he is not a willing participant, his individual human rights have been violated. Further, basic health care is a human right that should be received by everybody in any community. Sometimes traditional initiation exposes initiates to environmental conditions that are less than hygienic. This subsequently leads

to infections in their circumcision wounds. This situation is clearly a violation of a boy's human rights – the right to proper health care. Hence the controversy and debate is inevitable.

2.9 Conclusion

The literature provides information that is valuable in understanding initiation rituals. It acknowledges that initiation rituals are practices that take place across various cultures in the world. Van Gennep's theory has been useful in elaborating this, when he talks about the three phases of the initiation rituals. Interestingly, he does not only talk about the initiation rites of a specific culture, but about initiation in general.

This literature gives insight into the fact that rites are accompanied by symbols. During the initiation phase, the environmental conditions and practices in which initiates find themselves go together with symbols. The local people in that particular culture have their own interpretation of these symbols. In total, the transition phase is a symbolic period which could be viewed as being necessary in transforming a boy into a man.

Hammond-Tooke's theory links very well with the idea of putting a boy to a test of bravery and difficulty whilst he is an initiate. During this phase, a boy is placed near a forest which symbolises the unsafe space. It takes a brave person to live in a forest, away from the safe space of home. Once he goes through the test successfully, he is welcomed back by the community as a man.

In addition, this literature also demonstrates that the practice of initiation rituals is influenced by the phenomena that take place in society. For example, HIV/AIDS has an effect on the practice of this ritual, where traditional circumcision is used. It has been noted before, that traditional circumcision could lead to the spread of the HIV virus between boys, if they share the same circumcision instrument. If one of them is infected by HIV, he could pass the virus on to other boys. Interestingly, recent medical research has indicated that circumcised males are less likely to be infected by this virus. This research has resulted in the demand for male circumcision in several countries in Africa. However, people are cautioned not to see this as a solution to the HIV/AIDS problem. In fact it is still too early to rely on this method, since the research is still in progress.

Furthermore, there is an existing dilemma between cultural rights and human rights. This dilemma applies to those who practise circumcision as an initiation rite. According to the principles of democracy, the right of freedom to practise one's culture should be respected. Therefore, circumcision as an element of culture needs to be respected as a democratic right. In contrast, the very same circumcision can also be a violation of people's human rights. Some individuals are often put under pressure to undergo this rite. The pressure from other people to go through this rite equates to a violation of an individual's rights. That is, the right to choose whether to undergo the rite or not.

Furthermore, it looks as if differences in views about this rite are inevitable. Traditional circumcision has been practised for years and is generally accepted as a requirement for being a man. However, where reports about injury and death persist, the argument against this rite becomes justified. At the same time, these initiation tragedies have attracted the interests of various individuals and groups.

Currently, a strong argument is made in some places that the circumcision ritual is outdated. It is also not clear whether it is really outdated, or whether there are some practices that need to be changed within it. Perhaps, if the actual cause of an initiate's death and hospitalisation was clear, it would be easier to make a judgement on these contrasting views. This point leads logically to the next chapter, where a continuation of the theories of the initiation ritual will be examined. Its focus is on Xhosa initiation in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: THE XHOSA INITIATION IN THE LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned before (in section 2.1), this section deals with literature on the initiation ritual among Xhosa-speaking people. This literature is organised into different themes, whereby views from the authors have been used to illustrate the argument. The writers that have been used include Van Vuuren and De Jongh (1999), Warren-Brown (1998), Meintjes (1998), Funani (1990), Ngxamngxa (1971), Elliot (1975), Carstens (1982) and Mayer (1971).

The argument in this chapter is that the literature portrays initiation rituals as social instruments that create an ideology of males who are 'man enough'. Also, that HIV/AIDS is a challenge to initiation rituals today. Therefore there is a need to change certain practices within it, in order to prevent the infection of boys in the 'bush-schools'. The literature indicates that the initiation ritual is resilient to forces that attempt to destroy it.

3.2 Differences in Views Concerning Traditional Circumcision

As mentioned before, traditional circumcision is accompanied by differences of opinion. These differences are in relation to the injuries that are currently taking place in the 'bush-school.' It has been indicated before that the media play a great role in reporting on this issue. Meintjes (1998) is one of the writers who demonstrates this diversity of opinions. His study highlights the opposing views between older people and young men. He says the older people (especially female parents) are concerned about the safety of their sons. They do not want their sons to experience 'initiation tragedies'. Because of this, some see hospital circumcision as the safest option.

This view contrasts with that of the young men. To them (young men), hospital circumcision makes the ritual safer. In their opinion, anything that makes this rite safe undermines its symbolism, the bravery of masculinity in the face of the danger it represents. Instead these young men shift the blame of the initiation problems onto the initiates themselves.

Meintjes also talks about the death of the initiates in the ‘bush-school’, in relation to the ideology of manhood. He goes on to say that if a boy dies in the initiation school, the orthodox Xhosa-speakers blame him for not being ‘man enough’ to stand the pressure of this ritual. Meintjes argues that death and injury in the ‘bush-school’ are viewed as a way of rooting out those boys that are not fit enough to play the role of men in society. He goes on to report the idea that some initiates must die for the social good (see quote below, an opinion from the leader of The Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders). In a group of initiates, about one in ten would not return to the community because of death (Meintjes 1998: 50).

“Many women die while giving birth as do initiates at circumcision schools - no problem. After all, circumcision is a custom that introduces boys to manhood. Those who die during circumcision would not have made it in life after all.”
(Meintjes 1998: 50)

This school of thought suggests that in order to be a real man you have to be ‘Mr. Tough Guy’, a warrior, and fearless. In order to be a real man you must have the ability to undergo physical pain. One may wonder if this view fits relevantly into the modern world and into the new South Africa.

I disagree with the traditionalists’ perception about the death of initiates. This death is not because they are not tough enough to be men. Instead it results from purely medical complications that occur in the wound. As discussed, the *ingcibi*’s instruments are not always in a good hygienic condition. This leads to the infection of the boy’s wound and ‘cross-infection’. This infection could circulate with the blood, from the penis to other parts of the body, and result in death.

The problem of the dehydration of initiates is also associated with initiation tragedies. It is a loss of water in the body, because of water restrictions in the school. Sometimes this water restriction is done to the extreme, to the extent that it causes medical complications, e.g. kidney failure. On the other hand, a kidney failure could disturb the normal body functioning. Consequently, the initiate eventually dies of the malfunctioning of one of the body’s systems.

In addition, circumcision could lead to excessive loss of blood from the boy’s body through his penis. In the initiation camps there is no medical equipment that could be used to control blood loss. This problem

could lead to further body complications that are associated with excessive blood loss. Hence a boy might end up being hospitalised or even dying.

With regard to the above quotation, a poor boy is blamed for circumstances over which he has no control. The infection and dehydration may result from the carelessness of *ingcibi* and traditional guardians. The former circumcises boys with unhygienic instruments, whilst the latter impose exaggerated water restrictions on an initiate.

When a boy goes to this ritual, he relies on the leadership and guidance of the initiation school. The leadership constitutes *iingcibi*, traditional guardians, and men who have been circumcised the traditional way. When the initiate goes to this school, he has no previous experience of it; he may not know whether the practices are done correctly or incorrectly. Therefore, he relies on the guidance of its leadership.

It is therefore of interest that initiates are blamed for not being 'man enough' when things go wrong at this school. In fact this leadership is the one that is not 'man enough' to take responsibility for its actions. It is also not 'man enough' to face the truth about the most likely cause of death to initiates (infections and dehydration). They simply shift the way they view the cause of the problem. Instead of looking at the problem from the medical perspective, they see it as a cultural issue (boys were not 'man enough' to face the hardships of manhood).

3.3 Social Pressure to Undergo Traditional Circumcision

Sometimes boys undergo traditional circumcision as a result of being pushed by social pressure. The effect of this pressure carries on, despite that some Xhosa-speaking people would prefer a safer method of circumcision. As a result, boys are left with no choice but to go and endure traditional circumcision. Meintjes (1998) divided this social pressure into three categories, namely: Pressure from the peer group, from the boys' family and pressure from women.

3.3.1 Pressure from the Peer Group

Meintjes notes that boys are excluded from social groups of young men at school. For example, when circumcised males gather for a conversation, boys are not allowed to join them. There are other examples that indicate pressure from peer groups, these are:

- Exclusion from sitting together with men in traditional functions. In traditional functions of Xhosa-speaking communities, people sit according to categories, i.e. elderly men, men, boys, women and girls. A male who is not circumcised has to sit in the boys' category, which carries an inferior status.
- An uncircumcised male receives constant negative comments from his peer group. He is often reminded that he is a boy (a worthless person) (Meintjes 1998: 103-105).

In fact this is the most active group in perpetuating stigmatisation against the uncircumcised and the 'hospital-men'. In a modern society, a peer group takes over the guardianship of the ritual. The elders who used to be the guardians take a back seat.

3.3.2 Pressure from a Boy's Family

Like the peer group, family members also make negative comments to the uncircumcised males. The family members usually question the status of a particular male, if he has not undergone the rite. Most of the time, an uncircumcised male receives less respect from his family, just because of being a boy. In fact he is constantly made to feel uncomfortable about not undergoing this ritual. Meintjes (1998: 103-105) says fathers and elder brothers tend to be the ones who put pressure on boys, and push them to undergo traditional circumcision. Hence going to 'bush-school' becomes inevitable for Xhosa-speaking boys.

3.3.3 Pressure from Women

Meintjes points out that a woman is socially undermined if she is in love with a boy. Consequently, this woman compels her boyfriend to go to the initiation school. In the view of orthodox Xhosa-speaking women an uncircumcised male is inferior. He is likely to be rejected by women if he proposes a love relationship to them. He might earn status from something else, e.g., working in a high profile job, being a business man, etc. Despite all this, he will always have the stigma that he is a boy.

In total, Meintjies shows that the pressure that comes from different angles makes it impossible for a boy to remain uncircumcised while living in a Xhosa-speaking community. Simultaneously, this pressure also suggests that one must not just go through circumcision, but through traditional circumcision. It is understood that the Xhosa community has a constitutional right to practise traditional circumcision as part of its culture. However, this raises the question about the rights of an individual. That is, the right to choose whether to undergo circumcision or not, or to go through hospital circumcision instead of traditional circumcision (as argued elsewhere).

3.4 Initiation Rituals, Bravery, Hardship, and Masculinity

The Xhosa initiation rite plays a big role in promoting the idea of masculinity to boys. This is manifested by the hardship the boys endure in initiation schools. In this school, they become initiates who are taught the behaviour expected of them and their responsibilities as men. A part of this teaching includes them going through physical pain which symbolises ‘warriorhood’.

Ngxamngxa (1971: 202) takes this further when he discusses the trauma of circumcision pain as being a social achievement. He argues that the experience of going through this pain is associated with the achievement of manhood. Those who have gone through this experience successfully are socially acknowledged through ceremonies. During the circumcision operation, a boy is expected to suppress all signs of suffering under the operator’s *asegai*. It is this process of undergoing ‘bush- school’ hardship and bearing this pain, which is necessary to the process of becoming a man (Ngxamngxa 1971: 202).

Ngxamngxa goes on to write about the importance of hardship in an initiation school. He says various taboos are important and have educational value. These include restrictions on food and water intake, which are aimed to train an initiate’s ability to endure difficult circumstances. These are viewed as preparations for the hardship a boy is likely to encounter in his new life as a man (Ngxamngxa 1971: 196).

Furthermore, during the pre-industrial society, traditional circumcision played a great role in creating men who had the mentality of ‘warrior-hood’. They had to endure physical pain to prove that they were tough enough to be men. This mentality was beneficial in those days because men were engaged in activities that

required bravery. Therefore, this ritual emphasises the idea of bravely confronting the ordeal of the circumcision operation. In this industrial and information-oriented society of today, men's daily activities require less of the warrior mentality and more of the technical, intellectual and reasoning skills. In these days, most men spend their time in urban areas, doing industrial jobs. This is different to men in agricultural and pre-industrial societies who spent most of their time in rural areas, doing activities that required more physical power, for example ploughing maize fields, hunting animals and fighting on the battlefield.

Masculinity is discussed in a study done by Elliot (1975). He talks about the symbolic action that is done by an *ingcibi* after performing the circumcision operation. He says a surgeon makes a mixture of an 'ant heap' and water. This mixture is smeared on the face and chest of an initiate, and he is also made to drink it. The idea here is to make the heart of an initiate to be hard like an 'ant heap', so that he does not become a coward in future (Elliot 1975: 85).

I have different information on this. After the circumcision operation, Xhosa-speaking boys are not smeared with an ant heap, instead white ochre (*ikota/ifutha*) is used. Perhaps Elliot confuses this situation with another cultural group. In fact, the white ochre is the only liquid that is used for a boy from the post-circumcision moment till he leaves 'bush-school'.

When an initiation ritual is over, the next step for a man is to get married and build his homestead. In this homestead he is expected to be the head of his family. Carstens (1982) talks about the 'patriarchal' power of a man over his wife and family. He says a strong patrilineal principle is maintained. This ensures that children belong to the kinship group of their father. Wives join the household of their husbands as outsiders and still continue to belong to the descent groups of their fathers. Throughout this process, cattle become a symbol of a man's wealth. These cattle are also used as a means to acquire wives (or additional ones), and are used in ensuring the legitimacy of children. A man also uses these cattle to maintain a link with the ancestors (Carstens 1982: 513, 514-516). The initiation ritual therefore, emphasises the power of manhood in a household. In the past, a man was assumed to be the head of his family, which is what the initiation ritual promotes. Carstens concludes that the Xhosa domestic system is oriented towards men, husbands and their respected patrilineages. This makes Xhosa women to be agents of men but not necessarily their servants (Carstens 1982: 513-514).

Carstens (1982) also discusses the socio-economic positions of boys and girls, which are shaped during the initiation rituals. To girls, the economic position they are prepared for is that of being wives. He says people should not be surprised that girls' initiation ceremonies became incorporated into marriage ceremonies as soon as the traditional economy changed. He notes further, the measurement of a wife's contribution in a household is done in terms of her husband's productivity rather than her own (or that of her former kinship group).

On the other hand, boys are prepared for being managers of production. He says the initiation of boys is also conducted with the aim of positioning them towards appropriate manly behaviour (Carstens 1982: 515-516). Therefore, this literature provides a framework for understanding the significance of the pain of traditional circumcision during the initiation ritual. It also assists in investigating the meaning of the concept 'manhood.'

3.5 Initiation Rituals, Hierarchy and 'Communitas'

In the initiation ritual, certain participants have power and authority, by virtue of their responsibilities. These participants include traditional guardians (*amakhankatha*), traditional surgeons and men. They represent the leadership in an initiation school, while initiates are subordinates in this system. The best they (initiates) can do is to form friendships amongst each other. The focus in this section is to discuss the link between initiation rites, power, authority and 'communitas'. The authors that have been consulted in this discussion are Elliot (1975), Ngxamngxa (1971) and Warren-Brown (1998).

Elliot (1975) talks about how initiates are subjected to subordinate positions, starting from the moment they get circumcised by an *ingcibi*. During the moment of circumcision the operator becomes the boys' superior. This is a process (circumcision) that involves an *ingcibi* being arrogant towards initiates. That is, he walks close to the boys, carrying his assegai, and shouts at them using vulgar language.

For example he would say, "Where are these dogs?" "Where are these things that I have come to make men?" Without being noticed by boys and other people, an *ingcibi* would suddenly use his *assegai* to circumcise them (Elliot 1975: 84). This is a common practise in Xhosa-speaking communities, whereby an

uncircumcised male (boy) is treated as inferior. Such treatment carries on until this boy undergoes the initiation rite.

In addition, initiates are subjected to an inferior status through being forced to use the jargon of the 'bush-school' (*ukuhlonipha*). Elliot (1975) says a *hlonipha* language is the use of substitute words in the place of other everyday words. He says these words may not be used at any time whilst the initiates are in the school. Elliot notes that the use of this language is also a method whereby initiates are compelled to show respect and subservience. He says this respect is not clearly defined as to whom in particular it is shown. But the language used is to make the initiates admit their inferiority (Elliot 1975: 85).

I have personally experienced the way the *hlonipha* language is used in the 'bush-school'. The initiates are expected to use it throughout their stay in this school. They are taught it by traditional guardians and the circumcised men (who normally visit them). Thereafter, traditional guardians and other adult men would randomly ask the initiates to communicate via the use of this language. This is generally a way of testing to find out whether they comprehend it. They get punished should they not understand it or resist using it. Ironically, the same initiates who were inferiors in the 'bush-school' gain power and authority once they graduate. This is demonstrated in a study done by Ngxamngxa (1971). He says a graduated initiate gains the power to start his own family. This refers to him getting married and building his own homestead (as indicated before). He goes on to say that during a 'coming-out ceremony' the initiate is given a black stick (*umnqayi*). This stick is a token of authority which implies that this young man may start his own family. It is given to initiates as a sign of manhood (Ngxamngxa 1971: 194). In fact, going through the initiation ritual (in a Xhosa-speaking community) is a basic requirement for being a man. After the initiation ritual, a man has the right to get married and build his own family. He also gains the power to participate and address people in the community and traditional gatherings.

As pointed out before, a sense of 'communitas' is a positive consequence of the school. Ngxamngxa (1971: 187) defines it as a bond of friendship that is created by virtue of the boys going through this school together. He argues that all boys that have been circumcised together form a semi-legal or 'jural' union of friendship.

He defines this friendship further. He talks about the presence of a chief's son within a group of initiates. He says the blood of a boy that was circumcised before him, and the one of a boy circumcised after him, is mixed and smeared on a spear. This spear that contains blood of the first boy and the second boy is used to circumcise the chief's son. Because of this blood mixture with the son of a chief, these three boys become blood relatives. During the time of conducting Ngxamngxa's research, there was no problem of HIV/AIDS infections. Today this sharing of the circumcision instrument could result in transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus, from one boy to another.

During the "post-initiation school period", the graduated initiates are identified by the dress code they use. A graduate normally wears a jacket, a shirt, trousers and shoes. In addition, he must also wear a prescribed hat or cap on his head. The graduates are usually identified by their walking together in small groups (three to around ten). They often use their jargon as they talk among themselves. Warren-Brown (1998), talks about a vocabulary and social behaviour that is used exclusively by graduated initiates. He says these graduates learn a certain vocabulary and social behaviour when they are in the initiation school.

Consequently, graduates gain much exclusive knowledge from this school. It becomes this knowledge that distinguishes them from males who have not gone through this rite. He notes further that because of sharing the same experience, there is a strong bond that is formed between members of an initiation school. This bond remains with them throughout their lives, "coming second only to clan ties" (Warren-Brown 1998: 64).

In conclusion, being an initiate in the 'bush-school' subjects a male to the position of being an inferior person. The custodians of this rite have superior powers over him. Simultaneously, the very same environment creates a relationship of comradeship between initiates in the school. The process of experiencing pain during this phase is what binds them together.

3.6 The Initiation Rituals and 'Building a Homestead'

During the early days of the 20th century, it was a tradition for the graduated initiates in South Africa to find employment in the mines. The mines were located in urban areas, while the homesteads were in rural areas. They used to spend a long time in the mines, for example six months to a year. During the period of

apartheid in South Africa, there were reserved areas called 'homelands'. The Republic of South Africa governed some of these homelands as separate countries with their own 'independence'.

The initiates had to leave these homelands to pursue jobs in the mines and industries of South Africa. It became a tradition for Xhosa-speaking men to work in these areas, especially after graduating from initiation. A popular concept that was used was '*ukukhwela uTEBA* (leaving home through TEBA) (see definition of terms in appendices). TEBA was a South African employment agency. Its job was to recruit labourers from the homelands to work in the mines. Throughout this process, the people from the homelands assumed the status of being 'migrant workers'.

There were several reasons for initiated men to work in urban areas. They had to earn money in order to buy themselves new clothes (*ukuguqula*). More importantly, they had the responsibility of 'building the homesteads'. These homesteads would be their own homes, to accommodate their families and their extended families.

Ngwane also has an input on the dialogue regarding building a homestead. He reveals two conflicting points. Firstly, he points out that the educated young people were not investing their income through buying cattle. Instead, they settled in urban areas and kept their incomes to themselves (Ngwane 2001: 412). This made the concept of education to be viewed with a negative eye by the orthodox Xhosa-speakers. It basically made them realize that education was promoting self-centeredness and self-enrichment. The educated men were perceived as being unlike the young mine workers. To the mine workers building a homestead was the main reason behind going to work. The aim would be to buy cattle, as wealth and symbolic capital, something that was started by the generation of their fathers (Ngwane 2001: 412).

Secondly, Ngwane portrays the building of a homestead through investing in schooling and an initiation ritual. He notes that the elderly males realized that investing in schooling meant success to their sons in the job market. In addition, they felt that spending resources on schooling should also go together with investing in an initiation ritual. That is, to spend generously on schooling and the festivities of an initiation ritual. The goal of the elderly would be that when the son is working, the elderly male would be able to claim income from the son. This claim would be in the form of encouraging a youth to buy cattle in order

to build a homestead (Ngwane 2001: 412). The ideal of building a homestead is continuing even in this modern day society. Xhosa-speakers believe that a male becomes an adult once he has a homestead. This homestead is also expected to contain a wife and children. Even if a male has developed in terms of material and financial resources, he gets no recognition if he has no homestead.

The work of Ngwane shows the significance of adapting traditions to changes that take place in society. The threat of schooling (with young men settling and spending their money in towns) did not make elderly men resist educating their children. They simply complimented schooling with the institution of the initiation ritual. The ritual was used in promoting the concept of building a homestead while encouraging traditional value systems, e.g. investing in cattle. In another way, a male would be encouraged to go to school, undergo initiation ritual and to find work. Ultimately, he must buy cattle in order to maintain his father's legacy through building a homestead.

McAllister (1990) adds that the concept of migrant labourer was ritualised and rationalised, in terms of the need to build a homestead (*wakha umzi*). This implies that a migrant was made to understand that working in the mines was done with the intention of building a homestead. McAllister says "building" in this context has a range of meanings, that is, the material, the social and the religious meanings. The homestead must fulfil its obligation to the ancestors (worshipping). The homestead must also be materially well-off, e.g. in terms of livestock, and so on. These are the basic requirements that present the homestead as being successful (McAllister 1990: 5).

I have another perspective on building the homestead in the context of the traditional Xhosa community. A part of the building of the homestead is accomplished by buying livestock. This would be cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and so on. The cattle are the most important livestock and have a symbolic meaning for the building of a homestead. Traditionally, a man who owns a lot of cattle earns respect from the community. He gains an authoritative power over the other community members. Therefore, cattle are a symbol of wealth and are used in playing many roles in a homestead. These are to pay *lobola* (bridewealth) when a man intends to get married, and also to partake in rituals for communicating with his ancestors. They provide food for the family, that is milk and meat. They are also used when ploughing the fields, especially for the cultivation of maize (nowadays tractors are mostly used).

Further, a part of building a homestead also implies that a man becomes a father to his children. Morrell (2006) discusses fatherhood and masculinity among black South Africans. He points out that fatherhood is the key element of masculinity. He asserts that the idea of masculinity should not be used selfishly. That is, males must not use it as a means of oppressing women and to neglect their own children. In his words, “masculinities should steer away from the claim that fatherhood gives men power over women and children and justify authority” (2006: 23). His argument therefore, is that there is a need to encourage masculinities that value both responsibility and caring. Thus, the process of taking care of a wife and children is indeed a symptom of masculinity.

In short, the initiation ritual is not only about transforming a boy into manhood. The overall idea is to make a boy into an adult. Thereafter his community expects him to work towards building his homestead. Building a homestead refers to working. For example, in the 1980s and the 1990s, a graduate would go and work in the mines. The message to him was that since he is a man, he must get used to working in order to build his homestead. The building of the homestead is also a symbol of masculinity to a man. Within this homestead, a man has the responsibility to encourage love and taking care of each other.

3.7 Initiation Among Xhosa-Speaking People and HIV/AIDS

Warren-Brown’s study (1998: 63, 64) focuses more on ‘initiation tragedies’ and the initiatives that were used to solve them. The initiatives include registration of initiation schools, the enforcement of health standards by government, and the arrest of traditional surgeons who operate without being registered. Among the issues he studied was how traditional circumcision was conducted by the *iingcibi*. The issues he highlighted were the use of circumcision instruments and the importance of medical check-ups. Warren-Brown’s research emphasises how important it is for boys to undergo medical check-ups before they get circumcised in the ‘bush-schools’. His reasoning here is that if boys are free from STDs; there should be little risk of them getting infections in their wounds. This also implies that there will be no possibility of ‘cross-infection’ even if a group of boys (uninfected) were circumcised with the same instrument. A cross-infection refers to the infection of a boy's wound by another, through the sharing of the circumcision instrument.

He observed that these medical check-ups constituted a campaign of the Eastern Cape Department of Health's Initiation Task Team. This approach was welcomed with different views. Some people argued in favour of it, because it reduces the risk of wound infection and 'cross-infection'. On the other hand, some argued against it, saying that it is a soft option that allows boys to get injections. These injections were blamed for rendering boys anaesthetised to the pain of traditional circumcision.

Warren-Brown notes that there are even stories of the circumcised males who went as far as assaulting their peers who had been for check-ups. These males argued that boys who go for injections are avoiding the pain of manhood. This issue leads us to the intervention of government in order to regulate the initiation rituals. The Xhosa initiation rite has been associated often with hospitalisation and possible death of initiates. Consequently, government is involved in ensuring safe practices whilst retaining its cultural content. Hence one of the aims of this research is to understand the role that government plays in the regulation of initiation rituals.

Warren-Brown (1998: 64) discusses the *iingcibi* and the way in which they use *assegais*. He tells a story of a certain *ingcibi* who had a record of circumcising hundreds of boys. This took place in the rural areas of the former Transkei. This *ingcibi* would have a row of boys lined up that he circumcised very fast using the same assegai. The speed of this operation resulted in the boys not realising what had happened to them. By the time they started to experience pain, he had already completed the operation. This suggests that the *ingcibi* does not have the necessary time to sterilise or to change instruments in between circumcising each boy. Therefore there is a great possibility that his assegai could be carrying infected blood to another boy. In addition, he could do his cutting in a manner that could be dangerous to the boy's penis. Warren-Brown sees this practice as a matter of life and death because of the challenge of HIV/AIDS and STDs nowadays. Therefore, one of the aims of this research is to investigate how the *iingcibi* ensure the safety of the boys when they perform circumcision.

Meintjes (1998: 56-57) has been one of the influential writers on Xhosa initiation in recent years. He deals with the issue of HIV/AIDS in various parts of his study. He notes that the old methods of circumcision are no longer working today because of the presence of modern diseases that were not in existence previously. In relation to HIV/AIDS, Meintjes explored people's perceptions about the sterilisation of an *assegai* (to

prevent infection by STDs and HIV/AIDS). His research indicates that many people are in favour of sterilising the *assegais*. They viewed it as the best way of preventing the spread of infection.

Some interviewees blamed the *iingcibi* for resisting sterilisation methods. The argument about the issues of STDs was also blamed on the behaviour of the initiates. That is, they engaged in pre-marital sex (unprotected) and promiscuity. All this was viewed as contributing to the spread of STDs that surfaced in the initiation school.

One of the researchers who also talks about STDs is Funani (1990: 39). She mentions various ways in which instruments (for circumcision) are kept by the *iingcibi*. This refers to the manner in which the instruments are stored when not in use. She observed that these instruments are sometimes blunt and rusty as well. The rust could result in infection to the wound while the bluntness could cause additional physical pain. Consequently, traditional surgeons often make up to three attempts before they successfully cut the foreskins of the boys.

She says *assegais* are the most commonly used instruments, and sometimes knives are also used. She talks about the methods that are used in sterilising the *assegais*. She says the *iingcibi* do not boil these instruments after use, and they are cleaned only with water without soap. She also says most of them are smeared with pork fat and blue butter. They are also cleaned by sharpening them on stones. They are stored wrapped in a cloth or a piece of old grey blanket (*umrhaji*). She asserts that all these methods are in direct contrast to boiling or autoclaving, which is essential for destroying the micro organisms, and thus increase the infection risk. Funani's study shows that circumcision instruments are put in places that keep them 'unsterilised'. Hence the wounds get infected, then become septic and take longer to heal. This results in hospitalisation of initiates which clashes directly with the cultural context of this ritual.

Meintjes and Funani discuss the challenge of HIV/AIDS, STDS and the use of unsterilised circumcision instruments by the *ingcibi*. Before the 1990s these issues were not regarded as being problematic in this ritual. In other words the change in environmental factors have had an affect on this ritual. Therefore, the aim of the study is to understand how this rite is practised today, how the challenge of HIV/AIDS is being dealt with and how this ritual has been influenced by changes in society.

The study of Meintjes also deals with the way in which sepsis is viewed by the traditionalists (traditional Xhosa-speaking people). He says the problem of sepsis is not perceived as caused by external factors. Instead it is an internal indication that the initiate is lacking what is required of him to become a man. He says this view was dominant amongst young men. To them, the development of sepsis is a sign of weakness of character, cowardice and ‘unpreparedness’, or even of moral deficiency in the initiate. On the other hand, when the ritual goes on with no wound complications, this symbolises the initiate’s preparedness for manhood. Meintjes therefore argues that complications in the wound are “invested with culturally significant meaning within the context of the ritual and not seen as aberrations alone” (Meintjes 1998:51).

In conclusion, HIV/AIDS is a challenge to this rite today. The important issue is to balance the continuation of this rite, while keeping boys safe from HIV infection during circumcision and after.

3.8 Initiation Rituals and Christianity

During the second half of the 19th century, missionaries embarked on a campaign to convert African people to Christianity. Through Christianity, their mission was to alter people’s behaviour and beliefs, for example, to take away traditional practices and instil the western religion of Christianity. Xhosa-speakers were among the targeted group (Mills 1939: 1). In their campaigns, one of the practices they opposed was the initiation ritual. This ritual was not favoured by missionaries; they felt that it was associated with superstition. In their view, superstition did not correspond with Christian principles. They believed that customs that were superstitious should be abandoned at the national level. For example, missionaries would go as far as testifying against the Native Laws Commission, advocating for the circumcision ritual to be made illegal (Mills 1939: 5).

The missionaries managed to persuade many people to join their religion. They also created a Xhosa-speaking clergy, which acted as subordinate agents to them. It is through these agents that they could mobilise the masses. However, the rank and file of Xhosa-speaking Christians became unwilling to abandon their customs. Amongst the Nguni people, the initiation ritual was viewed as an indispensable practice. According to them, it was (and still is) a necessary ordeal to demonstrate that a youth is worthy of being considered a man (Mills 1939: 2).

When the missionaries saw this unwillingness of Xhosa-speaking Christians to give up the rite, they imposed some disciplinary measures on them. For example, boys who went through the initiation rite were expelled from school and also disciplined in church. Despite these efforts of missionaries, the initiation ritual continued and was resilient to change (Mills 1939:12).

It is interesting to note that even today, this rite is still popular. Even people who do not support it do it as a requirement for becoming recognised men in the community. For example, Christian families tend to use their own approach in practising this rite. That is, they tend to take their boys to doctors for circumcision. Alcohol is not served during the 'coming-out ceremony'. The church service dominates the proceedings, instead of traditional songs.

Furthermore, the strength of this rite was attributed to the mystical belief that Xhosa-speakers have, about the transformation it provides (e.g. it was/is viewed as being the only method to take away boyhood behaviour and instil the values of manhood).

Within this context, men were subjected to intolerable pressure, which forced them to undergo the initiation ritual. In fact even when parents were not in favour of this rite, they could not prevent their sons from undergoing it. In other words, parents had no power to prohibit their sons from going through the 'bush-school'. For example, sons would go as far as making arrangements to be circumcised in other villages, under the guise of visiting family relatives (Mills 1939: 12).

Ngwane (2001) discusses the impact of the work of missionaries on the Xhosa-speaking people; it comes up in his study that was conducted in Cancele Village, Eastern Cape in 1996/1997. He notes that there was a conflict between the missionaries and the chiefs during the 19th and 20th century. The missionaries were in favour of abolishing traditional practices and to replace them with schooling and believing in Christianity. In contrast, the chiefs were not compromising their support of traditional beliefs and practices. The initiation ritual was amongst these practices. It was used as an instrument for conveying the message and the spirit of the building of homesteads (Ngwane 2001: 411).

Ngwane argues that the efforts of missionaries were directed at penetrating and transforming the daily social life of the African people. Their power to do so was attributed to the ownership of cattle, land, and their own patron chiefs. On the other hand, the chiefs had resources that were similar to those that belonged to the missionaries. Their distinct power was associated with the chiefly courts (Ngwane 2001: 411). This situation was sufficient to maintain an ongoing conflict between these two groups. However, the missionaries lost their power to control schools, as government took over the control of all Black education. These changes can be attributed to the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Ngwane 2001: 411). This study of Ngwane demonstrates that the conflict between missionaries and chiefs did not destroy the initiation ritual. Traditional leaders managed to ensure that this ritual is regulated till today. This means that the efforts of the missionaries were not strong enough to destroy this ritual.

Thus, despite many forces that attempted to abolish the initiation ritual, it remained resilient to them all through the years. Christianity has become successful in gaining the support of people all over the world, including among Xhosa-speakers. However, it did not succeed in rooting out the initiation ritual of the Xhosa-speaking people.

3.9 Conclusion

There are 3 points that may be drawn out of this chapter, namely i) the importance of being ‘man enough’, ii) the impact of HIV/AIDS on the initiation ritual, and iii) the resilience of the initiation ritual.

Being ‘man enough’: The point that emerges in this chapter discloses that the initiation rite promotes the ideology of being ‘man enough’. The literature shows that through this rite a man is being shaped into being a certain model of a man (as noted in the discussions in section 3.2 to 3.6), who should be ‘man enough’. There are certain qualities that are linked with this kind of a man. These include: i) He must have survival skills. i.e. he must be able to face hard times in life. The experience of the ‘bush-school’ is exactly what makes him to be ready for hard times. Some of this experience includes being able to endure physical pain (circumcision pain), he should be capable of coping with being insulted, humiliated, and being placed in an inferior position. ii) He must be able to build his homestead; he must be a bread winner. This one is encouraged during admonitions. iii) He should have authoritative power.

i.e. he should be respected by community members, especially uncircumcised males and females. iv) The initiation ritual also encourages bonding with other men. Therefore he is expected to cooperate and build relationship with men in his village/township.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on initiation ritual: The fact that the initiation ritual goes together with circumcision makes it to be affected by the challenge of HIV/AIDS. This challenge calls for the need to change some of the practices that are used in conducting this ritual. This transformation is necessary in order to prevent boys from being infected by the virus. The decision on what to change, and how to do the change, should be left in the hands of the guardians of this rite, as will be argued in the last chapter.

Resilience of the initiation ritual: The initiation ritual has been influenced by several forces throughout the years (e.g. urbanization, lack of space to build initiation huts, HIV/AIDS, etc). These forces make it difficult to practice it sometimes. Christianity is one of them. It had tried (persistently) to destroy this rite but with no success. Therefore the initiation ritual of Xhosa-speakers has been amazingly resilient to forces that attempted to erode it.

CHAPTER 4: FIELDWORK RESULTS – INITIATION RITUALS AND MANHOOD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the outcomes of the fieldwork that was conducted in Butterworth, Eastern Cape. It aims to look at three points: i) To define the concept manhood. Manhood is defined as a community of men who often act collectively in taking care of the interests of their village/township. ii) To show that there are certain beliefs that are associated with manhood. For example, a man must not cry as he is regarded as a pillar of strength to his family. iii) To discuss the four phases of the male initiation ritual. Namely, *umngeno*, *ubukhwetha*, *umphumo* and *ubukrwala*.

This chapter is presented by means of a discussion of topics and subtopics: i) a discussion of manhood, ii) results of interviews on manhood, iii) personal observation about the journey towards manhood, and iv) *umphumo: a case study of Wanda and Nko*.

4.2 A Discussion of Manhood

From interacting with people in the community and in the ‘bush-school’, much information came out in connection with the concept of manhood. As a result, it became necessary to have a separate section in this chapter that deals with manhood. This section is organised into sub-sections, which include: i) people’s views about the concept of manhood, ii) the purpose of manhood, iii) stages of manhood, iv) an *injoli*, v) the responsibilities of manhood, vi) principles of manhood, and vii) the link between pain and ‘the ‘voice’.’

4.2.1 People’s Views about the Concept of Manhood

Manhood refers to the state of being a man rather than a woman or a child (Allen, 1992: 721). In agreement with the views of Allen (1992), this study confirms that manhood in the context of a Xhosa-speaking community means being a socially acceptable adult male who has gone through the initiation ritual.

Maturity in terms of a physical body, mental maturity and economic maturity, do not make an uncircumcised male automatically into a man.

Traditional Xhosa-speakers argue further that to qualify as a man (manhood), a male must not only undergo circumcision, but it must be traditional circumcision. Traditional circumcision is viewed as the only means to transform boys into men. According to this argument, manhood is to belong to an exclusive group of males who have undergone traditional circumcision. In other words, it excludes boys(uncircumcisedmales)and hospital-men’.

Manhood was also portrayed as how a man should conduct himself as an individual, among other men and in the community. It is not just about being circumcised the traditional way. It serves as a code of conduct for men, which develops in the name of having undergone traditional circumcision (received admonitions in the ‘bush-school’).

Brown (2003) has an interesting discussion of manhood and the associated code of conduct. She discusses masculinity linking it with morality. She focuses on males who were working in the coal mines in Nigeria in 1930 - 1945. She notes that the authorities in the mines perceived these men as inferior human beings. They even gave them terms like ‘boys’. On the other hand, their working environment ended up producing significant elements of masculinity to the men. The symbols of masculinity included the fact that their work required them to have physical strength and certain skills (Brown 2003:157).

An interesting point about this discussion was that masculinity was not just physical, instead it was an act of morality. It became a tool of courage, and generosity. Each man made a social obligation to develop his family, village and village group. For example, sponsoring a development project in his village, buying prestige goods (e.g. bicycles) for neighbours and his family (Brown 2003: 162).

Therefore, masculinity and manhood may be defined even beyond the physical features in a man. These two concepts contain a package of actions that is perceived to be channeled towards the common good of a community. This is ideally what the initiation ritual aim to achieve. After going through the ritual, the community hopes that males will become men who are capable of taking good care of themselves, their family and the community.

4.2.2 The Purpose of Manhood

The purpose of manhood is to ensure the smooth running of community affairs, which includes the following:

- To provide assistance and support in community ceremonies, e.g. funerals, weddings, graduation ceremonies, etc.
- To run traditional functions, e.g. the ‘coming-out ceremonies’, family rituals, etc. Men have the responsibility to monitor or maintain peace and order during the ‘coming-out phase’ and the ‘entering phase’. They also take care of initiates in the ‘bush-school’.
- To educate (informally) community members about manhood principles. As a result, members of the community end up having a common understanding about manhood. For example, in most Xhosa-speaking communities, it is generally known that a man should be a pillar of strength and support to his family. This makes a young man to grow up knowing that he is expected to try some means of earning an income (legal means) in order to feed his family.
- Lastly, to monitor whether men conduct themselves according to the principles of manhood.

4.2.3 Stages of Manhood – The View of the Orthodox Xhosa-speakers

The orthodox Xhosa-speakers believe that there are different stages in being a man. It is worth noting that the age of a man is not defined according to the number of years since he was born. Instead, it is how many years since he had undergone circumcision (*ubudala bendoda bubalwa ngezilimela*). Within this period there are stages. There is the senior stage, the less senior up to the junior stage. The stages of manhood are categorised as follows:

- The *Amaxhego* (elderly men). This stage begins from about 56 years since initiation ritual onwards.
- The *Udodana* (middle-aged men). It starts from about ten years since the initiation ritual up to about 55 years.
- The *Isifana* (young men). It starts from a year since the initiation ritual up to about nine years.
- The *Amakrwala* (graduates). A male who is below a year since his initiation ritual.

The unique benefits of traditional circumcision may be linked to the idea of the pain and the 'voice' (ilizwi). Men who have gone through traditional circumcision are bound together by their experience of having undergone this ritual. The common experience of how they survived this pain is what causes them to unite. The 'voice' that was used in persuading them to survive pain becomes a part of their unique experience. In another way, this pain is the necessary journey to be travelled in order to transform a boy into a man.

Therefore, traditional circumcision is not just a physical cut, it is a venture. Going through it is an act of courage. This venture is not different from climbing a mountain. However, an act of courage should develop from within an individual. This should not be imposed by the community, nor family members.

In short, one may wonder if traditional circumcision is indispensable. That is, if an initiation ritual takes place without it, would it be unsuccessful? The idea of adopting some safer method of circumcision may perhaps be worth to think about. It could add towards making this ritual sustainable?

4.2.4 An *Injoli*

In addition to these categories of manhood, a person called an *injoli* (food server) for the local village is appointed. An *Injoli* is a person whose responsibility is to serve meat and alcohol (*utywala*) in a traditional function. He is appointed by men of a particular village from the *udodana* category to serve on a voluntary basis. In appointing him, men use certain 'selection criteria': he must be someone who is not lazy to carry out his responsibilities (*umntu okhuthelayo*). In addition, he must be knowledgeable about the issues of traditional functions e.g. he must know the names for various cuts of meat. As a standard practice, there should be at least three *injoli* that represent a particular village. This trio usually consists of men who went to the initiation school at the same time. An *injoli* holds this position for a period of five to ten years.

As indicated, his role is to serve meat and alcohol in a kraal when there are traditional functions. His additional responsibility is to draw the attention of people (men in the kraal), in order to allow a speaker to deliver his speech. Once a speaker begins talking, other people are expected to be silent out of respect for him (*uyemisa xa kuzakubakho isithethi*). When an *injoli* resigns his duties, he receives a promotion from the elders to join their manhood category.

4.2.5 The Responsibility of Manhood during Traditional Rituals

As argued before, among the responsibilities (the key public responsibility) of manhood is to run traditional functions in communities. Firstly, a man in his particular household is responsible for conducting the traditional rituals on behalf of his family. He does this with the support of other men in the community. According to the cultural practice that is used by Xhosa-speakers, a woman is not allowed to perform a traditional function. To conduct a traditional function is a man's responsibility. If she has no husband (to do the ritual on behalf of the family, e.g. a widow), she must arrange for a man (usually an elderly man) who has the same clan name as her husband had to stand in. In the case of an unmarried woman, she must call a man who has the clan name of her father's descendants.

This discussion will now come back to the issue of men supporting each other in running traditional functions. In a function, men have certain roles that are allocated to them, for example, slaughtering a beast. Generally, men play the leadership role in these functions. A man who is hosting a traditional function becomes the project manager. He delegates duties to the supporting men. He is also accountable for the success or failure of this function. Among his responsibilities, he has to address the guests. This includes informing them about the programme of the day.

On the other hand, the role of men from the community (and their women) is to witness that a particular ceremony has actually taken place. The witnessing is not just being present at a ceremony, but an elderly man of the community must make a speech, which is a standard procedure for witnessing. The generic responsibilities of men from the community include slaughtering and skinning a beast/s. They also cook the meat and assist an *injoli* in serving it. They may do additional tasks as required, e.g. chopping wood. It is important to note that the duties of men in a traditional function are based on manhood categories. These duties are noted below:

a) The Elderly Men

This is a category of manhood that is no longer energetic (physically), but has wisdom about how rituals should be conducted. Because of their wisdom (about manhood and life), elders give advice to young men

on how they should perform their responsibilities. They act as executive members. They determine the time to serve meat and alcohol in a traditional function. Because they are the senior people, they are the ones who make speeches in a kraal. Further, as they have a high social status (in manhood and in a community), they receive the best parts of meat from the slaughtered animal/s.

b) The Middle Aged Men

They monitor young men to see whether they carry out their responsibilities properly (see young men below). They may be required to assist in doing the job if there are only a few young men. They are responsible for *ukuqoma* (tasting if the meat is ready to be served). It has been indicated earlier on that an *injoli* is selected from this category.

c) The Young Men

This is the category that has more responsibilities in traditional functions and in community affairs. The duties that are indicated earlier on are mainly done by them. To mention a few (of the community responsibilities): digging the graves when households have funerals, building initiation huts during the initiation seasons, slaughtering and skinning animals in community/traditional functions, etc. They are the ones who are responsible for watching boys who are going through the initiation ritual. The initiation guardians are also selected from this category.

d) The Graduates

These are trainees in manhood, as they have just graduated from the initiation schools. They basically assist younger men in their responsibilities. This is a way of helping them to learn the issues of manhood.

4.2.6 The Principles and Teachings of Manhood

The traditional Xhosa-speaking men view manhood as something that should be handled with care and with dignity, and it should be taught to the new generation of men. The new generation is also expected to teach it to the next generation. Traditional functions and initiation ceremonies are used as platforms to speak on

the teachings of manhood. The 'bush-school' is used as the main opportunity to teach manhood issues to initiates. The important issues that need to be highlighted in manhood teachings are: a) learning to deliver a speech (addressing people) in traditional functions, b) allocation of a 'share', and c) regulating the considerate behaviour that is expected of them towards other people.

a) Learning to Deliver a Speech

The making of a speech is one of the means of expressing manhood teachings and principles. In addressing other people (men in a kraal), men must follow a certain procedure:

- The most senior man is the one who should address people when making a speech.
- Firstly, a man should stand up before he addresses the people, and he must wear a jacket. Thereafter, he must talk with order, dignity and use the traditional Xhosa jargon.
- Once he is finished talking, he must sit down to allow another man (also a senior) to talk (respond).
- It is a common practice that no one should be talking on the side while a speaker is addressing people.

b) The Allocation of a 'Share' (Isabelo)

As a principle, men in a kraal (in a traditional function) sit in a certain order. This seating is done in terms of groups (categories): elderly men, middle-aged men, young men and graduates. This is a way of promoting respect between men, by putting the people of the same age group together. This is also a method of recognising the significance of being a man. This recognition is revealed when a man is being allocated a 'share' (of manhood). An allocation of a 'share' refers to being offered a place to sit with a suitable category of men (e.g., young men, elderly men, etc). In addition to the seating order, this allocation also includes sharing meat and alcohol with men.

The idea of 'share' allocation goes beyond just sitting with the appropriate category of men, drinking and eating meat. All the arrangements have a social meaning to the participants. In short, it is a confirmation of one's status in manhood. In other words, when a certain man receives a 'share', it means the manhood community welcomes and recognises him as a 'real man'. As noted before, 'a real man' gains community

respect when he addresses people in traditional functions and community gatherings. This also implies that he qualifies to get married and to perform family rituals.

‘Hospital-men’ and boys have no share in manhood. Boys do not qualify since they have not yet undergone this ritual. Historically, there has been a general perception that a boy is a ‘dog’ (*inkwenkwe yinja*). Stated differently, a dog is considered to be a worthless animal, therefore a boy is a worthless person. Similarly, a ‘hospital-man’ is also not recognised as a man, since he has undergone circumcision by means of a soft and comfortable method (as indicated before). Thus, in terms of the norms of the orthodox Xhosa-speakers, he is not included in manhood; instead, he is perceived as a boy.

One of the interviewees in the ‘bush-school’ (Mchubakazi Township) said, “*indoda eyolukele esibhedlele ayinasabelo*” (“a man who has been circumcised in hospital has no ‘share’ in manhood”). Therefore, in terms of this view, it is justified to stigmatise a ‘hospital-man’ and to look down on him for not being man enough to submit to traditional circumcision.

c) Regulating Considerate Behaviour towards Other People

One of the principles of manhood is respect. During the process of attending traditional functions, each man is expected to behave in an orderly manner, which shows respect to other men (young and old). This considerate behaviour has to be maintained; each man represents manhood in his local community and the Xhosa community as a whole. Moreover, men are expected to also maintain this behaviour towards female participants in a function. For example, it is expected that there will be no cases of violence against or harassment of women. They are supposed to treat women with respect and assist them whenever there is a need.

4.2.7 The Link between Circumcision Pain and ‘The Voice’

Among the aims of this study was to understand the significance of traditional circumcision when conducting this ritual. The respondents (‘bush-men’) motivated that it is not just the circumcision operation, but the “‘voice’” that goes with it. From having conversations with the respondents, it became necessary to write a few paragraphs that focus on the ‘voice’:

After the circumcision operation is over, an initiate is left with a circumcision wound to deal with. This wound goes together with excruciating pain. This is not just an ordinary pain, but a symbolic pain that gives birth to a man. It is a pain that separates boys from men. Those who endure it successfully are welcomed with joy and honour by the community. Those who do not or would not go through it successfully are mostly isolated from manhood.

This wound is painful to the extent that an initiate may be tempted to escape the 'bush-school'. This initiate hates being a male (a Xhosa male). He hates everything including the man who dresses his wound. But because it is accompanied by *ilizwi* (the "voice"), he starts experiencing it differently. This 'voice' implies that the traditional nurse and the 'bush men' talk to him as they dress his wound. They tell him that out of this 'pain' he will be born again (*uyakuzalwa ngokutsha*).

Boyhood inside him will be destroyed and a man will be born. As they dress his wound, men don't just use only their hands, but the "voice" as well. They negotiate with him, sometimes shout at him. The aim is to do whatever it takes to penetrate his mind, to appeal for his permission to dress his wound. This "voice" is basically used to ask for the initiate's co-operation, rather than applying force in dressing this painful wound. It is also used to plead with him to train himself to be able to dress his own wound.

As the time goes on, an initiate co-operates. In consequence of this co-operation, his wound makes progress and he develops skills in dressing it by himself. Eventually, he becomes the one who dresses other initiates who are still new in the school. He also takes the responsibility of using the power of the "voice" in dressing their wounds. He develops a great sense of empathy, because he knows the pain that is being experienced by other initiates.

When he is a man in the community, he understands this thing called 'pain'. He knows that it goes together with emotions. He understands that to ease it, one must throw his heart into the process, and then his body will follow. He becomes aware that in life (as a man), there will be 'pain' in one way or another. Because he has been trained on how to handle it gracefully, he is prepared for the challenges of life.

In addition to dressing the wound, the ‘voice’ is also used in teaching initiates about manhood issues in the ‘bush-school.’ This knowledge becomes the secret he keeps as a man; it distinguishes him from those who never went to this school. Further, the ‘voice’ also becomes a necessary part in delivering admonitions to other graduates. The admonitions are viewed as important in preparing an initiate for the challenges of manhood.

To sum up, the research findings indicate that manhood refers to males who belong to a particular community and have undergone the initiation ritual, especially by means of traditional circumcision. These men interact on a regular basis; especially during traditional functions; they contribute greatly in running community affairs through giving support to community members. For example, digging graves when there are funerals. The findings also show that manhood is guided by principles; it has certain stages which are used in separating seniors from junior men; and it is also based on a shared experience on having gone through the pain of becoming a man.

4.3 Results of Interviews on Manhood

In order to collect data, we (myself and the research assistant) used a list of research topics as a guideline in doing interviews. As indicated earlier, the study involved interviewing members of the community. The findings for this section are organised as follows:

4.3.1 A Description of a Man

In this topic the interviewees were asked to give a description of a man. The responses are categorised into three sub-topics. These are: a) a boy should undergo an initiation ritual to be a man, b) he is expected to adhere to the required code of conduct, and, c) he must build a homestead (*intsebenzo*).

a) A Boy Should Undergo an Initiation Ritual to be a Man

This ritual was described as being compulsory for transforming a boy into a responsible man. Without it a male is not recognised as a man. All the participants in this research felt that a male must first go through the initiation ritual in order to be a man. There are common ideas that were linked to a male who has not

undergone the initiation ritual. It was noted that an uncircumcised male will eventually show unusual behaviour (*imikhwa*) later on in his life. His property does not belong to him; instead it belongs to his home. He has no right to conduct traditional functions; instead he must ask another man to do it on his behalf. He cannot get married, because no woman would dare marry a boy. These ideas came from a diversity of people. That is, men and women; young and old; plus the educated and less educated.

In addition, the interviewees also indicated that a male may undergo either traditional circumcision or hospital circumcision, as long as he does this ritual. But the respondents pointed out that if he goes through hospital circumcision, he must still do the family ritual (*amasiko akokwabo*) (see the definition of terms in appendices). This feeling of not having a problem with hospital circumcision came mostly from the elders and adult people, both males and females. In contrast, young people felt strongly that to be a man, one must go through traditional circumcision. This idea came from both males and females.

Among the reasons that were noted in support of traditional circumcision, two of them were indicated by young men: “Traditional circumcision makes a man develop the ability to endure physical and emotional pain.” “He gains new rules on how to conduct himself” (*ufumana imithetho emitsha*). These new rules are derived from the admonitions that go with this ritual.

Ultimately, the respondents also indicated that traditional circumcision does not automatically transform a boy into a man. For this ritual to be complete, it must go together with a code of conduct that is taught to initiates in this school. Even the ‘bush men’ talked more about the teachings of this school, rather than the actual benefits of traditional circumcision. But they were adamant on criticising hospital circumcision, while emphasising the importance of traditional circumcision.

b) Code of Conduct

In describing a man, most of the respondents put forward a code of conduct as being important. The majority of the interviewees mentioned respect as a key issue in being a man. This refers to a man respecting himself and other people in his social environment. They also mentioned that being a man goes deeper than the cut of traditional circumcision. Circumcision was viewed as being a part of the total package required in being a man.

This package includes admonitions, learning manhood issues, being circumcised. A man was also described as someone who thinks before he acts (*uzikisa ukucinga*). One respondent noted, “being a man is not just the cutting of a foreskin, it is the use of his mind.” The research participants also pointed out that being a man comes originally from the teachings of his home while he was still a young boy (from the home of a boy to admonitions of the ‘bush-school’). If one did not get the teachings from one’s home as one grew up, this ritual might not help in developing good behaviour. This is another view that came from the adults and elders, also from both males and females.

A sense of maturity was also indicated as one of the features of manhood. A man should conduct himself as an adult. He should refrain from having many girlfriends. Instead, he must get married and build his own family. Lastly, interviewees highlighted that a true man must disapprove of antisocial behaviour (*umtu othiyene nentlondi*). For example, a man is expected to stay away from violence and criminal activities. He should conduct himself in an exemplary manner, as a socially responsible citizen.

Further, being mature and socially responsible also comes up in the discussion of masculinity by Hunter (2005). He talks about the *isoka* masculinity during the 1940s and 1950s in KwaZulu-Natal. The term *isoka* refers to an unmarried man who has many girlfriends (Hunter 2005: 143). During those years, to have many women was an adorable status; it symbolized masculinity. However, within this process, a man had a duty to act responsibly. Although he had many partners, he was expected to marry each of them in the end. Being married and building a homestead (see below) was a part of masculinity. If a man did not marry the partners (and build a homestead), or had too many girlfriends, he would become a disgraceful *isoka*. Therefore, he would lose respect from his community. Thus, Hunter shows that a code of conduct is significant in masculinity. The adventures that accompany masculinity are perceived as beautiful when they are practiced together with acting responsibly.

c) Building a Homestead (Intsebenzo)

In addition to the above points, building a homestead was described as being essential to being a man. This homestead building was portrayed as including the following:

- He must buy his own livestock (*imfuyo*) and get married. Livestock is used to pay *lobola* and feed his family. Livestock was highlighted as being important, as it is a symbol of wealth for a man.

- A man has a responsibility to take care of the daily activities in his home, e.g. taking livestock to and from the veld (if it is in a rural area), carry out maintenance on broken items in the house, etc. One of the respondents said, “he is a third hand to his father” (*usisandla sesithathu kutata wakhe*).
- He must conduct family rituals. Once in a while, he is expected to slaughter an animal(s) and serve traditional beer. By doing this, he is asking the ancestors’ blessings in building his homestead. One respondent said, “a man dies trying” (*indoda ifa izama*).

The point regarding building a homestead also surfaces in the discussion on masculinity by Hunter (2005). His discussion revolves around masculinity to Zulu-speakers during the 20th century. He argues that besides bravery and fighting skills (especially during the times of warfare), a man’s masculinity was revealed through his economic power. This power was attributed to him owning a homestead with its symbolic centre, the cattle kraal. Importantly, this kraal was not expected to be empty, it had to be full of cattle (Hunter 2005: 143).

Further, the masculinity of a man was uncovered by him having several wives. The marriage to these wives was not just about him fulfilling his needs and boosting his self-esteem. It was his means of contributing to the community. This implies that he had to make a financial contribution to the family of each wife through paying the *lobola*. In addition, he had to take care of each wife’s needs e.g. buying her clothes, food, etc (Hunter 2005: 143).

Ultimately, the wives would give birth to children. The children together with the wives would form a solid source of labour that produced wealth for the man and the entire family. The process of wealth production could include working in mealie-fields, taking care of livestock, etc. Therefore masculinity, as discussed by Hunter (2005: 143), played a huge role in developing the economic base of a man’s family and contributing to his community. The source of this wealth was the homestead.

In conclusion, this study reveals that a man is perceived as a male who has undergone the initiation ritual; it does not matter whether he chose traditional or hospital circumcision; a man is defined in terms of being able to conduct himself well; and he must be able to build his own homestead.

4.3.2 The Unique Benefits of Undergoing Traditional Circumcision

Two sets of views developed on this topic. The first one pointed out that there are unique benefits in undergoing traditional circumcision. The second one indicated that traditional circumcision provides no unique benefits.

a) The first Response: There are Unique Benefits in Undergoing Traditional Circumcision

- It makes a man gain more respect from the community. This results in him gaining a sense of belonging.
- He gains knowledge about manhood issues that are taught in the ‘bush-school’.
- Traditional circumcision teaches men respect due to the influence of the elders as they are expected to be involved in it. This is contrary to hospital circumcision, which is done by nurses in a hospital environment.
- He gets recognition as a real man, in manhood and in the local community at large. Consequently, a man gets his ‘share’ during the traditional ceremonies (*ufumana isabelo sakhe*).

Most of these responses came from the youths between 18-30 years, from both males and females.

b) The Second Response: There are no Unique Benefits in Undergoing Traditional Circumcision

The respondents felt that everybody (Xhosa males) must first go through the initiation ritual in order to be a man. They indicated that it doesn’t matter whether it is traditional or hospital circumcision. But they emphasised that if he chooses hospital circumcision, he must still perform his family rituals. One elderly man noted, “*akukho mahluko, ukuba zibekwa apha kunye zonke ziyafana*” (There is no difference, if you display the penises they all look the same). These are the kind of responses that came from the elderly men, from the age of 50 years onwards.

The results of this study demonstrated no distinctive benefits in using traditional circumcision. Instead there was a majority response to the initiation ritual playing a key role in building a Xhosa-speaking man.

Hospital and traditional circumcision were both favoured as long as they were accompanied by a family ritual. Traditional circumcision was acknowledged for making a male earn community respect.

4.3.3 People's Perception of a 'Hospital-Man'

On this topic, two opposing views came up. The first one argued that a male who has been circumcised in hospital is not a man. The second view pointed out that even if he has gone through hospital circumcision he is still a man.

a) *The First View - He is not a Man*

- A man who has been circumcised in hospital is not a man at all (*akayondoda kwaphela*). Instead, 'bush men' used various names and concepts to label him. "A 'hospital-man' is exactly like a boy". "A boy is even better than him, since he still has not undergone this ritual". "Uligwala, gwala" ("He is a coward").
- A 'hospital-man' has no 'share' in manhood (*akanasabelo ebudodeni*). That is, he does not fit in the community of manhood. One of the respondents said "*ungundinga sithebeni*" (he is a 'shareless' man).
- A man who has been circumcised in hospital and also not done the family ritual is not civilized at all (*akaphucukanga*).
- He is a man in his own way, but not a man. One of the interviewees said, "he is not different from boys because there are still manhood issues he cannot discuss with men" (*kusekho izinto ekufuneka zifihliwe kuye*).
- The respondents also commented on a male who went to the 'bush-school', but escaped to a hospital later on. He was viewed as having half the information about manhood. Some derogatory terms were also used in referring to him. He was labelled as *ilulwane* (a bat). A bat is an animal that is a mixture of a bird and a mouse. In this case, he is a mixture of traditional circumcision and hospital circumcision. He is half a real man and also a part of hospital circumcision (*sisigabhu sendoda*). It was also indicated that he is half a man because he did not receive all the teachings of the school. These teachings are done on a continuous basis from the first day in the bush till the last day.

b) The Second Perspective - He is a Man

This view allowed a certain level of tolerance to a man who has been through hospital circumcision. The following points were highlighted:

- If he behaves himself in a civilized way he earns respect. The respondents went on arguing that a man should behave himself whether he has gone through traditional or hospital circumcision.
- If a ‘hospital-man’ uses his mind appropriately, he earns respect from the people in the community. This idea is in consensus with the previous view, which notes that a man is someone who thinks before he acts (see code of conduct in section 4.3.1. (b).
- He should be respected as a human being and for his choice of the circumcision method. Surprisingly, this response came from the ‘bush men’ (young men) in the initiation huts of Mchubakazi Township. One of them said, “In the initiation school, we were taught to respect another man’s choice of circumcision.”
- To stigmatise a male who has gone through hospital circumcision was noted as a violation of his human rights.

All in all, the outcomes of this section indicate a strong belief among some people that a male who has been circumcised in hospital is not a man at all; dehumanising terms are still being used in referring to him. This attitude is dominant among the supporters of traditional circumcision.

4.3.4 Perspectives on Men’s Expression of Emotions

In this topic two examples of emotions were provided to the interviewees. That is, crying and fear. The respondents commented on the emotion of crying. Two opposing views came up. The first one argued that a man should not cry. The second one noted that it is acceptable for a man to cry:

a) The First View – a Man Should not Cry

- A man was not born to be a crying person (*indoda ayidalelwanga kukhala*). He should hide his emotions and express them through talking. Two respondents noted, “a man is not a weak person by

nature; crying is a sign of weakness,” “*Indoda ayikhali iyangqukruleka*” (“a man does not cry, he cries in a manner that hides his crying”).

- A man should not show that he is crying and his pain must be just his own pain.
- He is a pillar of strength and support to his family. If he is crying, who is supposed to console the family? Once he cries, everybody starts losing hope. One 56-year old man commented, “I have never seen a man crying, a man has his own way of expressing his pain.”
- In times of pain and difficulties (in a family crisis), he should not cry but strengthen other people. Men are not emotional beings by their nature (in comparison with women).

b) The Second View - It is Acceptable for a Man to Cry

- It is acceptable for a man to express his emotions, in order to relieve himself of a stressful situation. This makes other people take notice that he has a problem. It also shows that he has a weakness as a human being. This does not degrade his status of manhood, however.
- When a man fears that his life is in danger (e.g. being assaulted), he should cry out. Another man commented, “*awunakunyamezela ukufa njenge gusha*” (“you cannot face death like a sheep”).
- It is significant that a man should express his emotions and not hide them. This helps in preventing future problems like suicide. One mother commented, “Even an ox bellows when it is being slaughtered” (“*nenkomo iyabhonga xa ixhelwa*”).

Interestingly, the majority of the respondents mentioned that some men tend to cry when they get drunk. Some mentioned that this kind of crying could be an expression of emotions that have been bottled up for a long time (e.g. from the previous months or years). Another interviewee commented, “*kuvuka izinto ezindala*” (“emotional burdens from the past come back”). Some of the respondents said crying that goes with drunkenness is an expression of boyhood behaviour. This means that, this particular man is showing boyhood behaviour that was not expressed fully while he was a boy. In other words, he is going back to the phase of *ukukhonya*. (see *ukukhonya* in Section 4.4.1. (a)). They also indicated that crying that is motivated by drunkenness is not acceptable.

The aim of the initiation ritual is to create a man who becomes a pillar of support and strength to his family and community. Showing fear and crying are generally considered to be signs of weakness in men. This is my experience of growing up in the community of Xhosa-speakers.

The findings of this study have shown a strong disapproval for males who express their feelings. Crying and showing fear are perceived to be a shame. A little tolerance is shown for a man to express his feelings. However, he must only do that in exceptional circumstances, for example, when a man's life is in danger. Interestingly, it was reported by some people that men do cry involuntarily in certain instances. This has been indicated in cases where men find themselves crying once they are drunk. It seems drunkenness makes it easier for them to let go of their feelings.

4.3.5 Perception of Traditional Circumcision as a Risk

This sub-section topic is focused on the controversy and debate about traditional circumcision. It is a part of this study's aim to investigate whether this ritual has negative consequences. Two sets of views came up. One side argued that traditional circumcision is not a risk, while the other one said it is a risk.

a) Traditional Circumcision is a Risk

- Some boys have personal weaknesses in their bodies. That is, they are not strong enough to deal with the diet that is used in the 'bush-school'. In addition, their blood might not be compatible with the traditional method of dressing the wound. Therefore, this ritual is a risk to them.
- For the fact that boys come from the 'bush-school' into hospitals, it means that this ritual is a danger. One of the respondents said, "*isuka ehlathini ihambe iye esibhedlele*" ("This penis comes from the bush into a hospital").
- There was also a feeling that the method of dressing the wound that is used in this school is not hygienic, in comparison to hospital circumcision. Therefore, traditional circumcision puts boys in a vulnerable position of a risk (due to complications in their wounds).

b) Traditional Circumcision is not a Risk

- The interviewees noted that this ritual is not a risk if it is done properly. That is, it must be conducted by people who understand it.
- The prescribed steps of the Department of Health need to be followed, then a boy will not be at risk. For example, he must first undergo medical examinations before he goes to the school.
- Traditional circumcision is not dangerous; an initiate has a responsibility to take care of himself. A traditional nurse on the other hand, has the duty to take care of his initiate. Beyond that, an initiate is like “a dog that licks his own wound” (with no medical treatment used) (“*uyinja ezikhoth’amanxeba*”). According to the procedures of this school, this statement means that an initiate should dress his own wound without using any medication.

The majority of the interviewees indicated that traditional circumcision is not a risk if properly executed. There were few of them who felt that it is a risk. Out of eighteen respondents, five of them argued that it is a risk, while thirteen noted that it is not.

To sum up, although the respondents mostly indicated that there was a low risk, the findings on this question and other information also indicate that traditional circumcision is an operation that puts boys in a vulnerable position on getting wound infection. In worse situations the consequences could even be the death of initiates. Despite the views of many younger men, traditional circumcision can be regarded as a risk to the health and life of initiates. Further, the results of this section also indicate that this ritual is not regarded as a risk if it is practised by people who have knowledge of it.

4.4 Personal Observations about the Journey towards Manhood

As a researcher, I felt that it is necessary for me to have firsthand experience of this ritual, apart from my own initiation in Butterworth. Hence I did participant observation in the initiation huts of Mchubakazi Township in Butterworth. My findings are that in order to be a man (in the context of Xhosa-speakers) a certain journey must be travelled by a male person. This journey consists of four phases, namely: the ‘entering phase’ (*umgeno*), the phase of being an initiate (*ubukhwetha*), the ‘coming out phase’ (*umphumo*) and the phase of being a graduate (*ubukrwala*).

4.4.1 The 'Entering Phase' (*Umngeno*)

This is the first phase in the journey towards being a man. It is divided into three periods. These are, a) the preparatory period of *ukukhonya*, b) the ritual of slaughtering an animal and c) the period of undergoing circumcision.

a) The Period of *Ukukhonya*

This period involves activities that take place before the actual day of undergoing circumcision. It often involves a boy that will go to the 'bush-school' behaving wildly. It could be one or two boys, or a group of those who will go through this ritual at the same time. They are generally accompanied by other boys (friends) who will not be undergoing the ritual at this time. This collective group of boys runs around in a village (township), shouting and carrying fighting sticks (*iintonga*). For example, their shouting may go as follows, "*Ndiyaya emadodeni!*" ("I am going into manhood!"). One initiate told us:

"We were two boys that were going to the 'bush-school'. We did the ukukhonya for just one day. We were accompanied by a group of other boys that would not be going through this ritual" (interview with initiates in Mchubakazi initiation huts).

The word *ukukhonya* literally means shouting. This process of shouting is a mixture of arrogance, celebration and a little bit of violence (e.g. beating dogs, chickens and pigs that run around in the neighbourhood). Shouting is done with the aim of announcing to the community that a certain boy is leaving boyhood to join manhood. However, he must do this in a manner that does not violate other people's rights. This is an expected behaviour when a boy decides to join manhood. The reasoning behind this expectation is that a boy should be given freedom to release all the "boyhood" that exists inside him. This freedom is given with the hope that when he becomes a man he will never behave (misbehave) like a boy again. Once he becomes a man, he will be expected to conduct himself with respect and dignity.

I have indicated before that participants in the *ukukhonya* are boys that will be going to the 'bush-school', as well as other boys that accompany the host boys in the activities of the *ukukhonya* process. Most of these boys' behaviour can be explained by the fact that they are drunk. A boy that does *ukukhonya* can be

identified by the clothes he is wearing. For example, his trousers and T-shirts may be torn (*zikrazukile*), which makes him look wild. These boys would normally have a whistle (*impempe*) which they blow as they run around shouting. This is a kind of an event that draws attention from passer-bys. The relatives and neighbours, especially females, would be ululating (*bayayiyizela*) to give support to this boy.

The *ukukhonya* is generally a continuous process that runs until the morning of the day on which circumcision will be taking place. Its duration varies from time to time, depending on the boy and his family. It could take place from as little as just one day, up to a period of two weeks. In fact some boys do not do *ukukhonya* at all. See this response from an initiate:

“We were two boys that were going to the bush together. We did not do ukukhonya, and we were not even drinking alcohol. It was just a normal day to us, as we did not see the need to do it. I have just come back from Pretoria in two days time, before the actual day of circumcision” (an interview with the initiate, a first year student at Medunsa). However, it leaves a question in the eyes of the community members if it is not done.

As indicated before, the aim of *ukukhonya* is to acknowledge that a particular boy is leaving the life of being a boy to join that of being a man. This acknowledgement is directed to the boy’s peer group and to the community at large. *Ukukhonya* also acts as a form of entertainment to his community, as it includes serving alcohol, slaughtering animals and playing music sometimes. In addition, this is the method of collecting and receiving gifts from friends and relatives. Mostly, friends and relatives provide the boy with gifts as soon as they are notified of his intentions to go to the bush. The gifts may include money, chickens, pigs, etc. The chickens and pigs that walk around the village may also be taken by force (as noted above). That is, they may kill several animals and take them to a secluded place to cook them. This kind of behaviour is generally excused by the community members as it is not viewed as an act of crime.

b) The Ritual of Slaughtering an Animal

The ritual of slaughtering may involve sacrificing a sheep or a goat, depending on the preference of that particular family. This ritual also includes serving traditional beer (*umqombothi*). It generally takes place on the morning of the day on which a boy is circumcised. During this day (morning), there is a change in the group of people who surround a boy. He is no longer surrounded by boys; instead it is men, especially

those who will take him to a traditional surgeon for circumcision. The slaughtering ritual is conducted in a kraal. It involves a goat or sheep being slaughtered, a boy eats *umkhono* (the right-hand side front leg of an animal), and the shaving of his head. All his clothes are taken off, and his naked body is then covered with a blanket. Note that some homes do not slaughter animals at all (during this stage) until the ‘coming out ceremony’ but they still serve traditional beer. All this is done based on the procedures of that particular clan (*isiduko*).

c) The Period of Undergoing Circumcision

During this period a boy is escorted by men to a traditional surgeon. This normally becomes a moment of anxiety to him, but he must pretend that he fears nothing. In fact, men surround him every step of the way to ensure that he has no chance of escaping, should he be tempted to do so. When a boy is accompanied on his way to a traditional surgeon, men sing a specific traditional song called *somagwaza*, and they are carrying their fighting sticks. It is interesting to note that this is the very same song that is used by men during the ‘coming out ceremony’, when they bring him back to the community with a new status of being a man (see section 4.4.3. the ‘coming out phase’)

This is the dramatic moment, to see men escorting this boy, leaving the community behind until they disappear in the bush. Usually parents (mothers) become worried about this unknown journey, but they just hope that everything will go well. Their concern is understandable these days, because some boys end up being hospitalized while others die in the ‘bush-school’. All this is attributed to the initiation tragedies that take place in the name of manhood (see section 1.2.2: the ‘initiation tragedies’).

This is also the moment of ‘the fear of the unknown’ to the boy, as he does not know how painful it is to undergo circumcision. Once a boy goes through this operation, his status changes immediately; he becomes a man. However, it is just a small step forward into the journey of manhood. That is, he still needs to undergo the procedures of the ‘bush-school’ before he becomes a man. The traditional nurse, in Mchubakazi Township commented, “Circumcision changes everything to the boy. It changes his status of being a boy into a man. Immediately, the initiate starts to speak the language of the bush-school.”

After circumcision, a boy is taught a new language of respect? (the *hlonipha language*), and how he should behave himself in the ‘bush-school’. Circumcision therefore, marks the end of *umngeno* and it starts the beginning of a new phase (being an initiate). The word *umngeno* means a “process of entering”; in this case a boy has entered the school of manhood.

4.4.2 The Phase of Being an Initiate (*Ubukhwetha*)

This is the phase during which a Xhosa-speaking male stays in the bush as an initiate. He is not a boy anymore and is also not a man yet. The aim of being an initiate is to make him go through the transformation process of this school to turn him into a man. Throughout this period, the life of an initiate depends on a traditional nurse. This traditional nurse has the responsibility of dressing an initiate’s wound (from circumcision), and to teach him about manhood issues. On the other hand, a traditional nurse also depends on the support of men who normally stay in (or are regular visitors to) the ‘bush-school’. These men provide this support through giving advice concerning the dressing of the wound and by teaching an initiate about manhood.

The discussion of this phase is divided into eight sections. These are, a) participants in the initiation ritual and their responsibilities, f) the dressing code of an initiate, b) relationship between participants, c) daily activities for an initiate, d) atmosphere in the ‘bush-school’, g) communication in the ‘bush-school’, h) rules of the ‘bush-school’ and i) the *umojiso* ritual and e) the symbolism of being an initiate.

a) Participants in the Initiation Ritual and Their Responsibilities

The participants in the daily activities of the ‘bush-school’ are: a traditional nurse (*ikhankatha*), men (*amadoda*), an initiate (*umkhwetha*), boys (*amakhwenkwe*) and a girl (*intombazana*) that cooks for an initiate. Each of these participants has a role to play.

i. A Traditional Nurse

As pointed out before, the responsibility of a traditional nurse is to dress the wound of an initiate. The success or failure in the healing of a boy’s wound depends on the nurse. In fact the whole life of an initiate

depends on the nurse during this stage. This is because he does not only dress the wound, he also informs him about matters of manhood and he manages safety and security in the school (eg. reporting criminal activities to the police and the initiate's parents). He also ensures that an initiate sticks to the restrictive diet of this school, particularly during the first eight days.

ii. Men (Young Men)

Men generally give support to a traditional nurse, that is:

- They do regular inspections of an initiate's wound. They give advice on how to make it heal faster, whenever it is necessary.
- Together with a traditional nurse, they teach an initiate on matters of manhood. These men sometimes bring food from home to an initiate in the bush. On one of our visits to the initiation huts of Mchubakazi, three men popped in to bring food. This food was just a dry samp with no beans.
- They also act as security officers in the school. In other words, they ensure that a traditional nurse and an initiate stay in a safe environment. They act as security against witches and criminal activities that could occur in this school.
- These men generally sleep in the school and are usually armed. For example, they carry knives, fighting sticks, assegais, etc.

One day, I and the research assistant visited the initiation huts of Mchubakazi Township. We arrived in the morning at about 06h15. We came across a group of men who were sitting outside the initiation hut. In our conversation with them, we inquired about why they were sitting there so early in the morning. They responded by saying that they normally sleep in the bush. One of them said, "we sleep here, the initiates are not supposed to be left alone in the veld."

This response was accompanied by a story (from these men), about an initiate who was nearly stolen by the witches at night. They say this incident took place in the previous year (2005) in one of the initiation huts in Mchubakazi Township. One noted: "we visited the initiate in the morning, only to find him lying down, half unconscious. His mouth was opened, while his whole tongue was out of his mouth." According to these men, this is a sign that indicates that the initiate was nearly bewitched that night. Therefore, they

warned that initiates should not be left alone with no men around. Most of these men (who sleep in the bush) are relatives to the initiates. For the purpose of this research, they will be called ‘men-of-the-bush’ or ‘bush-men.’ In cases where ‘men-of-the-bush’ are not available, boys are asked to substitute them (see boys below 4.4.2 a, iv).

iii. An Initiate

An initiate has the responsibility to co-operate with a traditional nurse while he does the dressing of his wound. He must learn matters of manhood, and practice the ‘*hlonipha* language’ he has been taught by men. An additional role of an initiate is to do the daily activities that are allocated to him (see daily activities below in section 4.4.2 (c)).

iv. Boys

The responsibility of boys in this school is to bring food from home to an initiate. They also collect empty dishes from the ‘bush-school’ to take them home. They act as messengers for an initiate and men, between the bush and an initiate’s home (or community). In addition, they also sleep in this school when it is necessary; that is, they act as watchdogs for an initiate (see section on men above, section 4.4.2. (a) ii). They are expected to report to men (in the bush or in a community) once they suspect that there is something that could put the life of an initiate in danger.

v. A Cook

This is a girl whose role is to cook food for an initiate at the homestead. We were informed that this girl is usually a relative who does not have a child. On her way to deliver food to an initiate, she is expected to use the shortest route. This is a standard procedure, in order to prevent evil spirits from entering the food of an initiate.

b) Relationship Between Participants

There is a hierarchical relationship between participants in this school. The following can be noted:

- The order of relationship is that men (and the traditional nurse) are the superiors, while an initiate (and boys) are inferiors. Men have authoritative power over an initiate by the virtue of their knowledge about this ritual. An initiate, on the other hand, is submissive to the men. This is because he depends on them to heal his wound and to gain knowledge about being a man. An example of the superiority of a man is sometimes shown when a man visits an initiation hut. He would shout certain slogans as he is coming from a distance until he enters a hut. In return, an initiate is expected to respond with another slogan of submissiveness. If he does not respond, he will be beaten (by a man with a fighting stick in his hand) because he has disobeyed a senior (a man).
- Generally, a man gains respect from an initiate due to the fact that he has been through this ritual. In fact, an initiate admires a man.
- An initiate, on the other hand, has superior status over a boy. This is because he has passed the inferior stage of boyhood and is on his way to join the superior one of manhood. His power may be seen when he makes use of a boy as his messenger. For example, he may ask him to fetch food or water from his home, and a boy would do so immediately.
- The relationship between initiates (who share the same school or one initiation hut) is that of being equal partners. They spend most of their time together sharing the pain of manhood and doing their daily activities.

c) Daily Activities of an Initiate

For the first eight days, an initiate is basically doing nothing. He spends most of his time lying down in his blankets. He wakes up in the morning, makes up his blankets (sleeping place) and lies back again. This is the most difficult stage to him because his wound is still fresh, therefore he is in pain. During this stage, he is under intensive care, when a traditional nurse spends most of his time looking after him and dressing his wound. Overall, an initiate is not allowed to move out of his hut within this period of eight days.

This initiate gains freedom of moving out of his hut after a ritual has been made (the *umojiso* ritual). This rite is done on the eighth day after the circumcision (see *umojiso below*, section 4.4.2 (i)). It is generally expected that an initiate's wound has healed by then. This makes him to be free to move in and out of his initiation hut. From then onwards, his daily activities may include any of the following:

- Chopping and gathering fire-wood as a preparation for his 'coming out ceremony' (*bagawula iinkuni*). He also collects wood in the veld in order to make fire in his initiation hut. At the beginning (of the initiation school), before the *umojiso* ritual, the traditional nurse is responsible for ensuring that there is fire burning in the hut. The aim of making this fire is to keep the hut warm and to chase snakes away.
- He goes to the river and bathes himself.
- He also attends to guests who visit him, e.g. a girlfriend, school mates, etc.

d) Atmosphere in the 'Bush-School'

In visiting the initiation huts of Mchubakazi Township, we experienced the feeling of being in the veld (bush). The initiation huts were located in a spot that has long green grass, with the bushy forest that is not far from it. Perhaps this is the reason this is called 'bush-school'. Walking in this grass could provoke the feeling of fear from being bitten by snakes. In addition, birds could be seen and heard singing in the nearby trees, other creatures of the veld could be seen as well (e.g. locusts).

Upon entering the initiation hut, there was the wild-life feeling. Once you are inside, the place looks dark, but one gets used to it as time goes on. As you take a look at the initiate inside the hut, he looks strange and frightening. His face and body are smeared with white ochre (*ingceke*) which make him appear wild, similar to a wild animal.

When the initiation hut is still new, the dominating smell is that of plants, with leaves scattered all over the floor. These leaves fall from the tree branches that were used in building the hut. This place (atmosphere) also feels and looks unusual. As a result, it becomes difficult for a visitor (who is not familiar with the environment) to just do anything he wants to do, without asking permission first. For example, one would hesitate to answer a cellular phone out of fear of breaking the rules.

e) The Symbolism that is linked with an Initiate and the 'Bush-School'

Being an initiate in the 'bush-school' is symbolic of becoming an animal (a wild animal): This 'animalness' can be observed by the fact that an initiate stays in the forest (bush/veld) and is wearing no clothes. As indicated before, he smears ochre all over his body revealing only his head and eyes. This appearance makes him look frightening, just like a wild animal. He walks bare footed, he washes in the river and stays in the less hygienic and uncomfortable conditions of the bush. Moreover, he also shies away from certain people (married women), just like wild animals would do. Overall, if you put all the factors together, some impression is created that an initiate resembles an animal rather than a human being.

The fire and its symbolism of warmth and protection from evil spirits: In a hut of an initiate there is a fire that is always burning. This fire symbolizes warmth, just like a welcoming home. This fire also becomes a means for chasing away evil spirits. It is through this fire that traditional medicine is burned; smoke is inhaled as a medicine and it spreads all over the hut.

The unsafeness of an initiate's living space: During the initiation process, an initiate lives in an uninhabited space that symbolizes unsafeness (in the bush). The term 'bush-school' is attributed to the fact that an initiate stays in a bushy area. It is bushy because it is the veld.

This study supports the research of Hammond-Tooke (1995). As noted in section 2.4.3, he argues that an initiate lives close to the forest that is not safe and symbolizes danger. This danger is contrasted with the safe space of a homestead. It is definitely not safe to stay in the veld. It makes an initiate vulnerable to several types of danger. For example: he could be attacked by wild animals, he is in danger of being burnt by veld fires, the veld has snakes that could bite him, and he is also exposed to harmful insects. Further, this space is unsafe because an initiate stays in a hut that is not secured (i.e. not locked, no security fence, nor gate, etc). He stays away from his family that used to protect him when he grew up. Instead he has the company of people he was not familiar with ('men-of-the-bush') while he was still a boy. When these factors are put together, the bush remains a symbol of an unsafe place for a person to stay in.

An initiate's hut is a symbol of a spot where boyhood gets buried, and manhood is born: During the initiation school, most of the daily activities take place inside the hut. These include the dressing of the

wound and teachings of manhood. This makes the hut to be the heart of manhood in the 'bush-school'. It is a sacred place that stands on behalf of manhood. Although this hut gives rise to manhood, it is also retaining the previous life of an initiate while he was still a boy. When boyhood is destroyed in him, it remains in this hut. Once the initiation school is complete, the hut is burned. It is believed that all the boyhood behaviour will be burnt and buried in this hut. Ultimately a man is born.

f. The Dress Code of an Initiate

An initiate does not wear clothes, as highlighted earlier on; instead he covers himself with a blanket. Underneath this blanket he wears only a skirt-like outfit, which is wrapped around his waist. This is called *umbhinqo* (a 'waist garment') and is made from a blanket. During hot days, he just puts his blanket on the shoulder while wearing only the 'waist garment'. He does this as he walks around in the veld on his own or with other initiates. The initiate also carries his fighting stick all the time. It has been indicated before that the initiate is barefooted as he walks around in the veld. One wonders how he copes with thorns in the veld.

g) Communication in the Bush-School

An initiate, together with 'men-of-the-bush', use the *hlonipha* language as a medium of communication in this school. For example, when an initiate greets people, a fighting stick is used to make a hand shake, instead of using his hand. As a principle of manhood (and research ethics) I am not allowed to reveal the details of the *hlonipha* language that is used during this ritual. Hence I cannot comment any further on this item.

h) Rules of the 'Bush-School'

There are several rules that must be obeyed by an initiate, 'bush men' and the visitors in this school. To mention a few of the rules:

- The *hlonipha* language is a medium of communication that should be used by an initiate and everyone who is there.

- An initiate should hide himself from women or avoid contact with them in the first place. Should he come across one, he should cover himself with his blanket and stand aside in a safe place till a woman goes away.
- Further, a man who has undergone hospital circumcision is not allowed to visit the school. As indicated before, he is perceived as a disgrace to manhood since he is a ‘hospital-man’.

i) The Umojiso Ritual

This is a ritual that involves slaughtering a sheep, and serving traditional beer and brandy, which are sometimes accompanied by bottled beer. It takes place on the eighth day, since a boy was circumcised. The aim of this ritual is to set a boy free from the restrictions he went through for the past eight days. The restrictions include not being allowed to drink water and not being allowed to move out of the initiation hut. He is now allowed to eat only dry food (usually samp with no beans and salt). In setting free this initiate, a speech is made by an elderly man of the family (who has the same clan name as the initiate), to allow him this freedom. One of the important activities about this ritual is that an initiate is given the *umkhono* to eat (once the cooked meat is ready to be served). Before that, a small piece of an *umkhono* is roasted for him (*umshwamo*). Interestingly, all the meat that is served to the initiate is not salted. This is a standard procedure. Other people attend this ritual to enjoy themselves by eating the meat and drinking alcohol while socialising with other men. From this day, an initiate also gains the freedom to invite visitors, which may include a girlfriend, girls and his male friends (as indicated before). Among his visitors, he must also invite a girl who cooks for him, to give her an opportunity to eat the sheep’s intestines (*amathumbu*).

4.4.3 The ‘Coming-Out Phase’ (*Umphumo*)

This is the phase when an initiate goes back to the community to start the new life of being a man. This implies that he is done with the life of being an initiate and a boy. This discussion is divided into three sections, namely: a) washing the initiate in a river and burning his initiation hut, b) an *umgidi*, c) and the ‘house of young men’ (*indlu yesifana*).

a) Washing the Initiate in a River and Burning his Initiation Hut

This phase begins when an initiate is chased by young men to a river, in order to wash his body. The moment he is in a river (washing himself), his status changes into an *ikrwala* (a graduate). When the process of washing is done, this graduate is escorted by the young men back to his initiation hut, where elderly men are waiting for him. These elders inspect whether his wound has healed properly. They generally make comments on the progress of the wound.

The next step is to smear this boy with an ointment. This could be Vaseline, a pig's fat (*amafutha ehagu*), even butter that is used with bread (e.g. Rama). This smearing process is done by a middle aged man or an elder, who has a record of being successful in building his homestead (e.g. with a big house and many cattle). In other words, he must be a role model to young people. Throughout this process, he admonishes the boy. Afterwards, a boy is covered with a new blanket and is given a black fighting stick (*umnqayi*). The young men who took the boy to the river are given a bottle of brandy, as a token of appreciation for doing their job. It is called the 'bottle for washing the boy' (*ibhotile yokuhlamba inkwekwe*).

The next step involves a graduate being taken away from the 'bush-school' to the community. He is escorted by men who sing the song called 'somagwaza'. (see section 4.5.7.). Once he is a distance away from the 'bush-school', his initiation hut is burned by the elders. As a matter of procedure, they (elders) are left behind in order to burn it. They are also offered a bottle of brandy for doing the job of burning the initiation hut. This brandy is called the 'bottle for burning the initiation hut' (*umtshiso bhuma*). As this hut burns, a graduate walks away from it. He must never look back at it, as instructed by men. This implies that his whole life of being an initiate and a boy has been burnt and buried. Therefore, he must never return to it. The singing continues all the way until the home of the graduate is reached. The men who escort this graduate are in a celebrating mood. They carry fighting sticks, which are used in playing the game of 'stick fighting' (*ukudlala iintonga*). 'Stick fighting' could involve real fighting, or people may pretend as if they are fighting. The participants in the game are men. The game of 'stick fighting' goes on until men reach the home of a graduate.

b) An *Umgidi*

As men got closer to an initiate's home, women started ululating and singing, in celebrating the coming back of their child. This graduate is taken to a kraal where elderly men are seated. They welcome him back with speeches. Thereafter, the theme of the 'coming out ceremony' begins (*umgidi uyaqala*).

The activities of this ceremony include slaughtering animals (e.g. an ox, sheep, goats) etc, roasting and cooking meat. Alcohol is also served, which includes traditional beer, brandy and bottled beer. In a kraal, meat and alcohol is served in terms of the seniority principles of manhood. That is, people are allocated their shares (meat and alcohol) according to groups. Young men, for example, eat together, while elders have their own share together. Additional activities include admonitions, which are done firstly by men, then by women. Men do theirs in a kraal, while women do theirs inside a house. In addition, young men and girls do theirs in the 'house of young men', which normally takes place in the evening. Once meat and alcohol is served, people enjoy themselves throughout the day, singing and dancing. When the ceremony is almost finished, the 'house of young men' begins. This is the last stage in the *umphumo* phase.

c) *The 'House of Young Men' (Indlu yesifana)*

The 'house of young men' involves a gathering in a room, whereby a graduate is entertained and welcomed back to the community. This gathering constitutes mainly young men (*abafana*). It usually takes place in the home of a graduate. The climax of this entertainment is in the evening. For the first time, this graduate is wearing clothes that are all new. He is also given honorary nick names, like *ubhuti omtsha* (the new brother) or *ubhut'okrwala* (brother graduate).

This gathering is also made up of female visitors (girls) and other graduates who have just graduated before the host graduate. The graduate sits down on a grass mat (*ukhuko*) in a certain corner (allocated spot) of the room. The activities in this room include young men and girls doing admonitions to the graduate. The entertainment also involves playing music, especially songs of manhood. To heighten the festivities, alcohol is also served, which includes traditional beer (this is compulsory) brandy, and bottled beer.

Throughout the process, the formal principles of manhood apply (see section 4.2.6, principles and teachings of manhood). That is, men make their usual speeches, playing with the traditional Xhosa jargon. The content of the speeches involves admonitions to the graduate. It also includes informing and updating guests on the purpose of the gathering and informing them on how much alcohol is available in this gathering. One of the things they (men) normally do is to chase out males who were circumcised in hospital. 'Hospital-men' are not welcomed to this house with the argument that they are not 'men enough'. In fact the event is used as a tool for excluding the 'hospital-men' from the manhood celebrations.

4.4.4 The Phase of Being a Graduate (*Ubukrwala*)

As indicated before, being a graduated initiate (graduate) begins the moment an initiate washes himself in a river. It has been noted above that he becomes a graduate for a period of a year. For a six months period he is a junior graduate under the supervision of men in his community (especially his former 'bush men'). Thereafter, he becomes a senior graduate (*ikrwala elidala*). He becomes the one who guides new graduates who have just entered manhood. In the first six months, the graduate goes through a period of 'showing respect to manhood' (*ukuhota*). This period includes the following:

a) Initiate's Code of Conduct

- An initiate is not allowed to go to shebeens, taverns and parties. He is not allowed to smoke while walking in the streets. He should sit down somewhere in a hidden place, if he wants to smoke.
- An initiate is expected to be at home at about 18h00 in the evenings at least. The idea is to encourage him to work on home issues, as a man is expected to sleep in his home in the evenings (*indoda ayihlwelwa ibasemzini wayo xa kumarhatya*).
- He must behave himself with respect and dignity. The idea is that he should demonstrate the principles of manhood he has been taught in the 'bush-school'.

b) Dressing Code

On a daily basis, he should wear a long trouser, a jacket, a shirt, a hat and shoes, for a period of six months. He should take off this clothing (*azikhulule*) through making a ritual. The ritual includes buying a bottle of

brandy, and calling his elder brothers to inform them of his intention to take off the dressing code. After six months he may dress as he likes but in a manner that is exemplary (to the new graduates).

c) His Way of Walking

- He should look straight ahead and focus on where he is going to, and not look all over in different directions (*angahambi elaqaza*).
- He must lower his gaze as he is walking.
- He must enter other peoples' territories through entrances. The argument is that a true man does not trespass.
- He should not be drunk as he is walking in the street. A 'real man' drinks his alcohol at home.
- He should not be running around, (when going somewhere) he must walk with dignity (*indoda ayixhibitheki*)
- If he is walking and decides to turn around he cannot just do that, he must first pretend to be entering a certain house and doing something there (e.g. having a conversation with someone or smoking). It is then that he can turn back to the opposite direction.

Thus, research shows that there are four phases in the initiation ritual. The first one is the 'entering phase'. It involves a boy behaving wildly. He runs around in his village shouting (accompanied by other boys), with the aim of announcing that he is going to the bush. An animal is slaughtered for him and then he undergoes circumcision. The second phase is the one of being an initiate. It involves an initiate staying in the bush; he learns the teachings of manhood there. This phase is followed by the third one, *umphumo*. It involves an initiate being washed in the river; his hut is burned; and the welcome back celebrations take place. Ultimately, it is the phase of being a graduate. At this moment, an initiate has become a man who stays in the community. To him this is the time of showing respect to manhood. He must dress in a certain prescribed manner and have a good code of conduct.

4.5 Umphumo: The Case Study of Wanda and Nko

4.5.1 Introduction

To give more clarity on the journey towards manhood, this section provides a case study of one of the stages of manhood in Xhosa initiation ritual, the '*umphumo*' of two boys who went to the bush together and shared the same *ibhuma*. Their names are Wanda and Nko.

The two boys had different clan names, Wanda belonged to the Maduna clan while Nko belonged to the Miya's. Therefore, the ritual (family ritual) that involves slaughtering an animal had to be done separately for each boy. The one for Nko was done in his rural home in Cofimvaba on the 30th of December 2006. He was taken by a van from the 'bush-school' to his home and returned afterwards (the following day) to the school. For Wanda, it was done on the 31st of December 2006 directly at the 'bush-school' next to their initiation hut. This was the ritual of slaughtering the sheep that I observed. Afterwards, the 'coming out ceremony' was conducted for both boys.

4.5.2 The Start of the Family Ritual

On the 31st of December 2006, it was a slightly cold day, with 16 degrees minimum and 22 maximum. At 05h40 in the morning, I was knocking at the entrance of the initiation hut for Wanda and Nko. They were lying down on the floor next to each other, covered with blankets, separated by their traditional nurse in between. At the time of my arrival, they were already awake and were just having a conversation with each other.

I was there in the morning because I did not want to miss the exciting part of the 'coming out ceremony'. That is, the burning of the initiation hut and running behind the initiates chasing them to the river. This process sometimes took place in the mornings from around five. Because I did not know the time in which this one would take place, I decided to go there early.

We stayed there at the bush for about three hours, hoping to be visited by men from the home of the initiates' families. The representatives of the initiates' families were supposed to update the 'men in the bush' about the programme of the day. As we were waiting, other men were coming from the township,

while others had just woken up from the initiation huts. We kept the time going through a conversation, while others were smoking. Eventually, at about 10h00, the elderly men of the family came to the bush to address us. We were told that this 'coming out ceremony' would not be going the normal way - there would be no ritual of slaughtering the animal and the serving of alcohol at the home of the initiates. The reason was that the father of the family was a staunch Christian. His belief system was in conflict with rituals that involve slaughtering animals to worship ancestors. Consequently, the ritual for Wanda had to be conducted directly in the 'bush-school' next to his initiation hut.

After this briefing, we hung around chatting, waiting for the start of the ritual. Later on, a van came (about 20 minutes after the briefing from the elders) and it stopped at a distance, to offload items for the occasion (wood, the sheep, alcohol and water). In addition, it was also carrying a group of young boys and girls.

The ritual started immediately, the sheep was slaughtered, then cooked, while some parts of it were roasted on fire. The young men took care of it, while the elders were engaged in conversation. The people were sitting according to their expected positions. The categories were those of elderly men, men, young men (who were busy cooking and roasting meat), while boys were just standing aside with no specific positions. Traditional beer was circulated in the meantime. It was allocated to the elderly men and men (who were expected to share it with young men) and the two initiates. The traditional beer was put in a billycan (*ibhekile*) so that it could be circulated to the relevant people. The initiates were smeared once more with white ochre, and were sitting against their initiation hut facing the senior men. The sitting order for men formed a kraal-like semi-circle, leaving a space for people to come in and out, just like an entrance. I observed that men who came later on were not allowed to just join this group from any direction. They had to use this entrance, which was a symbol of a gate in a kraal. This order of sitting was an invisible kraal that was formed by the men, due to the fact that this specific ceremony was held outside the homestead and its associated kraal.

Time went on till the meat was served in two different servings. The roasted meat (*umbengo*) was served first at about 11h15, and then the cooked meat was served afterwards at about 12h40. The following points were noted about this meat:

- It was put on the tree branches (*ezihlahleni*), as there were no plates and dishes available in the school.

- There was only one person who was allocating shares of meat to men. This person is generally known as an *injoli* (see section 4.2.4.).
- The *injoli* was also responsible for doing the announcements when an elderly person was about to make a speech. In one of his announcements he would say “*Uxolo boMaduna, nank’utata ezakuthetha*” (“Excuse me *Madunas*, here is the father, he is about to speak”). Everybody would be silent in respect of the Maduna elder.

4.5.3 Clans and their Procedures

In a traditional ceremony of Xhosa-speakers, all the guests are addressed with the clan name of the host family. This practice also applies to guests (men) when they arrive in the household of this clan. For example, when a man enters a kraal (which is already occupied by other men), he would greet in a loud but polite manner. In his greeting he calls the clan name of the host family. For example, he would say “Aah! the *Madunas*.” By doing this, he greets the men in the kraal and the ancestors of this particular family.

Interestingly, each clan has an order of doing things and takes pride in that. The *injoli* therefore, must be someone who is quick to understand the procedures of a particular clan. If the procedures of a particular clan are not followed, the result is the dissatisfaction of the host family. For example, the *Maduna* elder, in his talk complained about the method that was used in serving the meat. He said the following “We the *Madunas* want the entire pot of meat to be put in front of the men in the kraal (when serving it). We do not want to see only shares of meat being served to us”. Basically he was concerned about it that people received shares of meat without even seeing where it came from. According to this *Maduna*, the process of serving the meat should involve a pot full of meat, being placed in front of everybody in the kraal. It is then that the *injoli* could start serving it.

Through complaining, the *Maduna* elder initiated the practice of manhood principles (as he put forward his concern about the violation of the *Maduna* clan procedures). The concern was dealt with through negotiations in the following manner:

- In response to the complainant, another elder stood up (also of the *Maduna*), apologizing on behalf of the young men. He argued that these young men were never informed about the Maduna procedures in the first place.

- The complainant elder stood up again, criticizing the previous speaker. He argued that it is inappropriate for a man from the *Maduna* clan to respond to this concern. Instead, only a man who does not belong to the *Maduna* clan should respond (a community representative).
- Eventually, an elder who was a non-*Maduna* stood up and responded, repeating the apology of the second *Maduna*. Because the correct person responded, the apology was accepted, the problem was solved and everybody started eating.

4.5.4 The Role of Manhood Principles

It is a standard practice that manhood principles apply during traditional functions. This is what also happened in the ‘coming out ceremony’ for Wanda and Nko. After eating the meat, alcohol was served. It was put in front of everybody according to the *Maduna* procedure. The *injoli* also served it according to the categories of manhood. The *Madunas* were in a jubilant mood. People first ate the food and thereafter they received alcohol. The conflict (mentioned above, in section 5.5.3.) is an example of how men applied their code of manhood conduct. Although the concern revolved around the *Madunas*, this was also the more general manhood principles being implemented. To mention a few manhood principles: a man should voice out his complaint in an orderly and dignified manner. He must stand up when addressing other men as (indicated before). He must wear a jacket (or anything that resembles it) and take off his hat. Lastly, he is expected to use traditional Xhosa jargon as he is speaking (as noted earlier). When he is done with the talking he should sit down to allow the next speaker to respond, in the same or similar order. It is generally known that in manhood, no man shouts at another (like women are said to do). Men solve their differences with dignity and order through negotiations. I was impressed to witness them maintaining the dignity of manhood even when they were drunk.

The implementation of manhood principles is also shown by the method that is used in serving alcohol. Firstly, no matter how small or big the quantity of alcohol, every single man in a kraal receives an equal share of it. It is up to him to refuse the offer of alcohol. An *injoli* allocates shares to every man in a kraal. A glass of brandy or beer is circulated to men in a kraal. This alcohol is not a private property for a certain individual man. No one drinks as he pleases; every man must wait for an *injoli* to give him his share. He pours alcohol into a glass and gives it to a man. He waits until he is done, then moves on to the next man. Each round per man proceeds in that order. If a certain man does not want to drink, he gives his share to

another man. He does this by taking the offer from an *injoli* and gives it to the man he prefers. He takes the glass back when he is finished, and gives it back to an *injoli*.

When an *injoli* feels that people have drunk sufficiently, he gives them a break. He does this by making a short speech. The aim of a speech is to inform people on the progress of serving. For example, he may say “*Ndihambile ndahamba ndazakufikelela kule ndawo*” (“I have gone around till I reached this point”). This is basically his way of telling people about how much alcohol is left so far as he was serving it. He also gives them a chance to digest, then continues to serve if there is a need to give them more.

4.5.5 Communication with Ancestors

It is important to note that a ritual is done with the aim of communicating with the ancestors. Slaughtering animals and serving alcohol are the tools for this communication. When the *Madunas* did the rite of slaughtering the sheep, speeches were also made. In one of his speeches, the *Maduna* elder said the following: “*Asingomgidi ke lo kuhlanjwa amakhwenkwe kuphela*” (“this is not a ‘coming out ceremony’; it is just the washing of the boys”). “*Oku kutya ke liyeza kule nkwenkwe*” (this food is medicine to this boy), he said so referring to the meat. Thereafter, the initiate (Wanda), was given the right leg of the sheep (*umkhono*) to eat. The initiate had to call children from his home (via the messenger) to help him to finish it. To elaborate on the first point, the elder was informing people not to expect a big ceremony, as the father of the family was against the slaughtering of animals in the first place. On the second point, the slaughtering of the sheep was perceived as a medium of communication with the *Maduna* ancestors. It is believed that they provide good health and blessings to their child (Wanda). The meat was therefore viewed as medicine in spiritual terms.

In serving alcohol, the Xhosa-speaking people view it as a way of communicating with ancestors. The alcohol that was used by the *Madunas* and the *Miyas* was traditional beer and brandy. The traditional beer is generally known as a symbol and a medium of linking with ancestors. The brandy on the other hand was adopted as another medium of linking with ancestors. In this ritual the *injoli* first poured a little bit of brandy on the ground via the bottle lid (*waqabaza amathontsi ngesiciko*) before serving the people. This is a process that is followed, giving it to the ancestors first. In this ritual there was only one bottle of brandy, which belonged to the elder men. Additional alcohol was viewed as giving “sweets” to the guests. This

included the bottled beer and brandy. It is quite ironic that this alcohol is called “sweets” while it is bitter in taste.

4.5.6 The Process of Washing Boys in the River and Burning the Initiation Hut

After finishing drinking and eating, it was time to take the boys to the river (at about 14h00). The mood in the veld was exciting, the *abafana* were all standing up, carrying fighting sticks, waving them (*kuvonyavywa iintonga*) as they were preparing for their journey to the river. Some were intimidating the initiates jokingly, about beating them (e.g. with stones, fighting sticks, etc.) since they would be running. The initiates looked worried, as they did not know what would happen to them on the way to the river.

Finally we left, the two initiates were walking in front of us (mainly a group of *abafana*). The place was filled with noise of shouting and talking. I am sure alcohol played its role as well! As the two initiates were walking to the river, they were commanded to throw away their blankets and to start running (nude). They did so as instructed, thereafter it was a noise of men shouting at them. They ran as fast as they could in the direction where the river was. On their arrival at the river they washed themselves in running cold river water. The *abafana* assisted them using the material that had been cut from an orange bag. They handled them in a rough manner, and used vulgar language as they carried on. Throughout this process, the initiates were submissive to the men’s treatment. In fact this submissiveness went on throughout their stay in the ‘bush-school’. When the process of washing was done, we escorted them back to the initiation huts where the elders were waiting. They were still naked, so we formed a wall as we were walking, in order to hide them from other people (who could be looking on from a distance). It was my first time to see their faces without ochre.

On our arrival (back at the initiation huts) the elders stared at them from head to toe. They were smeared (by an elder) with butter all over their bodies, then each of them was covered with a blanket (rug). The idea was not to show any part of their bodies. This was followed by a speech from the elder (from the *Maduna* clan). He thanked the *Miyas* and the *Maduna* people for the co-operation they had. He also expressed his gratitude to the traditional nurse and other men who were involved in taking care of the boys (initiates) in

the veld. To the initiates he said: “now you have left boyhood, it is buried from now on! You will join men, but you are still not men yet! Take good care of yourselves!”

The congregation was dissolved, the *somagwaza* song began. The *abafana* escorted the boys (graduates) and left with them. I was in a group that accompanied the boys. The *ibhuma* was burnt as we were a distance, moving away and singing the *somagwaza* song.

4.5.7 The *Somagwaza* Song

This is the traditional song that is used when taking boys from the ‘bush-school’ back to the community. It is also used when men accompany a boy to a traditional surgeon for circumcision. It involves men singing, carrying fighting sticks while escorting a boy who is covered by a blanket. At this stage (coming out ceremony), the song is a symbol of victory. It means a boy has been transformed successfully into a man. The singing of the song goes with excitement and celebration. The moment community members hear it, they may join the group with excitement. Women would be ululating from a distance, while men take their fighting sticks and join the group. Some men may go to the front of this group, running around, acting as if they are fighting each other. In fact the game of ‘sticks fighting’ is what characterises this song. This song was also applied in the *umphumo* for Wanda and Nko.

The boys were escorted as the singing went on, to the home of a relative and not their own home. We walked for approximately 20 minutes moving across the township (Mchubakazi). The easiest way was used, the main road, which joins different townships. The singing and excitement continued to the extent that the moving cars had to slow down and make efforts to pass this *somagwaza* group. Most of the drivers were not bothered by this; instead they smiled at us as they passed along.

Out of these passing cars there was one interesting scenario from one male driver. He stopped his car; he got out of it carrying his fighting stick, joined the group and played the game of ‘sticks fighting’. After some time (about 3 minutes) he returned to his car in excitement, he left hooting. Everybody became excited by the actions of this driver; he left behind a big laughter and smiles. The participation from the community went on till the group reached its destination.

4.5.8 The Admonitions

On arrival, the graduates were allocated a sitting spot in the kraal, where they were surrounded by the group of men. This is the place where admonitions were made by the elders, while alcohol was served. The admonitions were done by men in the kraal outside the house. Thereafter, it was a chance for women to do theirs inside the house. Admonitions for young men and girls took place in the 'house of young men'

In terms of defining manhood ceremonially, some points were noted concerning manhood principles: i) Men maintained a specific sitting order. Their sitting was judged according to who went to the initiation school first. Elders sat collectively, while men and young men sat together. ii) In addressing men in the kraal, a certain order was followed. For example, a man should stand up, he must wear a jacket, and use traditional Xhosa as he is talking. iii) Meat was shared equally to all the men in the kraal. iv) Communication took place regularly. For example, the host man (a *Maduna*) kept on updating guests about the reasons for the gathering, he would also ask ancestors for blessings in conducting the rite.

Thus, this case study shows a link between the findings that were gained through interviews and participant observation. It helps in enhancing knowledge about *umphumo* and the concept of manhood.

4.6 Conclusion

There are several points that should be noted in this fieldwork results. They relate well with the aim of understanding the significance of traditional circumcision in relation to the concept of manhood and to explore the beliefs that Xhosa-speakers associate with manhood:

The role of manhood: The success of a traditional function/ceremony (to Xhosa-speakers) depends on the effectiveness of manhood in a particular community. Men are responsible for running ceremonies/traditional functions. They are also the ones who communicate to the community that a certain household will be hosting a ceremony/traditional function. They announce future ceremonies/traditional functions in their social gatherings. Each individual man would spread the news to his family and then the family forwards the news to the other families. Further, men (in traditional Xhosa-speaking communities)

tend to be the heads of their families. Therefore, the responsibility lies with them to give permission for their wives to assist in a particular household that is hosting a ceremony/traditional function.

Thus, men may be present in a certain village/township, but their presence does not imply that there is manhood. Manhood becomes a manifested status when individual men act together in the interest of taking care of their community. The usefulness of manhood should not be judged by the large number of men in a certain township/village. Instead, it must be their ability to act collectively and consistently in the interest of developing their community. Manhood goes beyond the belonging of a particular man to a group of men. It is about collective responsibility of a group of men in promoting harmony and the wellbeing of a community.

Traditional circumcision teaches a man on how to deal with life crisis situations: The wound of traditional circumcision resembles a moment of a life crisis to an initiate. This is a wound he never experienced before. By looking at it, he loses hope that it will ever heal. This loss of hope equals a life crisis. At this moment the 'voice' (of a traditional nurse or 'men-in-the bush') becomes important in helping him see that the wound will eventually be healed, and there is joy after it.

This 'voice' resembles those special people who help us in dealing with moments of crisis. These people may be living with us, or coming from elsewhere. They play the role of being angels that are sent by God to help us through the crisis. They help us to look beyond the crisis. They show us steps that should be followed in dealing with the crisis. Those steps would require us to act consistently and persistently. Gradually, as time goes on, the crisis evaporates. It ultimately goes away and life becomes enjoyable. In this context, traditional circumcision is significant because it provides a male with life skills. It helps a man to grow. As he deals with his circumcision wound, he is being challenged to grow emotionally, spiritually and in terms of his ability to endure physical pain. These are the skills that are assumed to be essential to a man in times of handling life crisis.

Beliefs about manhood: There are certain beliefs that are associated with being a man. These beliefs uncover the expected qualities for a male to be regarded as a man. Once these beliefs are put together, they contribute in forming a definition of manhood. These are:

- A male who is not circumcised is not a man. This belief makes an uncircumcised male to be treated with disrespect. The disrespect is imposed even to males who do not practice a circumcision ritual in term of their culture. This negativity of an attitude is a challenge in the modern day society. In this society people are encouraged to have tolerance to other people's cultures, religious beliefs and practices. Putting it differently, this modern society is encouraging the diversity of people to interact in one space. People of various population groups are welcomed to interact within the same sphere. The interaction of males in a social space is not determined by whether one has undergone initiation school or not. Instead, other factors are prioritized (e.g. job knowledge). Therefore, where is the relevance of traditional circumcision at this point? How does this belief explain the issue of males who do not practice circumcision ritual in their culture?
- A man should not cry, crying is perceived as a sign of a weakness to a man. This belief carries on despite the fact that a man is a human being; he also has feelings just like a woman. This situation leaves a question concerning one's need to express one's emotions. That is: how is he supposed to free himself from emotional baggage?
- A true man must be able to endure physical pain, i.e. the pain of traditional circumcision. In another way, those who avoid the pain are perceived as cowards and not man enough. This belief may raise a question concerning how this ability to persevere physical pain helps in making a mature adult man.

The practice of initiation ritual in the modern days: It has been argued before, that the initiation ritual is resilient to society's changes. The major transformation today is the fact that the youth take leadership positions in conducting initiation schools. They play the role of traditional nurses while they are still young and inexperienced about this rite. For example, it is becoming a common phenomenon to see a man who was an initiate a year ago, playing the role of being a traditional nurse.

The responsibility of a traditional nurse is to become a father figure to an initiate. He is expected to teach issues of manhood to him (an initiate). If this guardian (traditional nurse) has graduated a year ago, where does he get the necessary experience and wisdom of manhood? In short, the scarcity of elders in controlling the rite has left it in the hands of the youth. These hands do not have the necessary capacity to transform a boy into a man.

The initiation ritual is unique and indispensable: The experience of undergoing the initiation ritual brings a unique story to tell. That is, during the initiation ritual, an initiate stays in the veld for a period of about a month. He is subjected to unusual practices and behaviour. The atmosphere and the symbolism that is attached to this school add up to form the uniqueness of this rite. Even the modern day technology that seems to conquer everything does not have the power to replace initiation ritual. Hence it attracts the media, film makers and researchers who want to learn about it.

Initiation ritual connects people with ancestors: Throughout the process of conducting the initiation ritual, there is ongoing connection with ancestors of a boy's family (see 4.5.5). This connection is being regulated through slaughtering animals and brewing traditional beer. The older men in the family facilitate this connection with the ancestors through making speeches. By doing so, they are appealing for the ancestors' spirits to spread within them. Thus, the initiation ritual does not just helping turning a boy into men, it also facilitates the connection of a family with its ancestor spirit.

The initiation ritual brings a community together: The community plays a key role in the activities of an initiation ritual. This role becomes vivid during the 'entering phase' and the 'coming out phase'. With regard to the former, community members participate in activities that wish a boy good luck in the bush-school. On the latter, community members get together in an *umgidi* celebration to congratulate him for being successful in the school.

The initiation ritual provides survival skills to men: During the phase of *ubukhwetha*, an initiate is subjected to very uncomfortable and less hygienic conditions of the school. On top of that, he still has to endure the pain that is caused by the circumcision wound. Throughout this process he learns to survive on his own. For example, he must get used to the idea of living in the veld; he has to walk barefoot. The food he eats is not appetizing. Therefore, an initiate has to learn to survive these conditions for a period of about a month. Once he returns to the community, he is left with a valuable experience regarding how to survive under harsh conditions.

Refusal to forfeit control of initiation rituals: Traditional circumcision has become the tool of traditionalists (traditional leaders and orthodox Xhosa-speakers) to resist being controlled by government and outsiders in conducting the initiation rituals and their traditions and culture. This resistance has been against the fear of

accepting ideas that could lead to the erosion of the initiation ritual. As argued elsewhere, initiation ritual has been condemned for putting boys' lives at risk. As a result, government and health organizations are proposing ideas for alternative circumcision methods. The traditionalists' resistance therefore comes up in the form of refusing to accept ideas regarding alternative circumcision options. To them, the use of foreign circumcision methods would constitute allowing modernization to take over the initiation ritual. Thus, this resistance forms part of the power of traditionalists to refuse being taken over by foreign influence and government in conducting cultural and traditional practices by Xhosa-speakers.

McAllister (1990) adds his point of view: his argument focuses on the resistance of white domination by the rural people in Willowvale, in the Shixini Administrative Area. He says they made efforts to minimize their involvement in the wider economy and in urban society, and to conserve their rural niche. As a result, conservatism was formed with the aim of maintaining a certain style of the world. Put in another way, culture was manipulated and used in achieving a political goal. That is to fight against being dominated by white people.

In the modern South Africa some of the responsibilities of traditional leaders are substituted by government. This situation makes traditional leadership to be valueless. For them to feel valuable, they must hold on to matters that resemble culture and tradition, they ought to protect ideas and practices that represent being an African. Traditional circumcision therefore, forms part of this power struggle. The more traditional leaders stick to it, the greater their value. The perpetuation of traditional circumcision is a means to achieve a political goal. In the next chapter the implications of the articulation of policy issues with the ritual process on the local level will be investigated.

CHAPTER 5: CONTROVERSY AND DEBATE AROUND GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PUBLIC VIEWS REGARDING INITIATION RITUALS

5.1 Introduction

The argument in this chapter is that there are organisations that participate in the initiation ritual without having received an invitation from its custodians. These are government and the media. Their participation produces a conflict of interests, between maintaining the confidentiality (and sacredness) of the ritual and exposing it to the public view (including that of women and boys). In the light of these issues, the initiation ritual clearly remains a controversial topic.

The argument in this chapter is organised around two topics: i) controversy and debate about traditional circumcision in the Eastern Cape, and ii) government policies on initiation rituals. Each of these two topics consist of subtopics.

5.2 Controversy and Debate about Traditional Circumcision in the Eastern Cape

5.2.1 The Media's Involvement in the Initiation Rituals – A Case Study of *Umthunzi Wentaba*

This section was inspired by the SABC drama series that put traditional male circumcision of Xhosa-speakers in the spotlight. It is called *Umthunzi Wentaba* (Mountain Shadow). It started on Thursday 15 March 2007 at 21h00, on SABC 1. The series attracted a wide media attention, as it became a platform to debate the issues that surround this ritual.

Before continuing a discussion of this dispute, it is necessary to give a summary of the contents of the drama. It was a mini-series that consisted of four episodes. The story was based in the Eastern Cape in the former Transkei state, in a rural village. It relates to Ndoda, a young male who was about to go to the

initiation school. Ndoda was in a dilemma, whether to go for traditional circumcision or not. He was worried about his health and life, as there were stories of initiates who got injured (in their sex organs) while others died in the school.

His fears were made worse by the latest news he received, as eight initiates in his village died in the school. This tragedy created tension in the village and among various households. As a result, the village and Ndoda's family were divided into two camps. On the one hand, there were people who supported the old ways of practising this ritual. In the opposing camp, there were those who were against the old ways. They were willing to support the traditional initiation method, but only if it were done under the auspices of modern health practitioners (*Mail and Guardian* 18 July 2007).

Further, at the time of the tragedy, Ndoda was already in the initiation school. He had made up his mind to undergo traditional initiation in the school. When he was in the bush, the SABC stopped the drama. It was discontinued due to pressure from the viewers, traditional leaders, and cultural activities. The general concern with the drama was that it televised activities that were not supposed to be shown on the air.

The writer of the drama was Mntunzima Nkwinti, a teacher by profession, in the Department of Arts and Culture in the Eastern Cape. The objective of his writing was to use the drama as a catalyst for debating issues that surround this rite. He also wanted to revive the consciousness of The Xhosa-speaking people about those things that were going wrong in practising this rite. These objectives are linked to the following questions:

Why do initiates die in the mountain today?

Why do parents send underage boys for circumcision?

How do we deal with boys who go for hospital circumcision?

How sacred is this tradition when initiates loiter on freeways getting photographed by women?

How does the tradition deal with the threat of HIV/AIDS?

(Author unknown 2007, www.tvsa.co.za)

The *Mail and Guardian* (18 July 2007) concurs with Nkwinti on this matter. It notes that the sole intention of the drama was to spark debate, not on circumcision per se but on its social impact. It argued that the poorly trained *iingcibi* pose a danger to the lives of the initiates, for example, the use of the same blade

over and over again without sterilising it. Hence the theme of this drama was to alert communities about the dangers posed by ill-trained *iingcibi* on the lives of would-be initiates (*Mail & Guardian* 18 July 2007).

It is important to say something about the rise of the controversy. After two episodes had been aired, the people who viewed themselves as custodians of the culture of Xhosa-speakers were angered by this drama (*Daily Dispatch* 10 April 2007). Their argument was that it uncovers the intimate secrets of this sacred ritual. According to the principles of this rite, the secrets should only circulate among those who participate in it (*Daily Dispatch* 10 April 2007). Therefore they insisted that it must be discontinued.

In the words of IOL (www.iol.co.za), this drama was taken off the air, after causing a furore among traditional leaders. They felt that it infringed on a sacred tradition. The critics went on, maintaining that the drama revealed initiation practices that were meant to be secret, especially to women. Consequently, the SABC was bombarded by e-mail threats, from Xhosa-speaking men and women from all around the country.

Interestingly, concern about the violation of this ritual was perpetuated by the people of the Eastern Cape; the traditional leaders who were very active in challenging the SABC all belonged to the Eastern Cape. The SABC indicated that the e-mail threats and complaints about the drama came mostly from the Eastern Cape people. According to the *Cape Argus*, the drama was pulled off air because of an outcry from the traditional leaders in the Eastern Cape (including cultural activists from other areas in the country). Also the chairman of the National House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Mathupa Mokoena, blamed the house for failing to take a leadership role in the matter. Instead, it was left in the hands of the Eastern Cape Traditional Leaders to fight alone (*Cape Argus*, 08 March 2007).

After the drama was stopped, the SABC hosted a live show, with the aim of discussing this dispute. The traditional leaders (from the Eastern Cape) were guests in the SABC's talk show discussion. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- *The views of traditional leadership and cultural activists:* This presentation of the story was done in a negative manner; the initiation ritual was disclosed as something that was totally harmful to initiates. That is, it results in death and hospitalization of them. Their argument went on, the rite is

not the problem, instead there is a lack of experience among those people who perform it; the rite has been practiced for years, therefore the problem is not with the initiation itself, instead it is the way some people are doing it.

Consequently, the producers and writers of the drama were criticized for exposing the secrets of this tradition, as women and the world are not supposed to know what is going on in the bush. The fact that the rite was presented in a negative manner was felt as being not acceptable.

- *SABC's input:* In response to the criticisms about the way the drama was represented, the SABC representative (Mr. Seipati Bulane-Hopa) commented. He noted that SABC did an intensive consultation with traditional leaders before this drama was broadcast. He also pointed out that an *ingcibi* was also consulted. This *ingcibi* had a good reputation of circumcising over a thousand boys. Hence the SABC felt that the drama was representing the truth adequately (Shunga 2007).
- *Views from the supporters for the continuation of the drama:* 'The argument was that a show of that quality deserves to be seen by everyone and be appreciated. A tradition may seem sacred to those who practice it, but those who do not should not be denied an opportunity to learn about it. This is because the initiation ritual is a part of the South African culture (Shunga 2007).

“The *Umthunzi Wentaba* drama is a part of South African art just like the rest of South African culture. The role of art is to enlighten, inform, and eventually allow people to make up their mind about it. That is, after viewing art, the people themselves should decide how they feel about it. The *Umthunzi Wentaba* (as an art product) has the responsibility to elicit controversy and debate. This is what forces people to confront their own perceptions of various issues. Therefore, there is no reason to take the drama off air” (Shunga 2007).

Moreover, the subsequent decision to discontinue the drama resulted in another dispute. The Freedom of Expression Institute criticised the SABC for this decision. It argued that the rights of society to receive information had been violated by the unprincipled broadcaster who crumpled under pressure (*Pretoria News*, 20 April 2007). The argument maintained that the HIV challenge is a concern to everybody. If this rite is being practised under conditions that perpetuate HIV, then society has a right to know about it (*Pretoria News*, 20 April 2007). The *Daily Dispatch* (10 April 2007) supported this criticism. It noted that

this dispute had put a spotlight on the conflict between openness and cultural enclaves, that is, the right to confidentiality of the rite, versus the right to transparency of practices. In other words, whose rights overrule in such cases? Is it the right to keep this sacred initiation ritual confidential, or the right to expose the rite if it appears to endanger the life of human beings?

Eventually, the drama was continued, towards the end of March 2008. The last two episodes were shown. The SABC discussed it behind the scenes with the traditional leaders. It turned out that these last two episodes were the heart of the story. The story revolved around discussing the concept of manhood. No sensitive issues were shown, however. There were no complaints noted from traditional leaders and viewers. However, traditional leaders demanded that SABC should slaughter a beast, as an apology to the ancestors for the manner they handled the *Umthunzi Wentaba* drama.

5.2.2 Government's Initiatives in Regulating Initiation Schools

The continuous death and hospitalisation of initiates has led government to be involved in regulating this ritual (see section 5.7 below). Its strategy has involved putting policies in place. The aim of government was (is) to prevent these tragedies from happening in the first place. This policy implementation started towards the end of the 1990s.

The activities that were involved in these policies included: closing of illegal circumcision schools; the imprisonment of those individuals who broke the circumcision laws; boys had to go for medical check-ups before they underwent traditional circumcision; and the *iingcibi* and traditional nurses were compelled to register with government before they practised in the schools. The *Cape Times* (December 10, 2003) supported this point. For example, the Department of Health in the Eastern Cape collaborated with the police, and arrested thirty traditional surgeons and traditional nurses in November/December 2003. See extract below.

“It has been just a few days into the winter initiation season and five traditional surgeons have already been arrested for performing illegal circumcisions. They were arrested in the Eastern Cape for the illegal circumcision of 110 boys since last week. Eastern Cape health spokesperson Sizwe Kupelo this week said three more surgeons, responsible for circumcising about 50 boys between them, were still at large” (City Press, 17 June 2007).

However, government's initiatives were not welcomed by the custodians of this ritual. To them, the whole issue of government's involvement in this ritual was still new. They found the process of registering schools a burden. Registration with government also implied that leaders of the traditional initiation schools must be supervised by government in order to conform to the expected health and safety standards. This was not good news to them, because some of them were avoiding taking responsibility, in case initiation tragedies should take place.

One of the arguments of the traditional Xhosa-speaking people is that government's intervention is unconstitutional because it infringes on the rights of traditional communities. They argue further that government makes this ritual lose its dignity. In its administration of laws and intervention measures, government allows the involvement of men who are not circumcised, females and people who are not even black Africans (e.g. whites, coloured people and so on). Therefore, they feel that government's intervention is an affront to the 'Xhosa culture' (*Cape Times*, 10 December 2003).

To sum up, the resilience of this rite is attracting public interest. Tourists, university students, academics, the media, government, etc. are interested to know more about it. It is this involvement of outsiders that creates controversy and debate. The outsiders consider this ritual harmful to boys; therefore it must be exposed to the public. In contrast, the custodians of initiation are adamant that this rite is sacred; it should not be invaded by outsiders.

5.3 Government Policies on Initiation Rituals

5.3.1 The Role of Government through the Department of Health

The role of the DoH (Department of Health) is to regulate the conducting of initiation rituals in communities. This regulation is done through developing certain procedures that must be followed (by participants) before boys go to the bush. The participants who are affected by these procedures are: boys, the *iingcibi*, traditional nurses and boys' parents. Thereafter, government has to keep on monitoring whether or not these procedures are obeyed. This process of monitoring includes appointing task teams and imposing penalties on those who disobey the procedures.

This sub-section will include the following: a) facilitating registration to participate in initiation rituals, b) procedures that must be followed by participants, c) the DoH task team, d) penalties if procedures are not followed, and e) the influence of government policies at local level.

a. Facilitating Registration to Participate in Initiation Rituals

The role of government through the Act is to ensure that the conducting of initiation rituals is done together with maintaining health and safety standards. These standards are regulated by only allowing people who qualify to be participants in the rite. Once they qualify, the DoH issues certificates to them (directly and indirectly). The traditional surgeons and traditional nurses receive their permit for circumcision directly from their local DoH office. On the other hand, boys and their parents get their medical certificate from the local public hospitals.

Doctors who run private practices may also issue these certificates in their surgeries. (They are also supplied by the DoH). Moreover, the Department of Health maintains a data base of *iingcibi* and traditional nurses who are registered to operate in this ritual. It also maintains communication with communities about this ritual (including traditional leaders). Traditional leaders are tasked with conveying messages between the DoH and the people in the community.

b) Procedures that must be followed by Participants

i. Procedures for Boys (and their Parents)

According to the DoH, if a boy plans to undergo this ritual, he must first go for a medical ‘check up’. It is done in his local public hospital. It may also be done by medical doctors in their private practices. This ‘check up’ involves an examination of a boy’s body, to see if he is medically fit to undergo traditional circumcision. This procedure is expected to take place at least a week before the day of circumcision. However, boys do not always do this within the required period of time. Some of them go during the last hour, while they have already started with preparations for the ritual. This is a concern that was expressed by the Department of Health officials in Butterworth (in an interview, January 2007).

In visiting a medical centre, a boy should be escorted by his parents or guardian (if he has no parents). The parents (guardian) have to complete and sign a consent form, which binds him/her as being accountable for the boy. The parent is also expected to bring his/her identity document to the health centre. Once the medical check up is done, a report is made about a boy's health status. He may be recommended fit to undergo this ritual.

On the other hand, a medical officer may not allow him to go for traditional circumcision, if he/she feels that a boy is not fit. Instead, she/he may suggest that circumcision should take place in hospital. Those who are fit get injections as a form of vaccination (against possible infections in the circumcision wound), and permission to go on with the rite. This boy would also receive a certificate to confirm that he is fit to go through the ritual.

The procedures of the DoH include those that pertain to a boy's parents and the guardians of the initiation school. As a requirement, the parent of a boy must first produce a certificate as a confirmation that he has gone through government's procedures. This certificate is shown to an *ingcibi* (traditional surgeon) for circumcision, then to an *ikhankatha* (traditional nurse) for looking after him in the school.

In addition, concerning the initial contact between a boy's parents and a traditional nurse, parents are basically the ones who approach a certain *ikhankatha*. The purpose is to ask him to take care of their boy. They normally approach him because of his good reputation in taking care of initiates.

On average, this *ikhankatha* is paid an amount of approximately R300.00 plus a bottle of brandy. Some parents pay as little as R50.00 plus a bottle of brandy. An *ikhankatha* also assesses whether parents can afford to pay the amount of money he requires. If he feels that they cannot afford it, he drops it to below R300.00. However, some traditional nurses expressed a feeling of being exploited by the boys' parents. They noted that these parents refuse to pay them once their boys are brought back to their homes and are in good health.

ii. Procedures for Traditional Surgeons

Before an *ingcibi* starts his operation on any boy, he must have permission to do so (a certificate from government). The first step in this procedure is that he must have a letter which confirms that he has the necessary knowledge and skills to perform his duties. This is also a process to certify his citizenship in that particular community. This letter is written by a local *usibonda* (headman/traditional leader) if he stays in a rural area, or a ward councillor if he stays in an urban area.

The letter should be submitted to the local health district office (Butterworth in this case). Thereafter, an *ingcibi* gets a certificate. This is used as evidence that he has permission to conduct circumcision on boys. This certificate is valid for a period of a month, and must be renewed afterwards (if he wants to continue with other boys). In renewing this certificate, there is no need for him to bring a letter from an *usibonda* or a ward councillor. Instead, he must just bring the outdated certificate, in order to receive a renewed one.

iii. Procedure for Traditional Nurses

Before receiving a certificate (like a traditional surgeon), a traditional nurse must also bring a letter from a ward councillor or an *usibonda* to the Department of Health. He also receives a certificate afterwards. It is only then that he may look after the initiates. An *ikhankatha* that treats initiates must be one that has been authorised by the Department of Health. If he has a personal problem that requires him to leave the school, he may ask another traditional nurse to stand in for him. In terms of the procedures from the DoH, the substitute should also have the necessary certificate.

Further, as a requirement from the DoH, a traditional nurse must stay in the bush for the first eight days. This helps to ensure that an initiate receives proper care, until his wound heals properly. Failure to do so may result in the DoH taking legal action against him (see penalties below). Moreover, he must ensure that all the necessary certificates (for boys and himself) are available when the Department of Health officials come to inspect the school.

b. The DoH Task Teams

The Eastern Cape Department of Health has developed task teams per local municipality. Their aim is to monitor whether people comply with government's regulations in conducting this rite. These task teams constitute various units within the Department of Health. In Butterworth it constitutes the following: Environmental Health, Health Promotions and a male nurse. The monitoring process is done through visiting the 'bush-schools', in order to take care of the following:

- To check whether people comply with the Circumcision Act, 2001.
- To carry out wound management where it is needed. If they come across an initiate who has a medical problem in the school, they deal with it directly in the bush. By doing so, they are trying to avoid initiates ending up being hospitalized. This is another way of maintaining the dignity of this ritual. However, if everything fails, a boy is taken to a local hospital as a last resort (in order to prevent death). During these visits the nurse always carries his medical emergency kit in order to deal with the problems he may come across.

g. Penalties if Procedures are not Followed

The moment government discovers that procedures are not followed by the participants, penalties are imposed on them. The people who are affected most by the penalties are boys, traditional surgeons and traditional nurses.

i. Penalty to a Boy

According to the Act, a boy is not allowed to circumcise himself. If he does so, he may find himself locked up in prison. At the same time, the DoH first makes sure that his wound is treated properly. Afterward, disciplinary measures may follow.

ii. Penalty to an *Ingcibi*

If a traditional surgeon circumcises a boy without having received permission from his parents (guardian/s), he could be sentenced to three years in jail or pay a fine of R10 000.00. In other words, he is only allowed to circumcise boys who possess certificates from the DoH.

iii. Penalty to an Ikhankatha

As indicated earlier, a traditional nurse is not allowed to be absent from the 'bush-school' for the first eight days. He is also not allowed to be drunk while he is doing his duties, especially within these first eight days. Should he disobey this instruction; he could be sentenced to three years in jail or be fined an amount of R10.000 (Interview with Mr. M. Maseti, Environmental Health Practitioner, Butterworth Local Health District, 5 January 2007).

h. The Influence of Government Policies at Local Level

This section narrates my own experience in observing government's influence at the local level (Mchubakazi Township in Butterworth). This point refers to what was observed in the 'bush-school' and the community, about compliance with government policies.

The influence of government on initiation rituals in Butterworth was revealed by the way 'bush men' reacted to us as researchers, while we were visiting the 'bush-school'. The moment these men saw us coming carrying documents, they were anxious and asked us to wait while they were going to fetch the 'papers'. The term 'papers' was used to refer to government certificates that permitted them to conduct this ritual.

This is the kind of reaction that we received about three times (each day we visited) from different men. On the first day we met one man who reacted in this manner. On the second day, there were three, while it was two on the third day. It would be only after we had explained our mission that these men would start to relax. In short, they thought we were government officials, whose aim was to inspect their activities.

Further, interviews were conducted with the traditional nurses and 'bush men,' to inquire about the co-operation they have with government in regard to this ritual. In addition to complying with government, bush men gave initiates a maximum level of support, and they had a genuine interest in taking care of them.

In one initiation school we observed, there were three traditional nurses who took care of nine initiates. In their duties (of taking care of initiates), they were supported by men (usually from the initiates' families) and young boys. These traditional nurses slept in the initiation huts, especially during the first eight days. In general, they often slept in the school, as they felt that the life of the initiates depended on them. In addition to their presence in the school, the traditional nurses and the initiates had the necessary certificates that were required by government in order to participate in this ritual.

5.3.2 The Role of Government through the South African Police Service

The police played the role of ensuring that people comply with the health and safety standard that have been highlighted in the Act. Putting it differently, to enforce the implementation of the Act, their activities included doing random visits to the initiation schools. The idea was to inspect the following:

- To see whether initiates were in good health.
- To check whether there were no concerns about the living conditions of the initiates.
- To check whether the initiates were at the appropriate age to undergo the ritual. That is, their age should be a minimum of 18 years.
- To check whether traditional nurses were in possession of the required certificates (see procedures for *amakhankatha*, *iingcibi* and initiates, 5.3).
- To escort the delegations from the Department of Health when they carry out inspections in the 'bush-schools'. The idea was to protect them from any unnecessary attacks that could rise from the custodians of the ritual in the bush.
- To do patrols in the 'coming-out ceremonies'. The idea was to monitor whether there is any violence that erupts in these ceremonies. The interviewee noted: "it is a common phenomenon that murders take place in these ceremonies" (interview with Captain J. *Manata*, SAPS, Butterworth in the Eastern Cape: 29 December, 2006). During the *umgidi*, people exceed their limit of drinking alcohol. Consequently, they end up fighting each other. In certain instances, these fights go on to the extent that someone gets killed.

Government's role is to ensure that boys who go to the initiation school come back to the community alive and are in good health. Government does this by executing certain procedures – boys must first do medical

check-ups before they go to the bush; the *iingcibi* and traditional nurses should be registered before they practise. Penalties are imposed on those who disobey government policies.

5.4 Conclusion

The controversy and debate regarding initiation ritual is inevitable. In South Africa, each population group is entitled to its constitutional right to practice its rituals. This freedom is granted, as long as it does not infringe another person's human right. Therefore, Xhosa-speakers are also the beneficiaries of this right. They have the freedom to practice initiation rites without being interrupted by outsiders. In fact they do not have to account to anyone (outsiders) concerning the way they practice their rite.

On the other hand, the media have the right to investigate certain issues and expose them to the public. Indeed, it is the job of the media to collect news and bring them to the people. This role becomes significant, if the topic under investigation relates to people's lives and health being in danger. Sadly, the initiation ritual (of Xhosa-speakers) has been identified as one of the practices that endangers the life of initiates.

This situation results in the mismatch of interests. The initiation ritual is generally a private and sacred practice. In contrast, the media's role is to disclose the secret practices that have the elements of violating human rights. In the light of these points, the controversy and debate about initiation ritual becomes inevitable.

Further, the involvement of government in regulating initiation ritual is not a favoured practice (by initiation guardians), but it is helpful in saving initiates from unnecessary death and injury. Government's interference is disliked because it makes initiation guardians to account for their actions in the schools. It also results in inappropriate people (women and uncircumcised males) to be involved in the discussion and activities of this ritual. On the other hand, government's response is to ensure that initiates are not exposed to conditions that make them vulnerable to death and injury. In short, the involvement of the media and government in the initiation ritual creates a situation of conflict between them and the custodians of this rite.

Moreover, the involvement of government in initiation schools has produced positive results. The impact of government is revealed by the presence of suitable leaders in the 'bushschools'. These are people who qualify to be traditional surgeons and traditional nurses. The initiation guardians also play their role in taking good care of initiates in the bush. The fact that they are aware of being constantly watched by government influences them to act responsibly. The fear of disciplinary measures by government to culprits compels them to watch their steps.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this last chapter the focus is on providing a summary of the findings from the fieldwork. A discussion about the research findings will take place, and will be linked to the theory that was discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter will be made up of two sections. The first section will constitute the summary and discussion of the main points. The second one will deal with recommendations that are brought forward in this thesis.

6.2 Summary and Discussion of the Main Points

This section begins by indicating the main points, which are also discussed as the conclusion goes on. Afterwards, the interpretation of these results takes place while the theory that was presented in the earlier chapters is used to interpret the results.

6.2.1 A Description of Manhood

The findings of this thesis show that manhood refers to belonging to a community of men who live in a certain area. The common physical marks that distinguish them show that they have all undergone the initiation ritual. However, men who have been through traditional circumcision earn more respect from their community. Those who have used hospital circumcision are accepted by the community as part of the adult males, but are not fully welcomed by traditional Xhosa-speakers into true manhood status.

The use of traditional circumcision is part of a cultural identity that is associated with Xhosa-speaking people. It has been argued earlier (Skelton and Allen 1999) that culture is not something that is fixed (for example to a certain population group). Instead, it is moving and adapting to societal changes. For instance, a certain male might choose to use another type of circumcision in his initiation ritual, instead of traditional circumcision. His choice does not mean he is throwing away the culture that brought him up. Instead he is redefining his own identity, while he still subscribes to the cultural practices that nurtured him.

Perhaps he has chosen other elements of culture that he finds valuable. His choice does not make him 'unmanly' or 'un-Xhosa'. He is adopting something he feels that is building him up towards being a responsible man. Therefore, his culture becomes modified and is adapting to changes that exist in the modern-day life.

Further, this study also shows that defining manhood refers to identifying its purpose. That is, to give support to community members and thus enabling them to run their community affairs. These are, facilitating traditional functions (e.g. *imigidi*), community ceremonies (e.g. weddings, funerals, etc), regulating initiation rituals, and promoting manhood principles.

This role is essential to the community. It implies that a person who hosts an event receives free human resources. This assistance is provided in the form of reciprocity. No contractual papers are signed. Trust between community members is what drives this relationship.

Among the highlights that have emerged about manhood is that it has stages. Namely: elderly men (senior stage), middle-aged men, young men, and the graduates (the most junior stage). All these stages are determined by the day a man got circumcised. This division of males is exactly what separates boys from men, and juniors from senior men. The aim of the division is to promote respect between men. It is based on the principle of *indl'ukutsha* (which men went to the initiation school first). Indeed the principle of seniority promotes discipline and respect of individual men. This discipline spreads throughout the community.

The basis of these stages of manhood comprises the traditional functions (in addition to initiation rituals). It is during these functions that men assess each other concerning their individual manhood status. These functions are also used as a platform to instil the teachings of manhood.

Ultimately, the description of manhood has been presented by linking the perspectives of the pain and the 'voice'. The argument here is that when an initiate is in the 'bush-school', he endures the pain that results from the circumcision wound. This wound is dressed by a traditional nurse (with the support of other men). During the process of dressing the wound, an *ikhankata* persuades an initiate to co-operate. Persuasion

involves negotiation and shouting at him. This process involves him using his 'voice', so that an initiate can understand the importance of dressing his wound in order for it to heal.

In this context, the 'voice' reveals the power of persuasion. Through the 'voice' an *ingcibi* manages to persuade an initiate to co-operate, in order to dress his own wound. The influence of this 'voice' is that it changes the negative attitude of the initiate towards pain into a positive one. When a traditional nurse negotiates with his initiate, he drives him to the highest level of enduring the pain. It is through persevering that this pain subsides faster.

This is what distinguishes 'hospital-men' from those who have been through traditional circumcision. It is the experience they have been through. The traditionally circumcised males have an interesting story to tell. A story of survival! This experience is what makes traditional circumcision unique. Experience is what teaches in the final outcome, not observing while standing outside the experience.

Therefore, this research argues that manhood refers to belonging to a community of males who belong to a particular village or township. The requirement for participating in this community is that a male must undergo the initiation ritual. The purpose of manhood is to execute community affairs. However, the community of manhood may seem to be united, while it is not. Males who are not circumcised the traditional way still experience social exclusion (from the traditionally circumcised males). This exclusion becomes clear mainly in traditional functions.

6.2.2 A Description of a Man

In trying to understand this topic, the study uncovered that a male must undergo the initiation rite in order to earn respect as a man. This is the basic requirement that was viewed as essential in being a Xhosa-speaking man. Even hospital circumcision was noted as being acceptable if a family ritual is included in this practice.

The responses were divided on this topic. Most of the community members supported the idea of either hospital or traditional circumcision. On the other hand, traditional Xhosa-speakers were adamant in upholding traditional circumcision. Both groups agreed that a man is defined in terms of how he conducts

himself. In other words, a man was not defined in terms of the type of circumcision he underwent. Instead, other points were mentioned. For example, he must be able to build his homestead and he must have a good code of conduct. These factors were generally attributed to how a boy was raised by his parents, and the values he learned in his community.

With regard to building a homestead, this point was discussed in Chapter 2 (section 3.6). The argument in supporting the building of a homestead was made by McAllister (1990). He pointed out that building a homestead was an idea that was strongly suggested to graduates after they came out of the initiation school. They were encouraged to go to the mines to work, in order to build their own homesteads. He says this concept was ritualised and rationalised, as it was made a part of this rite. During admonitions, graduates were encouraged to build their own homesteads.

Therefore, McAllister is in consensus with the outcomes of this research. In this study the respondents enhanced the significance of building a homestead as part and parcel of being a man. In his argument, McAllister put forward the same point. In short, the initiation ritual aims at forming an adult who is capable of building his own homestead.

To conclude, the argument of this research is that a male (amongst Xhosa-speakers) becomes a man by virtue of his going to the initiation school. He must conduct himself with dignity and respect; and he earns manhood status by taking responsibility for the wellbeing of the people in his family and the community. Traditional circumcision is amongst the elements that contribute in making an individual a man. On its own, it does not create a socially responsible male.

6.2.3 The Unique Benefits of Undergoing Traditional Circumcision

With regard to this topic, this study has resulted into two sets of views. The first one argued that there are unique benefits in undergoing this rite. The main point noted was that a traditionally circumcised male earns respect from the community. The respect was associated with the lessons an initiate earns during his stay in the 'bush-school'. Interestingly, no tangible argument came up with regard to the contribution of the traditional circumcision operation itself. Even the 'men-of-the-bush' could not articulate this! But they were strongly in favour of it. They wanted to protect this ritual from being eroded.

The second view argued that there are no unique benefits. The argument was in support of either hospital or traditional circumcision. That means both options of circumcision were favoured here.

In short, it is clear that the use of traditional circumcision during the initiation rituals is deeply rooted in the communities of Xhosa-speakers. The support that people have for this rite has not been changed by the death and hospitalisation of initiates. Perhaps there is still a need for other research methods of interrogating the usefulness of traditional circumcision within this rite. Putting it differently, it is necessary to do more intensive research in order to understand “why traditional circumcision should be maintained, considering the risk (health and life) that is associated with it?”

6.2.4 People’s Views about a ‘Hospital-Man’

The research findings indicate that a hospital man is not a man, as he has not received the teachings of the ‘bush-school’; he also has not felt the pain of manhood, which is only experienced in the bush; therefore, he is a coward; a true man is not a coward. These were the views of the anti-‘hospital-men’.

On the other hand, the pro-‘hospital-men’ addressed this question differently. They felt that, if he behaves himself well, he earns the community’s respect; hospital circumcision does not matter as long as he performs his family rituals as in traditional initiation. Overall, the conclusion to this question is that community members respect a ‘hospital-man’ as a man. However, the concern is that he faces the risk of being discriminated against by the orthodox Xhosa-speakers. The responsibility lies with him, regarding the type of circumcision he prefers.

To sum up, this study shows that a ‘hospital-man’ is accepted as a man by his community. The concern is that he might not be recognised as a man by the traditionally circumcised males.

6.2.5 People’s Views on Men’s Expression of Emotions

This section plays a part in uncovering the beliefs that community members have of manhood. These beliefs are also linked to a male’s sexual identity, as indicated in section 2.5 (initiation rituals and gender).

A part of the argument in this thesis is that the initiation rituals promote the allocation of social roles (and expectations) in the society. The criteria for conferring this allocation are based on one's sexual orientation. A part of this implies (for example), that a man is expected to behave in a certain manner (e.g. not to cry, or fear; he must be a breadwinner, etc.) compared to a woman.

In terms of the research findings, it is not acceptable for a man to cry. A man is still expected to fulfil the role of a strong person, emotionally, physically and spiritually. If he fails to fulfil this role, he is not perceived as being man enough. Therefore, there is still a strong belief that a man should be a strong person; he must be a protector of his family and the community. His community and family must be able to perceive him as a pillar of strength and they want to be able to rely on him. The aim of the initiation ritual is to create a strong and reliable man. This ritual is meant to create men who are able to endure pain and not to cry. Crying therefore is unacceptable to the initiation ritual.

In contrast, other respondents indicated that it is acceptable for a man to cry. The argument they put forward is that a man should cry if his life is in danger. He should also cry as an expression of his inner pain. They also believe, however, that his crying should be done in a quiet, secretive and controlled manner. Therefore, a man is not viewed as a superhuman being; he experiences pain (emotional, physical, or spiritual) just as women do. The strength of a man was seen to be based on his ability to let go of his emotional baggage. An emotional pain was noted as a heavy load to carry. By crying it out, is relieved.

Government (especially in the Eastern Cape) became involved in initiation rituals as a response to the death and injury of initiates in the 'bushschools.' The identified problem was that boys' status was changing from being initiates in the 'bush-schools' into patients who are treated by female nurses in hospitals. Hence the Circumcision Act of 2001 (the Act) was formed in order to deal with this problem. In Butterworth, the major role-players in regulating this rite are the Department of Health and the South African Police Service.

To wrap up, this section indicated that it was acceptable for a man to show his feelings. This is for relieving emotional baggage. However, if he cries, he should cry only in exceptional circumstances. His crying should be done in a secret and a controllable manner. The crying of a man is an unusual act; though it is acceptable for him to do so, it is nevertheless perceived as being 'unmanly' to cry.

6.2.6 People's Views on Traditional Circumcision as a Risk

This study has found two responses to this question. The first one pointed out that the rite is not a risk as long as it is regulated by people who understand it. The second response noted that it is too much of a risk. The method of dressing the circumcision wound in the initiation school is unhygienic. It could result in serious consequences to a boy's health, due to wound infection or even serious injury.

This study also indicates that community members do not trust traditional circumcision as a safe method of circumcising boys. The fact is that there are boys who experience initiation tragedies, and this makes people feel uncomfortable about using it. Simultaneously, the involvement of government has played a big role in enforcing the safety of this ritual. Of all the initiates that went to the 'bush-school' in Mchubakazi Township, no deaths and hospitalisation have been reported in recent times. The adherence to government's policy may be attributed to this success.

Traditional circumcision is the heart of controversy around the Xhosa initiation ritual. The controversy arises due to the death of boys in the school. The risk of this ritual is disclosed when boys end up being hospitalised or die in the bush. The respondents in this study show that this rite has a great chance of being safe if well controlled.

Therefore the argument is that traditional circumcision is not a risk if it is monitored properly. Government's health and safety standards must be followed; people with the necessary skills for doing this job should be the only ones allowed to do it.

6.2.7 The Four Phases of the Initiation Ritual

This research uncovered that the practice of initiation ritual involves four stages. They are: the 'entering phase', the phase of being an initiate, the 'coming-out phase' and the phase of being a graduate. This number of phases contrasts with the theory of Van Gennep (1960). His argument is that there are three phases, while there are four here.

The 'entering phase' is the first one in the initiation ritual of Xhosa-speakers. It begins with the process of *ukukhonya*. The *ukukhonya* involves a boy running around in a township and behaving wildly. He does this

in the company of boys who are there to give him support. An *ukukhonya* is followed by the ritual of slaughtering an animal. It involves sacrificing a sheep or a goat and serving traditional beer. It is done on the morning of the day in which circumcision takes place. Eventually, the moment of undergoing circumcision arrives. This requires that a boy be escorted by men to a circumcision spot. As they surround him they are singing the *somagwaza* song. Once the circumcision operation is done, a boy has moved a big step forward towards being a man. However, he still has to face the most difficult times in the initiation school.

The findings on the entering phase concur with the theory about initiation noted in Chapter 2. Concerning the entering phase, it is regarded (in the theory) as the phase of separation. Van Gennep (1960) says this phase is aimed at bringing about a momentous change in the life of a boy. The connection with his previous environment is cut, while he is placed in an isolated place.

Hammond-Tooke (1937: 229-230) also adds his input. He says the characteristics of this phase are the symbolic acts that signify the separation of an initiate from the previous environment in which he used to live. These acts, for example, may include shaving the boy's head. In the case of *umngeno*, the symbolic acts include *ukukhonya*, the ritual slaughtering of an animal, and the *somagwaza* song.

After circumcision he stays in the school for a period of about a month. This constitutes the second phase, the phase of being an initiate. During this period his wound is being dressed while he is learning issues of manhood. The participants during this phase are: a traditional nurse, men, an initiate, boys, and a cooking girl. A traditional nurse is the most essential person at this time. He is responsible for dressing an initiate's wound and teaching him about manhood issues. Moreover, the health (life) of an initiate depends on him.

In this school there are daily activities that are done by an initiate. The dressing of his wound is done on a daily basis, and many times per day. During the first eight days, an initiate is basically doing nothing. His circumcision wound is still new; therefore this is the moment of pain to him. As a result, his ability to move around is limited. Hence he wakes up every morning, makes up his sleeping place (*umandlalo*) and then lies down again. The daily activities for an initiate begin after the *umojiso* ritual (after eight days). This rite sets him free to move in and out of his hut, as well as to move around the veld. After this rite he gains the freedom to do other activities, for example chopping and gathering firewood.

There is disagreement and consensus on this point, between Van Gennep (1960) and the findings of the research. Van Gennep is not discussing Xhosa initiation, he based his remarks on other ethnographic examples. Van Gennep says during this phase an initiate is not allowed to go out of his place and show himself to the public. This research shows that an initiate may move around in the forest after the *umojiso* ritual. As he moves up and down the forest, the public can see him from a distance. This means that he is not hidden completely from the outside world.

Van Gennep (1960) indicates that there are certain rules and restrictions that must be observed during this phase. In the study such restrictions were found including not coming close to married women and that an initiate must use the *hlonipa* language. Van Gennep's examples are that an initiate is subjected to intoxication, religious discipline, etc.

Through this process (the activities of the school) the previous life of boyhood is being destroyed. The connection with childhood behaviour is being left behind. Simultaneously, the spirit of manhood is instilled in an initiate on a continuous basis. It is within this phase, that a man is born. This is the result of this process.

During this phase, an initiate is taught about manhood issues. The lessons of manhood are essential in this rite. However, this does not take place often today. The focus seems to have shifted to the dressing of the wound. The area of interest is to ensure that the wound makes progress in healing. This is a good practice. However, attention ought to be also placed on instilling the lessons of manhood. This is what this ritual is about, manhood, not the circumcision wound. Otherwise it would have been termed the ritual of circumcision, instead of the ritual of manhood.

Besides the daily activities in this school, there is a symbolism that is attached to being an initiate. Being an initiate in the 'bush-school' symbolises being like an animal. That is, he stays in the forest just like a wild animal. He wears no clothes, washes in the river, and he lives in less hygienic conditions of the veld. Lastly, he shies away from people (women), as certain wild animals would do. The 'animalness' is a part of showing respect during this phase.

Rasing (1995:35-36) expresses his view about the symbolism of the liminal phase. He says this phase symbolises death. The features of this symbolism include an initiate being naked or wearing only a slip of cloth. This nakedness aims at humiliating him, to tease him and to indicate that he is a non-person. Victor Turner (1967: 96) also added his input on this matter earlier on. His view is that a neophyte is structurally dead during this phase. He (the neophyte) is treated like a corpse for a certain period of time. All these facts make him feel like a worthless human being.

However the acceptance of 'animalness' and structural death in today's initiates appears to have disappeared sometimes. For instance, it is common to see them moving around in urban areas to expose themselves to the public. Some of them pose for photographs from tourists (including women) in exchange for receiving money. It is fair to acknowledge that this rite is losing its dignity. Its purpose (transforming boys into men) has shifted to something else.

In total, the symbolism has been shown by Rasing (1995), Turner (1967) and the findings of this study that an initiate is being presented as an animal. This 'animalness' has a positive role to play in the initiation ritual. It is a part of the process of transforming a boy into a man.

There are key points that are worth mentioning about the rules of the initiation ritual: that is, married women are not allowed anywhere near this school. Initiates should also move away from these women and must hide themselves if they come across them. If an initiate happens to come across women, he must cover himself with his blanket in order to avoid any form of contact with them. 'Hospital-men' are also not allowed to visit this school. Since they chose hospital circumcision, they are perceived as being a disgrace to manhood.

The next phase is *umphumo*. This is the phase when an initiate is changing from being an animal living in the bush, into a new person (graduate). The *umphumo* involves a boy coming out of the initiation school into a community. Hence it is called '*umphumo*' ('coming-out ceremony'). It begins with men who accompany an initiate to a river, in order to wash his body. It is a group of men who chase after him to a certain river. Their role is to ensure that his journey to the river is safe and is taken care of. Afterwards his naked body is smeared with fat (*ifutha*) (usually pig's fat); he also is covered with a new blanket. These activities are followed by the burning of his hut.

The next and the last phase in the journey of manhood is that of being a graduate. During this phase, an initiate who was in the bush has become a man, living with people in the community. However, he is still under the supervision of men. For a period of six months he goes through the exercise of showing respect to manhood. He does this by adhering to a prescribed code of conduct and the dress code.

Therefore the argument here is that there are four grades of manhood. Namely: the elderly men, men, young men, and graduates. The stage of being an initiate is at the heart of this ritual. It is where an initiate learns about the activities of the initiation school.

6.2.8 Controversy and Debate about Initiation Rite

The tragedy of hospitalisation and the death of initiates in the bush has made this rite to be challenged by the media and government. The media have focused on this challenge through writing public reports concerning this ritual. In this research a case study of a drama series was used to show the role of the media in this rite. However, the focus of the media has been strong in reporting sensationalism, mainly where there are unpleasant occurrences in the bush. The media have reported less on the positive aspects of the initiation ritual.

The exposure of malpractices in the bush has also catalysed government's response to this matter. The mission of government is to root out the incidence of initiates' deaths and hospitalisation. For example, the government imposed health and safety measures on the schools. The boys must go for medical check-ups before they go for circumcision. The initiatives of government have led to the involvement of outsiders in this ritual. According to the principles of this school, outsiders are not allowed to participate in it. Women are also not welcomed.

To wrap up, the resilience of traditional circumcision in the initiation ritual has elicited the attention of government and the media. Both these parties are involved since initiation led to death and hospitalisation of initiates. It is the involvement of outsiders that causes disagreement between traditional leaders and outsiders about the right to intervention.

6.2.9 Government Policies on Initiation Rituals

This research has made a contribution by showing the role of government in regulating the initiation ritual. This regulation is in the form of government policies. The concern of government is to ensure that initiation rituals in communities are practised in a manner that is free from death and injury. The aim is to prevent wound infection due to the circumcision operation. Government takes various steps in ensuring its aims actually do materialise.

Firstly, it facilitates the registration of participants. The DoH monitors this ritual through making sure that people (guardians of the school) with the necessary knowledge and skills are the only ones who manage the initiation schools. They receive certificates from the DoH. On the other hand, the DoH allows only boys who are in good health to undergo traditional circumcision. Once these boys are confirmed (by health practitioners) to be in good health, they receive certificates. After registration, they may proceed to participate in this rite. This requirement for certificates applies also to traditional nurses and traditional surgeons.

This research also shows the second role of government. That is, government laid down procedures that should be followed. The people who should obey these procedures are boys and their parents, traditional nurses and traditional surgeons. The procedure for a boy is that he must first go through a medical check-up, before going to the 'bush-school'. His parents must also be present, to confirm that they are the boy's parents. It is done in a local public hospital or through a doctor's private practice. If he is fit to go through the rite, he receives a certificate and a vaccination injection. On the other hand, a traditional surgeon and a traditional nurse must also receive their certificates from the DoH. Each of them must first bring a letter from a ward councillor or traditional leader.

The third contribution of government is revealed through the DoH Task Team. As a part of monitoring the policy implementation, government has developed initiation task teams in various local municipalities. They comprise various units from the department. In Butterworth, this study noted the following who are involved in the task team: the Environmental Health, Health Promotions, and the male nurse. The role of this task team is to visit 'bush-schools', in order to check whether the participants comply with the Act. In addition, it does wound management where there is a need. This implies that if they come across an initiate

who has experienced a medical problem, the male nurse (medical) treats him immediately in the bush. The aim is to avoid the embarrassment of boys ending up being treated by female nurses in hospitals.

Fourthly, government's role is enforced by using penalties. If government's procedures are not followed, penalties are imposed on the culprits. Should a boy circumcise himself without his parents' permission, he faces the penalty of being imprisoned. As regards the '*ingcibi*', if he has circumcised a boy without his parents' permission, he could be sentenced to three years in jail, or a fine of R10 000. Lastly, the '*ikhankatha*' has to adhere to certain procedures. He is expected to be present in the school at all times, especially during the first eight days of a boy's circumcision. He is also not allowed to be under the influence of alcohol during this 8 days period. The penalty for disobeying this rule is also a three-years sentence in jail or a R10 000 fine.

The last role of government that came out of this study is that of the SAPS. The police also plays a role in ensuring the implementation of this Act. They do this by conducting random visits to the schools. Amongst the issues they take care of are: to escort the delegation from the DoH when they visit these schools; to do patrols to the 'coming-out ceremonies', and to check whether there are stolen goods kept in initiation huts. Initially, government's intervention by monitoring initiation schools was not welcomed. The custodians of this ritual were unhappy with this involvement. As noted before (in the controversy and debate section), they felt that their sacred rite was being invaded.

The results of government's input are, however, visible and beneficial. This study has shown the impact of government on the practice of this ritual. The reaction of 'men-of-the bush' to us (myself and the research assistant) suggested that government was constantly monitoring them. As noted before, whenever these men saw us visiting, they would ask us to wait while they fetched their 'papers' (certificates). Their reaction to us was that of fear and anxiety. They would calm down after we told them that we were researchers, not government officials.

This fear of government made these men take good care of the initiates and the school. This care was confirmed by the absence of complaints from the initiates. That is to say, initiates reported no incidents of abuse or negligence by the custodians of the school. There was also no tension or resentment between these two groups. Above all, since the school started in early November 2006 and continued until the beginning

of January 2007, there were no reports of initiates' death or hospitalization. When one interviewed the DoH and the SAPS in Butterworth, the officials were proud to report that they had experienced no initiation tragedies.

Therefore, the initiatives of government in the initiation schools have had a positive impact. This impact was revealed by the decrease in the number of initiation tragedies, as there were no casualties reported in the media. Government's impact was visible also at the local level. The guardians of this rite were vigilant in making sure that their schools were run well and kept in order.

6.3 Recommendations

Traditional Xhosa-speakers have a strong belief in keeping the traditional method of the circumcision ritual. This belief prevails despite the tragedies that sometimes accompany the traditional circumcision. Simultaneously, the orthodox Xhosa-speakers do not provide a convincing argument for upholding traditional circumcision. Therefore, the recommendation of this study is that there should be further research on this matter. The topic to deal with this may say: "Why should traditional circumcision be retained, considering the risk that goes with it?"

I have argued earlier, that using traditional circumcision in undergoing initiation ritual is an act of courage. Any act of courage should arise from within the actor. It should not be imposed by other people on him. As an act of courage, traditional circumcision should be left to a boy to decide whether he wants to adopt it or not. Therefore, the recommendation from this research (to community members) is that the preferred type of circumcision should be left to a boy to decide. His decision should be free from the pressurising influence of his family, the peer group, and community members. In the words of 'men-of-the-bush' in Mchubakazi Township, people should "respect one's choice of circumcision". In other words, males should be respected as men, regardless of the type of circumcision method they have chosen.

The right to practise this rite with confidentiality, versus the right to expose it to the public is the core issue here. The leaders of the initiation ritual feel strongly that their right to practise initiation with confidentiality is being violated by outsiders. In contrast, the media and government see the need to be involved as long as this ritual puts boys' health at risk. This is a mismatch of interests. Therefore, this study

is left with a question unanswered about this matter, concerning whose rights should take priority. Thus, it is the recommendation of this study, that further research is required on this question.

There is a need to do further research on the reasons for the initiation ritual in these days. Originally, the purpose of the ritual was to teach boys about manhood issues while they are initiates in the bush. Its concern was about the disappearance of teachers from these schools. This situation is made worse by the absence of elderly men as guardians. Instead, the youth are the custodians.

Consequently, this ritual now contains less teaching about manhood. Ironically, this is what the initiation ritual is all about. Therefore, one may well ask: What is the purpose of this rite in a modern society? Hence it is the recommendation of the study to suggest the need for further research on the purpose of the initiation ritual.

6.4 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter leads to the final summary of the argument of this research. This argument is based on two items. These are, i) a definition of manhood, and ii) the significant of traditional circumcision:

A definition of manhood: The argument in this research is that manhood refers to a group of men who live in a specific village or township. These men act collectively and consistently in the interest of their village. They give support to households that are hosting traditional functions and ceremonies. It is this collective responsibility that makes manhood to be alive in a community.

The requirement for belonging in manhood is that a male must be circumcised and undergo an initiation ritual. Undergoing the ritual is a key requirement for being a man and consequently belonging to manhood. A man may choose either hospital or traditional circumcision, the important issue is to undergo the initiation ritual and to be circumcised.

The significance of traditional circumcision: Undergoing traditional circumcision is an act of courage. It is courageous for a boy to embrace traditional circumcision, as it involves unbearable pain. Men who went

through this circumcision method get recognition (from the community) for being brave enough to persevere while enduring the pain.

Moreover, being a man is strongly associated with traditional circumcision. Traditional circumcision teaches a man life skills that are necessary to deal with harsh moments and crisis situations. These skills are being developed as an initiate is exposed to unpleasant conditions in the school. Being a man arises out of these challenges of the 'bush-school'. All this experience results in him having survival skills that become useful in life later to a man.

However, it is not compulsory to use traditional circumcision in undergoing the initiation ritual. The important point is that a male must go through initiation ritual in order to become a man. Choosing a circumcision method that is not traditional does not make a man 'unmanly'.

REFERENCES

- Aldeeb Abu-Sahliem, S.A.A. 2001. *Male and female circumcision: among Jews, Christians and Muslims: Religious, medical, social and legal debate*. Pennsylvania.Warren Center: Shangri-la.
- Allen, R. E. 1992. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. London. Oxford University Press.
- Author unknown, 2007. Male circumcision lowers chance of contracting HIV/Aids. *Contemporary Sexuality*. 41(2):13-25.
- Author unknown, 2006. Demand for male circumcision rises in a bid to prevent HIV. *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*. 84 (7): 509-511.
- Author unknown, 2005. UNAIDS statement on South African trial findings regarding male circumcision and HIV. *Indian of Journal of Medical Science* 59 (7): 322.
- Author unknown, 2001. Male circumcision and HIV/AIDS: Are adolescents the key? *Population Reports*. 29 (3): 14.
- Author unknown, 2007. Umthunzi Wentaba's writer speaks out. Available: www.tvsa.co.za. [29 September 2008].
- Author unknown, 2007. Amakhosi want SABC to slaughter an animal. Available: www.iol.co.za. [29 September 2008].
- Author unknown, 2007. SABC pulls contentious drama on circumcision. Available: <http://www.mediaupdate.co.za>. [29 September 2008].
- Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. 2001. *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Bible. Genesis, 2004. *The covenant of circumcision*. In the holy bible International Version. 17:9-14.

Birx, J. 2006. *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. London. New Delhi: Sage.

Block, R. 1996. Tribal rite robs youth of manhood. *Sunday Times* (London), 29 December.

Brown, C.A. 2003. A “man” in the village is a “boy” in the workplace: Colonial racism, worker militance, and Igbo notions of masculinity in the Nigerian coal industry, 1930-1945. In Lindsay, L.A. and Miescher, S.F. *Social history of Africa. Men and masculinities in modern Africa*. Britain. British Library Cataloguing: 156-174.

Carstens, P. 1982. The Socio-economic context of initiation ceremonies among two Southern African peoples. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*.16 (3): 505-522.

City Press 2002. 30 June.

Cox, J.L. 1998. *Rites of passage in contemporary Africa. Interaction between Christian and African Traditional Religions*. Cardiff. Cardiff Academic Press.

Davies, D. 1994. *Introduction. Raising the issues*. In Holm, J. and Bowker, J. *Rites of Passage*. Pinter publishers. London: 1-9.

De Vos et al. 2003. *Research at Grass Roots for the social sciences and human service professions*. Second edition. Pretoria. Van Schaik.

Dijker, A.J.M. and Koomen, W. 2006. A psychological model of social control and stigmatization: Evolutionary background and practical implications. *Psychology, Health and Medicine* 11 (3): 296-306.

Dover, P. 2005. Gender and Embodiment: Expectations of manliness in a Zambian village. In Ouzgane, L. and Morrell, R. *African masculinities. Men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present*. Natal. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press: 173-187.

Elliot, A. 1975. *The magic world of the Xhosa*. London. Collins.

Five arrested for illegal circumcisions. 2007. *City Press*, 17 June.

Funani, L.S. 1990. *Circumcision among the Ama-Xhosa. A Medical Investigation*. Braamfontein. Skotaville Publishers.

Grimmes, R.L. 2000. *Deeply into the bone. Re-inventing rites of passage*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

Hammond-Tooke, W.D. 1974. *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. .

Hammond-Tooke, W.D. 1975. The Symbolic structure of Cape Nguni cosmology. In Whisson, M. and West, M. *Religion and social change in Southern Africa: Anthropological essays in honour of Monica Wilson*. Cape Town. David Philip: 15-33.

Hunter, M. 2005. Cultural politics and masculinities: Multiple-partners in historical perspective in KwaZulu-Natal. In Reid, G. and Walker, L. *Men behaving differently*. Cape Town. Double Storey Books: 139-160.

Lightfoot-Klein, H. 1989. Prisoners of Ritual. *An odyssey into female genital circumcision in Africa*. New York. Harrington Park Press.

Male circumcision significantly reduces the risk of HIV infection. 2006. *Daily Dispatch*, 20 December.

Mark et. al. 1998. Rituals and masking traditions in Jola men's initiation. *Academic Search Premier*. 31(1).

Mayer, P. 1971. Traditional manhood initiation in an industrial city: The African View. In de Jager, E.J. (ed). *MAN: Anthropological essays presented to O.F Roum*. Cape Town. Struik: 7-18.

- McAllister, P.A. 1990. *The role of ritual in resisting domination in the Transkei in the 1970s*. Johannesburg. History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Meintjes, G. 1998. *Manhood at a price. Socio-medical perspectives on Xhosa traditional circumcision*. Grahamstown. I. S. E. R. Rhodes University.
- Mills G.W. 1939. *Missionaries, Xhosa Clergy and the suppression of traditional customs. Paper presented at UWC Institute for Historical Research Conference on : people, power and culture, the history of Christianity in South Africa, 1792-1992*. Bellville.
- Morrell, R. 2006. Fathers, fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa. In Richter, L. and Morrell, R. *Baba. Men and fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town. HSRC Press: 13-25.
- Ngxamngxa, A.N.N. 1971. The function of circumcision among the Xhosa-speaking tribes in historical perspective. In de Jager, E.J. (ed). *MAN: Anthropological essays presented to O.F Roum. Cape Town. Struik. : 183-204*.
- Ngwane, Z. 2001. Real men reawaken their fathers' homesteads, the educated leave them in ruins: The politics of domestic reproduction in post-apartheid rural South Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 31 (4):402-426.
- Nyaundi, P.M. 2005. Circumcision and the rights of the Kenyan boy-child. *African Human Rights Law Journal*. 5(1): 171- 181.
- Parker, M. 1995. *Rethinking Female Circumcision*. Africa 65 (4).
- Pinnock, D. 1997. *Gangs, rituals and rites of passage*. Cape Town. African Sun Press and the Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town.
- Private ritual, public spectacle. 2007. *Daily Dispatch*, 10 April.

Rasing, T. 1995. *Passing on the Rites of Passage. Girls' initiation rites in the context of an urban Roman Catholic community on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Amsterdam. African Studies Centre.

SABC pulls contentious drama on circumcision. 2007. *Pretoria News*, 20 April.

Shuga, B. 2007. SABC Suspends controversial Umthunzi Wentaba. *TV SA Newsdesk*, 30 March: 1-3.

Silverman, E.K. 2004. Anthropology and Circumcision. *Annu Rev. Anthropol.*33:419-45.

Skelton, T. and Allen, T. 1999. *Culture and global change. An Introduction*. London. Routledge.

Spiegel, A. and Boonzaier, E.1988. Promoting tradition: Images of South African past. In Boonzaier, E. and Sharp, J. *South African Keywords. The uses and abuses of political concepts*. Cape Town. David Philip: 40-45.

Sullwold, E. 1998. Swimming with seals: The developmental role of initiation rituals in work with adolescents. *Child and Youth Care Forum*. 27(5): 305-315.

Thornton, R. 1988. Culture: A contemporary definition. In Boonzaier, E. and Sharp, J. *South African Keywords. The uses and abuses of political concepts*. David Philip. Cape Town: 17-28.

Two die, five lose penises after rituals go horribly wrong at initiation schools. 2003. *City Press*, 28 December.

Traditional leaders slated over a satanic TV. 2007. *Cape Argus*, 08 May.

Turner, V. 1967. *The forest of symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. United Kingdom. Cornell University Press.

Unhealthy silence. 2007. *Mail and Guardian*, 18 July.

Van Gennep, A. 1960. *The rites of Passage*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Van Vuuren and de Jongh 1999. Rituals of manhood in South Africa: Circumcision at the cutting edge of critical intervention. *South African Journal of Ethnology*. 22 (4).

Wagner, R. 1984. Rituals as communication: Order, meaning and secrecy in Melanesian initiation rites. *Annual Rev. Anthropology*. 13: 143-55.

Warren-Brown, G. 1998. *BOYZ 2 MEN*. Initiation's cutting edge. *Leadership*. 17 (1-4): 54-65.

Wright, S. 1998. The politicization of "culture" *Anthropology Today*. 14(1):7-15.

APPENDICES

- a) Definition/Clarification of Terms
- b) Research Interview Questions
- c) The Circumcision Act 2001
- d) DoH Forms
- e) Photographs

APPENDICE A: DEFINITION/CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

- TEBA - The Employment Bureau of Africa Limited.
- Family Rituals - This is the ritual that involves slaughtering an animal and serving a traditional beer. It is done by the people of that particular clan. The people in the community are invited to witness the ritual.
- The *hlonipha* language: A hlonipha language is a language that is used by initiates in the 'bush-school'. It is used to substitute the common language of the daily basis. It comes from the word *hlonipha*, means respect.

APPENDICE B: RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- i. How do you describe a man?
- ii. What unique benefits does traditional circumcision offer?
- iii. What is your feeling about a 'hospital-man'? Is he a man?
- iv. What are your views regarding men and the expression of emotions, e.g. crying, being fearful, etc?
- v. Do you think traditional circumcision is a risk?

APPENDICE C: THE CIRCUMCISION ACT

Extract from: Provincial Gazette Extraordinary. 22 November 2001. No. 818.

APPLICATION OF HEALTH STANDARDS IN TRADITIONAL CIRCUMCISION ACT 6 OF 2001
[ASSENTED TO 15 NOVEMBER 2001]

[DATE OF COMMENCEMENT: 22 NOVEMBER 2001]

(English text signed by the Premier)

ACT

To provide for the observation of health standards in traditional circumcision; to provide for issuing of permission for the performance of a circumcision operation and the holding of circumcision school; and to provide for matters incidental thereto.

1 Definitions

In this Act, unless the context indicates otherwise -

"**circumcision**" means the circumcision of a person as part of a traditional practice;

"**circumcision school**" means a place where one or more initiates are treated;

"**Department**" means the Department of Health in the Province;

"**gazette**" means the *Provincial Gazette* of the Province;

"**initiate**" means a person who is in any stage of the circumcision process as contemplated in this Act;

"**MEC**" means the Member of the Executive Council responsible for Health in the Province;

"**medical officer**" means an officer designated or a person appointed in terms of section 2;

"**medical practitioner**" means a person registered as such under the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974);

"**permission**" means permission in the form of a document prescribed by Annexures A and B, issued by the medical officer in terms of section 3(a);

"**Province**" means the Province of the Eastern Cape established by section 103 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996);

"**surgical instrument**" means an instrument used for the performance of circumcision, and "**instrument**" has a corresponding meaning;

"**this Act**" includes regulations made hereunder;

"**traditional authority**" means a traditional authority established in terms of a law recognised by section 211 of the Constitution; and

"**traditional practice**" includes a practice according to the custom, religion or any other rules of similar nature.

2 Designation of medical officer

The MEC must designate in writing one or more officers of the Department or appoint one or more persons, on such conditions and qualifications as may be prescribed, as medical officers for the purposes of exercising and performing powers and functions conferred or imposed on them by this Act.

3 Powers and functions of medical officer

The medical officer must, in addition to any other power and functions entrusted to him or her by this Act, exercise and perform the following powers and functions:

- (a) Issuing of permissions to circumcise or treat an initiate;
- (b) Keeping of records and statistics pertaining to circumcision and reporting thereon as prescribed, to the Department; and
- (c) A right of access to any occasion or instance where circumcision is performed or an initiate is treated.

4 Permission to perform circumcision

(1) No person, except a medical practitioner, may perform any circumcision in the Province without written permission of the medical officer designated for the area in which the circumcision is to be performed.

(2)(a) A person may apply as prescribed for permission to perform circumcision and such permission may not be given unless all the conditions set out in Annexure A of the Schedule have been complied with.

(b) A medical officer may, as part of the condition provided in item 7 of Annexure A of the Schedule -

- (i) disallow the use of a surgical instrument that the traditional surgeon intends to use; and
- (ii) prescribe or supply a proper surgical instrument where the use of a particular instrument has been disallowed in terms of subparagraph (i).

(c) Where a proper surgical instrument has been prescribed or supplied in terms of paragraph (b)(i), the medical officer concerned must demonstrate to, or train, the traditional surgeon as to how the instrument should be used.

(3) A medical officer must, in the following manner, present the conditions set out in Annexure A, to the person applying for permission in terms of subsection (2)(a):

- (a) The medical officer, or any other person assisting such medical officer, and in the

presence of the medical officer, must read the conditions in the official language understood by the person applying for permission;

(b) both the medical officer and the person applying for permission to perform a circumcision, must write their full names and signatures, and the date, on the document containing the conditions.

(4) A person who has applied must within one month of the date of such application, submit proof of compliance with the conditions referred to in subsection (2), failing which the application of such person shall lapse.

(5) A person whose application has lapsed as contemplated in subsection (4), is eligible to make a new application for permission to the medical officer concerned, and the provisions of this Act apply to such person as if application for permission is made for the first time.

5 Permission to hold circumcision school or treat initiates

(1) In the Province, no person may hold any circumcision school or treat any initiate without written permission of the medical officer designated for the area in which the circumcision school is to be held or the initiate is to be treated: Provided that this subsection does not apply to the treatment of an initiate in a hospital or by a qualified medical doctor outside the traditional context.

(2) A person may apply, as prescribed, for permission to hold a circumcision school or to treat an initiate, and such permission must be given subject to the conditions set out in Annexure B of the Schedule.

(3) A medical officer must, in the following manner, present the conditions set out in Annexure B, to the person applying for permission in terms of subsection (2):

(a) The medical officer, or any other person assisting such medical officer and in the presence of the medical officer, must read the conditions in the official language understood by the person applying for permission;

(b) both the medical officer and the person applying for permission to hold a circumcision school or treat initiates must write their full names and signatures, and the date, on the document containing the conditions.

(4) A person who has applied, must within one month of the date of such application, submit proof of compliance with the conditions referred to in subsection (2), failing which the application of such person shall lapse.

(5) A person whose application has lapsed in terms of subsection (4), is eligible to make a new application for permission to the medical officer concerned and the provisions of this Act apply to such person as if application is made for the first time.

6 Restriction of persons to treat an initiate

(1) No initiate may treat or attempt to treat another initiate at any stage during or after the holding of a circumcision school.

(2) No person other than the traditional nurse, medical practitioner, the medical officer or any other person

authorized by the medical officer, may within a traditional context, treat an initiate.

7 Consent by parent or guardian

(1) The parent or guardian of a prospective initiate must, in respect of a prospective initiate below the age of 21 years, complete and sign a consent form in the format set out in Annexure C.

(2) The parent or guardian of an initiate must, in addition to all other responsibilities which such parent or guardian has in respect of the initiate, render such assistance and co-operation as may be requested by the medical officer in the interest of the good health of the initiate.

(3) No person, including the parent or guardian of an initiate, may interfere with or obstruct the medical officer in the performance of his or her duties under this Act.

8 Amendment of Schedule

(1) The MEC may, by notice in the *Gazette*, amend the Schedule.

(2) The MEC must, within a period of thirty days after the publication of the notice contemplated in subsection (1), submit a copy thereof to the Legislature of the Province.

9 Penalties

(1) Any person who contravenes the provisions of sections 6, 7(2) and 7(3) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine of R1 000,00 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months.

(2) Any person who contravenes the provisions of sections 4(1) and 5(1) or who fails to comply with any condition imposed by a medical officer in terms of sections 4(2) and 5(2), is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding R10 000,00 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years, or to imprisonment for a period of five years without the option of a fine.

10 Regulations

(1) The MEC may make regulations in regard to any of the following matters:

(a) The issue of permission under this Act and the form of such permission;

(b) the form and manner of application for such permission;

(c) the requirements to be complied with by the applicant for such permission;

(d) the prohibition or restriction of the issue of such a permission in appropriate circumstances;

(e) the duration of any circumcision school;

(f) generally the conditions subject to which permission may be issued;

(g) the conditions and qualifications which an officer or a person referred to in section 2 must satisfy or possess; and

(h) any other matter, the regulation of which may in the opinion of the MEC, be necessary or

desirable for the purpose of achieving the objects of this Act.

(2) Any regulation made under this Act may prescribe a penalty for the contravention thereof, or default in complying therewith: Provided that regulations may not prescribe a penalty in excess of the penalty imposed by section 9(2).

11 Short title

(1) This Act is called the Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act, 2001 (Eastern Cape).

SCHEDULE

ANNEXURE A

CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING PERMISSION TO PERFORM CIRCUMCISION

1. There must be proof in the form of a birth certificate or an identity document that the prospective initiate in respect of whom permission is requested is at least 18 years old, or if the parents of the initiate so specifically request, at least 16 years old.
2. Parental consent must be obtained in respect of a prospective initiate who is under 21 years of age or who has not acquired adulthood, and such consent must be given either by a parent or a guardian of the prospective initiate concerned.
3. A prospective initiate must undergo a pre-circumcision medical examination by a medical doctor. The medical certificate must indicate as to whether the prospective initiate, based on the examination by the medical doctor who must have considered amongst others the medical history of the prospective initiate, is fit to undergo circumcision or not.
4. The traditional surgeon must be known to the parents of the prospective initiate, and must use instruments approved by such parents, or in the case of an orphan by his family, guardian or relatives, unless a medical officer has prescribed another surgical instrument.
5. A traditional surgeon, who is to perform a circumcision within an area falling under a traditional authority, must inform such traditional authority thereof.
6. Where a traditional surgeon does not have the necessary experience to perform a circumcision, he must perform it under the supervision of an experienced traditional surgeon.
7. An instrument used to perform a circumcision on one initiate must not be used again to perform a circumcision on another initiate, and the traditional surgeon must use the instruments supplied by the medical officer where the traditional surgeon has to perform more than one circumcision on more than one initiate but does not have sufficient instruments.
8. The traditional surgeon must keep instruments to be used by him to perform circumcision clean at all times before a circumcision, and shall use any substance prescribed by a medical officer for the sterilization of the instruments.

9. The traditional surgeon must cooperate at all times with the medical officer concerned in respect of any directive given or decision made by the medical officer under the powers vested in the medical officer by this Act.

<i>Traditional surgeon</i>	<i>Medical officer</i>
Name
Signature
Date
If initiate is under the age of 21 years:	
Parent or guardian	
Date	

ANNEXURE B

CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING PERMISSION FOR HOLDING A CIRCUMCISION SCHOOL OR FOR TREATING INITIATES

1. The medical officer concerned shall be entitled to impose a deviation from the use of traditional material only in cases where there are early signs of sepsis or other similar health conditions.
2. The medical officer concerned must be allowed by the traditional nurse to visit the circumcision school at any time and as regularly as the medical officer deems necessary in order to inspect the health and the condition of the initiate(s).
3. The initiate(s) must, at least within the first eight days of the circumcision, be allowed by the traditional nurse to have a reasonable amount of water to avoid the initiate suffering any dehydration.
4. The traditional nurse must not expose any initiate(s) to any danger or harmful situation and shall exercise reasonable care in the holding of the circumcision school.
5. The traditional nurse must report any sign of illness of the initiate(s) to the medical officer, as soon as possible.
6. The traditional nurse must stay with the initiate at the circumcision school 24 hours a day

during the first eight days of the initiation process, and after the lapse of the first eight days of such initiation process, he must be available to the initiate(s) at least once every day until the initiation period has come to an end.

7. The medical officer concerned shall be entitled to prescribe any measure at any stage of the circumcision process that he or she on reasonable grounds deems necessary in the interest of the good health of the initiate(s)), and such a measure may in appropriate circumstances include a departure from the traditional methods.

8. The traditional nurse must cooperate at all times with the medical officer in respect of any directive given or decision made by a medical officer under the powers vested in the medical officer by this Act.

<i>Traditional nurse</i>	<i>Medical officer</i>
Name
Signature
Date

ANNEXURE C

PARENTAL OR GUARDIAN CONSENT

I,

ID No.

Residential address

1. confirm that I am the parent/guardian of:

NAME OF THE PERSON

.....

who will be undergoing a circumcision on

DATE OF OPERATION

.....

in

PLACE OF OPERATION

.....

TIME OF OPERATION H

and

2. consent to my child undergoing a circumcision operation and attending initiation school. I acknowledge that I understand the conditions set out in Annexures A and B hereto, which conditions bind the traditional surgeon and the traditional nurse.

SIGNATURE OF THE PARENT /or

GUARDIAN