

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF XHOSA MALE INITIATION  
IN MORAL REGENERATION**

by

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**PROMOTER: PROF. H.C. PAUW**

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## **DEDICATION**

*THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED TO  
MY SON,*

*LATHITHA ILANGA NTOMBANA*

*WHOM I COULD NOT SPEND ENOUGH TIME WITH DURING MY STUDIES  
AND HE CUNNINGLY UNDERSTOOD THAT DADDY HAD TO GO TO  
WORK*

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**DECLARATION**

In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification

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**DATE.....JANUARY 2012.....**

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## ABSTRACT

This research study in Mdantsane (East London), Whittlesea (Hewu), Njiveni (Libode) and Cala sought to investigate the role of the amaXhosa male initiation in moral regeneration focusing on socio-cultural, educational and religious aspects related to moral values. The role of the amaXhosa male initiation as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, how it was viewed in the past, its impact upon the initiates and its contribution to the moral upholding of values were investigated. It was further intended to establish whether westernisation and urbanisation brought a shift of meaning and emphasis to the current initiation practice and, if so, to what extent has the ceremony departed from traditional norms and what challenges the ceremony has to face at present.

A qualitative research method involving an ethnographic study was utilised, which includes in-depth, semi-structured interviews (formal interviews and informal discussions) and participant observation

Research findings suggested that in the past the amaXhosa male initiation played a role in the instruction of moral values. However, this study identified a shift of meaning in the practice which has been more evident in urban than in rural areas. The shift suggested that the instruction role has changed in prominence and there is less emphasis on teaching and appropriate adult behaviour. Moreover that the *amakhankatha*, who had the major role in teaching of the initiates are now participating in making the role less effective and sometimes introducing influences that are destructive to the initiates. Such negative influences include abuse of alcohol and drugs, promiscuity among the youth and disobedience of elders. It is argued that revisiting the teachings surrounding male initiation may cultivate productive debates on how young males are taught morality in today's society. Furthermore, that if the Xhosa male initiation could be contextualised it can play a role in the instruction of boys as they graduate to manhood and that can contribute to moral regeneration in South Africa.

## **SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 covers the Introduction and Background to the study. This chapter provides a brief background of the Xhosa initiation practice as one of the old practices that are observable in other South African ethnic groups, Africa and the world. In this chapter, it is acknowledged that much research on initiation and circumcision has been conducted but such work concentrates more on circumcision, HIV and AIDS and minimising deaths of initiates. There has been less research work recently undertaken on the traditional and current role of initiation in building the moral fibre of the society. It is acknowledged in this chapter that now is the time to seek alternatives from African culture, values and practices in order to tackle contemporary societal challenges. Hence this research study is conducted in the realm of cultural anthropology and the research methodology that will be presented in the next chapter is from a social scientific point of view.

Chapter 2 covers the Research Methodology. In terms of research design and methodology, a qualitative research method involving an ethnographic study was utilised, which includes in-depth, semi-structured interviews (formal interviews and informal discussions) and participant observation. Four different areas were chosen for this research namely, Mdantsane (in East London), Whittlesea (Hewu), Njiveni (Libode) and Cala. Mdantsane is a symbol of township and urban life. Whittlesea, a semi-urban area, Cala and Njiveni in Mpondoland are a symbol of rural life. The main reason to include Njiveni in Mpondoland was that the initiation practice was abolished and has only recently been re-adopted in Mpondoland.

Chapter 3 addresses the initiation process itself as a rite of passage. This chapter offers a broad background of the Xhosa initiation practice from two angles; firstly by identifying this practice as a rite of passage that is not only practised by the amaXhosa but also by other groups in South Africa and other nations all over the world. Secondly, that the Xhosa initiation practice has from as early as the seventeen hundreds been identified as an institution where moral values were instilled upon boys as they graduated to manhood. After

having looked at the meaning of the moral concepts, an endeavour is made to find out how these values are regarded in the Xhosa culture and their implications for the initiation practice today. It is considered that in the past the Xhosa initiation practice played a tremendous role in the building of moral fibre of men and that role has deteriorated due to various reasons discussed in this thesis.

Chapter 4 looks at characteristics that are related to culture and culture change in relation to the Xhosa initiation practice. This chapter argues that major factors such as colonisation, industrialisation and urbanisation had a great influence on cultural change in South Africa. Furthermore, these factors may have affected the shift or change in the practice of the Xhosa initiation. The observable escalating problems associated with the Xhosa initiation practice has resulted into some people calling for its discontinuation mainly arguing that it is no longer safe and it does no longer play a positive role in the community. Even in the midst of all the problems associated with initiation, this practice is becoming more and more popular that even areas such as Mpondoland which abandoned the practice in the past, has re-introduced it. Despite the escalating number of casualties, Mpondo boys are not willing to give up this practice. Although initiation is quite popular in some of the urban and rural communities, this practice is struggling to find its effective role in the contemporary South African context.

Chapter 5 covers the legislative framework which regulates circumcision and initiation schools under the current political milieu. With the advent of democracy, the democratic constitution seeks to ensure that the rights of all South Africans are respected, including children's rights, cultural rights and religious rights. The Xhosa initiation which includes, traditional circumcision is regulated by different Policies, Acts and Procedures as entrenched in the South African Constitution. The introduction of laws guiding circumcision and the practice of initiation were viewed as infringements of cultural rights while the Department of Health and the government maintained that their intension was to make initiation safe for its participants. In this chapter it is acknowledged that South Africa is faced with a challenge of bringing various

cultural practices in line with the constitution. This chapter further explores the merits and demerits of the role of regulating circumcision and initiation practices and the impact of such regulations in curbing problems associated with initiation schools.

Chapter 6 looks at the present meaning of initiation and its role in Xhosa communities. The findings in this chapter are in reference to the three areas related to morality namely, socio-cultural aspects, education and religion. The views from the informants correspond with the literature study discussed in chapter three that the initiation practice did play a positive role in instilling good moral values to boys as they graduate to manhood. The older informants argue that this moral role is no longer visible more especially in Mpondoland and in urban areas. The young informants are excited and show excitement and strong commitment to the initiation practice with the belief that it would transform them into manhood. The ideal versus real culture is observed, where some informants express a belief but act contrary to it. For example, there was a reported case of *amakhankatha* who claimed that they spent 24 hours with the initiates, when in actual fact, they hardly spent time with the initiates. What gave evidence to their absence in the lodges was the difficulty in finding them as a result the researcher had to look for them in the communities and sometimes visit them in the evenings.

Chapter 7 contains the Conclusion and Summary. The discussion in this chapter is mainly based on the suggestions made by the informants and the researcher's opinion of the findings. The findings of this research study suggest a number of observable facts related to the Xhosa initiation practice, but there are four main issues that have been visible. Firstly, that from its inception, the amaXhosa male initiation had a strong moral command which resulted in behavioural change of the men. Secondly, that even today this practice still has a great potential to play this moral role if it can be contextualised for today's society. Thirdly, that this practice has over the years met a lot of influences, which have caused a change of meaning and in the significance of initiation in the amaXhosa cultural life. Lastly, that this change had been felt and experienced differently by different areas such as rural,

semi-urban, urban and Mpondoland. The main finding of this research is, therefore, that there has been a shift of meaning and value in the amaXhosa initiation practice and that this shift has taken place in all areas but has been slower in the rural than in the urban areas

## **KEY WORDS**

AmaXhosa;

Male initiation;

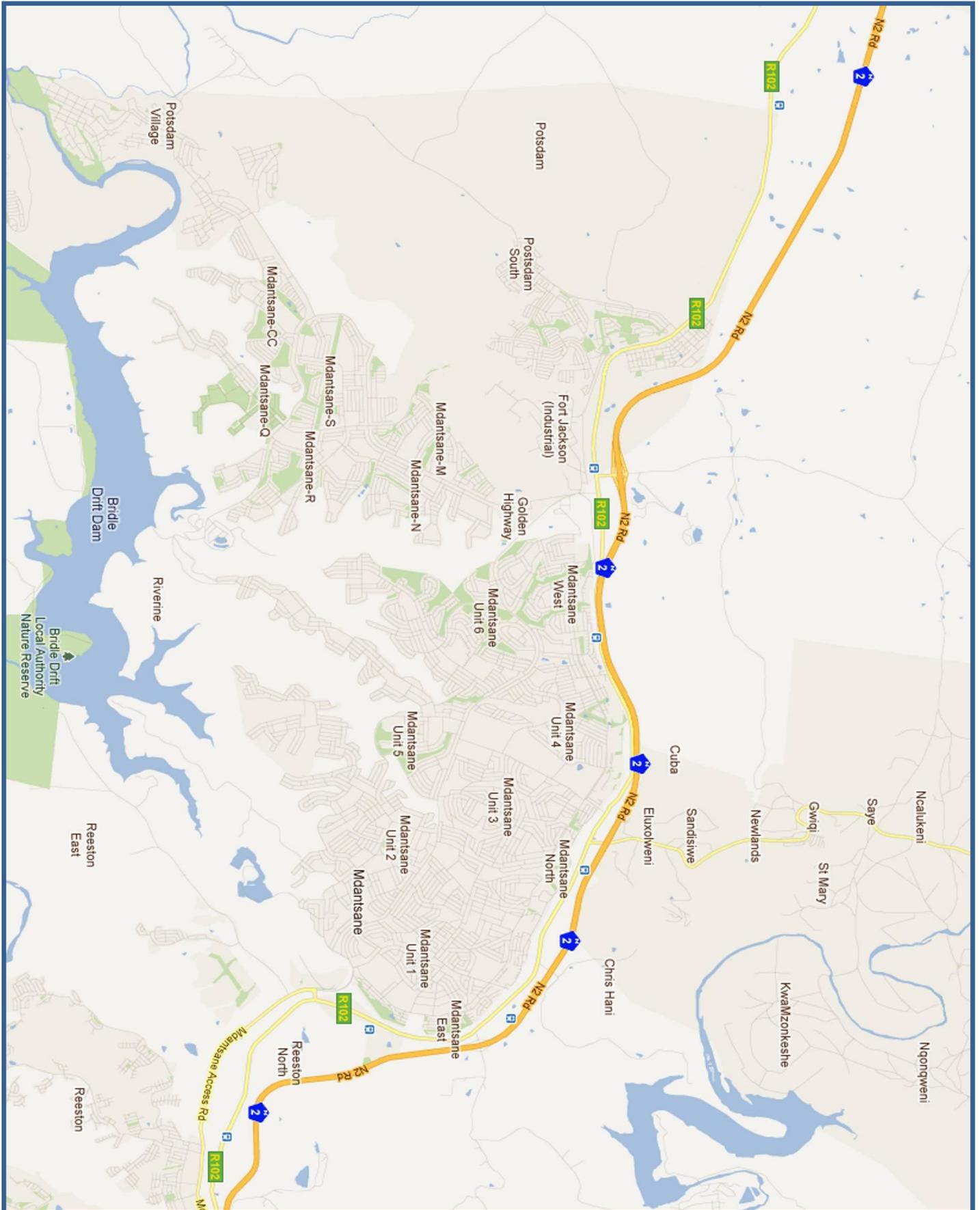
Moral regeneration;

Rites of passage;

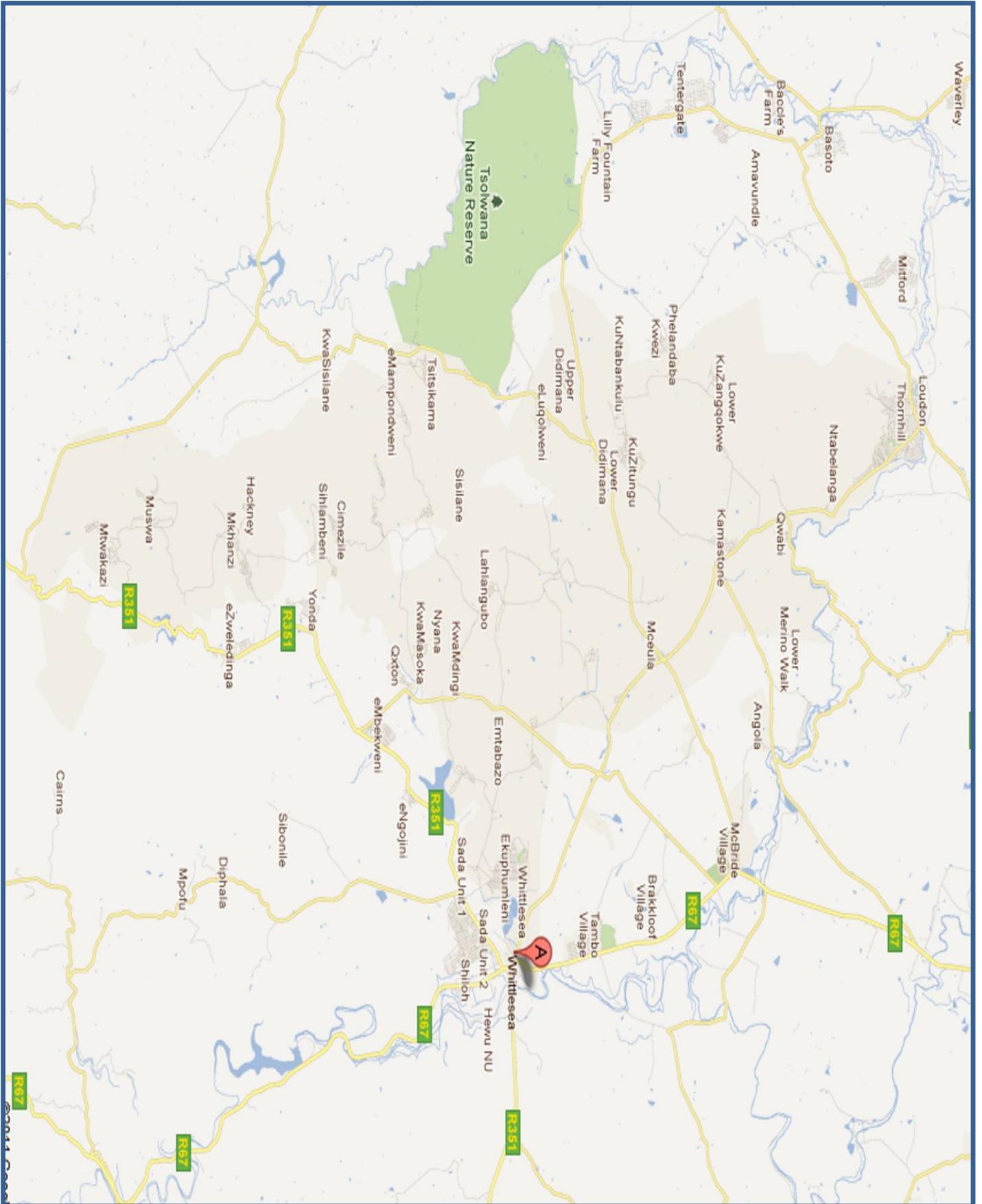
Amampondo;

Ubuntu (Humanity)

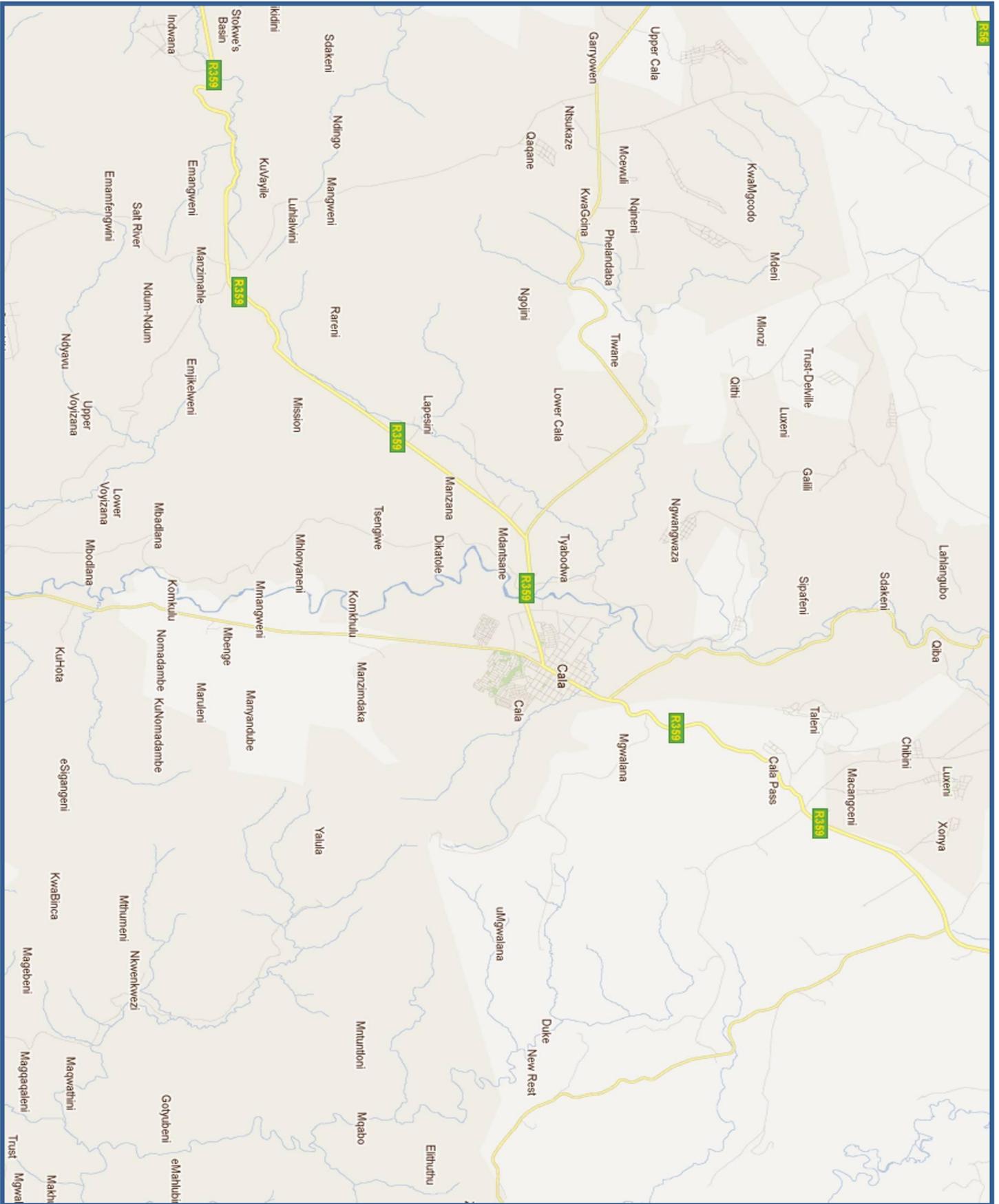
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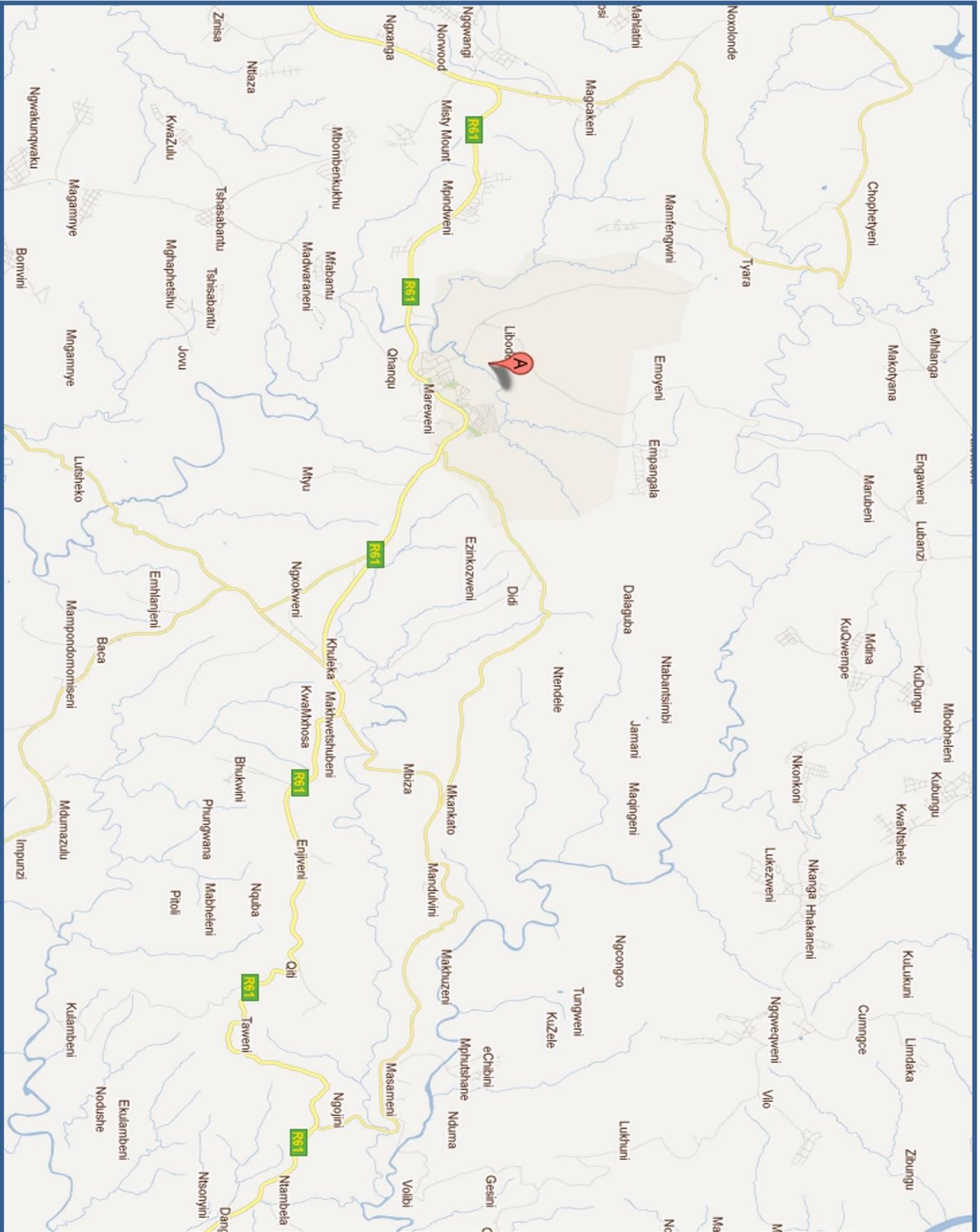
# MAP OF WHITTLESEA



# MAP OF CALA



# MAP OF LIBODE



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

*Isiko lokwaluka* (initiation rite/ritual) is one of the old traditional practices that has been observed in many cultures across the world including Sub-Saharan and North Africa, the Muslim middle East, the Jewish Diaspora, Australia, Asia and elsewhere (Silverman 2004:425). This practice was observed among the Nguni groups that are the amaXhosa, amaZulu, amaSwati and amaNdebele as well as other ethnic groups such as the Southern Sotho, Pedi, Masemola, Lemba, the Matlala of the North West Province, the Mmamabolo of the Woodbush, Shangana-Tsonga, Venda, Lobedu, Hananwa, Letswalo, Khaha and the Ntwana (Hammond-Tooke 1974:229). The amaXhosa in particular take pride in this practice and refer to it as *isiko elingenakuphela* (rite/ritual that will never come to an end) (see also 4.15.3.3). Among the amaXhosa people this practice has been observed as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. Further that, in the amaXhosa cultural life, this practice has been regarded as more than just a law, but a traditional practice that was passed on from one generation to another.

Literature suggests that the Xhosa initiation practice has gone through different major distinctive challenging phases or eras. This does not suggest that other challenges did not exist at different times, but one can observe four major periods that has significantly influenced the meaning and the role of initiation in the Xhosa cultural life. The first is the era of colonialism and wars, the second is the era of apartheid; the third is the advent of democracy and HIV and AIDS, lastly it is in the post-modernism era which is characterised by new research and new findings on HIV and AIDS and circumcision.

The first and the second eras date as far back as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century whereby the pressures were both from the outside and inside forces (Hammond-Tooke 1974:230) such as urbanisation, industrialisation, westernisation, Christianity and social instability. Such forces led to unintended changes in the initiation such as abolishing

it as done by some of the Nguni groups such as the amaZulu and amaSwati. Some of the Eastern Cape groups such as the amaBaca, amaMfengu, amaMpondo, amaXesibe and Ntlangwini also stopped practising initiation (Lamla 2005:12; Meintjies 1998:76). Despite such challenges, the initiation practice among amaXhosa did not lose popularity; as a result, even the amaXhosa who moved to urban areas still contextualised the traditional practice of initiation to the conditions of urban life style.

The third era was from the early 1980s to the late 1990s. The main challenges in this era were democracy, the existence of HIV and AIDS, issues of human rights and negative behaviour associated with the initiation schools. The HIV and AIDS pandemic resulted in a number of health challenges in the initiation practice. Before the discovery of HIV, the *ingcibi* (traditional surgeon) utilised one knife to circumcise all boys; and, sometimes more than ten boys were circumcised without sterilising the knife. With the existence of HIV and AIDS, the circumcision part of this custom posed a threat, as HIV is a disease transmitted by some body fluids, especially blood. Measures had to be put in place in order to make sure that the spread of HIV is avoided during circumcision. The second challenge in the same era was the issue of human rights and the role of traditional leaders as embedded in the Constitution. This raised a number of legal issues in some cultural practices associated with initiation and as a result some of the traditions associated with the initiation practice were found to be unconstitutional. For example, according to Xhosa culture it is compulsory for a male to be initiated if he wants to be recognised as a human being in the society. If for some reason, a male refuses to be initiated, others could take him by force and circumcise him in the initiation. The Constitution called this custom abduction and it is against the law (see also 5.2.2 and 5.2.5.1)

The third challenge in the same era is the issue of discipline. There was an outcry that the initiated males do not live according to their expectations and that the initiation practice no longer plays its traditional teaching role. Some people went to the point of saying that some initiated males were more responsible when they were boys. It was during this era that some parents, church and community leaders called for the discontinuation of the initiation practice and suggested that boys should go to

hospital for circumcision (see also 4.15) in order to avoid the inhaling negative behaviours and influences associated with the initiation schools.

The third era led to the current situation and the fourth era that is characterised by new research innovations and post-modernism. In this fourth era, the new findings on HIV and AIDS suggests that medical male circumcision decreases the infection rate among males; as a result there has been a call for the promotion of medical circumcision over traditional circumcision. Even the amaZulu have returned to circumcision, this time not on a cultural basis but for health reasons. Hence, instead of encouraging a traditional circumcision, a medical circumcision performed at the hospital is endorsed by the government and a budget has been set aside for (see also 3.5.1). This is also the time when the majority of the youth live in urban areas and are more concerned about education and success. This era is characterised by increase in globalisation, westernisation and urbanisation trends which are manifested through; certain style of clothing, rise of technology, the use of English over African languages, the tendency to shift away from *amasiko* (ritual/rites), *nezithethe* (traditional practices), etc. One wonders whether the initiation practice will survive or will follow other practices that have lost their meaning and slowly disappeared over the face of the earth.

This study seeks to investigate the role of the Xhosa male initiation practice in the postmodern South Africa, which includes its past and present meaning. The past and present role in building up the moral fibre of the society will also be discussed.

This chapter provides a background to information presented and discussed in this thesis. The statement of the problem is presented and the intensions for conducting this research are explored in detail. The last part of the chapter gives an overview of the various chapters and their logic and discussion.

## **1.2 South Africa: A state of moral bankruptcy**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2006 a young girl from Zwelitsha was raped on her way back from school (Daily Dispatch 2006:9). The accused were two young men who had just graduated from their initiation school (*amakrwala*). In court, the *amakrwala* defended

themselves by putting the blame on Xhosa culture, particularly the initiation school. They alleged that they were instructed to have sexual intercourse with any woman who was not a girlfriend of theirs. The purpose was to remove any bad luck that they had acquired during the initiation (see also 6.8). In exploring the present South African moral state, the inhuman story above about the experience of the young schoolgirl that was raped by *amakrwala* is a perfect example of moral decay. This scenario is very relevant because it shows that in South Africa (SA) there is a serious problem of moral decline and further that the existing Xhosa initiation practice is one of the major contributors to moral decay. This is just one of the few experiences of many South African citizens that prove beyond reasonable doubt that SA is currently going through a state of moral decay. Lamla (2005:96) observed that a number of the members of the older generation are worried about evident moral degeneration.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, there has been a widespread concern over the disintegration of the moral fabric in the society as evidenced by the broadcast news and the newspapers headlines both nationally and internationally. This moral dilemma has been visible from corrupt government officials, an escalation of violent crimes, women and child abuse and the ruthless xenophobic attacks. Human life seems to have lost value and this brings into question the human conscience and respect for human value.

Various politicians, religious leaders and academics ascribe the roots of the present moral bankrupt state to the apartheid era. Mkhathshwa (2004:2) agrees that “We can never find a solution to our social challenges until we recognise the fact that apartheid in the final analysis was responsible for what we might call a rather unacceptable social and moral behaviour of the people”.

The argument is that the present moral impoverishment has been created and perpetuated by the colonialism and apartheid philosophy in particular (Williams 2004:129). During the apartheid era, both Black and White people had no time of dealing with morality and integrity issues and this resulted in the high degree of moral bankruptcy in SA (Mayson 2001:2). The majority of South Africans were morally displaced and had no time to deal with rights and wrongs, but instead were engaged in a lot of brutal actions in order to survive.

In response to apartheid and its brutality, Black people retaliated by violence in the form of burning with tyres those suspected of being apartheid spies and taking up arms to terrorise White people. The majority of South Africans were morally displaced and had no time to deal with questions of moral and immoral lifestyle, but instead were engaged in any action that enabled them to survive. It is thus logical to argue that, in the context of apartheid for both Black and White people, there was no time for dealing with morality and integrity issues and this resulted in the high degree of moral bankruptcy in South Africa.

The apartheid system had done a major damage to the people of South Africa; this damage involves both the oppressor and the oppressed (Tutu 1996:8). Non-white people had been oppressed and dehumanised for more than 300 years. The wounds are beyond what can be seen with the naked eye and beyond what has been recorded or celebrated. It took 300 years to finally overcome colonialism and apartheid and even today both Black and White people of South Africa are still suffering from the consequences of apartheid.

It was only in 1994 that the political situation changed as, for the first time in South Africa, there was free and fair elections, where everyone, irrespective of their colour and gender, were able to participate in elections. For the first time, there was a democratically elected president heading the Government of National Unity. This new government faced a challenge of deciding what to do with the type of history SA had, and how to generate and execute strategies that will address the inequities and lack of moral values created by the past (Asmal 1996:16). In addressing this problem, the government realised that South Africans needed national psychological and spiritual healing and moral renewal. Thus a transformation and healing process was introduced, which involved the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM). Tutu (1996: 9) noted that the transformation and healing process could not be accomplished over a short space of time.

### **1.3 The background of the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM)**

When the government of national unity came into power in 1994, it was agreed by parliament that the apartheid system had done a major damage to the people of South Africa as argued in 1.2. Different strategies and regulations were put into place to address the consequences of apartheid. The beginning of the MRM became one of the strategies to deal with the issues of restoring the moral fibre.

The origins of the MRM date back to a meeting between the then President Nelson Mandela and key South African religious leaders in June 1997. At that meeting, Mandela spoke about the role of religion in nation-building and social transformation, and the need for religious institutions to work with the state. According to the words of Nelson Mandela (2004) “we do not only need a housing and community Reconstruction Development Program (RDP), South Africa needs the RDP of the soul”. Govender (2005:1), the deputy director in the Office of the Speaker states that;

The MRM programme offers a unique opportunity for South Africans to re-define and re-affirm ourselves as moral beings and collectively formulate tangible, practical and workable strategies and programmes that will see us endorsing values compatible with the new democratic South Africa.

In the late 2001, a moral panic in the media about levels of child rape, crime, corrupt government officials and sexual violence in South Africa revived interest in moral regeneration. This resulted in the official launch of the MRM in early 2002. This was done through the establishment of a Section 21 (not-for-profit) company that, although intended to be a non-governmental organisation, was funded by government. The high profile launch of the MRM took place in April 2002, with over 1,000 people present from government, parliament, provincial legislatures, political parties, religious organisations, traditional structures, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Approximately a year was spent on setting up the organisation and generating a vision for its existence and role in the morally troubled South Africa. The newly formed MRM attempted to make clear its core messages, and focused on the Constitution as a source of moral values – a shift from the earlier discourse of spirituality and religion. Moral regeneration of the nation formally became the

responsibility of the government, communities, schools, households as well as individuals.

The government tasked the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) with the administration of moral regeneration issues, including administering the grants to the MRM, and coordinating government-wide activity that could be seen as relevant to the initiative. The deputy president's office was described as the movement's political hub inside government, with the DAC as the administrative hub. Mr Jacob Zuma, who was the then Deputy President of the country, was the first to lead and to represent the MRM whenever there was a need.

The MRM vision was launched in all South African regions as well as Universities and Colleges. The government, NGOs and communities took up the vision of moral regeneration by running programs that sought to build moral values. For instance, the Department of Education curriculum involves subjects such as Life Orientation, which seek to encourage learners to make right choices when it comes to sex, crime and abuse. While the NGOs and Religious organisations have community projects that seek to encourage responsibility among South Africans. These are the few examples to show that the moral reconstruction of the nation has not only been the responsibility of the MRM but also other sectors of the South African community.

#### **1.4 The Xhosa people**

The amaXhosa, sometimes referred to as the Cape Nguni, are part of the Bantu peoples found in South Africa (Pauw 1994:2). In particular, the amaXhosa belong to the Nguni-speaking groups, which include the amaZulu, amaNdebele and AmaSwati that migrated into South Africa, during the great Southern migration. According to Ngxamngxa (1971:184) the amaXhosa are a group of clans within the Nguni descendants who were in the past confined to the Eastern Cape, from the Umzimkhulu River in the north to the Great Fish River in the south. Due to apartheid segregation policies, the amaXhosa were forced to reside in areas previously called Transkei and Ciskei. Pauw (1994:5), Vivian (2008:15), Ngxamngxa (1971:184) and Gitywa (1971:205) refer to the amaXhosa as the Xhosa speaking people, because

the amaXhosa are not a single group. They are divided into different chiefdoms with diverse origins and with different spoken isiXhosa dialects that differ according to the demographic area (Ngamngxa 1971:184). Standard isiXhosa is spoken by groups such as amaNgqika, amaGcaleka, amaNdlambe, abaThembu, amaBomvana and amaMpondomise (Ngamngxa 1971:184). Ngamngxa (1971:184). Further notes that differences in dialect are found in the amaMpondo, amaXesibe and amaBhaca. The amaXhosa include groups or sub-groups such as the amaMfengu, abaThembu, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBhaca and amaBomvana. The amaXhosa are a patrilineal people, united by language, culture, ancestors, and history, neighbourhood and marriage ties (Vivian 2008:15). The history of the amaXhosa and its spoken dialects has to be understood in the context of the early history where mobility was very limited to the point that the people defined the world according to their limited social construction.

I remember, as I was growing up in the 1970s, I regarded every Black person I saw as a Xhosa. Even when we watched boxing with Black American boxers fighting, because they were Black we regarded them as amaXhosa. My world-view was only the area I lived in and I had not been outside my birthplace. At the time, I had never seen other black African nations apart from my own. I only knew the existence of the White, coloured and Xhosa people. I wonder how much more was it then with the generation before me in the 1950s and 1960s as well as earlier than that (see also 4.2.1.1).

Whilst tradition is strong amongst Xhosa-speaking people, current practices show their adaptation to diversity, westernisation, Christianity and urbanisation. In the Eastern Cape, Mayer (1961,1971) described how amaXhosa identity and tribal affiliations shifted with the emergence of 'School' people who held up Christianity, literacy and western ideals, whilst 'Red' people conformed to a more traditional way of life (see also 4.3.3).

## **1.5 *Ukwaluka* or *isiko lokwaluka* (Initiation or initiation rite/ritual)**

In this study *ukwaluka* (initiation) or *isiko lokwaluka* (initiation rite/ritual) is used to refer to the amaXhosa cultural rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. This practice is performed in the bush or sometimes not necessarily in the bush but in isolation from other people. The details and the significance of this practice will be discussed as well as the people who play a pivotal role in its existence.

### **1.5.1 The relationship between circumcision and the initiation rite/ritual**

The correlation between the use of the words ‘initiation’ and ‘circumcision’ cannot be assumed obvious. Largely, writers like Hunter (1936:165); Van der Vliet (1974:229) and Ngxamngxa (1971:185) use the term circumcision in referring to initiation. Some authors use the term traditional circumcision to distinguish between hospital circumcision and circumcision performed in the cultural or “traditional” manner. Some writers use the terms interchangeably to refer to traditional circumcision, while others like Mhlahlo (2009) recognises the term traditional circumcision as circumcision performed in the initiation ritual. Vivian (2008) is one of the researchers who use the word circumcision in referring to *ukwaluka* (initiation ritual) in her study. Her motivation for the choice of circumcision to that of initiation is that “initiation is ambiguous as it also refers to the induction of a healer, which, of course, does not involve circumcision per se,” (Vivian 2008:13).

I understand the milieu of researchers like Vivian and others, it is not that they do not understand what they write about; it is because of the language factor, which according to my opinion ends up reducing *ukwaluka* into circumcision. For example, in isiXhosa there is a big difference in the use of words for initiation into manhood (*ukwaluka*) and initiation of the traditional healer (*ukungeniswa kwegqirha*). When one speaks in isiXhosa there is no contradiction found in the two words. For a Xhosa man, the moment the word *ukwaluka* is mentioned, what comes to mind is *umkhwetha* (*initiate*), *ikhankatha* (*initiation guardian*), *nebhoma* (*initiation lodge*) and all other practices related to initiation. Below is an illustration to explain what is implied by the use of ‘language’ in relation to the use of these two words:

One day I went to consult a medical practitioner because I was suffering from flu. As I was sitting and waiting to be attended to, I saw a writing on the wall that read “*siyolusa apha*”. The question that came to my mind was, where the *amabhoma* (initiation lodges) are? As I was sitting, I overheard three other men having a conversation over the same concern over what *ukolusa* means to them. Their concern was exactly what I was battling with. In isiXhosa the concept of ‘*ukoluka*’ refers to going for the initiation ritual. Of course, in the case of the medical practitioners what they meant was that they do perform medical circumcision and that had nothing to do with the initiation ritual. The popular term used when referring to hospital circumcision is ‘*ukolukela esibhedle*’ which is a degrading term meaning having the circumcision procedure performed at the hospital instead of performing it within a traditional practice? As a result if one asks ‘*wolukile ubani*?’ (Has so and so been initiated?), if the person has been circumcised traditionally the reply would be ‘*ewe wolukile*’, (yes, he has been initiated). If the person was circumcised in hospital the reply would be ‘*hayi wolukele esibhedle*’ (no, he has been circumcised in hospital instead). For a Xhosa man when one mentions the word ‘*ukoluka*’ what comes to mind is not circumcision but the whole ritual process one goes through in the initiation. This clarifies the distinct use of circumcision and initiation in this thesis.

Circumcision is one of the activities performed by the *ingcibi* at the beginning of the initiation rite and it entails *ukudlangwa kwekwekwe yenziwe umkhwetha* (cutting the boy’s foreskin and make him an initiate). It has to be acknowledged that circumcision is not initiation but only part of the initiation ritual. Hence in this research I do not use the term circumcision in referring to initiation I use the term circumcision in referring to the removal of the foreskin irrespective of where it is removed, whether in hospital or in the initiation lodge. In cases where the term circumcision is used in referring to initiation it is because it is a direct quote and I still put the term initiation in brackets to clarify my point. Furthermore, in isiXhosa two words are used in referring to initiation that is *ukwaluka* (initiation) and *isiko lokwaluka* (initiation custom/rite/ritual) (see also 4.15.3.3). In this thesis the term initiation practice or sometimes initiation (used interchangeably) is used to refer to the whole practice which includes, the going in, circumcision, the coming out and all other rituals and ceremonies related to the initiation. The term initiation ceremony is used to refer to all rituals and celebrations that involve the community and in most cases there is beer, food and

meat. The examples of these ceremonies are *umngeno* (going in), *umgidi* (celebrations after *ukuyalwa* to welcome the boy into manhood) and *ukuyalwa* (giving words of admonition). Lastly, the word initiation rite or ritual is used to refer to all religious practices that involve goats/sheep and or beer and most of them involve blessings from ancestors. For example, the slaughtering of a goat during *umngeno* which involves *umshwamo* (the initiate is fed a piece of meat taken from the right front leg of the sheep or goat) and the *ukosiswa/ukojiswa* ritual (marks the healing of the initiate and a sheep is slaughtered in the bush) which involves *umshwamo* as well. The use of the above words have been clarified because most of the recent material written on the topic of initiation is written by researchers from the fields of bio-medicine, law and health and the above terms have been used interchangeably assuming that they mean the same thing. This research is written from an anthropological perspective and acknowledges the cultural significance of initiation. Such terms are pertinent to the cultural identity of amaXhosa and if not used appropriately, this might result in miss interpreting the real meaning of initiation in Xhosa cultural life.

## **1.6 The current state of the Xhosa initiation practice in South Africa**

In South Africa, the initiation practice generated little or no significant debate among the public, politicians, health sector or the media until about two decades ago (Kepe 2010:730). About 20 years ago and earlier, most of the writing about the amaXhosa initiation practice in the Eastern Cape Province focused on the simple description of the ritual and its related cultural significance (Gitywa 1976; Mayer 1971; Ngxamngxa 1971). From the late 1980s, however, it became clear from media coverage, newspapers, academic writing, government policy and legislation, and political debates, that the amaXhosa male initiation was facing a mounting crisis and was a source of tension between various stakeholders. This tension was caused by issues related to initiates' deaths, circumcision irregularities, alcohol abuse and the misconduct of *amakrwala* (new men).

In recent years there has been a continued rise in casualties because of various initiation schools performed in the Eastern Cape Province. Since 1995, more than 6,000 initiates have been admitted to the Eastern Cape hospitals, more than three

thousand have died and more than 70 had their genitals amputated following traditional circumcision (Vincent (2008(b):79). Newspapers reported in detail how boys between the ages of 14 and 30 died every year (City Press 28 December 2003; Daily Dispatch, 10 April 2007). It was reported that in 2006 alone, eighteen boys died in Mpondoland and six boys lost their manhood (Weekend Argus, 22 July 2006). There have also been reports of crimes committed by boys while participating in initiation and unfortunately there were cases where these crimes were committed by people in the community who then hid in the initiation schools (Bogopa 2007: 56).

This practice has also been associated with irregular teaching such as that when an initiate graduates, he must sleep with a woman who is not his girlfriend to supposedly remove the bad luck acquired during the initiation (*ukukhupha ifutha*) (Meintjies 1998:57; see also 1.2 and 6.8). This view has perpetuated rape and the abuse of women and is leading to moral decline in South Africa. The problem associated with initiation has caused ceaseless lament from Church leaders, politicians, health workers and parents, calling for the banning of the initiation practice (see also 3.7.2.2 and 4.15). Their argument is that this practice has lost its traditional value and its moral role in the community. Being a Xhosa man and having gone through initiation, I began to wonder what initiation is all about.

## **1.7 Motivation for the study**

It is with a mixture of both anxiety and trepidation that I approach this study. Firstly because initiation is one of those practices that are regarded as sacred and should only be known to those that have been through it. Secondly that it has been on the media for all the wrong reasons as a result some of amaXhosa assume that when one conducts research on initiation, the main intention is to negatively expose this practice to the public domain.

More significantly, the scarcity of material covering African morality and ethics, from African writers in particular is a challenge that cannot be denied. Let me hasten to confess that it is not because I am brave, nor do I have answers to the problems mentioned in this thesis. It is due to my wrestling with questions of culture, morality

and the reality of the post-modern society. The main question I have battled with is whether African culture, life and philosophy have anything to offer to the current post-modern South African challenges?

The lack of morality is a great cause for concern as it affects all South Africans. South Africa is said to be becoming an unsafe place to live in, as a result there has been individuals who have relocated to other countries. Large amounts from taxpayers' money are used to fight crime, corruption and acts of crime are slowly becoming an acceptable part of South African culture. The question is where is the country heading towards? If the lack of morality is the culture that transcends good behaviour what is the future of this country? If there is a lack of good values and principles from the government officials, police, religious leaders, parents and community members, what will the youth learn as a legacy to take with as they approach adult life?

My submission is that we cannot really talk about moral regeneration outside the framework of the social, economic, political and cultural aspects or realities. The context is very important; whichever way one looks at morality it is influenced by the environment in which we find ourselves. Having acknowledged the reality of the context, in our attempt to look for solutions to the present moral quandary which leads to the increase of HIV and AIDS infections, the escalating rate of violent crimes, women and child abuse, as well as inhuman xenophobic attacks, we must not overlook the fact that many values and elements can be drawn from African religion and culture. The transformation of political and economic structures and the empowerment of any society must be accompanied by cultural and moral reconstruction as well. The Xhosa initiation practice is just one of those African practices that need to be investigated and contextualised in order for it to play a constructive part in the society.

## 1.8 Research objectives

The following objectives will guide this study:

1. The researcher attempts to investigate how the Xhosa male initiation practice was viewed in the past, its impact upon the initiates, its contribution to the moral upholding of values, and also its role in promoting the values of *ubuntu*, which are for the common good of the whole society.
2. The study seeks to investigate and evaluate the role and the impact the initiation practice has had on three aspects that the researcher believes are related to moral values:
  - i). **The socio-cultural aspect:** What the Xhosa society understood the role of the initiation practice to be and how the practice contributed to building the society and its role in upholding good principles.
  - ii). **The educational aspect:** to evaluate how the practice contributed to the Xhosa informal education system, as the boys being introduced into manhood are expected to manifest certain behavioural changes.
  - iii). **Religious aspect:** How the practice encompassed the relationship between the young and the old, the ancestors and God; and thus to find out if the practice had any spiritual or religious meaning to the initiates.
3. After evaluating the above aspects the researcher will ascertain what the meaning of the initiation practice and circumcision is for the Xhosa communities today, as well as its function and value in relation to the socio-cultural, educational and religious aspects.
4. Furthermore, the researcher attempts to study and evaluate the present-day Xhosa initiation system as a socio-cultural mechanism that could contribute to the broader challenges of moral regeneration in South Africa.

5. The researcher seeks to observe and identify whether a shift of meaning and emphasis exists in the initiation practice, as well as identifying challenges and departures from traditional norms in the initiation system.
6. The researcher further intends to seek and identify the reasons for the calls to ban the male initiation practice.

### **1.9 Research questions**

The following research questions guided the research:

- 1 Did the Xhosa male initiation practice play a role in building the moral life of men in the society?
- 2 Has the initiation school lost its traditional and educational meaning?
- 3 Can the Xhosa male initiation practice contribute to addressing the moral reconstruction process in South Africa?
- 4 Can the initiation practice be redefined to address the moral and socio-cultural challenges we are faced with?
- 5 Is calling for the discontinuation of the initiation practice a solution to the problems associated with it?

### **1.10 The initiation practice and anthropology**

My interest for undertaking this study developed in 2007 while I was lecturing at the University of Fort Hare in the Department of Theology and Religion. The modules I was lecturing were all connected to the African understanding of God in relation to the African context. I was offering modules in Practical Theology, such as Church in the African context, Worship in the African Context and Healing in the African Context. It was at that time that I developed an interest to understand the role of initiation in contemporary society.

I then developed a proposal and submitted it at a certain institution in the department of Theology and Religion and it was rejected on the grounds that the research study did not fall under Theology or Religion but anthropology. Consequently, I then started reading anthropology literature in order to see how the panel came about the decision to reject my proposal and referred to it as 'anthropological'. I then realised that the assertion was correct and that I have always been an anthropologist at heart and I always had a quest for social and cultural anthropology.

The proposal writing process for this study propelled me to read across disciplines to see the research done on initiation and circumcision. I realised that initiation and circumcision have over the years attracted researchers and writers from different fields of study and writers across disciplines. Just to mention a few, authors such as Meintjies (1998); Meel (2005); Kanta (2003); Kanta & Peltzer (2009) who published their research findings focusing on the medical perspective. Other writers such as Ngxamngxa (1971) and Twala (2007) focused on the historical and African traditional perspective, while others such as Mcotheli (2006) and Myemana (2004) focused on the religious and the Christian perspectives respectively. There is a broad reading base from legal (Maseko 2008) to psychological (Vivian 2008). What is interesting about the writings from other fields of study is that they always referred to the early anthropological writings in their definition of initiation as a rite of passage and its cultural significance (see also 3.2).

Most of the recent research and writing concentrate on current challenges such as HIV and AIDS, criminal activities, irregularities and constitutional challenges associated with initiation. Before all such challenges, as early as the twentieth century anthropologists such as Hunter (1934) and (1936), Van Gennep (1960), Pauw (1963) and Turner (1967) had an interest in understanding all cultural practices including initiation as a rite of passage (see also 3.2). Even from the seventies to date, anthropologists such as Van der Vliet (1974), Vizedom (1976), Pauw (1994), Lamla (2005) and Bogopa (2007) followed suit. Anthropology has always had an interest in studying the origin of behaviour and the physical, psychological, social and cultural development of humankind.

According to Eller (1999: 2) the study of anthropology:

(1) is holistic, incorporating historical, political, economic and other data into a complete description of social phenomena; (2) it takes culture as its central focus and brings well-tuned concepts to the task; (3) even as it takes culture seriously, it does not take it for granted but questions or “deconstructs” cultural concepts and claims, whether advanced by ethnic participation or academic colleagues, to expose interests, power relations, structural interconnections, and factional interpretations; and (4) It gathers and analyzes data, as far as possible, from an emic point of view, wary of the imposition of foreign distinctions and definitions.

This study is approached from a cultural anthropological perspective, “a branch of the anthropology discipline that deals with the study of specific contemporary cultures (ethnography) and the more general underlying patterns of human culture derived through cultural comparisons (ethnology)” (Ferraro 1998:6).

As noted previously, most of the recent researchers who have done some work in the area of initiation and circumcision concentrated on the medical role and to HIV and AIDS and as a result they have left out the cultural aspects of initiation. The language they use is a medical orientated, such as initiation nurses instead of initiation guardian (*amakhankatha*) and circumcision instead of initiation (*ukwaluka*). Such language describes the hospital scenario and overlooks the cultural role of the initiation. As Eller (1999:2) states, anthropology takes culture seriously and not for granted and further analyses data from the emically, being the insider’s perspective.

It has to be recognised that the initiation practice takes place within a culturally prescribed context and is invested with cultural meanings (Meintjies 1998:36). The role of past and present anthropologists has helped us not to divorce the Xhosa initiation from its cultural setting. The reason for undertaking this research from an anthropological perspective is to remain true to the cultural meaning of initiation. This can be achieved by recognising its role as a *rites de passage* (rite of passage), to review its traditional historic role and lastly, evaluate its meaning for contemporary society.

### 1.11 Initiation and the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS)

An Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) is local knowledge which is based on local experience unique to a given culture or society. It is a basis of local level decision making which involves agriculture, health care, food preparation, natural resources, religion and other activities in that cultural context. The South African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (SAIKS) Policy is an enabling framework to stimulate and strengthen the contribution of indigenous knowledge to social and economic development in South Africa. The main SAIKS Policy drivers include the following;

- *The affirmation of African cultural values in the face of globalisation – a clear imperative given the need to promote a positive African identity;*
- *Practical measures for the development of services provided by IK holders and practitioners, with a particular focus on traditional medicine, but also including areas such as agriculture, indigenous languages and folklore;*
- *Underpinning the contribution of indigenous knowledge to the economy – the role of indigenous knowledge in employment and wealth creation; and*
- *Interfaces with other knowledge systems, for example indigenous knowledge is used together with modern biotechnology in the pharmaceutical and other sectors to increase the rate of innovation. (South African Indigenous Knowledge System Policy presented in Geneva 24-29 April 2006:4)*

The main aim and purpose of this Policy was to recognise the indigenous knowledge and to protect such knowledge and innovation from being illegally used or stolen by those coming from outside the local area.

This study locates itself fully within the notion of IKS, thereby seeking to unravel African traditional ways of life, knowledge and resources (including human) in order to find solutions to African problems. My academic background and my interests have always been in the areas of culture, spirituality and religion, which involve a number of realities of the African context in the post-modern world and attending to the challenges of African people and their general well-being. I have found the initiation practice as one of those African practices that if researched and understood could participate in addressing some of the challenges African people are faced with. As indicated in almost all the chapters of this study, the Xhosa initiation has always

been understood to be taking a huge role in defining the Xhosa community in several ways.

In our attempt to look for solutions to the present moral quandary, which leads to the increase of HIV and AIDS infections, the escalating rate of violent crimes, women and child abuse, as well as inhuman xenophobic attacks, we must not overlook the fact that many values and elements can be drawn from the African religion and culture.

This research is my response to the call by Nkwi (1998:192; see also 2.5) and other African anthropologists for fellow Africans to 'study themselves' and to participate in understanding their own context in order for Africans to find solutions to their challenges. Furthermore, I realised that there is a lot I needed to learn about my own cultural practices and this research afforded me an opportunity to ask questions I had never asked before and further question the same traditions I always assumed to be absolute.

### **1.12 Outline of the thesis**

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter two addresses the methodology used to conduct the study as well as the reasons for choosing specific research methods/techniques. I also share my experiences during the fieldwork, which includes how I was received by the communities and by my informants.

In chapter three a broad background of the Xhosa initiation practice is given from two angles; firstly by identifying this practice as a rite of passage that is not only practiced by the amaXhosa but also by other groups in South Africa and other nations all over the world. Secondly, that the Xhosa initiation practice has from as early as the seventeenth hundreds been identified as an institution where moral values were instilled upon boys as they graduated to manhood. This is achieved by using published sources and the results from the discussions with old men from all the areas where research was done as well as their responses to the question of the role

of initiation in moral building. After having looked at the meaning of the moral concepts, an endeavour is made to find out how these values are regarded in the Xhosa culture and their implications for the initiation practice.

Chapter four identifies and discusses various universal characteristics that are related to culture and culture change, which are outlined by different anthropologists. It also identifies factors that have had an influence on cultural change in South Africa, i.e. colonisation, industrialisation and urbanisation. Furthermore, how the above factors may have affected the shift or change in the practice of the Xhosa initiation. The distinct perceptions, views and experiences of rural and urban life are also reported on in this chapter. Most of the work in this chapter is based on the fieldwork findings, my own experience of the initiation and the literature review.

Chapter five explores and evaluates policies, acts and procedures, which have been introduced by the government and the House of Traditional Leaders to regulate initiation practice and traditional circumcision. This chapter further evaluates how these policies, acts and procedures negatively or positively affect the practice and whether the people involved in the practice adhere to them. Furthermore, the chapter also explores how the adherence to or dishonouring of these policies and regulations affect the initiation practice and the lives of initiates. This chapter is based on the literature and the findings that are related to the experiences of traditional and local leaders on issues concerning the initiation regulation framework and how it has affected their roles in the initiation practice.

The past and present roles played by initiation are reported on in chapter six with particular reference to the three areas related to morality namely, socio-cultural aspects, education and religion. The specific findings on the experiences and understanding of different groups, i.e., *amakhankatha*, *abakhwetha*, *amakrwala*, *iingcibi* and some village leaders are presented. This chapter, furthermore, presents the in-depth findings that are based on the interviews with different groups. The findings are analysed per group, for example, the younger and the older generations are presented separately. These findings are about the role of initiation in building up the moral fibre of men for the benefit of the community.

Chapter seven contains a discussion of the findings that are based on the suggestions made by the informants and the researcher's opinion of the findings. Further, the gaps and contradictions identified in the research process are indicated in this chapter. Lastly, the researcher puts forward his proposals and recommendations for the current initiation practice and for future research.

### **1.13 Summary**

This chapter has fore-grounded the work of this thesis and further given the background for the need to conduct the study. It is acknowledged that much research on initiation and circumcision has been done but the contention in this chapter has been that, that kind of work has concentrated more on circumcision and minimising deaths of initiates. There has been less work recently done on the traditional and current role of initiation in building the moral fibre of the society.

As an aspiring academic who has been educated in subjects of religion and culture, I have observed the moral dilemma that is evident in all South African communities. This dilemma includes the escalating rate of violent crimes such as rape, child abuse, mutilation of female and children body parts and the intentional infecting of partners with HIV. In my observations, I have realised that in addressing the challenges, the majority of South Africans are looking for western remedies. This research work is my contribution to join other researchers in investigating whether traditional African practices can positively contribute to the challenges we are faced with. This research is an attempt to acknowledge that now is the time to seek solutions from African cultures and African practices to address challenges in the society. This study is conducted in the realm of cultural anthropology and the research methodology presented in the next chapter is from a social scientific point of view that enhances the aims and objectives as pointed out in the objectives of this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

The researcher adopts a qualitative research method involving an ethnographic study. Qualitative research always attempts to study human actions or behaviours from the 'insider's' perspective with a purpose of focusing on the process rather than just the outcome (Babbie and Mouton 2001:279). This type of research entails getting closer to the research subjects in their natural setting in order to describe and understand the world through their eyes (Warren 1988:83). The advantage of this kind of research is that its purpose is to understand the meaning of the informant's world without judging them. This method enables the researcher to examine the different views and perceptions that exist on the role played by the initiation practice in the socio-cultural world of the amaXhosa and the positive role it can play in the present South African state of moral bankruptcy.

The term ethnography originated in anthropology and traditionally referred to the conducting of fieldwork within cultures other than the anthropologist's own (David and Sutton 2004:103). The more specific origin of ethnography is in the nineteenth century when anthropologists relied on the reports by missionaries, colonial administrators and travellers whose intentions were to inform their fellows about other societies (Forster and Kemper 1974:2; Hammersley 1998:2) or what they saw as small-scale and geographically specific 'cultures' (David and Sutton 2004:103). From around the turn of the twentieth century it became widely accepted that it was necessary for anthropologists to collect their own data, and to do so in a systematic and rigorous manner (Hammersley 1998:3). That was the time anthropology became a legitimate academic discipline with PhD graduate programmes and field research accepted as essential for professional preparation and practice (Forster and Kemper 1974:2). At the time the emphasis of ethnographic studies was about anthropologists making efforts to learn 'others' culture which involved living among the people they were studying, learning their language and firsthand observations (Hammersley 1998:2; David and Sutton 2004:103). It appears that historically, ethnography was

perceived as proving knowledge about cultures yet unknown in Europe (Nkwi 1998: 192). As time went on, ethnography was not only recognised as a study of 'others' but also of the 'self'. This notion gave birth to the encouragement that African anthropologists must take part in studying and defining their cultural life. Anthropology/ethnography can no longer be a reflection of the 'outsiders' view of Africa but a means for Africans to study themselves in relation to the world. Black Africans took a stand to better understand themselves and sought to educate others about African way of life (Nkwi 1998:192). The Pan African Association of Anthropologists (PAAA) was established in 1989 with an intention to push the agenda of African Anthropology. Such an agenda would have to stimulate a discourse on issues that affect Africa and to ensure the application of anthropological research to development problems of Africa (Nkwi 1998: 203). The founding of PAAA was the beginning of the 'self ethnographic discourse' for African Anthropologists. In defining the general meaning of ethnography, Hammersley (1998:2) suggests five central aspects;

1. The study of people's behaviour in everyday contexts.
2. The study is also largely based upon informal conversation and observation.
3. The data collection process is relatively unstructured.
4. The focus is usually on a small number of cases.
5. The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meaning and functions of human actions.

The above five aspects of ethnography highlighted by Hammersley (1998:2) are also found in Brewer's (2000:10) definition of ethnography that reads as follows:

Ethnography is the study of people in naturally accruing settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.

Other social scientists agree with Hammersley (1998:2) and Brewer (2000:10), that ethnography involves the data of cultural anthropology that is derived from the direct observation of behaviour in a particular society (Babbie and Mouton 2001:270). It is also derived from a form of participant observation in which the emphasis is on the recording of detail about the object of study in its cultural setting (Davis 2007:30).

From the definitions of ethnography, I drew two elements of ethnography that were highly significant, i.e. participant observation and the recognition of cultural context. In acknowledging the above elements, I attempted to remain true to the natural setting of the amaXhosa and the concepts they use to describe themselves and their environment. This is where the values of the people and attachment to their cultural life became critical, especially as such “value attachments” related to people’s self-identities, their socio-cultural and religious-ethical constructions. Initiation was one of those cultural values which entailed the identity and the role of Xhosa men in family and social structures.

Data was collected through a literature study and fieldwork. Firstly, a literature review of primary and secondary documents was done. In this regard, newspapers, books, documents and other literature written by different authors were consulted. The literature study was carried out both pre-and post-fieldwork in order to complement the fieldwork data. Secondly, key informant interviews were conducted with individuals who play a significant role in the initiation process. Thirdly, observations of the initiation process were done by visiting initiation lodges (*izikhwetha* or *amabhuma/amabhoma*, singular *isikhwetha* or *ibhuma/ibhoma*) and ceremonies which take place at the beginning (*umngeno*) and at the end (*umphumo* or *umgidi*) of initiation.

## **2.2 Literature Study**

For a better appreciation of the initiation practice and its socio-cultural importance, it is imperative to ascertain its traditional historical background, mainly from literary sources, especially the early accounts on the topic. Sources dating as far back as the nineteenth century were consulted. Most of these sources were obviously not necessarily looking at the role of initiation in building the moral fibre of men but were

helpful in allocating its historical significance, practice and its meaning in the Xhosa cultural and religious life.

The amaXhosa, like all other African nations, do not have a written history of their own. Most of what is known about them is based on the research of western anthropologists and ethnologists, discoverers, oral tradition, travellers, missionaries and government officials (Sobahle 1982:8), which could be classified as primary sources. The research is based on sources, such as Laidler (1922), Soga (1930-1931), Weiss (1966) and others who have made use of primary sources.

In classifying the Xhosa male initiation practice as a rite of passage, the works of 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists have been consulted. These are anthropologists such as Van Gennep (1960); Turner (1967) and La Fontaine (1931) (see also 3.2).

## **2.3 Field Work**

### **2.3.1 Observations**

Since the emerging of ethnographic studies, observations have always been one of the most important parts of data gathering. Without observation, there is no ethnographic study. Observation is a fundamental and highly important technique in all qualitative inquiry. There are a number of social phenomena the observer has to consider in the process of data gathering, namely the exterior physical signs, expressive movements, physical locations, language behaviour and time duration (Babbie and Mouton 2001:293). For example, in this research I was able to observe distinct differences between urban and rural areas. In urban areas life is fast and as a result the informants gave feedback faster and were in a hurry to move on to other commitments, whereas in the rural areas the informants had more time as a result they spent more time giving more detail in their responses (see 4.8). There are mainly two types of observations; namely simple and participant observation.

### **2.3.1.1 Simple observations**

A simple observation is when the researcher observes the informants from the distance in order to try to understand their world. The example of simple observation is the first recorded accounts of the Xhosa male initiation by the travellers (see also 3.3 and 4.4.2). This is said to be the only data gathering procedure that can be utilised in observing babies and toddlers (Huysamen 2001:140). One of the disadvantages of the simple observation method is that the researcher is seen as a 'privileged' and distant observer who comes to judge their cultural behaviours. In this context, the term 'privileged' refers to the fact that the researcher is an individual who belongs to a certain social group that happens to be better educated than most of the African people. The other challenge of simple observation is that fact that the researcher can observe from a distance, when one is distant they might miss details such as age, number of people and important conversations. For example, in the first recorded case of initiation, it is said that the initiates were around the age of nine, the account was recorded by people who were passing by and observed from a distance, and as a result we cannot be sure of the age of the first observed or recorded initiates as noted in 4.4.2.

### **2.3.1.2 Participant observation**

The most reliable type of recording the ethnographer can apply is, of course, an event that he/she had witnessed (Gitywa 1971:21). This statement emphasises the importance of participant observation as a reliable fieldwork method. The researcher felt that initiation was a very emotional process that involved feelings, behaviours and practices and cannot only be expressed in words, but it carried feelings that can only be identified by closely observing and communicating with them. The use of participant observation bridged the gap between ideal and real culture as noted in this study (see 4.2.4). Through observation, I was able to identify the differences between data gathered from interviews and the practice observed during the initiation process. The observations were done and recorded at the initiation process and all cultural gatherings associated with the initiation ceremony.

In participant observation the researcher spends a length of time in the field and actively participates in the cultural activities of the informants. He or she becomes part of the concerned community and the intention is that he/she should be part of the community under study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:270), this is a type of observation that involves “getting one’s hands dirty” when entering the field. The hands are dirty in the sense that the observer leaves his ‘comfort zone’ and lives in a context of the community under study. One of the advantages of this method is that the researcher gets a better understanding of the insider’s perspective and how they experience their physical conditions that involve their struggles, fears and even excitement. This method is not without challenges; one of the challenges is that the researcher might get involved in illegal activities of the informants. It is advisable that in such situations it is important for the participant observer to decide when and where to draw the line (Babbie and Mouton 2001:293). Because this research is an auto-ethnographic study it was impossible not to do participant observation. The research topic under study is a ritual practice that I have been through and one of the areas under study is the area I was initiated in. As a Xhosa man it would have been an indictment for me to go and study the initiation practice from a distance. The communities would have obviously been offended if I had refused to participate in the ceremonies and rituals of the initiation. There were instances where I had to draw the line, for example, alcohol consumption. I normally do not drink alcohol, so I had to be careful to take a small portion only when it was compulsory like in the case of brandy which is taken just before the boy is integrated into the society. More experiences of my participant observation are shared under the section dealing with auto-ethnography.

### **2.3.2 Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews (formal interviews and informal discussions) were conducted in the areas identified for the research. The purpose of the interviews was to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from the informants (Rubin 1993:23). The interviews were based on conversation, with the emphasis on the researcher asking questions and listening, and the informants answering. Group discussions with initiates, new men and older men in all areas identified for the research were done. This gave a collective understanding of how the practice was

conducted in the past and their advices for the current practice. Interviews were conducted for the following reasons

- I realised that the majority of Black Africans do not feel confident about expressing their views in writing; instead they are more open to share them in a less formal manner.
- Another reason for conducting interviews is that many people prefer to be familiar with the person seeking information and want to get assurance of how it will be used.
- The initiation topic is a very secretive tradition that has to be kept away from women and those who have not gone through it. As a Xhosa man, I made sure to give the informants the opportunity to ask questions concerning the aim of the research.
- Another reason was that I was aware that some people cannot read and write; therefore, interviewing rather than questionnaires was more appropriate.

In the course of the investigation, the interviews (see appendix A) were conducted in *isiXhosa* that is the local language of the people interviewed and the researcher's home language. I met a group of youths who expressed themselves well in English and two of them had a little knowledge of *isiXhosa*. In that regard, I had to interpret the questions in English to accommodate them.

### **2.3.2.1 Types of interviews**

Interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. I chose to use semi-structured interviews for this study. This type of interview has much of the freewilling quality of the unstructured interviews and requires all the same skills (Bernard 1988:205). The difference is that a semi-structured interview is based on the use of an interview guide, a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order and it demonstrates that one is fully in control of what you want from the interview but leaves a room for both the researcher and informant to follow leads

(Bernard 1988:205). The interview schedules used created a positive atmosphere and freedom where the informants were free to share their experiences and views without intimidation.

### **2.3.2.2 Advantages of semi-structured interviews**

It is on the strength of the following explanation that I decided to use the semi-structured interview as a data gathering technique for the study:

(1) The initiation process is a practice that involves life and death and therefore it is a very emotional process. Open-ended questions provided in the semi-structured interviews created an atmosphere for the informants to share their perceptions, ideas, wishes and emotions without any obstruction.

(2) The initiation process is a cultural practice with strong religious elements that involves God, the ancestors and the living. Religious practices are expressive and spiritual; therefore, the semi-structured questions guided the informants to share their religious beliefs without fear of prejudice.

(3) The semi-structured interview provides an opportunity to question thoroughly certain areas of inquiry and permits greater depth of response. The informants did not have to follow a certain pattern of questions that might have been irrelevant to their experiences.

(4) Another reason is that some of the Xhosa informants, especially the elderly who are regarded as the custodians of cultural practices, preferred an informal set up of communication. If I were to go without a set of questions as guidelines, the interview would have ended up being a mere cultural discussion without a purpose.

### **2.3.2.3 Recording of the interview data**

In the research process the data can be obtained in three ways, by audio recording, video recording or recording on a notebook.

I chose to use both the audio recording and note recording techniques for the following reasons:

(1) The audio recording is convenient, inexpensive and obviates the necessity of writing during the interview, which may sometimes have a negative effect, both on the researcher and the informants.

(2) Interviews recorded on audio may also be played back as often as necessary for complete and objective analysis at a later stage. In addition to the words, the tone of voice and emotional impact of the respondent is preserved by the audio recording, but could also be noted down during the interview.

(3) I was of the opinion that when the intentions of the research and the reasons for recording were clearly communicated to the informants, they felt that their views were taken seriously when recorded on tape.

Having discussed the above advantages, I realised that there were also important disadvantages in using an audio recorder during interviews. In some rural areas, some informants were suspicious about the use of an audio recorder and openly raised their objections to it while others just became indifferent without raising objections. Some people raised concerns that voice recording would violate their wish to remain anonymous since there would be a possibility that someone would recognise their voices. In such cases I was flexible enough to use note recording instead of an audio recorder.

## 2.4 Auto-ethnography/auto-anthropology

The concept of auto-anthropology or auto-ethnography as it is sometimes called was defined by Strathern (1987:17) as “Anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it.” Auto-ethnography is anthropological research carried out by someone in his or her own cultural setting. The term was originally defined as ‘insider ethnography’. According to Rapport and Overing (2000:18), auto-ethnography as a concept covers, “... the notion of an anthropological study of one’s own, one’s home and one’s self, and explores that murky ground, at once physical, phenomenological, psychological, social and personal, which ‘an anthropology at home’ gives onto.”

Rapport and Overing (2000:18), furthermore, point out three aspects that effectively defined the concept of auto-ethnography, i.e., one’s critical consciousness, one’s journey of discovery and exploration of one’s own culture. Rapport and Overing’s (2000) assertion could be summarised as auto-ethnography being the converging of auto or self and ethno or culture, or the researcher coming to reality with his or her own cultural experience. Auto-ethnographies are highly personalised, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences in relation to their cultural selves.

The concept of auto-ethnography and its elements introduced a paradigm shift in the ethnographic research world and, as a result, it is now popular among anthropologists (Mhlahlo 2009; Khosravi 2007; McLennan-Dodd 2004; Ellis 2004; Boonzaier 1998). Auto-ethnography recently was adopted to be utilised in other disciplines such as Sociology, Career Counselling (Watson 2006; McMalon and Patton 2006) and Education (Ellis 1999).

Ellis (2004:6-8) in her book where she defined the meaning of auto-ethnography found what I consider as the best description of auto-ethnography when she asked her students about their intentions for enrolling for an auto-ethnography class. The students’ responses provided the best description of auto-ethnographic research, as what was common about all their reasons for attending the class is the fact that they were all involved in their research projects and all had one intention that was to

better understand their own circumstances and ways to improve them. In essence, the auto-ethnographer takes a journey of reflection into his/her own culture, practice and discipline. According to the psychologist, McIlveen (2008:13), auto-ethnography is a “methodological vehicle for a scientist and scientist-practitioner to bring him- or herself into critical view and to reveal a phenomenon with the intellectual objective of a shared disciplinary understanding and empathy.”

In this research, I have taken a journey into my own cultural practice of initiation that has been regarded and acknowledged within the Xhosa culture as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. I have undertaken this auto-ethnographic research as a Xhosa man who has gone through the rite of passage of initiation to achieve the aims and objectives of this research as mentioned in chapter one (see 1.8).

As mentioned before, in the first paragraph of this section, ethnographers of the nineteenth century concentrated on ‘others’, more especially countries in the third world and it was the privileged anthropologist who took interest in researching about others. There were rare instances of ethnographers doing studies in their own context until the emerging of auto-ethnographers. This research work is my own contribution in joining other African researchers who have taken the liberty of exploring their own cultural practices. In defining my own auto-ethnographic work; that is the work found in this thesis, I wish to borrow from the auto-ethnographic criteria mentioned by Anderson (2006:375) that:

1. I am a full ‘member’ of the research group that I investigated,
2. I explicitly declared my ‘membership’ in this research work,
3. I am committed to research work that focuses on improving the theoretical understanding and broader social phenomena relating to the topic investigated.

Instead of using the third person (the researcher), I have resorted to use the first person singular for the purpose of this ethnographic study.

## **2.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of an auto-ethnographic study**

### **2.4.1.1 Introduction**

In looking at the advantages and disadvantages of auto-ethnography, I will examine my own encounter during the fieldwork. The examination consists of my experiences (limitations and advantages) and how I was received and treated by the communities where the research was conducted. Boonzaier (1998:172) acknowledged that a substantial amount of work had been done and written on the 'insider's perspective' but very little has been done written on 'our informants' perspective. He argued that anthropologists were surprisingly silent regarding the way in which their efforts were received by the people they study (Boonzaier 1998:172).

In the process of my research, I tried to find anthropological material on how the informants perceive the researchers in their communities and I found very little information. The popular practice is for a researcher to include challenges experienced during the fieldwork under the topic of the research methods and note them as 'limitations'. Furthermore, what one finds under limitations are the negative experiences. It is rare to find researchers writing about the positive or negative perceptions of the communities under study (what they think of us and our work). I have chosen to heed from the advice by Boonzaier (1998:172) and join other researchers like Asad (1973), Mafeje (1971), Magubane (1975) and Clifford and Marcus (1986) who have taken an interest in writing about the informant's perspective on 'us'. Hence, the paragraphs below will be discussing what I consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of auto-ethnography, based on the fact that I did my research in my own cultural context. The discussion will be influenced by my experiences and the perceptions of the community while I was doing my fieldwork.

I went through the initiation in 1994 in the Whittlesea Township called Ekuphumleni (Dongwe), which forms part of the areas chosen for the research. In chapter four I will reflect on my personal experience of initiation in relation to semi-urban and urban life. The fact that I am a Xhosa initiated male resulted in advantages and disadvantages for me and my informants.

## **2.4.2 Rewards/Advantages of auto-ethnographic research**

The auto ethnographic research has its own disadvantages and advantages. What follows is what I have identified as my rewards during the fieldwork.

### **2.4.2.1 Familiarity with cultural imperatives**

When the Anthropologist Sir Evans-Pritchard as a young student was about to set off to do his ethnographic field work in a 'foreign land' in Central Africa, he had to depend on the tips given by anthropologists who had been in Africa before and had a wealth of experience in ethnographic research (Shwedler 1996:15). In return, Evans-Pritchard wrote and shared with his readers how it was like to hunt for a witch in Central Africa (Shwedler 1996:15). J. A Van Eeden (1991:3) mentions the social embarrassment he went through due to misunderstandings and wrong interpretations that were as a result of him not being sure what behaviour was expected in terms of indigenous behavioural norms. As a result of coming to terms with his limitations, Van Eeden (1991:14) was able to work around issues that were related to him being an 'outsider' and as a result he was accepted and recognised as '*unolali*' (member of a sub-ward) which is a recognised inhabitant with all residential rights to participate in all community activities of the sub-ward (*umhlali*).

As a Xhosa male who went through initiation I did not have to be oriented about initiation, however, I do admit that I had a conversation with Prof. Masilo Lamla of the Walter Sisulu University who had done extensive auto-ethnographic research among the amaXhosa. Lamla, warned me of three pertinent issues when it comes to research in rural areas, i.e. showing respect, acknowledging that their views are important and the importance of participant observation that involves partaking in their food, beer and cultural activities.

The fact that I am an initiated Xhosa man was an advantage. The initiation practice is one of those practices that is guarded against intruders and is kept a secret from those who have not gone through it, including women. As a Xhosa man I have an understanding of Xhosa culture, which made me to communicate better with the young and the old, the rural and the urban. The fact of being an initiated Xhosa man

made the informants more relaxed and they did not show any signs of being uncomfortable or that I was invading their cultural territory. In some instances, especially in Mdantsane, I was asked some questions by a group of men to check if I had really gone through the initiation. After succeeding in answering the questions I was then accepted to visit the lodges. I did not take the process personally as in some cases, especially towards strangers, it is an accepted practice called *ukutshakwa* (verifying whether a person has been initiated). The practice of *ukutshakwa* will be discussed further in chapter six (see 6.6.1). I grew up in the rural areas and was later exposed to urban life in East London. My rural background enabled me to understand the importance of patience in communicating with people from rural areas. In Cala and some of the villages in Whittlesea it took me almost an hour to interview one person and it took at least ten minutes to *ukubuza impilo* (how are you?).

#### **2.4.2.2 The researcher was viewed as an insider and not a stranger**

I observed that in all areas except in Mpondoland I was viewed as one of the community members, which meant that this had advantages and disadvantages. It was an advantage in the sense that the informants carried on with their daily activities without having to pretend. Of course *abakhwetha* pretended and made sure that they behave in a good manner. Their reaction was not because I am a researcher but that is the reaction they would have shown when an elder comes. For example, there were instances where some of the *abakhwetha* were smoking tobacco or dagga (all areas), some were talking on their cell phones (Whittlesea and Mdantsane), some were playing football (Mdantsane) and some were drinking alcohol and the moment they noticed me they started hiding what they were doing. I also observed a similar reaction when other men came.

In one of the *umphumo* in Sada (Whittlesea) I was asked to be a *njoli* (the one who tastes first and dishes for everybody in a group of men). After completing the task there were comments like “*kuthe kanti usawuqonda umcimbi*” (you still know how to do this job), “*uqhube ngendlela*” (you have done well), and “*liJola lakuthi ke elo*” (that man belongs to the same clan as me). In Whittlesea, I noticed that very few people were intimidated by the tape recorder and also that sometimes I was writing notes as

most of them continued with their business as usual. Jokes were made by those who knew me, when they had a lot to drink. One of my *saluka* and my high school classmate jokingly asked “*heyi ntang’am utheni ubhala abangxolayo<sup>1</sup> ngoku, owu kanene asisekho esikolweni ngoku, ubhala amagama azo zonke iindlavini apha emgidini*” (my peer why are you writing the ones who are making noise now, ok by the way we are no longer at school so you should be writing the names of all hooligans in the ceremony). One of our *saluka* replied, “*Awu ndoda yakuthi ukhumbula iimini zesikolo ezimnadi?*” (My man you remember our good old school days). Another person remarked, “*Kodwa ke noko siyathemba ukuba wena awuzi ukufana naba bantu babhale umthunzi wentaba baveza izinto ezenzeka ekhusini lesiko lethu.*” (We hope that you will not be like the people who wrote *umthunzi wentaba* showing the secret rituals in the initiation custom).

At one point while I was having a conversation with some men in Cala, one of the men, who was a school principal, remarked:

*Mfondini siyavuya ukuba khe kubekho abantu abafana nani, amadoda akwaXhosa aphanda ngmvelaphi nangenkcubeko yethu. Sasoloko sifunda izinto ezibhalwe zezinye iintlanga, phofu uninzi lwabo bantu alwazinto ngathi kwaye babhala izinto ezingezizo bathi ngamasiko ethu.* (We appreciate the fact that at least there are people like you, a Xhosa man doing research about our history and heritage, as most of the time we read writings written by white people and most of them have no clue about our culture and they end up writing false practices and ascribe them to our culture).

#### **2.4.2.3 Language**

Ideally the ethnographer lives among the people intended to be studied for some time learning the language and understanding their culture (Forster & Kemper 1974:6). In some cases, the ethnographer uses the services of an interpreter, which carries its own disadvantages (Petrus 2009:26). Petrus (2009) who is familiar with the Xhosa language and culture did his ethnographic research in Xhosa speaking rural areas but due to his ineffective grasp of the isiXhosa language, he could not

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<sup>1</sup> Writing down the names of those who made a noise used to be practiced in schools in the olden days when the teacher was not in class in order to make sure that the students do no play but concentrate on their studies. The list of those written down would receive corporal punishment. In my class, it used to be my role to write down the names of all ‘hooligans’.

avoid using the services of an interpreter. Petrus (2009:26) experienced the following challenges that were related to the use of an interpreter:

- The possibility that some of the data might have been lost between the process of interviews and data analyses.
- The unavailability of an interpreter at certain times limited the number of informants.
- Sometimes the interpreter did not pitch up for the appointments with the informants, which made the researcher seem unprofessional.
- Appointments had to suit the schedule of the interpreter even when he and the informants were ready to do the interviews.
- At one point the researcher had to suspend interviews while he was searching for another interpreter.

As a Xhosa man I did not need to learn the informants' language unlike some of the ethnographers who study foreign communities (Forster & Kemper 1974:6). Furthermore, I did not need the services of an interpreter, therefore, that eliminated some of the challenges that some ethnographers like Petrus (2009) encountered. Because I was initiated, I could visit the *amabhoma* at anytime without being discriminated and I could also speak the *ukuhlonipha* language (secret respect language spoken during the initiation) which is only spoken during initiation; and, those who have not gone through initiation are not able to understand that language. The informants, except in Mpondoland, received me as one of them. As mentioned elsewhere in this research (see 1.4), the language spoken in Mpondoland is an isiXhosa dialect and it was not difficult to understand the dialect; however, there were instances when I had to ask some older informants to explain some of the words in that dialect. The main advantage was that even though they spoke in a dialect they could understand my isiXhosa and, in some cases, I used some isiZulu words that they understood better.

## 2.5. Disadvantages of auto-ethnographic research

### 2.5.1 Introduction

Boonzaier (1998:174) argues that “doing anthropology ‘at home’ implies certain motivations, concerns and problems”. In particular, it requires considerable sensitivity to the way in which our presence and our work is received by our own people. When one undertakes research in their own communities, one of the challenges is that the informants will still see one even after the fieldwork. This is different from an outsider who becomes a temporary citizen and then moves on without having to face or hear firsthand opinions and outcomes about the work she or he conducted. We cannot escape consequences of our fieldwork by moving to other research fields, and by pretending to ignore the long-term fallout from our activities.

Basically three issues had a negative impact on my experience during the fieldwork. Firstly, that I am a Xhosa man who had gone through the initiation. Secondly, the effects of the escalating rate of initiates’ deaths and irregular circumcision activities. Lastly, that the Xhosa initiation practice has been characterised by a lot of negative publicity from TV and newspapers; as a result, people are apprehensive of the intentions of people coming to enquire about the practice. All the above were because the researcher was perceived as part of the community and not an outsider in all areas except in Mpondoland. The Mpondoland issue is different in the sense that the researcher was viewed an “initiation insider” or expert as far as *ukwaluka* is concerned, but as an “outsider” in the cultural practices and community life of the amaMpondo. The researcher observed that in the areas identified for the research, the people were accustomed to receiving strangers coming because of initiation. Some of the informants had some encounters with visitors, some of whom were government officials coming to inspect illegal initiation lodges and irregularities while others were researchers investigating initiation and health related matters.

### **2.5.2 The effects of the researcher being a Xhosa man**

In the above paragraphs, I have discussed how the effects of me being Xhosa were an advantage. Some older informants from Cala and Whittlesea did not understand why I could ask obvious questions. The expectation was that since I am Xhosa, I am supposed to know the practice and they did not quite understand the need for me to interview them. One of the older men remarked that “*awu awazi ukuba kufundiswa ntoni esuthwini akuyondoda yomXhosa na?* (don't you know what is being taught at the initiation school; are you not a Xhosa man?). Some of the older generation did not understand the concept of research and even after it was explained to them they still showed concerns of being asked obvious questions by the person who is supposed to know.

In all the areas, there were a number of people who reacted negatively to my writing and recording during the ceremonies and that will be discussed later as a negative effect.

### **2.5.3. The escalating initiation irregularities and death of initiates**

Due to the number of deaths every year and circumcision irregularities experienced in the past four years, initiation has been a very emotional topic to the Xhosa communities. One of the informants said, “*O baphela abantwana bethu egameni lesiko lokwaluka*” (Our children are dying in the name of the initiation ritual). During the course of the research, I attended a funeral of an initiate who died in the initiation school in Mpondoland. It was alleged that the initiate died due to the negligence of the *ikhankatha* while the *ikhankatha* said it was due to the initiate not obeying the rules he instructed him in the lodge. It was clear that the communities were disarrayed by the problems associated with the initiation schools. The comments of the speakers at the funeral were concerns over the deaths and problems associated with initiation schools. The funeral was quite emotionally moving; as a result, the research progress was greatly impacted as I could not conduct any interviews after the funeral and had to take three days' break.

Consequently, it was difficult for the informants to keep up to the discussion for this study despite attempts to keep the questions and discussions directed on initiation

and moral fibre, but the informants kept diverting to the topic of the deaths of the initiates. Some of the informants have lost family members and some have witnessed deaths and mutilations of the boys closer to them. As a result, the research was an emotional experience for the researcher and the informants, especially in Mpondoland.

Most of the deaths in the initiation practice occurred in Mpondoland. For instance, in 2008, there were about 40 deaths in the Eastern Cape and 30 were from Mpondoland. According to Sizwe Kuphelo (Eastern Cape Health Department spokes person), in 2010, over one month (June) about 28 initiates died in Mpondoland alone and over a 100 initiates were taken to hospital (The Citizen 29 June 2010). The increase of the initiation crises in Mpondoland led to the temporary suspension of the practice in Eastern Mpondoland until the summer of 2010. Some people in Mpondoland were reluctant to participate in the study as it is the area where most of the initiation complications occurred. Some men from Mpondoland regarded the initiation as a foreign practice that was causing their children to be irresponsible and also killing them. Due to the unfortunate events occurring due to botched circumcisions, some of the informants remarked the following: *“Thina maMpondo zange sanazo lezinkinga zokufa kwabantwana, ngiyathemba ukuthi nina nizokuxazulula zonke lezinkinga ezihambisana nokwaluka, thina maMpondo asinalo isiko lokwaluka”* (As amaMpondo we never had major deaths of the youth and I hope that you are going to bring solutions to all these initiation problems because as amaMpondo, we do not have the initiation practice in our tradition).

*“Mna andifuni nokuyithetha indaba yokwaluka ngoba yiyo le yenza ukuba abantwana bethu basibize amakhwenkwe ngoba singolukanga, ukhulisa umntwana ajike akubize inkwenkwe?”* (I do not even want to talk about the initiation practice as it has caused our children to disrespect us and call us boys because we were not initiated, why you raise your child and he later calls you a boy?).

The perceptions of informants from Mpondoland on the role of initiation will be further discussed in chapter four.

#### 2.5.4 The effects of negative publicity

It has been mentioned in chapter one that in the recent years, the Xhosa initiation practice has been characterised by negative publicity in the news on television and newspapers. It appeared that the majority of the informants had problems with the negative publicity of initiation more especially the television programme called *Umthunzi Wentaba*<sup>2</sup>; thus, they used the interview opportunity to air their views on the two issues. Some of the informants made the following reamarks; *“ndiyathemba ukuba olu phando ulwenzanyo luza kunqanda la manyala enza isiko lethu kudlalwe ngalo koomabona-kude sekungathi alilunganga”* (I hope that the research you are doing will stop the current issues associated with the initiation practice which has caused our practice to be in disarray).

*“Kudala sibadinga abantu abafana nani abanokubuyisela isiko lethu lokwaluka libe kwimeko eyiyo sitsho siyeke ukufunda ngalo emaphepheni nakoomabona-kude kuthethwa ngalo kabuki”* (We have been in need of people like you who can reinstate our initiation practice and that we stop hearing it being negatively reported on in the newspapers and the television).

*“Zekhe nizame kupheliswe ezi ngxaki zibonakalayo koomabona-kude nasemaphepheni kubonakala ukuba isiko lethu alisahlonitshwa”* (Please you (plural) must try and stop the problems associated with the initiation practice which have caused it to draw negative publicity in newspapers and on television).

I was seen by others, especially in Cala and Whittlesea, as someone who was there to assist to restore their tradition and end all negative publicity about initiation.

Some informants, especially the *amakhankatha*, regarded me as a government official who wanted to inspect the illegal initiation schools. As a result some of the *amakhankatha* in Mdantsane were reluctant to participate in the study. It was only

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<sup>2</sup> *Umthunzi Wentaba* was a drama that was televised by SABC1 and was about the Xhosa initiation practice. It showed in detail the life of the initiates and the problems associated with initiation. The majority of Xhosa men, community and traditional leaders voiced concerns over this drama. Their grievance was that this drama showed details of what happens in the secret place of initiation which most of it is not supposed to be known by larger society. Because of the grievances, the SABC suspended the drama but later televised the edited version of it.

after I introduced myself, the intention for the study and ethical expectations attached to it that they were willing to participate.

## **2.6 Areas of research**

I chose four different areas for the research namely, Mdantsane (in East London), Whittlesea (Hewu), Njiveni (Libode) and Cala. Mdantsane is a symbol of township and urban life. Whittlesea is a mixture of urban and rural life and in this study I will refer to it as semi-urban. The three villages in Cala and Njiveni in Mpondoland are a symbol of rural life because cultural change takes place at a slower rate than in Mdantsane and Whittlesea (see also 4.2.1.1). The main reason to include Njiveni in Mpondoland was that the initiation practice has recently been re-adopted in Mpondoland (see 2.6.2). The reason for choosing rural, urban and semi-urban communities and Mpondoland was that they each represented a unique cultural imperative. Moreover, I wanted to observe the effect of inside and outside forces upon the cultural and moral values of the Xhosa communities. The following paragraphs will discuss in detail the unique differences in these areas, the time and the duration of the fieldwork and brief information about the informants.

### **2.6.1 Whittlesea**

Whittlesea is a rural town that is located about 30 km from Queenstown. It is surrounded by more than ten villages and two townships; thus, it serves as a town to those villages. This research was conducted in two rural townships namely Sada and Ekuphumleni/Dongwe, and also two nearby villages called Embekweni and Engojini. Even though Sada and Ekuphumleni are classified as townships, the life style is still rural with a bit of western influence because in the same township some people live a more rural and some a more urban life style. For example, more especially in Sada, some people still collected wood and also cooked outside and some still kept livestock such as sheep and goats. The villages that surround the township are quite close to the township; hence the township lifestyle can be easily adopted by some dwellers from the villages. For the above reasons one cannot conclude that this area is rural or urban hence it is classified as semi-urban. The houses in the two villages were old rural houses built of mud, while in Ekuphumleni Township/Dongwe most of

the houses were the old four roomed houses, a few suburban and a few RDP houses. In Sada Township most of the houses were the old apartheid houses, a few suburban houses and a substantial amount of informal settlements.

In Whittlesea, the research was conducted from 01 October 2009 to 15 December 2009. The *isibonda* (headman) and Health officials were interviewed in the first and second weeks. In the third and fourth week, the *umngeno* observations were made and interviews with the *ingcibi* and *amakhankatha* were conducted. In the second Month, interviews with the *abakhwetha* were conducted and observations were made. In the last Month, observations of *umphumo* were made and interviews with *amakrwala* and *amaxhego* were conducted.

### **2.6.2 Libode**

Libode is situated about 20 km from Umtata in the area that was previously called the Transkei Homeland. The villages where the research was carried out were about 10 km from Libode. Libode and its villages fall under the Nyandeni Regional Authority with His Majesty, King M. Ndamase, Ah! Dalukulunga (his praise name) as a presiding King. The villages that were chosen for the study were Njiveni, Bhukwini, Mbiza and Mkankato and were under the leadership of Chief Boklein and Njiveni as the headquarters where the chief resides. In this study all these villages will be referred to as Njiveni or sometimes Mpondoland. This area is part of the district called Mpondoland and the Xhosa group that inhabits it is the amaMpondo, and lately due to the mobility of people even other Xhosa groups are found in the area. The majority of houses were old rural village houses (including rondavels) and lately those who can afford it were able to build big houses that are similar to those in urban areas. There are basically two reasons why I chose this area for research. Firstly, it has been in the news due to a number of circumcision irregularities and several deaths caused by the initiation practice. Secondly, male initiation in Mpondoland was discarded in the nineteenth century (Van der Vliet 1974:229) and later re-adopted in the early 1990's (Meintjies 1998:6).

The research took place from 1 July 2009 to 30 September 2009. In July the researcher observed the *imingeno* (beginning of the initiation ceremonies). From

August until 30 September 2009, the researcher also interviewed the *inkosi*, *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha*. Between July and September, the researcher also observed the *imiphumo* (graduation ceremonies) and also interviewed *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala*. Over and above the interviews, two group discussions took place, one with *amakrwala* and the other with *amaxhego*.

### 2.6.3 Cala

Cala is also in the area that was previously called the Transkei Homeland. It is a rural town surrounded by more than ten villages. The research was done in two villages called Manzimdaka and Mgwalana about 10-20 km from Cala. These villages were characterised by values of *ubuntu*; which includes, respect for visitors, respect for elders, greeting every one you meet, sharing meals with neighbours and with a clear hierarchy of traditional leaders and respect (Porteus 2006:3). The majority of the people residing in this area were senior citizens with children who were in primary schools and the *amakrwala* that were found were already preparing to attend school outside the area. The rest of the population were those who were working in rural towns and urban areas as well as those who were studying in high schools and universities outside the areas. The research was conducted, from 28 December 2009 to 30 January 2010. In the first week, the chief and *amaxhego* were interviewed; and, in the second week, the researcher was observing the *imingeno*. In the third week, interviews with *iingcibi*, *amakhankatha* and *abakhwetha* were conducted; and, during the fourth week, observations of *the imiphumo* were done and *amakrwala* were interviewed.

### 2.6.4 Mdantsane

Mdantsane is an urban township situated about 10 km from East London. The infrastructure reflected an old township life with areas that housed the poor, the middle class and also the working class. The areas were the suburbs (NU 17 and Golden Highway), four roomed houses (NU 1-16), the new RDP<sup>3</sup> (Reconstruction

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<sup>3</sup> The RDP was designed to create programs to improve the standard of living of the majority of the population by providing housing, basic services, education and health care. RDP houses are basically part of this program hence referred to as RDP houses

and Development Program) houses (some areas of NU 4 and 9) and informal settlements (shacks) and Highway which is a central business district with a shopping complex and taxi ranks. Even though this is one Township, the poor live in more densely populated areas (most live in RDP houses and shacks, some in the four-roomed houses), and in the business district (Highway) there were more criminal elements among organised groups of *amakrwala* (see also 4.6.4; 4.9 and 4.10). In this area, the initiation ceremonies were centred around families; each family holds its own ceremony and invites the community. Most of the boys had their own lodge and in some instances there were two boys in one lodge. It was explained that in cases where there were two boys in one lodge, it was because they were related or one boy did what is called *ukuziba* (going for the initiation without the knowledge of the parents). In most cases of *ukuziba*, a lodge was not built for the boy but he stayed with the boy he was circumcised with (see also 4.4.4). Most of the people who visited the initiation lodges were family members of the initiates, a few neighbours and family friends.

The research took place over three Months from 01 May to 30 July 2010.

## **2.7 Selection of Participants**

The participants were purposely selected based on their involvement, participation and role in the initiation practice and Xhosa life. This selection was based on the researcher's judgement and understanding of the nature of the research. This type of sampling is called judgemental sampling (Babbie and Mouton 2001:166). According to Babbie (2004:183) judgemental sampling is "...a type of non-probability sampling in which one selects the unit to be observed on the basis of the researcher's own judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative"

*Abakhwetha* were chosen from those who were initiated at the time of the interviews. *Amakhankatha* were those guarding the boys in the initiation and some who were known guardians even if at the time they had no initiates to take care of. *Amakrwala* were chosen immediately after their graduation from the initiation, most of them were less than six months in the *ubukrwala* process. *lingcibi* were purposely selected from

the areas as there was only a few of them. *Amaxhego* were selected at random from the communities (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of interview participants**

<b>Whittlesea</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Mdantsane</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Libode</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Cala</b>	<b>No</b>	
<i>Headman</i>	1			<i>Chief</i>	1	<i>Chief</i>	1	3
<i>Initiates</i>	10	<i>Initiates</i>	10	<i>Initiates</i>	10	<i>Initiates</i>	10	40
<i>Guardians</i>	10	<i>Guardians</i>	10	<i>Guardians</i>	3	<i>Guardians</i>	5	28
<i>Old men</i>	10	<i>Old men</i>	10	<i>Old men</i>	10	<i>Old men</i>	10	40
<i>New men</i>	10	<i>New men</i>	10	<i>New men</i>	10	<i>New men</i>	10	40
<i>Surgeon</i>	3	<i>Surgeon</i>	3	<i>Surgeon</i>	2	<i>Surgeon</i>	3	11
<i>Health official</i>	2		2					4
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>		<b>45</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>166</b>

All the informants that were interviewed were males and this has been mentioned as one of the limitations to the study (see 2.11). In total, 166 interviews were conducted with informants. However, it should be noted that the total number of interviews does not reflect the total number of informants who participated in the study as there were instances where groups engaged with the researcher in interviews and discussions.

**Table 2: The ages of the informants**

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Number</b>
14-20	35
21-30	37
31-40	25
41-55	25
56-70	30
71-100	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>166</b>

## 2.8 Key informants

The following male informants were selected because they were the main pillars in the Xhosa initiation practice. The purpose was to get their understanding of the process with reference to the past and its present role and contribution in building the moral character of men.

### 2.8.1 *Inkosi* (chief)

An *inkosi* is a hereditary position in the sense that he or she holds this position based on birthright. Normally, he is the elder son of his father's eldest wife (*inkosikazi/umfazi omkhulu*) (Pauw 1994:75). The chief is the one who rules the community and the headmen and all other leaders are accountable to him. The chief is the custodian of all issues related to community life, tradition and culture. An *inkosi* is the traditional leader whereas *izibonda* are more involved with issues related to culture and law. In the current government, the *iinkosi* work as councillors and are paid by the government. The *inkosi* is accountable to the *kumakani* (King) who is most superior in the hierarchy of the tribe (Pauw 1994:13). The current role of the traditional leaders including the chief is discussed in 3.5.1.

In Cala and Njiveni the researcher had to seek permission from the Chief before embarking on the research. In Cala, the chief was knowledgeable about the initiation practice and was involved in the initiation practice. When illegal (see 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 for meaning of illegal initiation schools) *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi* were found, they were called to *enkundleni* (traditional court) and later taken to the police when there was a need. The chief was more than willing to give guidance but his major concern was that the people in rural areas seemed to pursue the western way of life where there was less regard for the role of traditional leaders. In Njiveni, I had to seek permission from the Chief to carry out the research. It is the *inkosi* himself who was in charge of the initiation practice. The boys were circumcised in his yard and he made sure that all the necessary documents were presented before circumcision took place. The details of the interview with the Chief and his involvement in the practice will be further discussed in chapter six (see 6.11)

### **2.8.2 Izibonda (headmen)**

Headmen served as the overseers of the village and they dealt more with the daily activities of the community and usually reported to the *inkosi*. Traditionally, they were appointed by the chief in consultation with his secret council and had to be acceptable by the inhabitants of the *ilali* (rural village) (Pauw 1994:84). They were responsible for the day-to-day running of the village affairs, for instance, one chief can rule over ten villages and have different *izibonda* to see to the daily activities and who must report to him. The researcher found that the two villages, Dyamala and Emtha were under the leadership of one headman. Permission from the headman had to be sought before proceeding with the interviews.

### **2.8.3 Abakhwetha (initiates)**

While in the initiation the participants were known as *abakhwetha* (plural) or *umkhwetha* (singular). *Aba* means a group and *khwetha* means to learn and, therefore, the complete word *abakhwetha* means group learning. They were a group of initiates learning together through *ukwaluka* to be men. They submitted themselves to the teaching of the *ikhankatha* and were not supposed to take instructions from any other men without the knowledge of the *ikhankatha*. In case where advice had been offered, an initiate had to first consult the *ikhankatha* before taking it. He was expected to follow all instructions without questioning anything (for the role of *amakhankatha* see 6.3.5.2).

### **2.8.4 Ingcibi (traditional surgeon)**

The *ingcibi* was the man who performed the circumcision operation on the boys in the initiation process. *The ingcibi* was traditionally a calling and a gift and in some instances he was appointed by the chief and elders (Pauw 1994:14). Apart from being an initiated male of not less than ten years, the *ingcibi* should not be a person who abuses alcohol, he should be a disciplined man and respected in the community. Soga (1930-1931:235-5) and Ngxamngxa (1971:199), say that the *ukudlanga* (circumcision) operation was so mysterious that it was conceived in magical terms. Ngxamngxa (1971:199) illustrates his position by making an example

of Hintsá, who after having been operated upon by an *ingcibi* of the amaNgqosini clan who was known to be aggressive, turned out to *fuza* (be like) his *ingcibi* by being a man of fiery temper. As a result, the elders made sure that his heir and successor Sarhili (Kreli) was circumcised by an even-tempered *ingcibi* of the amaKhwemta clan. Fortunately, Sarhili became a man with a non-violent character just like his *ingcibi*.

Customarily, the *ingcibi* was at the lodge only on the first day to do his job and never came back again but in Mpondoland and Cala, it was observed that some men perform both the roles of *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha*. In Whittlesea only two guardians performed both duties of *ikhankatha* and *ingcibi* and the *amakhankatha* voiced problems with such *iingcibi*. Their complaint was that they were taking over their duties. In Mdantsane none performed both duties - a person was either an *ingcibi* or an *ikhankatha*.

### **2.8.5 Amakhankatha (traditional guardians)**

Traditionally, an *ikhankatha* (singular of *amakhankatha*) was appointed by the chief and the elders, while in the family, he was appointed by the *usosuthu* (father or guardian of the initiate) and the elders. An *ikhankatha* had to be a man of integrity and one respected by the community (Pauw 1994:14). Traditionally, the man had a role of nursing and teaching the initiates, while in the lodge. The *ikhankatha* was expected to be the sole person responsible for the initiates and further gave feedback to the elders on the progress of the initiate.

In Mdantsane and Whittlesea it was observed that each initiate had his own guardian but in cases where the initiates were of the same household, they all had one guardian. There were a few cases where initiates were initiated in the same *ibhuma* due to the fact that they were from the same *isiduko* (clan name), or a situation of *ukuziba* (4.4.4). For example, a Rhadebe was to be initiated in the same *ibhoma* with another Rhadebe. Contrary to Mdantsane and Whittlesea, in Cala it was observed that one *ikhankatha* took care of more than one *umkhwetha*, in some cases they took care of up to five *abakhwetha*.

### **2.8.6 Amakrwala (new men or graduates)**

The stage of *ubukrwala* (being an initiate graduate) followed the stage of *ubukhwetha* (being an initiate) after the *umphumo* (graduation). The *amakrwala* were the young men who graduated from the initiation practice and who were integrated back into the society (see also 3.6.11).

### **2.8.7 linkonde / Amaxhego (old men or elders)**

The old men were usually called elders and they had more knowledge about Xhosa history and they also provided information regarding possible changes that took place in the initiation practice (see 3.5.9; 3.5.10, 3.6.10 and 6.3.6.3).

### **2.8.8 Health officials**

Health officials are male nurses assigned to be involved in the initiation practice. In cases of emergency, they were called in to intervene. The researcher observed that health officials had one thing in common, they were not only involved in the practice as per their employment duties, but also had a passion to preserve and protect the practice.

The health officials were significant to the research because they provided input regarding their understanding of the socio-cultural role played by the initiation practice as well as their views on its existence and present meaning in relation to health hazards that the practices is associated with.

In Sada and Dongwe health officials from the clinics were consulted and they introduced the researcher to relevant people who were involved in the initiation practice.

### **2.8.9 Illegal guardians and surgeons**

In Mpondoland and Cala, the researcher was introduced to other men who performed the traditional circumcision (*iingcibi*) and who acted as *amakhankatha* but they refused to be interviewed as they were not recognised by the community and the chief. Some of them were acting in both duties and some as either *ikhankatha* or *ingcibi*. According to iNkosi Boklein, the major problems that they have experienced in Njiveni were due to the illegal initiation schools performed by the unknown guardians and surgeons. The illegal guardians and surgeons performed their duties in private and kept the boys in their yards and that was apparently done as a business. The challenges caused by commercialisation in the practice are discussed in chapter four (see 4.6). The only information that the researcher was able to gather from them was that they had been performing the initiation practice for some time but they refused to participate in the study due to personal reasons.

## **2.9 Data analysis**

Data analysis involves “breaking up” the data into themes, patterns, trends and relationships that are manageable (Babbie and Mouton 2001:108). The rationale of data analysis is twofold: firstly, to establish the relationships that exist between concepts, constructs or variables, and secondly, to ascertain whether any patterns or trends can be identified or isolated (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:108). Vivian (2008:118) asserts that there are no rules for the interpretation of qualitative data as each set is unique to the researcher and his or her subject matter and further that it is difficult to duplicate a qualitative researcher’s data. The data analysis period is critical because “the anthropologist employs his/her own philosophical social sciences insights (which are grounded in the literature) in conjugation with discussion in the field to delineate critical themes” (Vivian 2008:103).

One of the data analysis methods utilised in the social sciences is the qualitative content analysis method and that is the method utilised in this study. By tradition, content analysis is usually divided into two types, namely conceptual and relational analysis (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:492). Conceptual analysis has to do with establishing themes whereas relational analysis has to do with finding relationships

between the elements of one's data rather than the elements themselves. The researcher employed conceptual analysis to analyse and interpret the raw data and the eight conceptual analysis steps, as outlined by Babbie and Mouton (2001:492), were used. The research topic for this research was used as the framework to begin data analysis. This research revolves around three main themes in relation to the moral role of initiation that is, the socio-cultural, the religious and educational aspects. The above aspects were evaluated from the data provided by the individual interviews and the group discussions with all groups. The reliability and validity of data was triangulated against the literature and participant observation. The findings were interpreted parallel with the reviewed literature study, checking them against the background for gaps that existed in the knowledge and meaning of the initiation practice. The difference in the observations and reality of the roles of *amakhankatha* was identified (see also 4.2.4 on ideal vs. real culture). The data from interviews was compared to that of the group discussions and further that different groups were divided according to social status as practiced within the Xhosa communities, i.e., the younger and the older generation. In addition, different themes that were related to the different fieldwork areas namely, the rural, semi-urban and urban areas were analysed and similarities and differences in meaning were observed and noted. Sub-topics were created based on the categories of similar responses. As stated in the first chapter of this study, the topic under investigation is related to the cultural meaning of initiation in relation to moral reconstruction; therefore, some of the data that was found to be irrelevant to the topic was excluded. The data was collected in isiXhosa and in the process of analysis the material and language was condensed into concepts that were applicable in English.

## **2.10 Ethical considerations**

According to Babbie (2001:470), everyone who is involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement or conduct of what is proper and improper in scientific research. Since the study involved human subjects, the researcher was aware of his role in making sure that all ethical procedures were taken into consideration. This was done by making sure that the rights and welfare of all informants were protected at all times during the study. Informants were informed of the purpose and the goals of the study. Informed consent was requested and re-

negotiated with each individual participant. Permission from the chief was requested in all areas where there was a chief. In Whittlesea, there was no chief and permission was obtained from the headman. In Mdantsane there was no chief or traditional leadership so to obtain more information on the regulation of the initiation practice it was essential to visit the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital, clinics and the public health offices.

Before interviewing the *abakhwetha*, permission was sought from the *ikhankatha* who was responsible for them while in the initiation. In cases where the informants were under the age of 18 years old, in consultation with the *ikhankatha*, permission from the parents of the initiates was sought.

According to Babbie (2001:470) informed consent is called “voluntary participation”. I made sure that no one was forced to participate in the study and everyone took part voluntarily. Informants were made aware of the fact that they were participating voluntarily and they could withdraw at any time. Informants were also made aware that they had a right to confidentiality and that their names would not be recorded during the interviews. Furthermore, the informants were told that only general findings will be reported without mentioning their names and positions within the Xhosa male initiation practice. In the case of Chief Boklein it was negotiated with him that his real name can be used in the process of reporting the results and he signed and agreed to it. The consent forms were available in the isiXhosa language, the home language of the informants. In addition, the researcher provided the informants with a letter of confirmation from the promoter that specified the details of his institutional affiliation and the intent for the research study. A consent form and letter requesting participation are attached as appendix B.

## **2.11 limitations of the study**

This study was not without limitations. One of the limitations was the questioning of old men about their initiation. It is true that most of the Xhosa men go for initiation, but it is a fact that there are some who might have not gone for initiation for their personal reasons, while some might have chosen to be circumcised in hospital instead. It was difficult to ask Xhosa men whether they have been initiated or not.

Actually, it is an insult to ask a Xhosa man such a question. In this case the assumption was that most of the informants were initiated, and that is not necessarily true. The challenge that might arise from the above scenario is that those who did not go for initiation might provide incorrect information on the details of the process because they had never participated in it.

The second limitation was that, as previously mentioned, this study was done at a time where the Xhosa initiation has been negatively exposed by programmes such as *Umthunzi Wentaba* as well as the newspapers (see 2.5.4). Most of the informants were more concerned about this negative publicity and their interests and some of their responses were reacting to such negative publicity. One other limitation similar to that was the fact that initiation has been characterised by a number of irregularities which has resulted in a number of boys losing their lives. During the research, a number of informants, especially during discussions, spoke more on matters related to the *ukudlanga* (circumcision) work of the *ingcibi* than the cultural and moral significance of the practice.

Another limitation was the issue of language. As mentioned in the first chapter, the target informants were assumed to be Xhosa speaking. It was found that some of the younger generation were more comfortable to communicate in English than isiXhosa. There were a few instances where some did not understand isiXhosa at all. When the researcher approached the informants, the assumption was that they could all understand isiXhosa because they were amaXhosa. At one instance, during an interview, one of the informants did not respond and after three minutes, he said, “sorry I don’t understand”. Thereafter, in such cases the interviews were conducted in English.

Under the discussion on auto-ethnography, it was of great advantage that the researcher is Xhosa. However, this could have been a limitation because due to the researcher’s knowledge of the practice, he could have excluded some questions that were obvious to him but significant to the cultural meaning of initiation.

One of the limitations to the study is the fact that only male informants were interviewed. The reality is that initiation is no longer a male issue; it is a life, human

right and health issue. Women are mothers of the initiates and in some instances, as single mothers they end up playing the role of both *usosuthu* (father of the initiate or clan representative) and *zibazana* (mother of the initiate).

Lastly, one of the limitations of this study is those that are considered as *amakhwenkwe* (those who have not gone through the initiation) were not among the informants. Among the *amakhwenkwe* there are those who are young and still planning to go for initiation and those who are old, some married some not and were not initiated for some reason. Some of those referred to as *amakhwenkwe* are those who have been for various reasons circumcised in hospital. It would have been essential to get their perceptions on initiation more especially those who have been circumcised in hospital and those who have chosen not to be initiated intentionally. Adjoining to the issue of *amakhwenkwe*, it is said that prior to initiation, the boys must go for a medical check up at the nearby clinics or hospital, thereafter, they can get permission to go for initiation. Nothing is said; even the literature is silent, about those who are found to be unfit for initiation. It would be interesting as well to understand what happens to them; whether they postpone their initiation, decide to quit initiation or decide to go without consent (*ukuziba*) (on *ukuziba* see 4.4.4).

## **2.12 Presentation of the findings**

The findings of the fieldwork were integrated and presented in all chapters but there are mainly three chapters that contain the biggest part of the results, i.e., chapters four, five and six. The findings are based on the individual interviews, group discussions, observations from different areas chosen for the study and my experience of the initiation practice. The observations done were on initiation related rituals and ceremonies such as *imingeno/umshwamo* (ritual done just before the boy goes for initiation) and *imigidil/imiphumo* (graduation) ceremonies, *imiguyo* (celebrations for the boys before they go for initiation) and *intlombe* (celebrations to welcome the new men into manhood) from all areas identified for the research. Importantly, the researcher could compare his own experience of the initiation practice and the current practice.

## **2.13 Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher has provided the method that was adopted for this study and the reasons for its choice. This study is an auto-ethnographic research study on the cultural meaning of initiation. At the beginning of this study, there was reluctance to use the first person singular, but instead followed the traditional procedure of using the third person singular (the researcher) which has been popular in anthropology. I then became uncomfortable of referring to myself as the researcher whereas the nature of this study involves my culture as well as my own experiences of the initiation practice (auto-ethnographic). In consulting some literature (see, for example, Clifford and Marcus [1986]) I found that there is nothing wrong in using the first person singular in this study. This chapter acknowledges all the methodological aspects of this research and further describes my experiences of the fieldwork that includes advantages and limitations. The qualitative research method involving an auto-ethnographic study adopted for this research was chosen to appreciate the cultural phenomenon of the initiation practice in relation to the moral fibre in the community. Lastly, this chapter recognises the ethical procedures of research and the realities of rural, semi-urban and urban characteristics. Consequently, the findings of this study were analysed bearing in mind the existence of the three different contexts.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **INITIATION AS A RITE OF PASSAGE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter gives a broad background of the Xhosa initiation practice from two angles; firstly, by identifying this practice as a rite of passage and, secondly, as a Xhosa practice that traditionally had a role of instilling good moral values in the boys as they graduated into manhood. That will be done by reviewing literature and presenting findings from the discussions and interviews with old men as well as their responses to the question related to morality. The literature study and the findings of this study suggest that there is a strong connection between initiation and morality (see 3.6.10; 3.7.2 and 6.2). Morality or morals means a number of things to different communities; hence in this chapter the meaning of morality in the South African context is reviewed. Each South African cultural group has its own traditions, which define their collective meaning of rights and wrongs, but in the country, people's rights are entrenched in the constitution, which acknowledges rights and privileges of all citizens. The initiation practice is not only practised by the amaXhosa but there are a number of other groups and nations that practise this ritual and it is practised for various reasons (see 3.3). This custom falls into the rites of passage as it contains the characteristics that are distinctive to the rites of passage as the anthropologists describe them (see 3.2).

#### **3.2 The Xhosa initiation practice as a rite of passage**

Having viewed material written by some sociologists and anthropologists, I have identified the Xhosa initiation practice as a rite of passage. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists such as Arnold Van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1967), and Jean La Fontaine (1931), who have contributed to the theories that are related to the definition of the rites of passage that exist within different social structures.

According to Van Gennep (1960:1), the rites of passage are ritual ceremonies intended to mark the transition from one phase of life to another, from one world

(cosmic or social) to another. In the process of transition, certain conditions have to be fulfilled. Rites of passage exist as a response to the recognition of the various stages that humans move through during their life cycle. It is believed that humans move through at least four different stages as they develop: birth, maturation (transition to adulthood), reproduction (marriage and procreation) and death (Pauw 1994: 10). The transition from one life-stage to the next is marked by rituals, referred to as rites of passage, to ensure the safe transition of an individual from one stage to the next. The rites of passage exist within a certain cultural context; therefore, the conditions of transition are laid down and accepted by the social structures; and there is a general recognition of a correct, morally right pattern that should be followed in any particular performance (La Fontaine 1931:11). Thus, the initiation practice does not exist in isolation, but as is the case elsewhere also within the Xhosa social structure.

La Fontaine (1931:11), furthermore, emphasised that the rite of passage is a social action, as much as it is a secretive societal engagement; but it is also to maintain social order (see 6.2.1.3.). Social relationships are presented in the organisation of a ritual. For instance, the Xhosa initiation practice creates peculiarity of hierarchy in manhood; there is a clear distinction between an *inkwenkwe* (boy), an *ikrwala* (graduate or new man), an *umfana* (young man), *indoda* (fully-fledged man) and *utata* (father or matured man) and an *ixhego* (old man). These are not only status groups but each group has roles, responsibilities and duties attached to them. In case of one not living according to the roles and duties of the status, they lose such respect in the society (see also 6.2.1.4)

Those who are recognised by the larger society and are living a good moral life are recognised in the ritual. For example, the headmen (*izibonda*) play a pivotal role in the Xhosa initiation process; and also the men that nurse the boys (*amakhankatha*) are men who are known for living an exemplary life. The examples of such rites of passage are initiation (*ulwaluko*), initiation into life or adolescent initiation (*imbeleko*), and betrothal in marriage (*ukungeniswa emtshatweni*).

The rite of passage is not only a social association, but it draws one to the supernatural or sacred being (see 6.4). Van Gennep (1960:182) puts it aptly and states that;

The phenomenon of transition may be noted in many other human activities, and it recurs also in biological activity in general, in the application of physical energy, and in some cosmic rhythms. ...The rites of passage ultimately correspond to this fundamental necessity, sometimes so closely that they take the form of rites of death and rebirth.

The initiation practice has a strong religious connection (see 6.4). It is seen as a process that connects back the initiate with the departed members of his family. In referring to the departed members, Mbiti (1975: 63) calls them “the living dead” implying that they are not dead people but are always active in the African society. This connection is being regulated through the gathering of all family elders and the whole community, slaughtering of animals, brewing traditional beer and appeasing the ancestors (see also 6.4).

Most rites of passage fall into three main phases: separation, transition, and incorporation (La Fontaine 1931:48). Between these three different phases there is a state of isolation which is said to have two aspects which may be found separately or in combination (Van Gennep (1960:26). The first aspect is that the participant is weak because he/she is in isolation and is outside his/her usual group or society. The second aspect is that the participant is also strong because he/she is not alone and is in the sacred realm with protection from supernatural powers and support of the small community (Van Gennep (1960:26. The isolation state is caused by the reality that the participant has not gone through the process before; and even those who have gone through it have kept it to themselves. He/she moves from one phase to another with a certain fear that is caused by the uncertainty of future events. However, the participant is encouraged by the fact that others have gone through the process and have survived it.

### **3.2.1 Separation Phase**

In this phase, the participant is taken away from his/her familiar environment and former role and enters a very different and sometimes foreign routine to which they are forced to adjust and with which they must become familiar. In this phase the Xhosa initiates leave the society and a farewell by the peers (*umguyo*) (see also 4.3.2.2) and a traditional ceremony by the men is held for them (*umngeno*) (Meintjies 1998:7). The ritual takes place away from the community and is characterised by signals of gatherings (e.g. fire, trumpets, and drums) (Van Gennep 1960:26). Turner (1967: 14) described this phase as a period of seclusion that involves separation from everyday existence and having to observe certain food taboos. Separation is an essential feature of the rites of passage; initiates should be physically separated from rest of the community (Hammond-Tooke 1974:229) and a temporary home (*ibhoma/ithonto*) is built for them. Among the Xhosa, this separation is characterised by the use of *ukuhlonipha* language (the language used in the initiation school), wearing their own initiation dress code and applying 'ingceke' (white clay) to their bodies, etc (Meintjies 1998:8).

### **3.2.2 Transition Phase**

This is the time during which the participants learn the appropriate behaviour for the new stage they will be entering. This phase can, for example, include the time when the woman and man become engaged to be married. At this time, they are learning about the new stage of life into which they will enter. They are also adjusting and preparing for it, or making a transition. The transition phase may also include the time when children enter adolescence and leave their childhood behind. This is the time when young people grow, learn and prepare to be independent adults in the real world. In the initiation process, this phase is characterised by various procedures used to make the journey longer and more difficult. The aim of these strategies is to make participants stronger as they enter into manhood.

Vizedom (1976:8) defines the transition phase as a:

...form of disequilibrium phase during which the organism is creating a new ability or achieving a reorientation of some kind. It is a phase of innovation. The child withdraws from his former self and also somewhat from his environment, as though to gather strength for a forward thrust, which may be so vigorous that it has the appearance of aggression. However, even during the aggressive thrust new patterns are being incorporated into the old. A working balance is achieved between the new and the old and presently the organism settles down to a period of relative equilibrium, of assimilation and of consolidation.

In the Xhosa initiation, this phase is called *umngeno* (the coming in) or *ukungena* (coming in). In the transition phase, the *umkhwetha* has no idea of what the process is all about; he has to rely on the *ikhankatha* and the visitors who have been through the process before. In the past, some of the boys would run away on the day of *umngeno*, or just before *umngeno*, while some just before *ukudlangwa* (being circumcised). In my own recollection, as I was walking with a group of about twenty men, out of curiosity, I wondered who among them was the *ingcibi*. However, the paradox is that, until today, I still do not know who my *ingcibi* was and most likely, I will never know. One of the *amakrwala* asserted that;

*Wathi utata akundixelela ukuba ndiza koluka ndavuya ndafowunela bonke abahlobo bam ngenxa yemincili. Ndithe ndihleli ndodwa ndaqala ukuwucingisisa lo mba wokwaluka ndaqala ndoyika, ngoba kaloku ndandingazi ukuba kwenziwa ntoni kanyekanye apha* (When my father told me that I will be initiated I was very excited and I called all my friends due to excitement, but when I was alone I then started pondering about this reality and I got scared because I had no knowledge of what is really done here).

Another said; *“sonke silapha besingazi ukuba kanye kanye kwenziwa ntoni apha, qha siyazi ukuba uninzi luyabuya kwaye sibona kubo ukuba kumnandi ukubayindoda xa sowubuyile”* (all of us did not know exactly what is being done, we do know that most of the boys go and they come back and we see from them that it is a great privilege to be a man). Just before I went to the initiation, my cousin called me and said he was going to explain how I should handle myself in the lodge in order to succeed and cope in the initiation. He said *“kwedini izinto zimbini; phaya kuyasetyenzwa kwaye kuthotyelwa ikhankatha, wena ke uze usebenze kakhulu ukuze ungafani naba bakhwetha baphathwa ngabafazi esibhedlele”* (boy, there are two things; in the initiation you have to work hard and you have to fully obey the instructions of the *ikhankatha*, you must work harder so that you do not end up in the

hospital just like these boys who are taken care of by female nurses). I asked “*yintoni bhuti le isetyenzwayo?* (What is it that one has to be worked hard?). He replied “*uza kuyibona phambili, qha wena uze umamele ikhankatha kwaye usebenze*” (you will see that, all you must know is to obey the *ikhankatha* and to work hard). At the time, that information was not very helpful as I felt that what he said was not very empowering enough for the journey ahead; however, five years ago, I also gave the same advice to my nephew before he went for the initiation practice.

What happens in the lodge has always been kept secret, until recently when the initiation practice was negatively exposed by the TV drama called *Umthunzi Wentaba* (a TV programme that revealed a negative picture of what happens in the initiation schools). Some of the *abakhwetha* from Mdantsane responded that their *amakhankatha* were not much helpful; as a result, they had to rely on their peers (other initiates) who were circumcised before them (see also 6.3.5.2).

### **3.2.3 Incorporation Phase**

This is the last phase that takes place when the participant is formally admitted to the new role. Marriage is a good example of a rite that would take place in the incorporation phase. After people are married, they have taken on a very new and different role, having prepared for it in earlier transition and separation rites. In the initiation process, one of the important elements of a ritual is the graduation ceremony that celebrates the successful outcome of a long and often painful learning process and the launching of a new breadwinner role (Turner 1967:6). This ceremony becomes a formal entrance characterised by a meal in common and the exchange of gifts. It may further involve eating, drinking, smoking together, being attached to each other, being covered together or sitting together on the same seat (Van Gennep 1960:28). The togetherness, which is focused on the one who has just emerged from initiation, symbolises that the participant is no longer a boy, but is being incorporated into manhood with full privileges and all the responsibilities of the new community.

In addition to the above practices, La Fontaine (1931:35) discusses in detail some of the common practices in initiation, such as, firstly, the change of status from

boyhood to manhood that is expected to be accompanied by a change of behaviour (see also 6.3.2.2). Secondly, initiation is a symbol of death, and the transition from boyhood to manhood (La Fontaine 1931:36; Turner 1967:153). Thirdly, one must emphasise the secretiveness of the ritual to women and those who have not gone through it - La Fontaine calls them outsiders (1931:16).

Lastly, the separation of an initiate from the rest of the community by the application of *imbola* (mud) and other substances which carry a great meaning in connecting the initiate to creation, God and his ancestors (La Fontaine 1931:13). The above practices are some of those that can be observed across different cultures in the rites of passage, but more especially in the initiation practice.

In the Xhosa initiation, the new man (*ikrwala*) is given gifts, new clothes and a new name which all symbolise a new life. From a religious perspective, the person is being born again; the old self is dead and has been resurrected into a new life (Mbiti 1986: 49). He is now recognised as a man within the Xhosa society. He is entitled to marry, to have property rights and is permitted to attend and also speak at gatherings of men in the community.

### **3.3 The background of the Xhosa initiation practice**

In the above paragraphs, I have drawn from different anthropologists in my discussion of the Xhosa initiation practice as a rite of passage that prepares and equips boys to be responsible men of the community. The following discussion will explore the background of the Xhosa initiation practice as well as certain principles in this practice that identify it as a rite of passage.

I share the same sentiments as Botman (2000:105), that, I am not a historian; however I have been taught by academics that instilled in me the understanding that nothing academic has a future if it does not consider history.

Having mentioned the concept of the historical origin, it becomes imperative to draw attention to the reality that will always be a challenge in investigating a topic of this nature. Firstly, Xhosa people, like most of the other African people, were illiterate

and, therefore, would not have been able to record the origin of the initiation practice, instead passed on information from one generation to another by word of mouth (Mbiti 1975:4). Secondly, the initiation rite is one of the practices that have always been kept secret - women, as well as those who have not gone through it, have always been kept in the dark. It could be true that this illiteracy and the secretiveness could have led to its background being forgotten and lost in the mists of time.

The intention is not to discuss the details of the initiation process; such as what happens to the boys in the lodge, the cutting of the foreskin, the sprinkling of the blood, etc. Rather, I want to appreciate the reality that the South African and other African ethnic groups as well, all draw their initiation practices from a common background. This view is unequivocally attested and proved by the similarities in some of the common practices attached to initiation. The differences could be in how each group has contextualised these details to give them meaning within their socio-cultural context. "*Somagwaza! ndakugwaza ngalo mkhonto!*" ("Somagwaza! I'll stab (cut) you with this spear!"). Among Xhosa men, these lyrics are synonymous with the initiation practice. It is to this song that young men dance and others engage in friendly stick fighting during the beginning and the end of the initiation process (see also 4.3.2.4.). There are various explanations for the origins of this custom. Some old men pointed out the era of Somagwaza, who is believed to have been a very wise man that lived in ancient times. One of the elders eluded that;

Long, long ago there lived a well-respected man named Somagwaza; he raped a woman in the community. Due to his upright and well-behaved life, the community was amazed at the incident. He was not punished but given a warning. In response to his action he punished himself by cutting his foreskin as a sign of guilt and repentance.

After listening to the Somagwaza stories I concluded that Somagwaza is nothing more than a mythical ancestor.

When looking at the background of the initiation practice, one is confronted by a challenge. Most researchers and writers have been more interested in the process of the rite itself, rather than looking at its historical development. In his research, Weiss (1966:69) concludes that there are no adequate or archaeological records on the original intention and origin of the initiation practice and, therefore, its investigation

always leads to a dead end. The first recorded cases of Xhosa initiation were in 1789 by sailors from shipwrecks (Peterson 1789: 68; Meel 2005: 58). The ages of the boys who went for initiation was observed to be nine years and they wore penis caps and waist strings (Meel 2005: 58).

John Henderson Soga (1931: 240), son of the well-known Tiyo Soga, gives a more convincing explanation. He traces the historical background of this rite from Abram, the founder of Israel. Abram at the age of 99 circumcised himself and his entire household (Gen 17:10). He accepted circumcision as a sign of a covenant between himself and God. This led to his name being changed from Abram to Abraham, which means the father of many nations. The name change to Abraham had to do with more than just a name. It also influenced his change of identity and destiny. This is similar to the Xhosa practice of the rite. Immediately after the traditional operation by the *ingcibi*, the boy is instructed to say '*ndiyindoda*' (I am a man) and the *ingcibi* responds '*uyiyo indoda*' (you are a man) (Meel 2005:58). After the boy graduates to *ubudoda* (manhood) he is given a new name, which symbolises the beginning of a new life and his incorporation into a new society: adulthood with all its privileges and responsibilities.

The book of Genesis shows that this rite was not only taken seriously by Abraham, but also passed on to his descendents. In Genesis 34:14, Jacob's sons were not only committed to it but understood it as a premarital requirement, by refusing to give their sister in marriage to Sheshem who was uncircumcised and claiming that it would be a disgrace for their sister to marry an uncircumcised man.

Weiss (1966:77), gives a very interesting account, which is not much different from Soga's view, but differs by claiming that it is possible that Abraham learned about circumcision from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Hittites (Gen 14:13,23:10). Abram left his birthplace in Sumer (1900 BC) where neither circumcision nor human sacrifice were known and settled in Canaan. He married Hagar (an Egyptian girl) and probably made several trips to Egypt, which increased his knowledge of circumcision. Speiser (1929:9,86) is of the opinion that some Semites who had migrated from South Babylon into Northern Mesopotamia practised this rite as far back as 3200-2700 B.C.

Whether the rite originated from Abraham or the Egyptians, what is imperative is that there are some clues that lead one to the conclusion that the Xhosa might have adopted the practice from somewhere else. Soga (1931:247) suggests that the Bantu (including the Xhosa) adopted the practice from the Arabs, who, from very early times had stations all along the shores of the Indian Ocean where it meets the East Coast of Africa. La Fontaine (1931:13) seems to support this view by drawing on similar practices that are common to all African initiation rites.

### **3.4 Popularity of the initiation practice**

Connolly *et.al* (2008) found in a national survey that the prevalence of traditional male circumcision among men was found to be 24.8% (more than medical male circumcision at 13.2%). Traditional male circumcision was mainly practiced among the black African population group (13.9%). The biggest group that was found to be practising traditional circumcision was the Venda (71%), followed by the Northern Sotho (60.5%), the amaXhosa (57.3%), Ndebele (57%), amaZulu (10.7%) and amaSwati (2.4%). The difference is that the Xhosa initiation practice has been in the news due to the recent escalating number of deaths, circumcision irregularities, illegal activities performed in the initiation schools and the irresponsible behaviours by the *amakrwala*. The findings of this study suggest that despite all the challenges associated with initiation; this practice has become popular among amaXhosa, the educated and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the urbanised and the rural (see also 4.15.3).

The initiation rite is embedded in the culture into which it has been adopted. In order to understand the meaning of the practice in the Xhosa socio-cultural life, one has to place the rite within the Xhosa cultural context.

### **3.5 Role players and major events in the initiation practice**

This refers to the immediate individuals who play a specific role in the initiation practice.

#### **3.5.1 The role of traditional leaders in the Xhosa male initiation**

By traditional leaders one is referring to the *Kumkani Inkosi* and *isibonda* and any other person elected by the above to represent them the roles and responsibilities of the above traditional leaders are discussed under 2.8. In the nineteenth century, *ukwaluka* was linked to the homestead and chiefdom. It was an event for the king/chief's son and other boys were invited to participate as his peers (Hammond-Tooke 1956:5; Twala 2007:2; Vivian 2008: 34). As a result, the right time for the boys to be initiated was not based on age but depended more on the king's son. In cases where the king had a son and had plans to take him to the initiation in five years, during that period, there would be no initiation until the time of the king/chief's son. All the boys who were of similar age would have to wait until the king's son was initiated and join him in the initiation. At the death of the king/chief, usually a mourning period of about a year was observed during which all initiation was suspended (Hammond-Tooke 1956:55). It was the traditional leaders who had the power and privilege to announce the need for the initiation as well as suspend it when there was a need. Faku, the AmaMpondo chief abolished the initiation practice because his heir, Mqikela was not initiated and all available young men were needed to fight the Zulu raids at the time (Lamla 2005:11) and circumcision made people too weak to fight (Hammond-Tooke 1974:229).

Recently, after circumcision was found to be reducing the risk of HIV infection, Goodwill Zwelithini, the Zulu King, made an announcement to encourage men to be circumcised in hospitals. As a result between June and July 2010 during the soccer world cup, more than 3000 men heeded the call by the King and were circumcised in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (Times Live on line 29 June 2010).

Traditional leaders have always played a significant role in the initiation practice. The traditional leaders were regarded as the custodians of all traditional practices

including initiation. The current role of traditional leaders in the initiation practice is discussed in chapter five.

### **3.5.2 *Usosiko* or *usosuthu* (father of the initiate or clan representative)**

*Usosiko* or *usosuthu* is the father of the initiate. In some cases, the grandfather plays this role, especially when the father is in the urban areas to work. In some case when the father is deceased, the uncles take over this role. In cases where there are no uncles, a man who has the same clan name as the boy is chosen by the mother. The *usosuthu* would provide a goat and make the necessary preparations for the ritual. An *usosuthu* was usually responsible for the social implications of the initiation rite and the economic preparations (Lamla 2005: 6).

Almost in all the *imigidi*, more especially during *ukuyalwa*, it was the *usosuthu* who spoke first to welcome everybody, give direction, give words of admonition to his son and invite everybody to come and follow suit.

### **3.5.3 *Izibazana* (Mother of the initiate or her representative)**

*Izibazana* is the mother of the initiate or someone representing her, she is responsible for cooking the meals of the initiate. She is usually helped by her children and other household members, but she has to make sure that all food that goes to the initiate is clean so as to eliminate things like poison and witchcraft. *Amazibazana* (plural of *izibazana*) were observed at most of the *imiphumo* (plural of *umphumo*) ceremonies and in most cases wearing African attire. However, there were also those who did not wear African attire.

### **3.5.4 *Igqirha* (traditional healer) / *Ixhwele* (herbalist)**

Some families use an *igqirha* (traditional healer) some an *ixhwele* (herbalist) to *qinisa* (make sure no evil spirits come in) the *ibhuma*. This is done by using some traditional medicine to make sure no witchcraft comes close to hurt the initiate. They normally come just after the *ibhuma* has been built and just before the initiates enter the *ibhuma*. I did observe few of the *amagqirha/amaxhwele* going to some of the *amabhuma* to do their duties. But in most of the occasions I did not see any

*amagqirha* and *amaxhwele*. It could be due to the fact that their role is a private affair and therefore done in such a way that only the close family members knew about it. Among the Christian initiates, it is believed that prayers that are offered by the initiate, the *ikhankatha* and other members of the Christian community serve as a protection to the initiate. The born again Christians were very vocal against the role of *amaxhwele* (plural of *ixhwele*) and *amagqirha* (plural of *igqirha*) and referred to them as evil.

### **3.5.5 *Inqalathi* (un-initiated helper of the initiate)**

*Inqalathi* is the boy (un-initiated) who is usually pre-chosen by the initiate as his helper while in the initiation. He is expected to be with the initiate for the duration of the initiation. He is the one who brings food for the initiate and is usually *umthunywa* (the one to be sent) whenever there is a need (Pauw 1994:14). All the *abakhwetha* had *amanqalathi*. There were other boys who were around to help the *umkhwetha* by going to the shops, etc., but the main *inqalathi* was seen on the *umphumo* day. He was given a blanket and he walked along the *umkhwetha* as he proceeded back to the community. It was interesting that some of the *amakhankatha* were once *amanqalathi* and the wish to be *ikhankatha* developed from there (see 6.3.5.2). The minor duties they performed for the initiates made them fall in love with the lives of *abakhwetha* and as a result when they grew up they developed interest to be *amakhankatha*.

### **3.5.6 *Ikhankatha***

The *ikhankatha* (see 2.8.5 and 6.3.5.2) has been identified as the one teaching and nursing the boys while in the initiation. Apart from the circumcision work done by the *ingcibi*, *amakhankatha* have a major role of making sure that the initiate returns home safely.

### **3.5.7 *Ingcibi***

The *ingcibi* is the one who performs *ukudlangwa* and is normally seen only when he does his duty. Thereafter, he has no further role in the initiation (see also 2.8.4).

### **3.5.8 Umkhwetha**

*Umkhwetha* is the initiate who undertakes an unknown journey from boyhood to manhood (see 2.8.3 and 6.5.1).

### **3.5.9 Umthambisi (anointer of the initiate)**

*Umthambisi* (anointer of the initiate) is the man who is usually chosen by the *usosuthu* and/or the elders and on the day of *umphumo* the *umthambisi* uses a special kind of butter to anoint the body of the initiate, starting from the head to the toes (*ukuthambisa*). He is usually a man of a good stature and is regarded as the one who introduces the new man to manhood. There is a strong belief that he is imparting himself to the new man hence he is selected carefully. Most of the older informants responded that, traditionally such a person must be sober, experienced and hardworking, so that the initiates will emulate him.

In all the *imiphumo* in all the areas, the role of the *umthambisi* was never underestimated. In one of the *imiphumo* I observed that the *umthambisi* had to travel from one of the villages around Mthatha and the *umphumo* had to be postponed to the next day because he had not arrived. The fact that the *umphumo* could not proceed without his presence suggested that he plays a tremendous role in the practice. My *umthambisi* was my *umalume* (uncle from my mother's side). During my *umphumo* day he was not well and was in a wheel chair, as he had just been involved in an accident and was still recovering and one would have expected him not to come. He was driven in his wheel chair for the sake of his "*umtshana wakhe webhongo*" (the nephew he is proud of) as he would call me. As the *umthambisi* anoints the soon to be new man, he speaks words. It was not easy to hear what he said unless one was closer, but the words were more or less similar in all cases. One said "*namhlanje ndiyakuthambisa ndikwenz' indoda, ungaphinde ubuye uphile ngendlel' endala, uyindoda, uyindoda, uyindoda....*" (Today I am anointing you, I am making you a man, and you must live according to the old ways, today you are a man, a man, a man). The above words were said with a great conviction and belief that the boy was being turned into a man.

### **3.5.10 The role played by amaxhego in the Xhosa initiation practice**

The *amaxhego* had been identified in the literature and during the interviews as major role players in the Xhosa traditional practices, more especially in the initiation ritual. They are the ones who should give guidance to others on how the tradition is supposed to be practised (*Banika umkhombandlela*). The following is my experience in communication with older men from all areas. As previously mentioned, they are regarded as the ones who are the custodians of this practice and secondly, they have been around and if one wants to fully understand the tradition, they are the appropriate people to consult.

#### **3.5.10.1 Old men from rural and semi-rural areas**

From Cala and Whittlesea, there were a substantial number of old men who were more than willing to participate in the study. They saw the opportunity as an honour to air their concerns and views regarding the practice. Some of them mentioned that despite the current challenges and the changes introduced by the law they were still very active in the practice and were still regarded as custodians of the custom. A few of them from the above areas said that the current regulatory law has created a situation whereby people were losing interest in the initiation in general and some just concentrated on the initiation of their own children.

In Whittlesea and Cala, the old men from the clan of the initiate were the ones who made sure that the ritual was done correctly and that all procedures were followed. For example, just before the boy was initiated, the old men spoke with the *ingcibi* and immediately after the boy was circumcised, the old men called *igqugula* (a private meeting) to make sure that the right procedures were followed by the *ingcibi*.

One could hear the old men talking about how important it was for them to be involved so as to keep *isiko* pure and original. Even during *umojiso*, the old men first came and observed that the initiate was progressing. If there were any health complications they gave advice on what should be done. Before *umgidi* took place, it was the old men who came and inspected to see that the boy was ready to go and rejoin the community. As a result, except for Mpondoland, there have been minimal

cases of mortalities or deaths from the rural and semi-urban areas included in the study (see 1.6). Major complications and irregularities have been common in the urban areas and in Mpondoland (see 1.6). In Whittlesea the *amaxhego* were there, especially in the areas where people were still living the “traditional” Xhosa lifestyle (villages).

### **3.5.10.2. Old men from the urban area**

In Mdantsane there were few of the *amaxhego* (old men) available for the study. The researcher took time to convince some of them to participate. In some cases, some of the old men did not want to be referred to as *tata omkhulu* (grandfather). One of them said “*he kwedini wakhe walibona ixhego elingangam lo?*” (My boy have you ever seen an old man like me?). Even though this was said in a joking manner, I could tell that some of the old men took offence in being called *tata omkhulu*.

The old men in the urban area did not show much interest in the initiation practice, in fact in most issues related to Xhosa culture. Some of the young men raised the concern that in the townships there were no longer old men who can guide the young ones on issues of culture. Most of the old men had died, some had gone back to the rural areas and those who were around, showed less interest in issues of culture and were urbanised. *Abafana* and a few mature men were available to participate in the study and they were the ones who were more visible during the initiation ceremonies.

## **3.6 Major events associated with the initiation**

Initiation is characterised by a lot of different rituals and activities. Sometimes it differs according to the area and also according to the clan. There are also different ritual activities that are common in most of the initiation ceremonies irrespective of the area or the clan. The following practices and activities were observed in most of the initiation practices.

### 3.6.1 *Imitshotsho* (socialisation of the un-initiated)

*Imitshotsho* is traditionally a socialisation process of boyhood - un-initiated males (boys) who are about to go for initiation. In the past, it used to take almost a year because the initiation was not individualised like the current practice. As previously mentioned, the boys used to go together as *abakhwetha* (learning together to be men). As a result, in some Sotho speaking areas, boys are still initiated together as a group. It becomes an *umngeno* for the group and so is the *umphumo* and *umgidi*. All the boys who were known to be initiated that year would walk together as an '*igquba*' (group) and what was observed among them was that they would steal people's belongings, would drink alcohol in public, would destroy other people's property, would beat innocent people and commit other anti-social behaviour. The Xhosa social communities tolerated their bad behaviour as the understanding was that they were just boys and were supposed to behave like dogs (Mayer 1980:45). This was more like the current secret practice done in other cultures when a man or a woman is about to marry. The man or woman would have a secret meeting of bidding farewell to their friends. In some cases the man invites club dancers and women secretly invite strippers for the one who is about to get married. The understanding is that he or she is enjoying the single life for the last time and they will never be single again, and further what happens in those meetings stays there.

In the 1960s *imitshotsho* youth organisations were visible in Xhosa areas and were marked by anti social behaviour which included stealing openly, alcohol abuse, confiscating other people's belongings and abusing women (Van der Vliet 1974:238). Even in the seventies, it was observed that *imitshotsho* youth organisations were still functioning even though they were losing popularity, but still, the life of boys to be initiated were characterised by criminal behaviour, dagga-smoking, and drinking (Van der Vliet 1974:239).

Currently, what I observed was that in Cala and Whittlesea, there were no *imitshotsho* groups. The boys who were going for the initiation did not necessarily group together all the time. Some were together gathering fire wood in preparation for the big event. There were a few instances where I saw boys who were about to be initiated wearing torn clothes and were making noise around the village but it was

not popular as one would expect that such behaviour would be more visible in rural and semi-urban areas. It was in Mdantsane where there were *amagquba amakhenkwe* (groups of boys) who had *iimpempe*. They were wearing torn clothes and were running around the community like mad men. One of the ladies said: “*yho! Susani abantwana endleleni la mageza amakhwenkwe angababetha nangeza ntonga abahlabe nokubahlaba*” (remove the kids on the road, those mad boys can beat them with those sticks or even stab them). It seemed that the community was familiar with the sight of the soon to be initiated boys in groups with wild behaviours and that behaviour was regarded as a norm.

### **3.6.2 *Umguyo* (celebrations of the un-initiated)**

*Umguyo* is the social event attended by the boys and it takes place a night before the boy goes for initiation. The boys drink alcohol the whole night and enjoy themselves as a farewell for the soon to be initiated. It was observed that during *umguyo* the boys usually demand ‘their rights’ which comprises of a certain number of *umqombothi* containers and a certain number of bottles of brandy; it varies from area to area (see 4.9 and 4.10). The soon to be initiated must make sure that he receives it so that he can have a fine farewell. The soon to be boys were not interviewed as they do not form part of this study. In some areas it was observed that some families no longer have *imiguyo* (plural of *umguyo*) because they say it promotes alcohol abuse and crime. It is not a matter of areas but a household decision, for instance, some families in Mdantsane had *imiguyo* and some did not. It was the same in other areas. In cases where there were no *imiguyo*, the boys were given their *imfanelo* (their rights) during the day. They drank and were told that it was all and they went to the houses where there were *imiguyo*.

### **3.6.3 *Umngcamo* or *ukutyiswa umshwamo/ukushwama* (ritual performed for the soon to be initiated)**

This is the initiation ritual that takes place on the day the boys will start with their initiation. It is performed at the *ebuhlanti* (kraal) where the ritual-related matters are performed. A goat is slaughtered and a boy is fed a roasted *intsonyama* or *umshwamo* (a strip of meat cut from the right foreleg) usually by the soon to be

*ikhankatha* to the soon to be initiated (Ngxamngxa 1971:187). This ceremony is usually performed in the morning of the day the boy goes for the initiation. Ritual words are spoken to the ancestors; some are words of appreciation for protecting the boyhood life, words of pleading to the ancestors to protect the boy while in the initiation and words to invite the ancestors to partake in the '*isidlo*' (meal). In this study most of the boys for whom this ritual was not performed for were those from Mpondoland and those that performed *ukuziba* <sup>4</sup>.

### **3.6.4 Ukudlanga (to circumcise)**

*Ukudlangwa* is the circumcision operation performed by the *ingcibi* on the arrival of the boy in the bush. The boys usually sit outside the *ibhuma* and wait for the *ingcibi* to come and perform *ukudlanga* (see also 2.8.4).

### **3.6.5 Ukojiswa (a ritual that marks the healing stage of the initiate)**

The *ukojiswa* or *ukosiswa* (ritual that marks the healing stage of the initiate) ritual was traditionally not attached to time but was performed after the wound was healed (Pauw 1994:14). Currently it is usually performed during the second week of the initiation, sometimes later, depending on the healing process of the initiate. The custom is that the elders of the clan go and visit the initiate and communicate with the *ikhankatha* in order to view the progress of the initiate. Based on their recommendation, the practice of *umojiso* is performed. Usually a sheep is slaughtered and men are invited for a meal. A strip from the right foreleg of the sheep is roasted and fed to the initiate and the rest of the flank is kept to be eaten by the *umkhwetha* and *ikhankatha*. From the day of *umojiso*, the initiate *iphuma efukwini* <sup>5</sup> (comes out of the sacred place) and can now eat other kinds of food that he was not

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<sup>4</sup> To go to the initiation without the parents' consent and in most cases without any family member knowing. The boys who follow this action usually have to stay with one of those who were initiated legally and in most cases; no traditional rituals like *intsonyama* and *umojiso* are performed for them due to a lack of finances.

<sup>5</sup> From as early as initiation has been practised to the pre-known existence of HIV and AIDS in South Africa, during the period of *ukuzila* (first two weeks) the initiates were not allowed to drink water and eat other food except dry *inkobe* and dry samp. Only after *ukojiswa* they could drink water and eat other kinds of food. Due to the escalating rate of deaths and complications related to the practice, the *amakhankatha* have been encouraged to give the initiates most of the food with a minimum amount of water to drink.

allowed to eat during his fasting period. Furthermore, the initiate can now go out and walk with other initiates and hunt, play as well as do other outside activities.

### **3.6.6 Umphumo (graduation celebration)**

*Umphumo* is the graduation ceremony of the initiates (see 4.3.2.4, and 6.3.6.1).

### **3.6.7 Ukutshiswa kwebhoma (burning of the initiation lodge)**

*Ibhoma* (*amabhoma*, plural), *isikhwetha* (*izikhwetha*, plural) or *ithonto* (*amathonto*, plural - initiation lodge) is where the *umkhwetha* is temporarily kept during his seclusion. On the day of his graduation, the *ibhoma* is burnt together with all the material that was used by the *umkhwetha* while in seclusion as a symbol of leaving behind all the boyhood life and behaviours. The initiate is told not to look back while the *ibhoma* is burning. As a result, when a man misbehaves by disobeying his elders, it is normally said that his behaviour is due to the fact that he looked back while his lodge was burning hence he is still behaving like a boy. The issue of burning of the initiation hut is important when the informants were discussing the Western Cape Proposal on initiation, their major concern was the fact that the lodges would be permanent and they would not be able to burn them (see 4.15.2). This was the same issue that was raised by traditional leaders as one of the main reasons for rejecting the Western Cape Proposal (see 4.15.2).

### **3.6.8 Umgidi (graduation celebration involving feasting and drinking)**

The name *umgidi* comes from the word *ukugida* (to contribute to the other). It is the time that other people contribute to the one who has a ceremony. People from the community contribute alcohol, groceries and even money while the *umgidi* family spends on *umqombothi* (Xhosa beer) and meat. The practice of *ukugida* was observed in all the areas. There were neighbours, friends and relatives who brought all kinds of contributions ranging from brandy to beer, for example, Castle Lager. In most households, as the people were coming with their contributions there was someone writing down the contributions and the names of the contributors. It was said that the intention is to make sure that the beneficiaries would know who

contributed what so that when contributors have *imicimbi*, which does not have to be *umgidi*, but any traditional ritual or ceremony the beneficiaries can return the favour by bringing a similar contribution. As a result, in both rural and urban areas the one who contributes more to others receive more contributions from them as well. *Umgidi* is a major ritual ceremony that welcomes the new man to manhood, to the community, to the household and to the ancestors of the clan. It is the official welcome after the *umphumo*, *ukuyalwa* and *ukuxhentsiswa*. On this day, the *ikrwala* usually wakes up very early and wears the new *ubukrwala* clothes that he was given the previous day. On this day there is no compulsory ceremonial beast like in the case of *umgeno*, but most families usually slaughter sheep, some a cow, depending on their financial means. On this day, a lot of money is spent on meat, food and alcohol. This ceremony has recently become the most expensive part of the initiation practice. In townships, one can tell between the haves and the have not's of the community. When people talk about someone's initiation they always talk about how big or small the *umgidi* was. Even in the rural areas, especially the families who have sheep, goats and cows, it is usually ensured that people have enough to eat and drink. Sometimes, a father would decide to keep a certain cow as a special one that would be slaughtered on his son's *umgidi*. Usually *iimfanelo* would be provided depending on the area but in most cases, *izinwe* (see also 3.6.12) would be provided when the *abagidi* (contributors) have given more and in cases where the host has more resources.

### **3.6.9 *Intlombe/Ukuxhentsiswa* (celebration by men to welcome the new man into manhood)**

This event is also traditionally called *intlombe*, *indlu yesibane* (in Mdantsane and Whittlesea) or *ikatala* (in Cala). In the 1960s the *intlombe* group used to be a process of socialisation for *abafana*, beginning with the *ubukrwala* process to the higher ranks of *ubufana* (Mayer and Mayer 1970:187). It was a social group that introduced the *ikrwala* to the life of *ubufana* and adulthood (Van der Vliet 1974:238). In the 1990s, this group had its own norms and values on how an *umfana* was expected to behave and when such norms had been violated, an *umfana* would have to pay *umdlivo* (penalty payment) which in most cases was a bottle of brandy. For example, an *umfana* was expected to always wear a jersey or a jacket when attending

traditional ceremonies, when one was found not wearing a jacket they would be required to pay *umdliwo*. Even during this research study, it was observed that in some areas like Cala and Whittlesea most men old and young but mostly the old were wearing some kind of jacket over their shoulders while attending initiation ceremonies. In some cases there were those who were not wearing jackets more especially among the younger generation but when they were requested to perform any duty during the ceremony, for example, to be an *injoli* they would request a friend to give them a jacket and wear it as a sign of respecting the elders.

During this study, it was observed that the emphasis on *intlombe* is no longer a group process, but the event that takes place just after the graduation of the initiates. It is an event only attended by initiated men and girls who are of the same age as the *amakrwala* and *abafana*. It usually starts on the graduation day of the *ikrwala* around 6pm till 6am the following day. It takes place at the house that the *ikrwala* was given as his temporary residence. This event has been practiced as a way of teaching the new man about being a man. During this event, there is a lot of singing and the *ikrwala liya xhentsiswa* (new man is taught how to dance) by different men. In most cases, the *ikrwala* had to dance the whole night. The men usually compete against each other to see which one of them knows more about manhood as well as the one who is well advanced in his knowledge about heritage and cultural practices. During the debate, the *ikrwala* is expected to observe that now a man does not fight with sticks like when he was a boy, “boys settle things by sticks, and men settle things by law or words” (Mayer 1980:46). The *ikrwala* learns how to enforce the law (Mayer 1980:46) using the power of persuasion. This event sets precedents for *ubukrwala* as *amakrwala* are always in competition through how they argue against each other, each one tries to use words of persuasion to win over others. The young man who acquired a leading position in the *intlombe* was likely to become an influential elder in his community (Mayer 1980:46). The current practice of *intlombe* does no longer conform to the past teaching expectations indicated in the literature above. More problems associated with *intlombe* are discussed under 4.9 and 4.10.

During the observations of *ubufana* and *intlombe* the same *umfana* who was the *injoli yabafana* (*injoli* of young men) during the other rituals and ceremonies were the same leading the *intlombe*. In some cases, there were debates on who qualifies to

be the leaders while in some cases there was no debate but in the beginning it was said that “*siyazi madoda ke ukuba ngubani injoli nendoda esiphetheyo thina apha*” (you know man as to who is our *injoli* and the one is our leader here).

One *umfana* in Whittlesea (Sada) said, “*thina apha ke madoda siphethwe nguBovungana, indoda efuna ukuphatha ingaya kwezinye iindawo, eyethu indlu yesibane ikhokhelwa yindoda enye, asifuni ngxabano ke apha.*” (In this area we are led by Bovungana, a man who wants to be a leader must go to other areas, our *intlombe* is led by one man and we do not want trouble here).

Most of the *amakrwala* in all areas except in Mpondoland had this event. In fact, in Mpondoland there were very few of them who had this event. Most of the *amakrwala* in Mpondoland graduated and some had *umgidi* on the day of *umphumo* and the whole ceremony ended on the same day. In other areas including Mdantsane and Whittlesea (in Sada) and some villages in Cala there were a few cases where this event did not take place as it was said that it involved a lot of alcohol abuse and perpetuated crime. In all areas I was allowed to attend some of these events and in some cases, especially in Whittlesea, I was not allowed. Some *abafana* said I am too old to be allowed in and no observers were allowed to attend. In Mdantsane, especially in the RDP houses (NU 4) closer to the informal settlements, there were instances of fighting. In one of the *umgidi* in the above areas, two of the attendants were referred to hospital, one was stabbed and the other was beaten and badly hurt. In the suburban areas of Mdantsane (NU 17) there were no complications and fighting among the *abafana* during *intlombe*. The case was similar in Whittlesea. The areas in Sada that were closer to informal settlements and RDP houses were the areas where fighting among the *abafana* was prevalent.

In almost all of the *iintlombe*, the observation was that the event started smoothly and everyone tried to make the best out of it. However, as the men consumed alcohol they became drunk, and began arguing about who is more knowledgeable and deserved more respect than the other, thus leading to fighting with each other with fists or even knives. Each *umfana* wanted to be recognised and his position acknowledged while there was fighting about who should be the most senior in the *iintlombe*.

One of the *abafana* made a comment that “*madoda xa nisilwa ngale ndlela nithi malifunde ntoni ke ikrwala eli, ukuba amadoda ziindlavini?*” (Men when you fight like this, what is the new man supposed to learn, is he supposed to learn that a man is of uncontrollable behaviour?).

### **3.6.10 Ukuyalwa (offering words of admonition)**

*Ukuyalwa* is a ceremony that involves offering words of admonition to the new men. On *ukuyalwa*, see 4.5; 4.5.1; 4.5.2; 4.5.3 and 6.3.6.3 and the role of commercialisation on *ukuyalwa*, see 4.6.

### **3.6.11 Ubukrwala (process of being a new man)**

*Ubukrwala* is a state of being an *ikrwala* and takes place after the initiate graduated from the initiation (see 2.8.5 and 6.5.2).

### **3.6.12 Iimfanelo (expectations for initiation ceremonies)**

*Iimfanelo* is usually what is expected to be given to the participants in a certain ritual or ceremony. It is more of a right and one would notice that the people even demand their *iimfanelo* when they are not given. For instance, during *umgidi*, it is traditionally expected that the host would provide a certain number of bottles of brandy and a number of containers of *umqombothi* for each group (old men, matured men, young men, women, etc). The exact number depends on the area but there are similarities, for instance, in some areas, it is two bottles of brandy while in others, it is one bottle, but there is always discussion on the numbers but always a consensus is reached.

When the *iimfanelo* have been provided, the participants do not have a right to demand more than what they have been given. If the host is able to give more than *iimfanelo* then that is called *izinwe*, which is more and above what is expected of the host.

### 3.7 The role of initiation in moral regeneration

#### 3.7.1 Morals/Morality

According to Cook (1999:455) morals or morality, “Involves a body of conduct sanctioned by the custom or habit of the group of which the individual is a member.” According to Mbiti (1986:174), “...morals have been evolved in order to keep society not only alive but in harmony. Morals guide people in doing what is right and good for both their own sake and that of their community.”

The emphasis that we find from both Cook (1999) and Mbiti (1986) is that morals denote not any kind of conduct but accepted conduct or a standard of conduct, implying that morals have to be understood and defined contextually. Morals or morality is commonly accepted rules of conduct pertaining to patterns of behaviour as approved by a social group. This involves values and standards shared by the group within a particular context. Morality and its other cognitive terms such as values, norms and mores all have one thing in common, namely that they are commonly accepted rules of conduct pertaining to patterns of behaviour as approved by a social group (Scupin and DeCorse 2004:232). Looking at how different authors define morals or morality, in simple terms morality consists of, *firstly*, common beliefs about what is good or bad and right or wrong, *secondly*, which holds together a community with a shared history and social life, and *thirdly*, these patterns of behaviour have to be accepted by a social group.

However, when ordinary people speak of morality it has little if anything to do with these intellectual abstract pronouncements. Ordinary people speak of morality in terms of their personal experiences. As Paul Tillich (cited in Shelton 1990:3) once remarked, morality for ordinary people is not the result of reading books and writing papers, morality is not a subject; it is a life put to the test in dozens of moments. The ‘tests’ of life that Tillich talks about are not spiritual temptations in the desert but have much to do with existential, socio-economic problems related to people's basic life necessities and needs. In this respect, I am in agreement with Nürnberger (1999:15) when he writes that moral norms have not fallen from heaven as eternal truths, which demand obedience regardless of consequences. They have risen in history

from situations of need and necessity, and carry a sociological validity and historical development within the society. The perfect example of the above statement is the fact that among the amaXhosa the moral values have evolved with time and further that even when the migrants lived in cities they were able to contextualise such moral values to the context in which they found themselves.

The moral codes in Xhosa life pre-colonialism and in the 1960s were embedded on the values of respecting the others (*ubuntu*) and the veneration of the ancestors. As discussed in 6.4, the ancestors play a pivotal role in defining the ritual life of the amaXhosa, not only the ritual but also the moral code of the amaXhosa is centred around the respect of the ancestors and the terms of reference is the 'people' or the 'community' (Pauw 1963:156). The right conduct towards people is demanded and the ancestors are displeased by anything that causes trouble or strife in the community (Pauw 1963:156). The moral values and norms revolved around what is best for the community and involve principles such as; not to disturb the peace of the community, respect of seniors by juniors which involves their family and others, not cheating people and seducing women, denying responsibility, stealing and dishonesty, and other behaviours that are antisocial (Pauw 1963:156).

When migrant workers left their rural areas to go to urban areas, they were able to contextualise their rural moral codes to their urban circumstances. The focus and terms of reference had changed due to the urban environment. The intentions of the urban moral codes did not have much emphasis on the community, but rather to ensure that the migrant worker keeps his mind on the task at hand. Furthermore, such moral norms were a reminder to the migrant that he is a temporary 'urbaner' and has to work hard, save his money and return home safely. The urban moral codes involved avoiding the following; the dangers and pitfalls of the mine or town; heavy drinking, crime and fighting because they lead to trouble and imprisonment; prostitution and 'town women' for they will 'eat' his money and induce him to forget about his home (McAllister 1981:4). Furthermore, other urban moral codes that should be avoided and are detested by ancestors entail *ukutshipa* (ascending or when a person does no longer go to their rural homes), *uburhumsha* (being disloyal to the traditions) and neglecting one's nationality (Pauw 1963:158). All the above

moral commissions and omissions were expected to be obeyed by the migrant in order to uphold their names, their family names and to respect their ancestors.

In the light of what has been discussed above, a question may arise: does South Africa currently have common values and morals? This is the same question Pauw (2008) attempted to answer in his paper. After having evaluated the World Values Survey on South Africa, Pauw (2008:45) concluded that in spite of cultural differences, South Africa does have some common values which are further entrenched in the South African Constitution. It is acknowledged that one of the major threats to social cohesion is related to crime, which results in a decrease in the level of trust (Pauw 2008:46).

All cultures exist for the welfare of the people not vice versa. The morals and values of every culture must be for the well-being of the society. Even the behaviours that were previously acknowledged as accepted in other cultures are forbidden by the constitution. Such behaviours involve the culture of apartheid and segregation which was accepted in the Afrikaner culture, *ukuthwala* (abduction of young women into forced marriages) which was accepted in Xhosa culture and others. The beliefs and behaviours which are infringements to others are deemed as illegal and immoral in the current South African Constitution. In reclaiming morality and embracing diversity, the South African society is embracing the culture of a rainbow nation which is embedded in the values of *ubuntu*. The values of *ubuntu* that Mbiti (1986:44) depicts are the rich common diverse but analogous moral values that are entrenched in the laws and constitution of the country. It has been unfortunate that South Africans have failed to live up to the expectations of their democratic heritage that seeks to address the immoral acts of the past and re-defining the present and the future based on good moral standards. The state of moral decline as outlined in chapter one (see 1.2) in South Africa is a symptom of a lost identity, firstly, as living beings, secondly, as cultural beings. As a solution to the loss of a humane and cultural self, Marimba (1999:1), suggests that, "Our Ancestors are calling us 'home', back to our cultural selves". The answer to our social dilemma is the re-socialisation of our people into the cultural value-system that affirms our spiritual being. The initiation ritual is one of the cultural practices that affirm our spiritual beings, which is expected to bring us in connection with *uQamata* (God), the ancestors and other members of the society. Communities, universities, cultural experts and research

institutions have started recognising and reclaiming that *ubuntu* has to be at the centre of the South African culture. The values of *ubuntu* acknowledge that people might be of different colour, gender, age, educational background and culture but “*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*” (a person is a person by other people). Therefore, the well-being of the society comes before the individual. If the interests of the society are sought after, automatically the benefit of individuals are taken care of (see also 6.2.1.1). “In Xhosa culture, the most fundamental moral prescription is the need to show respect to lineage seniors as (*ukuhlonipha*), indeed, to all members of the senior generation” (Kuckertz 1997:312). The concept of ‘*ukuhlonipha*’ (respect) is not only the absence of disobedience, but means total trust and submission to the judgement and guidance of the elders. The understanding of *ukuhlonipha* has to be understood in the context that even elders themselves took upon their responsibility to act and behave prudently so that they could earn the respect due to them. That puts an emphasis on good moral order to both the young and the old. *Ubuntu* is about respecting others and to do what one would like others to do to them. One can only hope that the endeavours of all those who are involved in encouraging the enforcement of *ubuntu* will yield much results for our benefit, the benefit of ancestors, our communities, our country and our future generations.

### **3.7.2 The contribution of the initiation rite to the building of moral values**

In relation to the role of initiation in building the moral fibre of the society there are two views, the first is that initiation does contribute; the second is that it does not but instead it destroys the social order in the society.

#### **3.7.2.1 Initiation practice does contribute in building the moral fibre**

Reading various works produced by several writers in the field of Sociology, Anthropology and African religion and culture, one is struck by the proliferation of such writings purportedly written for the “African context”. It is even more interesting to find out that the majority of these writers are non-Africans. Some like Laidler (1922) and Weiss (1966) ended up reducing the initiation practice to a mere practice of cutting of the foreskin (circumcision), which is only part of the ritual. Most of the material written on the “subject” concentrates more on circumcision or sometimes

assumes that the initiation ritual is only circumcision. The majority of the recent material (Kanta 2003; Meel 2005; Twala 2007 and Mhlahlo 2009) investigates the role that can be played by initiation in reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS as well as the issues related to the escalating deaths of the initiates.

In the current research and debate on the role played by male circumcision in the prevention of the transmission of HIV and AIDS, De Cock (World Health Organisation Website 2009) warned that male circumcision should not be reduced to scientific discourse because it has such heavy social and cultural connotations that are linked to morality. He went on to suggest a need for more data from the world of social science before making any recommendations on promoting circumcision as an HIV and AIDS prevention mechanism. Pauw (1975:386) explains that the initiation ritual has always been guarded against being reduced to just the cutting of the foreskin.

As previously mentioned, the largest portion of the recent material investigates the role that can be played by initiation in reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS, as well as the issues related to the escalating deaths of the initiates. In all these good endeavours, an important aspect of the initiation has been left out, namely its contribution in building the moral character of the society.

The research conducted by Pauw (1975:34) in the Eastern Cape, shows that the Xhosa community perceived the initiation practice as an institution of values and good morals. The view is that initiation is necessary to make the transition from the stage of irresponsibility to the stage of responsible manhood. This research echoed the sentiments by Pauw (1975:34). The majority of old men from the group discussions related to the role of initiation in building the moral fibre of the Xhosa society responded that initiation played a tremendous role in building the moral fibre of men. The informants who had an emphasis on the role of initiation in building the moral fibre were the older and middle-aged. Most of the young informants (*abakhwetha*, *amakwala* and some of the *amakhankatha*) did provide a substantial amount of responses in relation to morality. The older generation informants from all areas (rural, semi-urban or urban) provided similar responses in relation to initiation

and morality. Their recollection of events and the role of initiation in moral building were similar.

### **3.7.2.2 Initiation does not contribute to the building of the moral fibre**

There is also a counter argument regarding the contribution of the initiation rite to the building of moral values. According to Laidler (1922:18), traditionally the initiation practice did not contribute much to the building of moral values. This view was only supported by the majority of old men from Mpondoland. The old men alluded that the initiation practice is not part of their tradition and does not contribute in building up the moral fibre; instead, it causes young people to misbehave. More results on the views of the amaMpondo informants will be discussed in chapter four (see 4.13).

Laidler (1922:15) is one of the few writers who hold this view and he refers to the initiation ceremony as a “pagan custom”. This view has been recently supported by others such as Myemana (2004) and Mcotheli (2006). Their argument is that perhaps the practice played a positive moral role in the past but currently it has lost its value hence they call for its discontinuation.

Elsewhere, Ntombana (2009:76) argues against this view and remarks that Laidler had no idea of the initiation practice or Xhosa cultural life for that matter. This is shown in his incorrect information, such as, the idea that any man could perform the circumcision (Laidler 1922:18). This is contrary to the view of most writers who hold the view that the initiation surgeon (*ingcibi*) is chosen by the chief, or in some areas by the fathers of the boys, and he was always expected to live a good moral life and had to be “ritually pure” (Pauw 1994:13). Furthermore, Laidler (1922:13) asserts that his informant in the research was a member of the London Church, and, therefore, a product of a school of Missionaries (Ntombana 2009:77). Ntombana (2009:77) draws the conclusion that Laidler’s point of view is undesirable and that he writes from a very stereotyped Christian world view.

### **3.8 Summary**

In this chapter, the initiation practice has been identified as a rite of passage, based on the writings of the anthropologists such as Van Gennep (1960), Turner (1967) and La Fontaine (1931). This practice has not only been practised by Xhosa people, but also across the globe (Silverman 2004:425; Hammond-Tooke 1974: 229). It has been identified as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood.

Furthermore, the initiation practice has been identified as one of the cultural practices that are at the centre of the Xhosa life and culture. This practice creates harmony in the traditional Xhosa community in the sense that it is through this practice that the hierarchy among the men is identified. The myth of the Somagwaza story illustrates a positive value attached to the initiation practice, in the sense that after Somagwaza realised that he was not punished for his actions, he circumcised himself as a sign of repentance. This action associates the initiation practice with responsibility and building up the moral fibre of men.

In this chapter, it has been acknowledged that South Africa is in a moral dilemma and the Xhosa initiation practice is contributing to this quandary. Instead of being a solution, the current practice seems to be one of the major contributors to this state of affairs. In response to this challenge, the question that came up is what in reality has been the traditional and historical role of initiation? This question has been attempted to be answered in this chapter, by allocating this practice within its traditional and historical context. The literature and the discussions mentioned above confirm that in the past, the initiation practice had a tremendous role in building up the moral fibre of the community.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE AND CULTURE CHANGE IN RELATION TO THE XHOSA INITIATION PRACTICE

#### 4.1 Introduction

The concept of culture is largely contested and vastly debatable. It involves people's perceptions about the past, present and the future. Furthermore, culture is affected by a number of internal and external factors that change it into a ball shape. I use the analogy of a ball because the ball is round and it moves into any direction where the wind (outside and inside forces) pushes it to. Sometimes the ball can resist its pace of movement but even if it moves at a very slow pace it will ultimately move. So is culture, sometimes it is able to resist the inside and the outside forces to a certain degree but surely such forces will have an impact on it. The Xhosa male initiation is one of those cultural customs that have over the years and currently been persuaded by the inside and the outside forces to change. An example of how the external factors have affected the Xhosa initiation practice is the age of boys who go for initiation as illustrated in 4.4.2.

This chapter identifies and discusses various universal characteristics that are related to culture and culture change, which are outlined by different anthropologists. Furthermore, it discusses how these characteristics may have affected the shift or change in the practice of the Xhosa initiation based on the fieldwork findings. The intention is to illustrate how factors such as industrialisation, westernisation, Christianity and urbanisation affected or did not affect the initiation practice. Furthermore, the future of initiation is discussed, involving the perceptions on the role of initiation in promoting moral values and the suggestions from old men on what should be done with the current initiation practice. Lastly, in this chapter I recall my own experience of the initiation practice and compare it with the current practice. Some of the issues raised in this chapter are discussed at length in chapter six.

## 4.2 The concept of culture

The concept of culture has been defined in various ways with the first definition by Sir Edward Taylor, dating back to the nineteenth century (Pauw 2008: 8). Culture is the elusive term in the generally rather fluid vocabulary of the social sciences (Boguslavsky 2007:10). More than 50 years ago, a well-known cultural anthropologist, Kroeber (1965:181) examined more than 100 definitions of culture and distilled the following definition:

Culture consists of patterns of, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and specifically their attached values; culture systems may on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements of future action.

From the above definition one observes that culture consists of overarching values, motives, and moral-ethical rules and meaning that are part of a social system and further embraces the entire set of institutions that humankind live by (Harris 1999:19).

There is no single definition of culture. Edward Burnett Tylor defined culture as "...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as member of society" (Havilland 1994:304). Like in any other form of knowledge social scientists could not be static and follow the nineteenth century definition, as new questions were asked new definitions came up.

Pieterse (1996:1390) defines culture as a set of characteristics which distinguish one group from another. Scupin and DeCorse (2004:225) define culture as a shared way of life that includes values, beliefs, and norms transmitted within a particular society from generation to generation. The concept of culture as an idea can be contested but the actuality of culture is seen in many effects of social life, such as the way people live, behaviour and act, and their physical as well as their intellectual achievements. "Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music and drama, in the styles of building, houses and people's clothing, in social organisations and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and

institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and in their economic life” (Mbiti 1975:7). All the above cultural expressions influence and shape the life of each individual in his society, and in turn the individual makes a contribution to his/her community through participating in its life and in some cases through creative work (Mbiti 1975:7).

It is a reality that there is no absolute definition of culture. Every definition is explicit and tailored to the goals of each research study but it has to be understood as I suggested earlier (see 4.1) that culture is who people were, who they are and who they aspire to be. Even though from time to time there has been different and unique definitions of culture, there are certain characteristics or features of culture that are accommodated in most definitions that social scientists have come up with over the years. For this study, three characteristics have been chosen: culture is non-static, shared and mostly integrated. Moreover, the study will explore how they have in so many ways played a role in the three periods of Xhosa cultural life from the pre-colonial period to-date.

#### **4.2.1 Culture is non-static**

The important conspicuous element of culture evident in most definitions is that it is not static, it changes. Culture is one of the phenomena that prove that change is inevitable. It is said that culture change takes place in mainly two basic processes; internal changes (innovations) and external changes (cultural diffusion), with innovations being the ultimate source of all culture change and can be spread to other cultures (Ferraro 1998: 23).

In the South African context, cultures came into contact through urbanisation, migration, trade, and lately political changes and technology; and, as a result, cultures have influenced each other. Before the eighteenth century the influence of culture took place slowly, delayed by long journeys while presently, because of technological influences such as telephones, televisions, Internet and satellites, cultures now easily influence each other rapidly. The example of the white boys' interest to participate in initiation is an example of being influenced by Xhosa culture;

the white boys were exposed to the concept of initiation via f their friends whom they met at school (mobility) (Daily Dispatch 2007. 04 Dec).

Change is a constant feature of culture, but due to conservatism, some cultures tend to change more slowly than others (Pauw 2008:18). For example, one of the South African groups that have been able to resist change is the Zulu nation. The amaZulu are one of the African groups that are still very obedient to the rule of their King (Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu) in spite of changes brought about by urbanisation and democracy.

African culture and tradition, like other cultures, are not static, they are constantly undergoing a metamorphic process in order to integrate and reflect changing societal values and perceptions (Matshekga 2003:400). These changes are due to the political, economic, legal and cultural realities in society, for example, in the past if an elder person was found not to be initiated, the men in the community would force him to be initiated without his will, and this was an accepted practice. Presently, due to the practice of human rights, forcing a person to go for initiation is illegal, even if that person is your own son. Even Mbiti (1975:2) who is regarded as an 'Africanist' and known for defending the values of African religion and cultural practices agrees that culture is a changing phenomenon, whether slowly or rapidly. Further that people adapt to lifestyle of living based on their environment and according to their needs for survival (Mbiti (1975:2).

It appears that change with all its difficulties is an inescapable trend and this was shown in the initiation practice since the *abakhwetha* were first observed in 1789 by sailors and the initates who were estimated to be nine years old were wearing white clay all over their bodies (Meel 2005:58). A number of material changes including the age (in 1798 it was nine and currently it is eighteen) might be observed compared to the first observations but even today the *abakhwetha* are still observed and they are still wearing white clay.

In the 1960s, Mayer (1971:8) observed that "the Xhosa initiation, continued to be carried out in town, in nearly the traditional style, even among committed Christians, the most highly educated and the most fully urbanised." More than 40 years later, my

observation in this research is similar to that of Mayer (1971:8), but even though initiation is still popular the current situation is more complex than the case of the 1960's. Change has taken place and, as a result, one cannot conclude that in the urban areas the initiation practice is performed the "traditional" way anymore.

#### **4.2.1.1 Change and mobility (rural and urban life)**

One of the major contributors to cultural change is mobility. As will be discussed in 4.3.3 and 4.3.4, colonisation, urbanisation and migrant labour had a great impact on the cultural life of the amaXhosa. Currently, technology, the transport system, globalisation and education are robustly influencing African way of life. All the past and the present effects on Xhosa cultural life are in one way or another related to the movement of people. The issue of mobility has instigated debate on the reality of the concept of 'rural' and 'urban' dichotomies. In 2006, a conference was held at the University of Fort Hare and the focus was on "re-centering the rural agenda" and the realities of 'urban' and 'rural' concepts were discussed. Most of the presenters argued that "in South Africa the concept of 'rural' and 'urban' must be understood in their interconnectedness rather than as simple dichotomies" (Porteus 2006:6). It was not a question of denying the distinction between cultural and socio-economical realities of each population (rural and urban). The interconnectedness should not be interpreted to mean that the concepts of rural and urban do not exist. It has to be understood that the meaning of 'ruralness' and 'urbaness' can no longer only be considered in terms of landscape, lack of a sanitary system, no electricity, no water and economic resources, with the subsequent promotion of 'urbaness' as something better than rural. The 'cultural selves' live in the conditions above, it is rural young people who migrate to urban areas (carrying rural culture) in search of work and school, it is the same young people who visit the rural areas (carrying urban culture with them) during holidays. Urban workers and the unemployed return home and sickness, old age, and the promise of urban employment fades into a collision (Porteus 2006:7). More especially in the context of HIV and AIDS, the urban workers move back to their rural home, in some cases even infecting their wives and partners who have lived all their lives in rural areas. In that way, the urban and rural cultures fuse together and create cultural change. Porteus (2006:7) postulates that "because of historical and current connections, the 'urban-rural divide' is more of an

interconnected, mutually defined continuum than distinct boxes or easy separated categories". One of the recommendations of the Fort Hare conference was that rural life is real (Nabudere 2006:35) and that challenges of rural people would be heard when rural voices have become stronger and politically empowered to be heard (Nabudere 2006: 31).

#### **4.2.2 Culture is shared**

In order for a thought or action to be considered cultural, it has to be shared by a particular group of people. If that thought or action represents a personal habit, then it cannot be regarded as being cultural (Pauw 2008:4). When people share a common culture, they are able to predict how others are most likely to behave in a given circumstance. Although culture is commonly shared, this does not mean that cultural understandings are shared equally by all members of society (Scupin and DeCorse 2004:221).

It is important to take note that there are subcultures. Subcultures are group formations within a culture whose members share many of the values of the culture, but also have some values that differ from the larger culture (Gudykunst 1998:43). The examples of a sub-culture would be social class, religion and ethnic groups. What really binds a society together is their culture, the ideas and standards they have in common. For instance, initiation is understood as marking the stage of manhood among the Xhosa communities and this has created social cohesion where there is clear definition in status between a boy and a man. This is contrary to Mpondoland where initiation was abandoned and later re-adopted. For many years, the 'Mpondo' definition of a 'man' did not involve initiation and the re-introduction of initiation by a few members has created an imbalance in the society. What could be making matters worse, in Mpondoland, is the fact that initiation was introduced by the youth without proper consultation with those who are regarded as custodians of culture.

### 4.2.3 Culture is mostly integrated

Since culture is a system, change in one aspect of culture will lead to change in other aspects, whether the initial change was introduced from within or through diffusion (Nanda 1990:77). This implies that the wholeness of culture depends on a single factor and the integration of a single factor may lead to consistency in cultural patterns. The integration of culture means that different elements that make up a culture have to be integrated to form a whole. When elements of a culture are integrated a sense of harmony is created (Havilland 1994:313). The integration of culture has been evident in all areas chosen for this study. The people have been able to adopt initiation to fit in their living environmental conditions. The initiate is washed at the river, even before his *umphumo* he has to wash at the river and even during his *ubukrwala* process he has to constantly go and wash at the river. In Mdantsane there are no rivers, the people have been able to integrate the river facet into their lives and as a result the community has accepted that the *umkhwetha* uses a container to wash and the container does not make the initiation practice less important (see also 4.12.2). Another example of cultural integration is the current standard practice of initiation entrenched by the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001 (Eastern Cape). In the Act the legal process of initiation has been set out. It involves the signing of a consent form by the boy's guardian, a medical report from the clinic or hospital, a form signed by the *ingcibi* and another by the *ikhankatha* (see also 5.2.2). All these processes are to be followed and anyone who fails to adhere to them breaks the law. The above prerequisites are applicable to the whole of the Eastern Cape Province regarding the practice of initiation.

### 4.2.4 Ideal vs. real culture

Every society has ideas about how people in particular situations ought to behave. In anthropology, these ideas are referred to as ideal cultural patterns (Ember and Ember 1993:21). According to Scupin and DeCorse (2004:233) ideal culture consists of what people say they do or should do whereas real culture refers to their actual behaviours." The real culture is the cultural behaviour of people that is observable. In most cases the ideal culture frequently contrasts with people's actual behaviour and

life styles (Scupin and DeCorse 2004:233). People do not always behave according to the standards they express; sometimes the ideal patterns differ from actual behaviour because the ideal is old fashioned. In some cases it could be that the ideal patterns were once real and had meaning in the society and due to cultural change those real patterns became ideas. This is exactly what was observed during this research. There were real cultural patterns that used to be observable in the Xhosa communities in relation to the moral role of initiation that includes the teaching taking place in the lodge, the role of *amakhankatha*, distinct behavioural differences between a man and a boy, etc. Such patterns have been noted in the literature written by anthropologists during the early periods of amaXhosa life (see chapter 3 and chapter 4).

During the interviews, the majority of the informants from all areas and groups except Mpondoland responded without hesitation that the Xhosa initiation does contribute to the building up of the moral fibre of men. It was during the interviews that some of their responses were challenged by the few among them who argued that in the past the moral role was prevalent however in the current practice this role has been compromised. Furthermore, my observations, as recorded in 6.2, suggest that the traditional and moral role of the initiation practice has been compromised, especially in the urban areas, and it is worse in areas that are closer to informal settlements. The informants' responses were found not to be corresponding with their actions.

A similar contradiction was found among *amakhankatha amakrwala* and *abakwetha*. Most of them maintained that they stayed for 24 hours with the initiates and were supposed to abstain from alcohol, drugs and women, while involved in the initiation. At the same time *amakhankatha* smelled of alcohol and others could not speak coherently because they were drunk; as a result, I had to reschedule the interviews. *Amakrwala* and *abakwetha* responded that the *amkhankatha* were hardly at the initiation lodge. To attest to the responses by the *amakrwala* and *abakwetha*, I experienced challenges in finding the *amakhankatha* because most of the times in the day, they were not in the initiation lodges. Despite their responsibility and obligation to guard the boys in the initiation lodges, the *amakhankatha* were neglecting their duties by disappearing and drinking alcohol.

The other factor that was found to be related to the patterns of ideal and real culture is the role of the *amakhankatha* in teaching about morality in the initiation. The majority of the *amakhankatha* responded that they do teach the initiates about moral values but when asked to give examples, they could not say exactly what they taught. Further, the *amakrwala* responded that the *amakhankatha* did not teach them about moral issues, the only time someone addressed moral related matters was during *ukuyalwa* (see 6.3.6.3).

### **4.3 Factors that played a part in cultural change**

The above discussion on culture has acknowledged three different characteristics that are related to culture and cultural change: culture is non-static, shared and mostly integrated. The following discussion will be related to the above characteristics and view them in the light of factors that have played a part in the practice of initiation among the Xhosa communities over a long period of time, from the first observation of initiation to date.

The initiation practice is said to have gone through periods of decline and resurgence in many African societies (Hammond-Tooke 1974:228). Different reasons were given to the above asymmetrical conditions in the initiation, such as wars, social upheaval, colonisation, urbanisation and the influence of missionaries. Groups such as the amaZulu, Tsonga and amaMpondo were affected by the above conditions; hence there had been drastic changes in their practice of initiation (Hammond-Tooke 1974:228; see also 2.6.2). The Xhosa initiation practice is not immune to such changes, as a result, there have been major differences between initiation practiced in rural and urban areas. The changes in the Xhosa cultural practices and initiation in particular are due to a variety of factors but the major factors are colonisation, Christianity and urbanisation (Ting Toomey 1999:3).

### 4.3.1 Christianity

#### 4.3. 1.1 The past situation

Mayer (1980:12) writes that;

Missionaries on their part were ready to acknowledge that 'civilizing' the natives was a necessary preliminary to conversion, and they accepted that this required effective administrative structures and firm government by authorities, even if their establishment necessitated the use of force.

The literature written on early Nguni history, as early as the eighteenth century suggests that there was a thin line between Christianity, westernisation and colonisation (Afolayan 2004:142; Mayman 1996:108; Hammond-Tooke 1974:12; Mayer 1961:21). The main vehicle to transport the above ideas was through education. The effects of education as a tool to promote Christianity was prevalent in the areas that were previously populated by the amaMfengu (previously called Ciskei). It is in those areas that the missionaries instituted schools such as Lovedale, Healdtown, Salem, St Matthew's and Mount Coke. The inhabitants of Ciskei became more susceptible to Christian conversion than those in the villages situated in the area previously known as Transkei (Pondoland, Fingoland and Griqualand). In Transkei there were no education institutions and less contact with missionaries and white people at large, further the power of the traditional leaders was not undermined to the same degree as in Ciskei. The intention of the education offered at the education institutions was to 'detrribalise' Black people and make it easy to convert them to Christianity while at the same time creating the black elite who would work as educators and preachers (Maylan 1986:109). In this way, missionaries would succeed in their intention of introducing the 'right way' of living versus the 'barbaric' African way of life and at the same time colonised the African people. Tiyo Soga was an example of the products of the missionary schools. Soga studied at Lovedale and on his return to Kaffraria (part of the Ciskei homeland) worked as a teacher at the station of Uniondale. As a result of the teaching of missionaries, Soga was not circumcised (initiated) and this created problems for his ministry as the African traditionalists refused to listen to an uncircumcised minister (*inkwenkwe*) (Williams 1983:2).

Missionaries generally required that their converts abstain from certain African customs like polygynous marriages, inheritance of wives, traditionally recognised forms of extra-marital sexual intercourse, traditional dancing, sacrificial rituals, paying of *ilobola*, initiation and beer drinking (Pauw 1975:425). It appears that the teaching of Christianity was that African people could not follow their 'pagan' practices and, at the same time practise Christian religion. The mission of colonisation and civilisation, wrapped into a 'dogmatic' package called Christianity, divided the Xhosa communities into two 'households', called the *ababomvu* or *amaqaba*<sup>6</sup> (the Red people) and *amagqobhoka* (the School people) (Mayer 1980:1&5). Mayer (1980:4) says that both the ideology of *amagqobhoka* and *amaqaba* were concerned with white domination and arrogance. Furthermore, in their quest for continued existence they dealt with realities of *ubuntu* (humanity) and *ukuxabiseka* (human dignity). In the early 1960s, when some clans travelled to settle in villages around Alice, one of those villages called Gqumahashe had a procedure in place to make sure that the *amaqaba* were separated from the *amagqobhoka*. When a family arrived they would be asked "*ugqobokile okanye uliqaba na?*" (are you converted to Christianity or not or sometimes are you westernised/educated or not?). If the response was *ndigqobhokile*, they would be allocated a piece of land in *kuGqumahashe osezantsi* (Lower Gqumahashe) and if the response was *ndiliqaba* then they would be allocated land in *kuGqumahashe ophezulu* (upper Gqumahashe). As a result, the residents of upper Gqumahashe were educated and converted to Christianity. It is said that there was a time in lower Gqumahashe that the initiation practice became unpopular due to Christian influence. Presently, there are traits of differences between the two villages, the upper Gqumahashe section is characterised by surnames of both educated and christianised families. According to Mayer (1980:4), the Red strove for human dignity by maintaining their identity in the ways laid down by the ancestors (*iminyanya*), the school people looked for human dignity in the achievement of 'civilisation' (*impucuko*).

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<sup>6</sup> *Amaqaba* or *ababomvu* and *amagqoboka* are derogative terms used to refer to the Red (*amaqaba*) and the School (*amagqoboka*). *Amaqaba* means the uneducated and the ones who are more resistant to change introduced by white people. *Amagqobhoka* means the ones with holes, in this context *ukugqobhoka* (being a Christian) means being converted to Christianity and westernisation by abandoning the African way of life.

*Ukwaluka* is one of the practices that missionaries referred to as 'pagan' but for African people it was laid down by their ancestors as *isiko* (custom/rite) which serves as a connection between the people and the ancestors (see also 6.3.4). It is an understanding that the ancient Xhosa prophet Ntsikana, son of Gabba, also taught that Africans should stop practising the initiation rite. The result was that some of the people deserted this practice; as a result, he became very unpopular among Xhosa communities.

Many years after Ntsikana, missionaries, teachers and white government officials championed for the banning of the initiation practice (Van der Vliet 1974:236). Laider (1922:18) in particular, is one of the writers who argued for the discontinuation of the initiation. Lately there have been similar calls to end the initiation practice by parents, Church leaders and government officials. Their argument is that the initiation practice does not contribute to the building of moral values. In fact, it has been associated with a lot of irregularities and criminal activities. Some like Myemana (2004) argue that taking part in the practice involves ancestral worship which according to his views, Christians should not take part in (see also 3.7.2.2; 4.3.1 and 4.15).

Some of the *amaqaba* and *amagqobhoka*, including those who were educated under missionaries, began to redefine the meaning of faith and found that there was no conflict in practising African rituals. Some opted to continue with their practices behind the backs of the missionaries. Rev. J.J.R. Jolobe explained how he and his brother who were both Christians had under disguise of visiting relatives arranged to be initiated and their father Rev. James Jolobe did not know about it until some years later (Mills 1980:12). It seems that even though missionaries preached against what they referred to as 'pagan customs', the African people secretly performed their rituals. Those who were in urban areas often secretly went to *emakhaya* (rural homes) to perform their rituals and come back and proceeded with their Christian duties. Mills (1980:12) argues that the missionaries were never successful in their combat against traditional circumcision (initiation practice) rather, the only outcomes of their campaign was "to promote deception, breaches of discipline, disobedience of children and hypocrisy."

Some converts opted to break away from white domination and started their own Churches where they could follow Christianity without being divorced from their cultural activities (Pauw 1975:418). It has to be acknowledged that the rising of the Zionist and other African oriented Churches brought a change in the understanding of Church and African way of life (Pauw 1975:436). Some of these Churches like the Zionist Christian Church and other Independent Churches were started by Black Africans who were not necessarily clergy or evangelists in a Mission Church. The African Churches recognised the practices such as polygyny and initiation which were opposed by Missionary Churches (Pauw 1975:425). The Church history that has been discussed above led to the current Church environment. There could be many Church views on the issue of the initiation practice, but Churches do not necessarily make it a public debate and are not writing any material that substantiate their claims. Perhaps this in itself calls for fieldwork to be done in order to better understand the different Churches' stances on initiation. Most of the work that was done to investigate the views of different Churches in relation to African practices was in the 1970s by Pauw (1975).

#### **4.3. 2 The present situation**

In the previous paragraph, it was indicated that there has not been much anthropological fieldwork done in understanding the current Church stance on initiation. Furthermore, the Churches are not writing any material to substantiate their views on initiation. One can observe three major views. The first is the mainline or orthodox Churches, like the Presbyterians, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Methodists, Anglicans and Roman Catholics who are not against the practice of traditional initiation. Their members fully participate in initiation including all its rituals and ceremonies. The second group is the Churches that are called the born again Churches, which includes the Charismatic, Evangelical and Pentecostal like the Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, Baptists and some of the new ones called Ministries who encourage the initiation practice but the practice should not include any rituals that are associated with ancestors and alcohol. Traditionally, this view has been supported by Rev N. Bengu, the founder of the Assemblies of God who was totally against Xhosa practices that were said to be connected to ancestral worship

but promoted initiation as long as it was done without alcohol and ancestral worship (Pauw 1975:294).

Some of the Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Charismatic Churches or Ministries are following the Assemblies of God's stance on initiation. The boys are taken to the initiation practice but some of the practices that are deemed to be associated with ancestral worship are left out.

The last group is of Churches such as the Watch Tower (Jehovah's Witness) and some ministries like the Jesus Christ Family Ministries (JCF) (Pastor Myemana) which emphasises that Christians should not practise initiation at all as it involves ancestral worship and boys should rather be circumcised in hospital. It cannot necessarily be assumed that the Church members adhere to that, but it is the Churches' position and members could behave contrary to the Churches' position.

Myemana is one of the few who has written on his Church's stance on initiation. Myemana (2004:12)<sup>7</sup>, who claims that he writes from a Christian perspective, also encouraged the abolishment of the initiation practice. The topic of his book is "Should Christians undergo the circumcision rite?" His argument is that Christians should not practice initiation because it involves 'ancestral worship' since the initiate is joined with his ancestors. He further argues that Christians are not supposed to be involved in any practice that involves ancestral worship and suggests that it is better for boys be taken to the hospital for circumcision.

During the research, the informants were not necessarily asked about their Church affiliation and the only initiates who spoke about their Church affiliation were the ones who called themselves 'born again' and said that they were initiated in a

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<sup>7</sup> Myemana Andile is the leader of one of the biggest Pentecostal Churches in the Eastern Cape. His followers religiously follow every teaching he instils on them. Recently, he has been on the news for discouraging his members from taking medical aid and funeral policies but instead should give the money to the Church. He has more than 10 000 followers in the province. More than 3 000 people attend his Church in Mdantsane every Sunday. It would be interesting to interview some of his members to find out if they follow his views on initiation. On Myemana see also <http://www.dispatch.co.za/specialreports/article.aspx?id=403758>

'Christian manner'<sup>8</sup>. Those are the ones who had a Bible in their *amabhuma* and voluntarily spoke about their Christian belief in reference to initiation.

#### 4.3.2.1 Initiates

During this research, about eight initiates were found who had been initiated in the born again Church manner, three were from Whittlesea, four from Mdantsane and one from Cala. What was common about all of them was that in their *izikhwetha* there was a Bible that was placed inside the lodge. Most of the initiates did not mention their Church affiliation but two of them did and boldly mentioned that they were members of the Assemblies of God and Faith Mission Churches respectively. Most of their responses concerning what they were learning and how they were taught were similar to that of other *abakhwetha* that are discussed in chapter six (see 6.3.5). The following differences were noted which were different to the rest of the *abakhwetha*.

The *ikhankatha* was with them all the time in the initiation. He only went home when there was an emergency and he did not take long to come back. Most of the initiates' responses were that "*ukhangi uyasifundela ibhayibhile asifundise ukuba indoda iziphatha kanjani ngokwasezwini leNkos*" (the guardian does teach us according to the Bible on how a man handles himself).

*"Sifundiswa ukuba njengoba besiziphethe kakuhle nje kumele senze ngakumbi njengokuba singamadoda"* (We are encouraged that as we were talking we were living an exemplary life as boys, we must do more when we are men).

*"Ebusuku sifundiswa likhankatha ibhayibhile sifundiswe ukuba kumele sikholwe singaphelelwa lukholo kwaye sibe ngaphezulu xa singamadoda"* (Every evening the guardian reads from the Bible and we are taught to have faith and that our faith in God should be more than before we were initiated).

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<sup>8</sup> It would be an interesting research project to follow up on in order to understand exactly what their stand on initiation is based on, whether it is Biblically based, drawn from Abraham or that it is their contextualisation of the African practice.

Most of the initiates responded that they were taught about moral values but the Bible was used as a guideline on how a man should live. What was interesting was that their responses were similar irrespective of whether they were from rural, urban or semi-urban areas. It was gathered from these initiates that they were initiated the Church way because it was prescribed by the Church and the Pastor or main Church leader made sure that the way the initiation was practiced adhered to the teachings of the Church. Furthermore, if one was found to incorporate practices that were not accepted by the Church or behaving in a manner not accepted by the Church, they would be disciplined, suspended and sometimes even expelled from the Church. The 'unchurchly' behaviour that was mentioned was the use of alcohol, use of dagga and drugs, sexual intercourse, disrespecting the *ikhankatha*, stealing from others, dishonesty and the worshipping of ancestors.

#### **4.3.2.2 Umguyo (celebration of the un-initiated)**

I had an opportunity to observe one of the born again Christian initiation practices. The following were observations made on the night of *umguyo*, contrary to the Xhosa "traditional" way (see also 3.6.2). There is usually a night prayer or night service and instead of having only the boys and girls (un-initiated) to meet for beer and celebration, it is attended by mostly young people (between the ages of 16-30) whether initiated or not. The meeting normally starts around 7-8 pm until 6 am and they pray and sing the whole night. The youth leader usually reads a verse from the Bible and speaks words of encouragement to the soon to-be-initiates and the other youth come after him and do the same to their fellow believers who are about to approach an 'unknown land'.

One of them said "*mntane' eNkosi awazi apho uya khona ukuba kunjani nathi asazi ngoba asikayi, kodwa siyazi ukuba uThixo uza kuba nawe*" (child of God you don't know how it is where you are going, unfortunately we don't know as well, but we do know that God will be with you).

#### 4.3.2.3 *Ikhankatha* (traditional guardian)

I had an opportunity to interview three of the *amakhankatha* and it was the same who were taking care of the initiates that were interviewed about initiation practices as followed by certain Churches. The *amakhankatha* were between the ages of 45-65. They all responded that they were doing the job fulltime as *amakhankatha*. The *ikhankatha* in Whittlesea said that he was the only one in the area and that he normally took care of all the boys from the born again Churches. These *amakhankatha* are usually Church leaders and are men who are respected by members of the Church.

One of them responded that, “*mna kudala ndaba likhankatha ndineminyaka engaphezu kwamashumi amabini ndiwenza lo msebenzi*” (I have been an *ikhankatha* for more than twenty years).

“*Mna ndaqala ukuba likhankatha mhla ndakhankathela unyana wam emva koko abantu babona ukuba ndinesandla esihle bamana bendicela nam ke ndaza ndawuthanda lo msebenzi*” (I started being a guardian by taking care of my own son, people saw that I can do a good job as a result they started asking me. I have now fallen in love with this duty).

Concerning what they taught to the initiates the response was similar to that of the initiates that all their teaching was based on the Bible and that the Bible has all the principles related to how a man should live.

“*Mna kudala ndilikhankatha. Bonke abam abakhwetha baphuma befundisiwe ngendlela yokuziphaltha kwendoda, yonke lo mfundiso ikhona elizwini leNkosi*” (I have been a guardian for some time now, all my initiates graduate after having been taught about how a man should handle himself, all that teaching is found in the word of God).

“*Kaloku nokuba ndilikhankatha ndikwanguye nomshumyeli welizwi, umkhwetha umana esenza umsebenzi lo wakhe kodwa nalapha elizwini siyacaphula ukuze abe yindoda eyiyo*” ( I am a guardian and I am a preacher as well, the initiate does his

work related to his operation and at the same time we read from the Bible so that he can be a real man).

*“Uyabona nangoku lo mkhwetha uyaphuma ngempela-veki, umsebenzi lo wona siwugqibile wona qha ngoku sihleli elizwini ukuze aphume apha enesimilo ngakumbi angafani nala ma-krwala aziphatha kakubi”* (You see, even now this initiate is graduating by the end of the week, we are done with the work that is related to his operation, what we are busy with now is the word, so that he can graduate as a man with good values not like these new men who are irresponsible). The kinds of teaching that they offered were values such as, honesty, integrity, faithfulness, responsibility, holiness and patience.

One of them said, *“kaloku indoda kumele iziphathe kakuhle ingatyi yonke into, ithembeke, ibe nesimilo kwaye ibe ngumzekelo”* (A man has to handle himself responsibly, not eat everything, be honest, have respect and be exemplary).

#### **4.3.2.4 Umphumo (graduation celebration)**

On the day of the *umphumo* a similar procedure that is discussed in chapter six (see also 6.3.6.1) was followed. The difference is that some of the Christian initiates were not wearing a blanket, but wearing the new clothes of *ubukrwala* whereas some were wearing blankets. Some of those who were wearing their clothes had an *iqhiya* (head cover) on the head and covered their heads and their eyes, while some had nothing on their heads. Men from the Church were singing hymns of praise. As they were approaching the community, women and other community members, even the neighbours were performing *ukukikizela* (ululating) for the coming home of the *amakrwala*. The whole community joined in and celebrated with the *amakrwala*.

The boys were then assembled immediately and *ukuyalwa* was performed. During *ukuyalwa* the words of admonition were similar to that of other areas the emphasis still depended on the area as illustrated elsewhere in this study. There were some individuals who had more emphasis on being an *‘indoda yenene’* (real man) who lives according to Christian values. In most of the Christian *amakrwala* there was a common reference to the previous state of boyhood and that they lived as

responsible boys. Now that they were men they must improve and become even better. Some of the people (men and women) said the following:

*“Mfana wam khange usiphoxe useyinkwenkwe, ze ugqithise ke njengokuba uyindoda”* (Young man you have never disappointed us). *“ube neempawu zobudoda useyinkwenkwe uyabona ke ngoku wenze nangaphezulu”* (you behaved like a man while you were a boy, now you must do so even more than before).

*Krwala kweli khaya nakule lokishi awuzange wabonwa unxila, ungulewu, usitya idrugs kwaye zange waba nto yamntu, abanye abantu babade bacinge uyindoda, silindele lukhulu ke kuwe, wakhe lo mzi, wondle olu sapho* (New man, in this family and in this township you have never been seen being drunk, being a playboy, abusing drugs and you have never stolen anyone’s belongings. Some people even thought that you were a man already, we are expecting a lot from you, make sure that you build this house and feed this family).

The *uphumo* ceremony did not continue till the following day like in the case of most “traditional” graduation ceremonies (see 6.3.6.1). In the Christian *imiphumo* all events and ceremonies, including *umgidi*, was done on the same day. At the time of the slaughtering of the sheep it was emphasised that this sheep had nothing to do with ancestors but it was slaughtered for people to eat. In all the Church boys’ graduation there was no *umxhentsiso* (dance performed by the new men and *abafana*) as was the case with other new men (see 3.6.9).

#### **4.3.2.5 Ubukrwala (the process of being a new man)**

The state of *ubukrwala* of the Church members is not the same as those who have been initiated in the “traditional” way. It was observed that there was no specific group of church initiated men. When the *amakrwala* walked in the community one could not tell by their actions, whether they were those from born again Churches or not. There were two types of new men from born again Churches, those who went through initiation because they were “born again Christians” and those who were forced by their parents. Those who were converted Christians were not found amongst the rest of the *amakrwala*. Sometimes they walked alone which was usually

a group of two or they would walk with a man from the Church. Those who were not necessarily converted but followed their fathers' beliefs were observed with other new men in the community. The *amakrwala* did not necessarily discriminate between those who were initiated according to the Church procedures or the "traditional" way. As long as the person went to *ibhuma* and used the same "traditional" procedures that were observed in the initiation, that person was regarded as a man and he qualified to participate in the *indlu yesibane* or *intlombe* (ceremony that is only attended by initiated men).

### **4.3.3 Urbanisation and migrant labour**

Urbanisation has been defined as an increase in the proportion of the population residing in towns and cities, brought about by the migration of rural populations. In South Africa, the process of urbanisation was as a result of industrialisation, which was a consequence of the discovery of gold and diamonds in the late 1800s. It is said that the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and the British annexation of the diamond fields created a paradigm shift in the South African cultural life (Butler 2004:12; Bank 1996:5; Marks & Rathbone 1982:3; Mayer 1961).

As previously mentioned (see 1.10) anthropology is not about the environment but about how people experience the environment, as well as urbanisation. From the anthropological perspective, urbanisation is not just a propos of an urban life style or way of life in the cities. The city lifestyle is usually defined as urbanism (Foster and Kemper 1974:6). Urbanisation is not just about what happens in the urban areas but how people experience urban life. Anthropologists defined urbanisation as a process by which rural immigrants settle in and adjust to urban life (Foster and Kemper 1974:6). The migrant labour movement resulted in a new speed of magnitude of cultural change. Before 1870, the majority of Africans in Southern Africa lived in independent chiefdoms (Mayer 1961:20; Marks & Rathbone 1982:3). Few of the African people were exposed to the western culture and Christian missionaries. By the 1920's, 30-40% of active men in rural areas migrated to urban cities in search of the 'urban promising life' (Butler 2004:13 &133). The economic system introduced from the early decades of the twentieth century undermined African rural societies and destroyed Black farming economies and made it increasingly difficult for Africans

to survive without remittances from the core urban economy (Butler 2004:134). The history of urbanisation was extremely dependent on the migrant labour system. The migration of male labourers to urban centres left rural areas with a disproportionate number of women (Porteus 2006:7).

The permanent residence in urban areas was never a plan of migrant workers. They came to urban areas to work and go back to build an *umzi* (homestead) or *umzi kabawo* (father's homestead). The contention is that the first African migrant workers who travelled from *emakhaya* (permanent rural settlements) to *emisebenzini* (temporary working environments) did not have the intention to be residents of the cities. Certainly, the movement of migrant workers led to the process of urbanisation but this was an unintended consequence.

Urbanisation and migrant labour created a generation and gender gap (Mayer 1971:7) because children and women remained in the rural areas while the men went to urban areas to work in order to support their families. Most of the homesteads depended on the average earnings of migrant workers (McAllister 1981:2). Butler (2004:134) supports this view that young men and later women worked away from their families, in hostels, backyard shacks, or informal settlements close to places of work, as part of the cosmopolitan and sometimes vibrant urban and peri-urban culture.

Thus, as the males moved to cities in search of employment the only people who were found in rural areas were women, youths who were still at school and the older generation. While at the same time in the urban areas a group of *abafana* who had no extensive knowledge of cultural practices came together. It is said that in one of the areas in the Willowvale district (Folokhwe ward), of a population of 409 in 1976, only one man had never worked as a migrant worker (McAllister 1981:2). This suggests that even in the late 1970s the rural economy depended on migrant wage labour and hence most of the assumed providers (men) spent the greater part of their active years in urban areas.

Even though the migrant workers were only in urban areas for temporary reasons the migration process itself created a culture that had positive and negative impacts

on the African people. It cannot be overlooked that the changes experienced in the Xhosa social structures were more rapid than those which these societies experienced before contact with the western influence (Pauw 1963:27). The urban life is characterised by hard work in order to make more money and to also achieve civilisation, and, ultimately, 'a better life'. Vivian's (2008) research that explores the psychological effect of circumcision on the initiates suggests that urbanisation rather than destructing traditional culture, institutes patterns of change and contradictions that are stressful. She further illustrates that urban environments fundamentally questions assumptions about gender and morality that have been injected in practices such as the initiation practice (Vivian 2008:79). The results of this study seem to be in agreement with Vivian that the urban life does not necessarily mean that there are no longer cultural values but such values are expressed and interpreted in an urban cosmological world.

The disruptive effects of apartheid forced removals, the migrant labour system and urbanisation have fractured the certainty of African communal bonds and muddled peaceable hierarchies (Vivian 2008:141). The social upheaval caused by apartheid, poverty and the uneven process of urbanisation impacted negatively on the Xhosa initiation practice in a variety of ways, which in part accounts for the rise in casualties, crime and lack of moral stance in the initiation practice (Vincent 2008(b):80). For example, the *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* are ideally practitioners trained by their predecessors with skills handed down from one generation to another. In the contemporary period characterised by much greater social change, mobility and cultural rapture, the competencies of the traditional practitioners is not assured. Pauw (1963:27) explicitly showed how urbanisation, Christianity and westernisation affected the Xhosa social structures in urban areas. While some urban dwellers prefer to send their sons to rural areas to undergo the ritual, many either no longer have rural ties or are motivated by other factors to keep their sons in the urban areas (Kepe 2010:730).

Lately, some of the urbanisation characteristics that have an impact on African cultural practices are related to a lack of facilities or materials (Mboya 1999:10), sometimes due to urban laws, or merely due to embarrassment to be seen as backward. The lack of facilities such as a river (see 4.12.2) and grass (see 4.12.3) in

urban areas and its effect on the initiation practice has been an issue. These factors, together with the belief by some people that the rural areas are closer to their ancestors, are the reason why some members of the urban population still prefer to perform *imicimbi* in their rural father's homestead (*emakhaya*) instead of their own urban homes (*imizi yabo*). Some still perform their rituals in the urban and suburban areas and sometimes end up getting into trouble with the law. For example, Tony Yengeni, (the ANC freedom fighter in the Western Cape), after his release from prison, slaughtered a bull and two sheep in a normal African ritual procedure<sup>9</sup> that is usually observed, at his suburban home as part of a cultural cleansing ceremony. The SPCASA was considering legal action against Yengeni for allegedly contravening the Animal Protection Act (Williams & Prince 2007). The issue at hand was that the manner in which the animal was slaughtered was deemed as cruelty and not the slaughtering in itself (Ka Nzapheza 2007). The Yengeni issue is just one of the examples that represents the real challenges of freely practicing culture in urban areas. If he had performed his ritual in rural areas, no one would have objected. In South Africa, the rate of change is enhanced by urbanisation which became rapid after the 1950s. At present it is estimated that 57% (or 21 million) of South Africans live in towns and cities (Pauw 2008:18).

#### **4.3.4 Colonialism**

The 1910 Act of Union<sup>10</sup> formalised the Union of South Africa's existence as a new state and cemented its political structures (Butler 2004:13). It served two purposes, 'racial segregation' and 'influx control'. Racial segregation served for the enrichment of privileged interests of the minority White people and the maintenance of their supremacy. The racial political machinery mentioned above laid the economic, political and institutional foundations of segregation and apartheid. The colonial policies had a negative impact upon the Xhosa traditional practices. The philosophy

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<sup>9</sup> The ritual procedure is that, after slaughtering the animal, it has to cry and this is a sign that the ritual has been accepted by the ancestors. In most cases, if the animal does not cry then the ritual would have to be re-done. While the animal is crying the head of the household speaks some words to the ancestors.

<sup>10</sup> The Act enacted the foundation of the Union of South Africa which was the joining of four areas, the two independent Boer Republics (the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, informally known as Transvaal and the Orange Free State) with the British dominated Cape Colony and Natal under the dominion of the British Empire.

of apartheid <sup>11</sup> was entrenched as law in 1948 by the National Party. It was a strategy to maintain White domination at the expense of the African people and further while extending racial separation to make sure that White people remain superior (Marks & Rathbone 1982:3). As a result of apartheid, White people had control over the economy and social systems. For generations, apartheid further complicated urbanisation problems and the urbanisation of black people was more complex because they were forced to live in areas away from the main cities. Those areas were called reserves, later called Bantustans and then homelands. It was in the homelands where most of the African people lived. It is said that the traditional practices were more observed in the homelands than in the urban areas. The homelands, for instance, were formed around some semi-urban areas, for example, the case of Zwelitsha and King William's Town, black people could have *imizi* in Zwelitsha and work in King William's Town, Queenstown and Whittlesea. In that way, the apartheid government succeeded in making sure that White people could have services of Black Africans as their slaves, while making sure that they do not mix with them as they had their own homelands. The advantage of homelands for some Black Africans was that they could maintain their homestead while working as family providers.

#### **4.3.5 Suburbanisation**

Suburbanisation is a term used to describe the movement of residence to the periphery or outskirts of urban areas. Until 1994, suburbs in South Africa were residential areas for mostly the white middle class and upper class. As previously mentioned (see 4.3.3), the previous minority governments of the British and Afrikaners created a rift between Black and White people. This separation was reinforced by the policy of segregation where the Whites were settled in better so-called White areas and the Bantustans were created for the black people. The democratically elected government took over in 1994 and subsequently the laws of oppression and segregation were broken down (Butler 2004:135). The elite group of Black Africans moved to the previously White suburban areas which were more

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<sup>11</sup> Apartheid means apartness and was a doctrine of racial and political hegemony which argued that each race and nation should be kept entirely apart, socially, territorially, and allowed to develop along its inherent and unique cultural lines (Afoyalan 2004:36). It was used by the minority white government to justify their ill-treatment of other races and making sure that they remain in power.

expensive but few could afford to stay there. The children were now able to attend the most privileged and expensive schools, which were previously reserved for White people. The suburban life is no longer about the outskirts areas; it is a state of being and is seen all over South African urban areas and more especially in universities. What happens is that the parents who live in townships send their children to suburban area schools, some drive them there, and some use the private taxis that usually transport children to such schools. The suburban residents, who still have *imizi* in rural areas, travel there to perform their rituals. Some, like in the case of Tony Yengeni, have enough space to conduct their rituals as long as they do not disturb their neighbours nor contravene suburban laws. In suburban areas, there is obviously no space for the *izikhwetha*, most of the Black suburban residents would send their boys either to townships or villages in the rural areas for initiation. Perhaps more research needs to be done to investigate the perceptions of suburban residents on the initiation practice. My contention is that it could be that there are a number of boys from suburban areas who do not go for initiation. During the research in Mdantsane, there were initiates who communicated in English even when the interviews were in isiXhosa, possibly because they were either university students or boys from suburban areas. One of the challenges that have been introduced by suburbanisation is the promotion of the English language over African languages. It is understandable that every parent wants their children to be able to communicate well in English. Therefore, from an early age the parents would assist the pre- and primary school children, by making sure that at home the child speaks English; however, the children usually end up unable to speak their mother tongue. The suburban life has given rise to the popular contemporary culture (see 4.3.5.1).

During the research, I made a telephone call to one of the community leaders to make arrangements related to research appointments. The call was answered by a male voice who spoke in English. I asked in isiXhosa whether it was the house I was looking for, the male voice answered in English and I could not determine if he was a White, Indian or Black African answering. I repeated myself in isiXhosa and the person responded that he could not understand me. I then said, "I am sorry wrong number" and then re-dialled the number again. The same voice responded and I then spoke in English and the person then understood and responded that it was indeed the house I was looking for. After the conversation with the community leader

I then realised that his children are studying in multiracial schools and do not understand isiXhosa at all.

In Whittlesea, I met an initiate who could not speak isiXhosa at all. I tried to find out the reason and he told me that his parents never taught him isiXhosa although they are both Xhosa speaking, but the language spoken at home is English. The issue of language has ethical implications in the sense that when one intends to conduct research among the amaXhosa, the assumption is that the language spoken by the informants is isiXhosa and sometimes that is not the case.

The initiate I met in Whittlesea who could not speak isiXhosa and the ones from East London who were more conversant in English made me wonder as to how they spoke the *ukuhlonipha* language used during initiation? But then their guardians were family members who were very understanding of their situation and further that the initiation practice has become a family affair. Other community members come during *umphumo* and *umgidi* for various reasons - some come because they are neighbours, others are colleagues, others are fellow Church members, some are friends and others come because there is free food and free alcohol.

#### **4.3.5.1 Contemporary culture**

The suburban life style has a strong effect on the twenty first century generation; the new culture that seems to be popular is contemporary culture, where both Black and White are being fused into an American cultural influence (Butler 2004:136). The contemporary culture is characterised by a western way of life, driving expensive cars, eating at restaurants and going to expensive suburban malls. The influence of international cultures, especially American cultural influences are evident in the contemporary life and this included White as well as Black people. Among young people, it is evident in the English language spoken, everybody wearing headphones listening to music while walking, loud music, going to nightclubs, Black dating Whites youths and vica versa and no bitter racial separation. Apart from all the negative stuff this is a culture the South African youth are comfortable with. These traits of the contemporary culture were observed among *amakrwala*. *Amakrwala* who seem to have embraced the contemporary life style were observed, most of them are

studying at the universities. They were not necessarily walking in groups, but were observable by the English language they used and some were wearing headphones and listening to music from their cell phones. In 4.4.1 there was a discussion about the initiates who were not well conversant in isiXhosa; some of those initiates were among the contemporary men. Even those who were fluent in isiXhosa were walking and communicating in English with each other.

Most of the contemporary new men were observed in all areas, but more visible in the township suburbs of Mdantsane, areas such as NU17 and Golden Highway as well as in some areas of Whittlesea suburbs.

#### **4.4 The current impact of urbanisation and colonialism on the initiation practice**

In the Xhosa cultural life there was a strong regulation of *amasiko*, *imithetho* and *izithethe*, which was regulated through the traditional leaders. The regulation of the household was led by the *umninimzi* and the elders of the clan and the regulation of the village was led by the chief/king and his advisors (Pauw 1994:78-88). The current government system, in rural areas does not have the same impact as it used to have. The Xhosa initiation was regulated by a strong community seniority network that existed in the rural areas. The special networks and foundations upon which that imperative once securely rested, and which served to support it, is no longer in place in many communities (Vivian 2008:141). The intervention by the government and the traditional leaders are efforts to redefining the traditional leadership and its role, but that has not brought any good results as even the rural people are slowly becoming westernised. In Njiveni, the Chief effectively plays his role, but one wonders about other areas of Libode that are semi-urban and have little regards for traditional leadership. Furthermore, in townships, traditional leadership is no longer in place and even the values of *ubuntu* are no longer evident. For example, in Xhosa culture the concept of single parenting does not exist, no young person raises their children on their own. Children born out of wedlock are taken as if they belong to the parents of the young mother. Today in the townships, one finds a lot of single parenting and when the boys have to go for initiation their mothers struggle to find a man who belongs to the same clan to come and give *umkhombandlela*. The lack of proper

household structures in the urban areas created confusion and a lack of discipline in the initiation practice. For instance, Mdantsane is characterised by a lot of informal settlements or shacks and in those shacks there is no privacy. A mother and father with children sleep in the same one roomed shack, sometimes the husband physically abuses the wife in front of the children and this gives the young people little room to learn positive values. When a boy goes for initiation, he thinks that it is acceptable to abuse a woman as he has seen his father abusing his mother. Due to the structural setting of the rural homes whereby the parents' room is separated from the children's, the abuse usually occurs between the two and the children will never know about it as it will occur in their room.

#### **4.4.1 Types of *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala***

There were four main types of *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala* that were observed. The first type is the Church group; the second is the township; the third is the rural and the last the urban culture group. The Church groups have been discussed under 4.3.2.1, the rural and the township groups in chapter six and in the following paragraph I will be looking at the contemporary cultural effects on *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala*.

During the time of this research study *amakrwala* were observed at the universities proudly walking in their attire without shame of mingling with other students. Some have even altered their *ubukrwala* clothes to suit the current style of clothing. There is a big difference between *amakrwala* observable in the universities and those observed in Mdantsane. One could argue that they are a re-emergence of the red and the school Xhosa, where the *amakrwala* that were observed in Mdantsane seem to identify themselves as those who are still holding to *ubudoda benene* (real manhood) and are refusing to change, whereas the *amakrwala* who are at the universities are changing and embracing the western life style. The interesting thing about the ones from Mdantsane is that to them the *ubutsotsi* walk, life style and language is the identity of manhood and hence if one does not live according to those expectations one's manhood is questioned.

Conceivably, the same *amakrwala* that were interviewed in Whittlesea and Mdantsane being more comfortable to speak in English than in isiXhosa are the

products of the contemporary culture. One could feel that no matter how civilised they could be, initiation was what set them apart from other contemporary youth.

#### **4.4.2 The impact of the above factors on the age of the initiates**

As I have noted in 3.3, the travellers (Meel 2005:58) observed cases of initiation from as early as the 1700s, the boys that were observed were around the age of nine. At that time, African people were probably in charge of their economic conditions and therefore had sheep, goats and cows to perform all their rituals. The boys did not have to first go and work to provide the animals for the initiation rituals hence they could be initiated at such an early age. The counter argument to that could be depending on the issue of the sources that provide us with this age account. The sources were said to be from the colonialists who were foreign to African culture and who observed from the distance. The possibility could have been that the boys were older than nine years, perhaps even 14-16 years. This is possible, for instance, if one observes Nigerians; a 15 year old could easily be mistaken for a 20 year old especially if observed from a distance.

With the arrival of White people and colonialism, Black Africans lost their wealth at the hands of the colonialists. At the beginning of urbanisation and migrant labour, the practice was that the father who could afford would supply the animals for the rituals and food for initiation but the *ikrwala* would be expected to go and work immediately after initiation so that he could return his father's money for animals. The effect was that only boys who were at the age of being able to work (from 18 years) could go for initiation. In few cases some boys from poor families would have to go and work in the mines in order to provide for their own initiation.

In the 1970s, the majority of black people were poor especially in the rural areas. The majority of the boys had to work to provide for their initiation as a result boys who went for the initiation were above 25 years of age.

During the 1990s, the economic conditions of some African people were improving as there was a creation of a better off working class, while there still were poor families. As a result, the initiation practice at the time was a mixture of all ages. For

instance, I did not have to work in order to go for the initiation as my family provided all animals and meals and my only contribution was from my weekend part time employment. As already mentioned, when my *saluka* went for initiation he had to first go and work on the mines and as a result he was initiated at the age of thirty. From the late 1990s, the families were adopting more the idea of providing for their boys again and the majority of the boys who went for initiation were as young as 15-18 years old.

With the advent of democracy and the formulating of new constitutional laws such as the Application of Heath Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001 (Eastern Cape), the legal age is now 18 years and most of the boys who go for initiation are 17-19 years old. This does not mean there are no other ages but most of the boys prefer to be initiated just before they finish grade 12 and some just before they go to tertiary institutions.

#### **4.4.3 Others being influenced to participate in initiation**

It has to be noted that not only westernisation influenced the initiation practice but the practice itself created interest among other cultures with the result that boys from other cultures are also participating in the initiation practice. The newspapers have shown several white and coloured boys who went for the initiation practice (News24 2007, Daily Dispatch on line 2008). One of the interesting stories was in the *Daily Dispatch* where during *umphumo* the mother of the White initiate was wearing the attire of the *izibazana* as the coming out ceremony took place. As the man approached with the new men, she was ululating doing exactly what normally *izibazana* do during *umphumo* (Daily Dispatch on line 2008).

#### **4.4.4 Ukuziba (attending initiation without the consent of guardian/s)**

*Ukuziba* literally means a person steals him. It comes from the word *ukuba*, meaning to steal. This term is used when a boy has gone to the initiation without his parent's consent. Traditionally it was the boy's father and the clan elders who had a final say on the boy's readiness to go for the initiation. It is true that the boy would sometimes share his wish to be initiated, but the final say was the father's/elders'. Before

colonialism and apartheid impoverished African people, it was the *usosuthu* (father of the boy) who would provide a beast for the initiation as well as all expenses for the ceremonies (see 3.5.2). Later with the advent of migrant labour which came as an alternative to *ukugxotha indlala* (to chase away starvation) the popular practice was that the boy would have to go and work in the city in order to assist with his initiation expenses. Even when the boy worked for his initiation, he still relied on the approval of the elders before going for initiation. This illustrates the importance of the role of father and elders in the approval of the boy's initiation, even when they could not afford to support the boy financially. The fact that he provided for his initiation did not mean that he could do as he wished but still adhered to the cultural norms and requirements. Not only the approval of the parents was significant in the past (between 1960 and the 1970's), but the affirmation of the peers and the community was important. The popular practice was that *oontanga* would be initiated together and they would be known in the communities by their behaviour of *ubundlavini* and *imitshotsho* which subsequently led to *imiguyo*. During *umguyo* the boy to be initiated would be receiving the consent of the *amakhwenkwe* as he leaves the *ubukhwenkwe* state and is promoted to *ubudoda* (see also 6.6 and 6.6.2).

The act of *ukuziba* was never popular in the past initiation practice, as a result the literature does not reflect on it. It apparently developed in the early 1980s due to various reasons. Sometimes when the boy's family could not afford to take him for the initiation they would ask him to wait for another year and when he saw that his peers were leaving him behind, he would go without the parents' consent. Sometimes it was due to the fact that the parents felt that the boy was not yet ready for *ukwaluka* and after failing to get the parents' approval the boy would still go without their endorsement. Prior to 1994, the meaning of *ukuziba* was simply going to the initiation without their father's consent. When I went for initiation in 1992, there were boys who performed *ukuziba* and they only had enough money to pay the *ingcibi* his fee and did not worry about the rest. There were a few cases of the boys who were said to have done *ukuziba* with their parents' knowledge. There were cases where the family kept on promising the boy to wait for the following year, and still could not afford and perhaps no hope that they will ever afford it. The boy will inform them of his intention for *ukuziba*, or the boy would go without the knowledge of the community and most of his peers. While the boy was in the initiation the family

would get assistance from the distant relatives, neighbours and other community members in order to *ukuquma inyala* or *ukuquma ihlazo* (to curb a shame or to curb embarrassment) by at least providing the goat for the ritual of *ukungena* and the sheep for the *ukojiswa* ritual. As noted before (see 3.6.3 and 6.4) the ritual of *ukungena* is normally done before circumcision, in the case of *ukuziba* the ritual will be performed, while the boy is in the initiation. The boy would normally share a lodge with one of the initiates until graduation; some families who could afford it would immediately organise and build him his own lodge. The *umphumo* and *umgidi* depended on the financial means of the family. In most cases of those who have done *ukuziba*, the *umphumo* and *umgidi* would be very simple. During *umgidi* the family would at least try to organise the *imfanelo* (see 3.6.12) and the community would understand their situation.

Currently, in accordance with the current Act on initiation, *ukuziba* could be defined as when a boy did not follow the required initiation process, such as, 1. Without having gone for the hospital/clinic health tests 2. Without producing a form signed by the prospective *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* respectively 3. Without producing a consent form signed by the parent or guardian (see 5.2). The Act still recognises that the boy has to be given permission by the parents before going for the initiation.

In all communities there were cases of *ukuziba*, the boys were known, and there were references made to those who performed *ukuziba*. For instance, when one described a certain initiate they would say, “*Elabhoma lala mkhwetha uzibileyo*” (the lodge of the initiate who has performed *ukuziba*) or “*Uphi la mkhwetha uzibileyo?*” (Where is that initiate who had performed *ukuziba*?).

There were a number of initiates who performed *ukuziba*, especially in Mdantsane and Whittlesea and most of them shared lodges with other initiates. I had the opportunity to observe the *umphumo* and *umgidi* of a boy who performed *ukuziba* in Mdantsane. In Mdantsane the popular practice was that the *umphumo* is performed before 11 am and would normally take the whole day and was followed by the evening of *umxhentso* (dancing). In the case of the said *umphumo*, the father of the initiate was unemployed and the boy had gone without his approval and apparently none of the legal requirements were submitted. The *umphumo* took place at 3 pm,

the explanation I obtained from the father of the boy was that he did not have enough money and gave me three reasons for the 3 pm decision. Firstly, that at that time most of the people in that area would have had enough to drink from other *imiphumo* and would not demand a lot from him; secondly, he was hoping that few people would be able to come as they would be engaged in other activities at that time; and thirdly, that if the ceremony was in the morning, it would have taken more hours of waiting for the evening event of the *abafana*. All the reasons provided illustrated that he did not have enough money, but he was trying his best to keep up to the tradition within his financial means. His son was housed by one of the other initiates and that initiate was not yet ready to graduate. Instead of burning the *ibhuma* the men collected wood and plastic and burnt them while the initiate walked towards the community. The burning of the materials symbolised the burning of the *ibhuma*.

The *ukuyalwa* ceremony and *umgidi* were combined in one day as was the case with the Christian *umphumo* ceremonies (see 4.3.2.4). In this case it was for a different reason namely, in order to save costs on meat and alcohol. In that way he did not have to spend on the *umgidi* ceremony the following day. It was made sure that all the *imfanelo* were provided accordingly and *ukuyalwa* and giving of gifts took place in the same way as other *imiphumo*. No beast was slaughtered but the attendants were served chicken which is cheaper than red meat and less alcohol was available, only *iimfanelo* were served.

My general observation was the plan of the father of the *ikrwala* worked well for him. The people who arrived were coming from other *imiphumo*, some of whom I saw at the *umphumo* I observed in the same area. They already had a lot to drink and were coming to support this occasion. I observed as well that the attendance was lower than most of the *imiphumo* in the area. What was interesting is that the people who attended understood the situation and, as a result, all they expected was *iimfanelo* and not *izinwe* (see 3.6.12). Some men were even talking among themselves that in such a case what is most important is *ukudlulisa isiko* (to fulfil the ritual expectations) which is fulfilled by providing the *iimfanelo* which are compulsory for the initiation practice.

The first speaker who spoke on arriving at *ebuhlanti* was the father of the initiate and he said that;

*Krwala uyayazi ukuba uzibile, kwaye loo nto uyenze ngexesha elibi ndigenamali, kodwa ke sibophe amaxonya ngoba kaloku nokuba kutheni uyinkulu yam. Bantu bakuthi nani niyayibona imeko, kodwa ningaxhali zonke iimfanelo zenu zikhona.*” (New man, as you can see, you have gone for the initiation without our knowledge and at the time we did not have money, but we have tried our utmost best because no matter what you are my first born. People you can see the situation, but you should not be worried as all the necessary requirements will be provided).

#### **4.5 Rural, semi-urban and urban differences on *ukuyalwa***

In chapter 6, the general findings on the perceptions of different groups on the moral role of initiation are presented without specifically viewing their different areas. This section places informants in their cultural settings; the rural, semi-urban and urban areas. The following paragraphs will be looking at the different challenges addressed during *ukuyalwa* in different areas. Furthermore, I will be looking at distinct differences in the urban, semi-urban and rural areas as well as in Mpondoland.

##### **4.5.1 *Ukuyalwa* (giving words of admonition) in rural areas**

It was observed that in general, the rural life retains many of the social features prevalent in the eras of pre-colonial and colonial writings by different anthropologists. However, many modern and urban traits were observed which were a sign that change does take place in rural areas; the difference being that it is slower than in urban areas (see 2.6; 4.1 and 4.2.1).

During *ukuyalwa* there was a distinct emphasis in words of admonition offered between the rural and urban areas. The men and women who gave words of admonition emphasised that the *amakrwala* should take care of the family and keep the “good name of the clan” intact.

The emphasis of the admonition words characterised values such as that the meaning of family includes the extended family members versus the urban definition of only the immediate family (father, mother and children). Secondly, to be a man means not forgetting your roots including visiting rural areas and perform traditional

rituals. Thirdly, to be a man is to behave in an accepted way according to the expectations of the village and to make sure that the clan name is kept highly esteemed. Lastly, that it is important to support the family by sending money and buying food to make sure that they do not starve.

#### **4.5.2 *Ukuyalwa* (giving words of admonition) in semi-urban areas**

The scenario in semi-urban areas was similar to that of rural and urban areas. For instance, in the two villages, Mtha and Dyamala the informants offered similar words to Cala. The emphasis was more on preserving the name of the family and the name of the clan, making sure that even if one moves to live in rural areas and townships but they should not forget their roots and the people they have left behind in rural areas. Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on education as a tool for success and good employment opportunities.

In Dongwe and Sada most of the words offered were similar to that of Mdantsane but with a certain influence of the words offered in rural areas. Some people warned the new men against multiple sexual partners in order to prevent HIV/AIDS, some spoke about the importance of education and entrepreneurship, some encouraged hard work, some warned them against drug abuse, crime and laziness. Some people spoke about the importance of respect and that a parent is not only one's biological parent but every adult has to be respected as a parent.

#### **4.5.3 *Ukuyalwa* (giving words of admonition) in urban areas**

As previously mentioned there was a clear difference in emphasis on what behaviour patterns were expected of the *amakrwala*. As much as there were similarities in what was expected of manhood behaviours there was a difference in the emphasis placed on different behaviours. The emphasis in Mdantsane, Dongwe and Sada was more on matters such as education, no crime, responsibility, HIV and AIDS and making a difference in the society. In almost all the *imiphumo* there were speakers who made reference to HIV and AIDS and calling it by a different name, such as, *lento iphandl'apha* (the thing that is outside), *ugawulayo* (the one that cuts, used more often, Xhosa word for HIV), *isifo esiphandl'apha* (the disease that is outside), *esisifo*

*sibulalayo* (the disease that kills), *esi sifo sabantu abatsha* (the disease for young people), *esi sigulo sikhoyo* (the sickness that is there), and *ingculazi* (something that destroys the nation, Zulu word for HIV). The *amakrwala* were advised to ensure that they complete school as education is the key to success. The emphasis that was placed on the above issues was not the same as in the rural areas as discussed under 4.5.1.

#### **4.6 Commercialisation**

I observed that in most areas, especially in urban areas and in Mpondoland the initiation practice had been commercialised. During the interviews the young informants were asked their reasons for going for the initiation and their reasons had more to do with the availability of money at the time than other reasons. When some of the initiates were asked the reason for going for initiation, their response was that “*umama ugalelelwe*” (my mother received the *stokvel* money). As a result, most of the boys in urban areas are initiated in December and that is the time when the *stokvel* money is divided amongst members and when most people receive their bonuses from work.

The urban guardians responded that they were receiving amounts ranging from R500-R1000 per initiate while in the rural areas it was between R300-R500 per initiate. In rural areas some of the *amakhankatha* were not given money, but gifts such as clothes and shoes. The *ingcibi* and *ikhankatha* have always been two different persons as they perform different tasks. The *ingcibi* would perform *ukudlanga* (circumcision) and give over to the *ikhankatha* to nurse the initiate. It was observed that there were *iingcibi* who worked as *amakhankatha*, in fact, there were a lot of such cases in Mpondoland and in Cala. Two reasons were given for them playing both roles; the one was that they wanted to make sure that the boys they have circumcised were well taken care of without any complications, and the second reason was that when you play both roles you can make better money to support your family. For instance, one *ingcibi* from Cala initiated ten boys and took care of them in his yard and after they were healed he released them to their families to perform their rituals. The amount of money that he charged per initiate included food and taking care of the initiates until they were healed, which was between R2 000 –

R3 000 per initiate. Owing to the fact that since he had started he has never had deaths, or circumcision health hazards, the parents of the boys trusted him and they were willing to pay whatever amount to make sure that their children returned home safely.

In the research done by Bogopa (2007) in Port Elizabeth, one of the major challenges related to the initiation in urban areas was commercialisation. This is a situation where *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha* with no knowledge and experience of the practice conducted illegal initiation schools in order to make an income (Bogopa 2007:57). Recently there has been an issue of an eleven year old boy who was found to be acting as an *ingcibi*. When approached by the officials his response was that he has been performing circumcision for a while now and that is how he makes money to support his mother (Daily Dispatch, 12 June 2010). It is further reported that that boy has already circumcised more than 20 boys and none of them experienced major complications. The debate raised was whether the community was aware of the incidents and no answer has been provided as most of the community members did not want to comment on the issue (Daily Dispatch, 12 June 2010). Some informants expressed their concern over the commercialisation of this practice. One of the informants said that "It seems that there is an increase in commercialising the initiation practice, people just come and ordain themselves as *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi* without prior experience and passion for the tradition but simply to make money". It was said that some of the *amakhankatha* were still *amakrwala* and were not mature enough to take up such a task. The worst scenario was cases where newly or un-initiated males were becoming *amakhankatha* in order to make money.

In the urban areas it was observed that during the *umgidi/umphumo* ceremony people slaughtered around five sheep, consumed more alcohol and they bought more food than is the case in the rural areas. An estimated amount of R3 000-R15 000 was spent on the *umgidi* ceremony in the urban areas. Whereas in rural areas, there was not much emphasis on spending on the *umgidi* ceremony, some rural families did not even have a big *umgidi*. Moreover, even though the colour of clothes worn by the *amakrwala* is the same, there was a huge difference in clothing labels. In the rural areas the *amakrwala* wore simple clothes whereas in the urban areas

one would notice a label competition - it is not just about clothes but it matters what label a person was wearing. In urban areas, the *umphumo* ceremony and the label of clothes worn by the *amarkwala* were some ways of telling the wealth of the family. Some of the informants equated *umgidi* with the twenty-first birthday for girls. Even the gifts that were offered to the *ikrwala* were huge gifts such as blankets and expensive clothes. One of the *ikrwala* in Mdantsane was given a car. In urban areas most of the time was spent on the handing over of the gifts and people were in a hurry to go to other commitments. Whereas in the rural areas most of the time was spent on *ukuyalwa* and some debates by men in order to train the *ikrwala* to enter manhood.

#### **4.6.1 The effects of commercialisation on the *umphumo* and *ukuyalwa***

Gifts to the *amarkwala* were offered during *ukuyalwa* that takes place at the *umphumo* ceremony which in some cases was combined with the *umgidi* ceremony in order to save costs. *Ngemini yomphumo amarkwala ayasokwa* (during initiation graduation, new men receive gifts) and words of admonition from the elders and their family members. The words of admonition are discussed in chapter six. It was observed that the gifts offered to the *amarkwala* in the rural areas were different from the ones offered in urban areas.

#### **4.6.2 Cala (rural)**

It was observed that in Cala only old and middle aged men gave words of admonition. The *amarkwala* received gifts such as goats, sheep, cows, knives, clothes and blankets. Even though they were given such gifts, there were few people who offered gifts. Most of the people offered money and it was not a lot. In most instances, a person gave less than R20-00. One old man took out a knife and said, "*thatha nantsi imela endasokwa ngayo ngaphezu kweminyaka engamashumi amabini adlulayo, ndayigcina kwade kwangoku. Ngale mela ndifuna ufane nam ube yindoda enesidima, mna andaziwa nganto imbi kule lali, ufuze mna mfo wam*" (Take this knife which I was given at my initiation graduation more than twenty years ago and I've kept it till now, it symbolises my wish for you, I want you to be like me and

be a reputable man, in this village I am not known as a bad person, be like me my son).

One of the new man's uncles brought two cows and said: "*Eli lithokazi kunye nenkabi mfo wam, that uzikhulise zikuzalele de bugcwale ubuhlanti beli khaya, ezonkomo ke iyakuba yintsebenzo yakho yokulobola*" (This is a cow and a bull, raise these cows and fill up the kraal of this house, that will be your hard work for paying lobola).

A middle-aged man stood up and said "*Ez izizihlangu mfo wam, zithengwe nguNozamile, unkosikazi wakuthi uthe ndithi uzinxibe ungayi ngazo kwindawo zembarha kodwa uye ngazo ecaweni*" (These are shoes my son, Nozamile my wife bought them; she said you must not wear them to places of alcohol but wear them to church). In some instances, there were old men who came to offer words of wisdom without necessarily offering gifts.

One middle aged man removed his watch and said, "*Mfo wam ungayi nasevenkileni le watshi inexabiso eliphezulu, ndikunika kuba kuphela kwento endinayo, ichaza indlela endikuthanda ngayo uze ukgasiphoxi ke mfo wam ube ngumzekelo wendoda.*" (My son you can go to any shop, the watch I am giving to you is very expensive, it symbolises my love for you, please do not disappoint us, you must be a true example of a man).

The *abaphathi matheko* (masters of ceremonies or MCs) emphasised that people should come and talk even if they do not have gifts. Some mentioned that what is important is the gift and the value does not matter as long as it comes from the bottom of the heart.

#### **4.6.3 Whittlesea (semi-urban)**

In the two villages in Whittlesea it was only old and middle aged men who were given an opportunity to offer wise words. In Dongwe and Sada the situation was similar to Mdantsane as the younger generation was given an opportunity to speak as well. The situation in the villages was very similar to the case in Cala while the

situation in Dongwe and Sada was similar to Mdantsane. The difference between the Mdantsane and Sada and Dongwe Townships was that the latter had some rural influence, for instance in Sada there were old people who brought their sheep and goats as gifts to the *amakrwala*. One of the major differences that were unique to Whittlesea (semi-urban areas) was that there was a lot of people including women who gave new clothes and bedding as gifts. The gifts that were offered were not necessarily expensive gifts; it was shirts, ties, blankets etc. Even though in Cala and Mdantsane there were clothes given, Whittlesea seem to have had more clothing given and this was similar to most of the cases. While giving the clothes some people were requested to open their gifts while in some cases they did not open. In some *imigidi* some people who stood up to give gifts spoke while in some *imigidi* some people offered gifts without talking, irrespective of rural or urban areas. This was different from Cala and Mdantsane. In Cala some people spoke without giving gifts while in Mdantsane every person who spoke gave a gift (see 4.6.1 and 4.6.3). The procedure in Whittlesea depended more on *umphathi-theko* (master of ceremony - MC) and each had their own way of doing it.

The family gifts in Whittlesea were not as extravagant as in Mdantsane, for instance; no one was given a car or a bedroom suite as a gift. The completion of gifts offered was not as high as in Mdantsane. In Whittlesea there were those who offered money but the master of ceremonies (MC) did not put an emphasis on giving more money as was the case in Mdantsane.

#### **4.6.4 Mdantsane (urban)**

It was observed that in Mdantsane the time for *ukusoka* and *ukuyala* was open to the older and younger generations. The types of gifts that were given included money, clothes, blankets, furniture and electric appliances like a TV, hi-fi and computers. Even though there were other kinds of gifts, the majority of people gave money. In some of the *umgidi* this day was said to be equivalent to the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday that is done for girls. A family member in one of the *umgidi* stood up and said; “*le mini ifana nokuba yi 21<sup>st</sup> birthday yakho ke yile nto sisebenze kangaka*” (this day is like your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday that is why we have worked so hard). In urban areas it is a normal practice to spend a lot of money having a big birthday party for a girl reaching 21

years of age without having a child. Families will spend every cent to make it a success, with gifts ranging from furniture to cars. The same mood found at the 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays was observed during *ukusokwa* in Mdantsane and some families in Whittlesea. One of the informants noted that the kind of people attending and the kind of gifts offered reflected the financial state of the family. The *imigidi* of families that were well off or popular were attended by people who offered more gifts. In some of the *imigidi* the gifts were more like a competition between those who have and those who have not. One *krwala* was offered a car by his father and while giving out the keys, the father said: “*mfo wam uziphethe kakuhle useyikwekwe kwaye zange wasiphoxa, silindele ukuba uqinise ngoku uyindoda, nazi izitshixo zemoto*” (my son you handled yourself very well while you were still a boy, we want you to do even better now that you are a man). Everyone who was present at the occasion was overwhelmed by the father’s gift.

Most of the people who stood to offer gifts used that time to offer words of advice and most of the people who came to give a word of admonition offered gifts as well. This was contrary to Cala where old men came to offer words of wisdom without necessarily offering gifts. In Mdantsane every man who stood to give words of admonition offered gifts as well. The emphasis on gifts made it difficult for the men who wanted to offer admonitions, but due to not having money or gifts, could not stand and give words of admonition. The MC used words of persuasion to encourage people to give more money. Few people gave with cheques while some went to withdraw money and came back to give. One MC said: “*kaloku bantu bakuthi lo mfana akaphinde oluke kufanele simbethele imali hayi imali nje kodwa ibe ninzi, makathi xa edibana nabanye abafana beqhayisa ngemali abayifumeneyo angabi nazintloni*” (remember that this young man will never be initiated again, we must give him money and not just money but a lot, so that when he meets other young men bragging about how much money they got he should not be embarrassed).

There was a case where two close cousins were initiated together, but then had different *imigidi* ceremonies, the one was on Saturday and the other on Sunday. The explanation provided was that their parents wanted to combine the *imigidi* to save food costs but the boys wanted it to be separated in order to make sure that each

gets his own gifts and money. Their concern was that if it was combined they would have to share the money.

The above discussion gives the overall picture of Mdantsane, but it was observed that the situation was different in the RDP houses and the informal settlement, even though there was an emphasis on money from the MC but the response was not the same as other areas (see 4.6.4). Furthermore, it was not the case in all the *imigidi* but in most of them.

#### **4.6.5 The initiation practice and poverty**

The meaning of poverty is contextually contested (Jones 1999:9). Poverty is much more than just a lack of income, but rather involves a lack or deficiency in some form (Jones 1999:10). In South Africa, the effects of poverty have been felt and manifested differently in the rural and the urban areas. As discussed (see 4.3), colonisation, urbanisation and industrialisation have all contributed to the escalation of the traditionally known *imikhukhu* (shacks or informal settlements) in urban areas. The majority of the rural population migrate to urban areas in search of a 'better life' (see 4.3.3) and on arriving reside in the informal settlements. Bank (1996: 15) who did his ethnographic research in East London observed that poverty in the area was characterised by an increase in the consumption of alcohol, having many children, unemployment and crime. *Imikhukhu* have always been densely populated, located a great distance from economic opportunities, characterised by unemployment, poor health care, limited public service, a high level of child mortality, the HIV plague and low morale (Butler 2005:135).

During this research, it was observed that in all informal settlements and the RDP areas closer to them the level of crime was higher than in other areas (see 4.6.5; 4.9 and 4.10). Furthermore, there was more physical fighting associated with major initiation ceremonial events, committed by *amakwenkwe*, *amakrwala* and *abafana*. In Mdantsane in NU 4 and NU 9, informal settlements and the RDP houses more violence and criminal activities were observed than in other areas of Mdantsane. So was the case in Whittlesea. The Sada area was an area that had more informal settlements than Dongwe and, as a result, more crime, alcohol abuse and fighting

occurred in Sada than in Dongwe. The poverty traits that I observed were similar to the observations by Bank (1996) in Duncan village in the early 1990s. One other thing that was observed was that the people in poverty-stricken areas visited the *izikhwetha* more often and more especially during the day, which could be an indication that they were unemployed and did not have to wait until after hours, as in other areas (see 4.6.4). One other observation was that there was a strong sense of communality among people in the informal settlements which was shown in their support of each other. The ceremonial events were better attended in poverty stricken areas than any other areas and one of the reasons for such high attendance could be that during the initiation ceremonies there are usually free meals.

#### **4.7. Technological issues**

Kepe (2010:731) observed that in urban areas the boys had access to modern conveniences such as beds, radios, and cell phones, all of which made a mockery of the requirement that initiates must learn to suffer by denying themselves the comforts they were used to before initiation. The same was observed during this study, the use of modern technology was more prevalent in Mdantsane than in other areas.

In Mdantsane and Whittlesea older informants raised concerns over the use of cell phones with cameras by the initiates. To them this was a sign of disrespecting the tradition. They further elaborated that the initiates use cell phones to communicate with women and their girl friends as well as view women pictures and send their pictures to women. In the past these cell phones were not available because the idea was that, while the initiates were in the lodge, they should avoid the outside world and have no contact whatsoever with people in the community. Furthermore, that their minds should forget about women and they were not even allowed to talk about women while in the initiation. If an initiate was found talking about females or had contact with them he would be punished. The *ukuzila* of women and the community contributed to their healing process and taught them self-discipline.

In Mdantsane, cell phones were observed in the lodges. In some cases they were used by the *abakhwetha* whereas in other cases they were just lying on the ground

or were in the possession of the *inqalathi*. At one point in Mdantsane during the interview with about five initiates and two of them were carrying cell phones, an old man shouted “*ndindi* (normally shouted when announcing presence/arrival), *makwedini nam ndandinjalo, ndicinga ndiyabulawa kanti ndenziwa indoda*” (*ndindi*, boys I was once like you, thinking I was being killed but I was being made a man). After the old man had left, I asked why the *abakhwetha* hid their cell phones when they heard the old man coming. One of the *abakhwetha* replied: “*yho ncentsa la madala uyasiquthisa xa ebone sine cell phones*” (*yho* that old man punishes us when he sees that we have cell phones). I then asked “*abanye abantu bathini xa bebona ukuba nine cell phone*”? (what do other people say when they see that you have cell phones?) The reply was that there were some old men, like the one who came who had an issue with cell phones but the rest of the people understood that times have changed. I asked how they knew it was him coming. The reply was that they knew the voices of the regulars, unless it was someone who was not coming often.

One of the informants from Whittlesea said that, “*Uyabona ababakhwetha abanambeko bangakuqhatha ucinge balungile, ukuba ungabagqogqa ungabona banazo nee cell fones apha kubo, qha bathi xa beva kusiza abantu bazifihle*” (You see these initiates are disrespectful, they can easily deceive you, if you can search them you will find that they have cell phones but when they hear that someone is coming they hide their cell phones). In Whittlesea there were few cell phones observed. There were two instances where initiates were walking and talking on the cell phones and the moment they saw us with other men coming, they immediately hid the cell phones. In Cala no cell phones were observed and no one raised concerns over the use of cell phones. In Njiveni there was an open use of cell phones and during the interviews no one raised concerns over the use of a cell phone or camera. One of the initiates responded that in Cala cell phones were used but when the initiates heard that someone was coming they immediately hid their cell phones due to respect hence I did not observe any cell phones.

In Mpondoland, the cell phones were used openly and no one raised concerns over that, it was a norm and no one questioned it. It has to be considered that Pondoland represents a unique case over other areas investigated, as was mentioned in other chapters of this study.

The conclusion to the matter of cell phones can be that in all areas there was a use of cell phones. In Mpondoland, there was an open use of cell phones and there the understanding was that there was nothing wrong with it. In Mdantsane and Whittlesea, cell phones were used in front of other men and would be hidden in front of those they feared or who had problems with cell phones. In Cala the cell phones were hidden from all men and only used secretly by the initiates.

#### **4.8. Fast life**

The fast pace was observed in urban areas, where everything was done according to time and in some cases without paying much attention. For example, after the slaughtering of a goat and the *umshwamo* ceremony (the boy eating the *intsonyama* - part of the goat only eaten by the boy before going for the initiation), the men in the rural areas spent some time with the boy *benika umkhombandlela* (giving direction). In the urban areas immediately after *umshwama* most men went back to their business and those who stayed were in a hurry to have the boy taken to the bush for initiation. In the urban areas, people had busy schedules and other engagements; therefore, less time was spent on traditional practices whereas in the rural areas life was more laid back and the event took the whole day. In Mdantsane there were very few instances where there was a collaboration of *imiphumo*, whereas in Cala and the villages in Whittlesea there were more cases where different boys graduated together and collaborated in their *imiphumo*. In Mdantsane and the townships in Whittlesea, the *imiphumo* and *imigidi* ceremonies did not take long, as a result some men were able to attend more than three different ceremonies in one day. In Cala the ceremonies took almost the whole day. In some instances where there was no combination of the two different ones an arrangement was made to have one group of initiates graduate a day later than the others so that everybody can give support.

#### **4.9 The abuse of alcohol**

Apart from the ceremonies that were performed for the Church initiation there was the use of alcohol in all other areas. A high level of alcohol abuse among *amakhwenkwe*, *abafana* and *amakrwala* was observed in the Mdantsane and

Whittlesea areas. The use of alcohol by *amakhankatha* is discussed in detail in chapter six (6.3.5.2). During *umgidi* there were instances where *abafana* would go and demand more alcohol from the *izibazana* of the *amakrwala*, while during *umguyo* the *amakhwenkwe* did the same. The demand for alcohol was in the name of 'iimfanelo zethu' (what is due to us) and 'amalungelo ethu' (our rights) and at times a lack of respect was observed when the attendees spoke to the *izibazana* and some family members demanding alcohol.

In Cala there was not much abuse of alcohol; in fact it was very limited. The type of alcohol that was popular in Cala was *umqombofi* (African beer) and brandy was only given to old men, whereas in the Mdantsane, Sada and Dongwe areas a number of bottles of brandy were given to the young and the old. As a result of alcohol abuse, there were instances of violence and criminal activities during *umguyo*, *umgidi* and *umxhentso*.

The observation was that in the areas identified as urban, the *umguyo*, *umgeno*, *umgidi* and *umxhentso* were centred on a lot of alcohol abuse. Given the fact that alcohol has become expensive, the people attending the event knew that at least they will have alcohol for free. One of the old men from Whittlesea said that, "when people speak of the successful initiation the *umgidi* ceremony becomes the highlight; it has little to do with the moral life style but everything to do with how much alcohol was there".

For instance, in Mdantsane, it was common knowledge that *abakhwetha* did use alcohol in order to keep their minds off things and were further encouraged to smoke dagga in order to minimise the pain. Other behaviours seen as challenging the ritual that were associated with the urban influence included initiates spending days and nights in taverns or shebeens (informal pubs); being fully clothed with shoes, pants, shirts and so forth - when they are supposed to remain naked - and spending nights with their girlfriends, which is a taboo (Kepe 2010:33).

#### 4.10 Crime

In the previous paragraph it was shown how the abuse of alcohol caused crime during the initiation practice. In urban areas there were more cases of crime reported than in the rural areas. Research done by Bogopa (2007) in Port Elizabeth showed that the initiation had become a place of criminal activities. In some cases crime was committed by the initiates themselves and sometimes it was the members of the community who committed crime and hid in the initiation lodges (Bogopa 2007:5).

Police records in Mdantsane indicated that there were quite a number of criminal cases performed by *amakrwala*, ranging from rape, stealing, murder, attempted murder, etc (Criminal cases: Mdantsane records Police station). I mentioned in chapter two (see 2.8.4) that Mdantsane was divided into suburbs (NU 17 and Golden Highway), four roomed houses (NU 1-16), the new RDP houses (some areas of NU 4 and 9), informal settlements (shacks) and Highway which is a central business district with a shopping complex and taxi ranks. During the *imiguyo*, *imigidi* and *imixhentso* in the informal settlements and in areas that are closer to them there was more use of alcohol as well as more fighting and criminal activities observed. In those areas there were more boys and women who were drunk, wallets were reported stolen, some people were robbed and some were stabbed during *umxhentso*. Even in areas such as NU 7, NU 1, NU 2 and NU 3, there was violence and criminal activities but less than the informal settlements and new RDP housing area. In Highway there were more criminal activities done by *amakrwala* and I witnessed some of them. One could not tell where they were from and cannot assume that they were from areas around Highway (NU1-5) because highway is a CBD and there is a converging of people from all areas and some of the *amakrwala* used it as their meeting place. In Whittlesea, there were criminal activities observed during *imiguyo*, *imigidi* and *imixhentso* but not as many as in Mdantsane. Sada, which has more informal settlements, had more criminal activities than Dongwe. In Cala there were no criminal activities or physical fighting during all the events and ceremonies. There were boys during *imiguyo* who were reported to have threatened people in the village, but they were called the following day and were warned that such behaviours were not acceptable.

## 4.11 Language

There was a different use of language in the different areas. In the rural and semi-urban areas, people spoke isiXhosa and in the urban areas the popular language was Tsotsi language using terms such as *broer* (brother), *dyan* (elder brother), *taima* (father). Even among *abafana* in Mdantsane, the Tsotsi language was used. In rural areas the informants spoke with a soft tone without raising their voices and with a lot of respect. The terms of communication that was used in urban areas were not found in the rural areas. Even in the semi-urban area the communication was more similar to that of the rural area which showed the rural influence in Whittlesea. As indicated under 4.3.5 some of the young informants (*amakrwala* and *abakhwetha*) were more comfortable speaking English than isiXhosa and some had a very limited understanding of isiXhosa.

## 4.12 Geographical factors

There are many reasons that people have no control over that makes it challenging for urban dwellers to maintain the ways in which the ritual was done in the past or in the same way as in the rural areas.

### 4.12.1 Landscape

One of these reasons is the shortage of space for building the initiates' huts, resulting in huts being built too close to residential areas – a taboo in the ritual. The researcher observed the unique environmental differences that had an effect on the initiation practice. The rural areas were characterised by mountains, more land with trees and rivers an environment associated with the presence of ancestors in most African cultures hence the performance of sacred rituals or practices in forests..... The landscape and mountains were crucial for the initiation practice because that was where the initiates were normally hiding for the duration of their initiation. The practice was normally performed in the bush away from women and other people and the areas must be spacious for the initiates to go hunting and seek food; the rural area was an ideal place for such needs. The rural areas have enough space for initiates to move around, play games and hunt.

The urban area was totally different to the above area. In Mdantsane there was not enough land that was away from people as urbanisation has seen the increase of “*imikhukhu*” (informal settlements) all over the area. This was one of the reasons why one would see initiates walking close to people. In urban areas one would see initiates walking along the road or crossing the main roads and even when tourists wanted to see the initiates they would drive in the main township roads.

In Mpondoland instead of *amabhoma* in the bush, it was observed that the popular practice is the use of huts that are inside the yards. Most of the huts belong to the families of one of the initiates, sometimes the yards of the *amakhankatha*. In Njiveni, as the Chief alluded, they no longer encourage *amabhuma* in the bush as there have been cases of violence and lightning that resulted in deaths of initiates and now they are concerned about the safety of initiates. Instead of *amabhuma* they use the permanent huts available in the yards (see 6.11 and 6.11.1).

#### **4.12.2 Rivers**

Qangule (1973:1) and Lamla (2005:55) agree that a river symbolises purification, redemption, spiritual renewal, hope, new life and regeneration to the Xhosa people. Most of the African rituals that are related to calling and rebirth are centred around the river. According to Lamla (2005:7), traditionally for the operation, the boys were led to a spot near a river with running water and were then circumcised there. My observations during this research were that the boys were not necessarily led to a river spot for circumcision but the river was more symbolic during seclusion and the day of *umphumo*. During seclusion the initiates from all areas except in Mdantsane were observed going to the nearby rivers to wash and for “*ukuphumza ingqondo*” (relaxing one’s mind) and “*ukuthetha nabaphantsi*” (to communicate with the ancestors). During *umphumo* some initiates were observed running towards the river to wash off the white clay as part of their preparation for their *umphumo*. According to one of the older informants “*umlambo usisisekelo kwisiko lokwaluka, yile nto sithi xa sisalusa sikhangele indawo enomlambo ukuze umkhwetha akwazi ukufikelela*” (the river is of great significance in the initiation ritual, that is why we always look for a spot nearby the river so the initiates can easily access it). While I was an initiate, I

had to go and wash at the river and when I was an *ikrwala*, for three months I had to wake up every day at 4 am, before anybody could wake up and wash at the river. In cases where the rivers are far, the *amakrwala* normally walk a long distance to find a river. In Mdantsane the rivers are scarce so the initiates are washed using water from a container instead.

#### **4.12.3 Grass**

In Cala and the two rural villages of Whittlesea the initiation lodges were made of grass and after the ritual all the grass was burnt whereas in the two townships of Whittlesea and Mdantsane the lodges were built using corrugated iron sheets and it became difficult to destroy it. The community was aware that, according to this practice, the material and all resources that were used must be burnt but they had no other alternative - it was impossible to burn the corrugated iron sheets. However, they did make sure that all other materials and blankets that were used by the initiate were burnt.

One of the old men from Mdantsane noted that;

*Mna nangona ndihlala apha eMdantsane kodwa onke amakhwenkwe am ndiwolusela ekhaya eQoboqobo. Phaya akukho zingxaki zemilambo nazingxaki zengca, nditsho nempahla yokusebenza umkhwetha ayisokoleki. Isiko kaloku kufanele lihambe ngendlela eyiyo lingafakwa isilungu.* (Even though I live in Mdantsane but all my boys are initiated at my home in Qoboqobo, where there is access to rivers, grass and the material used for the healing of *the initiate*, the rite must be performed in its rightful manner not to be westernised).

#### **4.13 The initiation practice and change in Mpondoland**

It has already been mentioned in chapter one and chapter two that the initiation practice, more specifically in Mpondoland has been characterised by a lot of irregularities and deaths. The area of Mpondoland had the worst circumcision casualties in the Province (Weekend Argus, 22 July 2006). It has to be acknowledged that the initiation practice was discarded in Mpondoland in the nineteenth century (Van der Vliet 1974:229) and later re-instated in the early 1990s (Meintjies1998:6; see also 2.5.2). As mentioned before, Faku, the then amaMpondo

Chief abolished the practice and this shows the role of traditional leaders in cultural change.

After the initiation practice was discarded in Mpondoland the effects of mobility caught up with the practice as boys who studied at the University of Fort Hare and Lovedale frequently returned home circumcised, probably because they had contact with Xhosa and Thembu girls who refused to have anything to do with uncircumcised men (Van der Vliet 1974:228; Hammond-Tooke 1962:81-82). The possibility is that they were circumcised in hospitals closer to their schools. Furthermore, as early as the 1960s some of the amaMpondo males had their circumcision performed at a Mission Hospital. This was not necessary due to cultural reasons and it was not compulsory or regulated but it was a household or personal decision (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 81-82). Not only the amaMpondo boys but also the amaBhaca (did not practice initiation) boys were influenced by their neighbours, the amaHlubi and, as a result, circumcision was introduced to amaBhaca who live in areas closer to the amaHlubi (Van der Vliet 1974:228).

Meintjies (1998:7) who did his research in the 1980s reported that in Mpondoland there were boys who went for initiation but against their parents' permission. Even before the research conducted by Meintjies, there were boys who were circumcised at the hospitals as previously mentioned, but traditional circumcision was still rejected by the amaMpondo parents. Parents again were pressurised by the boys who were studying at schools and universities outside Mpondoland, this time the pressure was not for circumcision, but the boys had the initiation practice in mind. Meintjies (1998:104) writes that when the amaMpondo boys arrived in other areas like Umtata, Alice and Port Elizabeth, they were called boys because they were not circumcised. In some instances even the girls from areas where circumcision is practiced will refuse to date them due to them not being circumcised. What is interesting about initiation and mobility is that in the 1960's, the boys who were studying outside Mpondoland introduced circumcision in Mpondoland and later in the 1990s again the 'educated boys' were the ones introducing change, this time it is not just circumcision but circumcision with cultural value (initiation). Lately the boys circumcised in hospitals were no longer recognised as men by the emerging group of 'traditionally circumcised' men. The amaMpondo boys now have become so proud of

the initiation practice to the point that they are willing to die as “men rather than to die as boys”. When one of the initiates from Mpondoland was asked why he wanted to be circumcised the traditional way, he replied “*mna ngenekhe ngelukele esibhedlele kungcono, ndife kunoba ngiphoxeke esibhedlele*” (I will never be circumcised in the hospital; I will rather die than to be embarrassed in the hospital).

In a discussion with the amaMpondo Chief, he echoed this view by stating that the boys were willing to die for this practice. The amaMpondo parents were reluctant to allow initiation back to the area and were saying that it was no longer part of their tradition. The refusal to accept this practice led to a lot of illegal and irregular circumcision practices because the boys were not giving up on initiation. The intervention of the chiefs and other traditional leaders led to parents accepting the practice for those who want to do it. Some of the parents used to (and still do) take their children to amaXhosa areas where the initiation practice was said to be safer and those in charge knew how it should be done and how to take care of the initiates. During my fieldwork in Mpondoland I saw at least two trucks full of young boys between the ages of 16-20 transported to villages towards Umthatha. I was informed that they were taken for circumcision, and that some will remain there until they were healed and others will come home to be taken care of by their brothers who were circumcised, and they will be kept in a separate house until they healed. I was further informed that the boys were taken to Umthatha so as to avoid casualties and stigmatisation. Casualties occurred because the few people who performed circumcision in amaMpondo areas were not experienced traditional circumcisers and hence a number of boys died and some had to go to hospitals. Stigmatisation, in the sense that even though the initiation practice had recently been introduced in Mpondoland, the youth had created groups for themselves and if a person was circumcised in hospital he would be discriminated against.

#### **4.14 *Imigidi* (graduation celebrations) in Mpondoland**

In Mpondoland there were no big *umgidi* celebrations, few families had the *umgidi* on the day of the graduation and some promised to have *umgidi* later in the year when they would have the necessary resources. The passion and excitement that was observed in other areas which involved spending a lot of money and celebrating with

the community was not prevalent in Mpondoland. For most of the boys who graduated, the family merely had a dinner with close neighbours and some families just received the 'new men' and were happy to see they had made it. The families were happy that their child had returned from the initiation alive and there was no strong emphasis on the traditional role of the ritual. In a few of the houses where there were celebrations, attendance was only by family members and a few men who have been through the initiation. Most of those who attended were peers of the boy who themselves had just been through the initiation practice. The *amaxhego* had little interest in talking about initiation apart from their concerns over deaths and that it should be abolished in Mpondoland. Some responded that the practice was no longer part of their culture and they only practiced it because their children insisted that it should be re-introduced.

#### **4.15 The debate around the discontinuation of the initiation practice**

The high incidence of deaths and genital mutilation due to the initiation practice caused an outcry and various communities, political and Church leaders called for the banning of initiation. Those who are anti-initiation suggest that this practice is outdated and should be replaced by modern ways of undergoing circumcision (Twala 2007:23). Some authors like Mcotheli (2006) and Myemana (2007) went to the extent of writing and substantiating their reason for the banning of this practice.

M Wornip of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site in Gauteng was quoted by the *Natal Witness* (2002-07-15: 6 in Twala 2007: 29) as saying:

The fact that traditional circumcision is cultural does not make it right, I believe that circumcision schools should be burned; I believe that those who run them should be charged and put into prison. I think that it is completely wrong when it is practiced by adults on children and it is a complete violation of their rights to their own bodies. Human rights must judge culture, or if not that, it must hold it very firmly in check.

The majority of the informants in Mpondoland suggested that this practice be abolished as it no longer played its moral traditional role and the number of lives that were lost due to it. Furthermore, when men came out of this practice they became worse than they were in their behaviour before initiation. Some informants from the amaMpondo responded that the other groups can continue with the practice but it

should be abolished in Mpondoland as it carried no meaning to their communities. One of the old men asserted that: *“Eli alilosiko lethu, kudala sahlukana nalo, mhlawumbi ezingxaki sinazo zenziwa yintoba izinyanya zethu ziqumbile”* (the initiation ritual is no longer our practice and we stopped it long ago, perhaps the problems that we encounter are due to the fact that the amaMpondo ancestors are angry). During the time of research in Mpondoland, there was a hot initiation and circumcision debate on the University of Transkei (UNITRA) community radio. The majority of the callers, including women, supported that initiation be abolished among the amaMpondo as it was no longer part of their tradition.

One of the callers argued that;

*Zonke ezi ngxaki zikhoyo zokuphela kwentlonipho nokubhubha kwabakhwetha zenziwa yinto yokuba izinyanya zamaMpondo ziqumbile eli ayilo siko lethu, xa sifuna ukulenza isiko lethu kumele sicamagushe sicele kwizinyanya, ukuba ziyavuma singalenza kodwa ukuba ziyala akho nto singayenza.* (All these problems such as disobedience and deaths of initiates are due to the anger of the amaMpondo ancestors; we need to plead with them for the permission to do the practice. If they approve we can do it. If they refuse there is nothing we can do about it).

Some of the old men explained that if the people were to refuse to abolish the practice an alternative could be that the amaMpondo perform a ritual event where the practice is re-introduced to the ancestors. Some of the older informants from Mpondoland supported initiation and further suggested that the practice be re-introduced in a correct and culturally accepted manner. Their contention was also that this practice was abolished by their ancestors and later imposed in Mpondoland by the youth, and that the custodians of the practice were never consulted when it was re-introduced. The custodians include ancestors, traditional leaders and elders. Some suggested that firstly, a repentance ceremony be held in Mpondoland to request forgiveness from the ancestors for re-introducing a custom that they had abolish and further plead for their guidance in re-introducing it. After that ceremony then proceedings for its re-introduction could commence.

In Cala all the informants rejected the idea of discontinuation and cited that initiation still have a positive role to play. One of the informants from Cala said that: *“Ukwaluka lisiko lethu elidala kwaye alinakuze liphele”* (initiation is our old tradition and will never come to an end). The idea of abolishing the practice was rejected by

the majority of informants from all other areas as not a solution to the problem at hand.

#### **4.15.1. Separation of circumcision from initiation**

Lamla (2005:7) observed that in some areas like Mt Fletcher and Matatiele there was already a separation between circumcision and initiation. The traditional surgeons had been replaced by medical doctors. The boys were circumcised by the medical doctor, while in the lodges and the biomedical material (betadine, bandages and other ointments) from the hospital used to dress the wound. When the wounds were healed, the initiates were taken to their respective families to perform all rituals and teachings related to the initiation practice. Lamla (2005:7) further observed that in such areas there were less health hazards; in fact, of all of the problems reported in the media none came from the above areas. Even the health officials that were interviewed supported the idea of separation arguing that circumcision should be performed by qualified staff and it could be done in two ways; that the boys are taken to a hospital or the medical doctors circumcise the boys in the lodges.

Some of the older informants from Mpondoland and a few from other areas supported the idea of separation of circumcision from initiation as part of the solution to the problems associated with initiation. Most of the informants from Mpondoland argued that the boys should be taken to a hospital and be circumcised by medical practitioners. One of the older informants from Mpondoland who said that he went through the Xhosa initiation in Mthatha said, *ukuba bekusiyiwa ngokwam mna bendiza kuthi aba bam oonyana mabadlangwe ngugqirha wesilungu senze isiko apha endlini, kodwa yo-o! Aba bafana abafuni nokuyiva loo nto*" (if it was according to me I would recommend that my sons go and be circumcised in hospital and then later we can come and perform the ritual here at home but you know these boys are against such an idea at all cost). Their argument was that the majority of the boys end up in hospital anyway, so it would be better if an arrangement could be made to have a separate space to treat initiates in the hospital. Some of the informants who supported the idea of sending boys to the hospital raised reservations about the idea of having the boys circumcised and treated by female doctors and nurses.

One of the older informants said, “*mna ndiyayixhasa le nto yokuthumela abantwana esibhedlele kodwa hayi le yokuba baluswe baphinde baphathwe ngabafazi, ukuba kungalungiswa nje lo nto ibe ngamadoda odwa aza kuphatha abafana*” (I support the idea of sending our kids to the hospital but I have a problem with them being circumcised and treated by females, if that could be rectified and let only males participate in the male circumcision).

The moment the man said that all of them in that group discussion agreed “*..ey yitsho uphinde...*” (say that again) “*..utsho khona...*” (exactly that’s a fact). Apart from the issue of involvement of female doctors and nurses, the majority of informants from Mpondoland supported sending the boys to a hospital for circumcision.

The informants from Mdantsane, Whittlesea and Cala who supported the idea of separation said that it could only be accepted on condition that the medical practitioners would come to the initiation lodge and not the boys going to and be circumcised in hospitals. One of the older informants from Mdantsane said:

*Mna kunokuba kubhubhe abantwana bethu nokuba isiko lethu libe negama elibi, ndiyavuma ukuba oogqirha mabeze apha esuthwini bazokwalusa la makhwenkwe. Masamkele madoda ukuba amaxesha ngamanye ngoku akusafani neentsuku zakudala.* (Rather than to have more boys dying and our initiation rite to get a bad name, I agree that the medical doctors to come and circumcise these boys, let us accept that times have changed, the days today are not the same as in our time).

One of the older men said in front of his son who is an *ikrwala*, “*mna ndicinga ukuba aba bafana mabangene esuthwini kodwa oogqirha beze apha kubo ukuze kunqandwe oku kufa*” (I think that the medical practitioner should come and circumcise these boys in the initiation in order to end the deaths). His son responded, “*hayi kaloku tata nina noluka ngendlela eyiyo, ngoku nifuna abazukulwana noo-nyana benu boluswe ngogqirha besilungu, ububele abulunganga*” (no father your generation were initiated in an acceptable traditional manner but now you want your grandchildren and your children to be circumcised by medical doctors, being too lenient is not a right thing).

The view that either the boys go to a hospital or the medical practitioners go to the initiation lodges was rejected outright by the younger generation from all areas. It

was interesting that this view was rejected by the younger generation; one would have expected that because they are a younger generation and therefore more open to change, therefore they would have been the ones to support it. The reason given by the younger generation was that they also want to take the same journey that was taken by their forefathers and fathers. One of them said that;

*Nokuba kungathiwa oogqirha baza kusizela apha ebakhwetheni kuyafana mos ugqirha ngugqirha nokuba ukolusela esibhedlela okanye esuthwini kuyafana. Mna soze ndivume ukudlangwa ngabo ndisebenzise i better die. Ngubani ofuna ukuba ngunotywetywe? (Even if the doctors can come and circumcise us here in the bush, a doctor is a doctor whether he circumcises you in the hospital or in the bush. I will never be circumcised by them and use betadine, who wants to be a fake man? (for an explanation about unotywetywe see 6.6.1).*

#### **4.15.2 Modified retention of the practice**

Matshekga (2003:395) argues that;

Although the view that the practice should be retained has some validity, it is difficult, from a human rights point of view, to accept the retention of the practice in its current form. First, circumcision, as it is currently practised in South Africa harms young children physically, socially, and mentally. Some of the children go to the mountains to seek manhood and return being neither men nor women.

The perfect example of the modified retention is the proposal that was made by the Western Cape Government. Due to the limited land space, crimes associated with initiation schools, lack of co-ordination of the practice, etc, the Western Cape Government came up with a discussion document to address issues related to the initiation practice. The discussions gave birth to a proposal of 'cultural villages' where safer initiation schools can take place (Afrol News 2 March 2004). The idea of the cultural villages was to solve problems associated with initiation while maintaining its cultural significance. It was recommended that land be made available where the cultural villages will be erected for the accommodation of *abakhwetha*. Each initiate would have his own room where he is kept until his initiation period is over. The process will still be kept very traditional in the sense that *iingcibi* will do their job and *amakhankatha* will be trained as informal teachers. It was further recommended that there will be medical doctors and male nurses on site to attend to any emergencies. The parents will send the boys and pay some amount which will be subsidised by the government and *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi* will be paid by the government as well.

After completing the activities at the school the boys can then be sent home for family traditional rituals. The document was discussed and there were questions raised. In particular, the House of Traditional Leaders felt that the document was undermining the traditional practice. Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana had no problems with the idea but his concern was the issue of the temporary lodges that could not be burnt. When the initiate graduates from the initiation, everything he used while in the lodge is burnt, including the material used to build the *ibhuma*. However, one wonders about a situation whereby a permanent building is used. Chief Nonkonyana further argued that when the *umkhwetha* graduates, the *ibhuma* is set alight and the *umkhwetha* is told not to look back which symbolises that he will now live a different life than when he was a boy, as all boyhood behaviours are left in the initiation lodge (Twala 2007:28). A permanent structure will deprive the initiate that opportunity. The majority of the informants were not aware of the Western Cape village and as a result when it was discussed they needed more information on it. During the discussion those who had more information filled them in and I contributed as well to make it clearer. One of them responded that; “*Mna ndiyaqala ukuyiva kodwa ingathi noko ayikho mbi kakhulu, kodwa ke iza kuthiwani yona indaba yokutshiswa kwezikhwetha?*” (I am hearing it for the first time but it is not that bad, but then what will happen with the issue of burning of the initiation lodges?)

One of the informants from Mdantsane said:

*Lo ncimbi waseKapa mos uyafana nale ndlela kolukwa ngayo kwezinye iindawo njengase-Transkei apho ingcibi ivula izikolo zokwaluka eyadini yayo iwagcine ade aphile amakhwenkwe, umehluko ngowokuba ke ngoku kuza kube kukhona oogqirha besilungu.* (The Cape Town proposal is similar to the current practice of initiation more especially in some areas of Transkei where an *ingcibi* open initiation schools in their yards and take care of the boys until they recover, the main difference is that in this case there would be medical doctors)

Another one said that, “*nangona ndiqala ukuyiva nje kodwa noko ayimbanga kakhulu le ndaba yaseKapa, kunganceda ukuba ikhe iqwlaselwe mhlawumbi ingasanceda*” (even though I am hearing it for the first time but the Cape Town suggestion is not that bad, it would help if it could be given more attention, maybe it could be a solution).

#### 4.15.3 Views against the discontinuation of the initiation practice

In spite of all the above given reasons for the banning of the initiation practice, initiation is one of the Xhosa traditional practices that have been resilient and resistant within an urban industrialised environment (Meintjies 1998: 7). The cultural contact in both urban and rural settings led to a few individuals from outside the Xhosa speaking communities adopting the practice (Daily Dispatch 2008; Meintjies 1998:7). In spite of the Christian missionaries' teaching against what they referred to as "pagan customs", African people have tenaciously clung to the customs and rituals that are of importance to them, such as manhood initiation (Ntombana 2009:77). More than 80 years ago Laidler (1922:13) called initiation a "pagan custom" and suggested its abolishment. Ntombana (2009) argues that Laidler's view is understandable as his informant in the research was a member of the London Church, and therefore a product of the school of Missionaries' writing and a very stereotyped Christian worldview. This is shown in his incorrect information, such as, the idea that any man could perform the initiation (Laidler 1922:18). This is contrary to the view of most writers who hold the view that the initiation surgeon (*ingcibi*) is chosen by the chief, or in some areas by the fathers of the boys, and he was always expected to live a good moral life and to be "ritually pure" (Pauw 1994:13).

Bogopa (2007: 59) observed a lot of discrepancies and criminal activities in the initiation schools in Port Elizabeth, but still recommended that abolishing it will not solve the problems but instead recommended further research and intervention programmes. After having done research on the perceptions of the Eastern Cape people on traditional circumcision, Meel (2005:59) found that initiation is of great significance regarding the cultural values of the amaXhosa. He further recommended that a well-planned prospective study be carried out in the province to further explore initiation related knowledge and attitudes. In recent research in the Eastern Cape, it was found that out of 114 initiates interviewed, 96 of them expressed pride in participating in it (Makhubu 2007:11).

It is true that the practice has acquired many negative issues, such as irresponsibility, the abuse of alcohol and a lack of its regulation. This has unfortunately resulted in the death of many initiates. However, the amaXhosa have

shown their commitment to the initiation practice because, according to Mtumane (2004:36), the fact that almost 80% of Xhosa males still practise the rite shows that there is minimal indication of its discontinuation.

The views of informants, both young and old and from all areas except Pondoland were that initiation is one of those Xhosa practices that can never be abolished. One of the informants mentioned that: "*Isiko lokwaluka eli lisiko elingenakuphela nokuba usedolophini nokuba uselalini kuyafana indoda yindoda ngokulandela eli siko*" (The initiation custom is a practice that can never end whether one is in an urban or rural area it is the same, a man is a man by following this custom).

The Xhosa word *isiko lokwaluka* does not have a direct English translation and is probably closer to the initiation custom or rite and carries strong social and religious implications. From the literature and from the informants' arguments against the possibility of abolishing the practice two other traditional concepts *umthetho* (law) and *isithethe* (common practice) were identified. The *umthetho* and *isithethe* together with *isiko* are significant in defining Xhosa tradition and culture. Furthermore, *isiko* is described as a custom that is above the practices associated with *umthetho* and *isithethe*.

#### **4.15.3.1 *Umthetho* (law)**

*Umthetho* (law, statute, decree and rule) is the law set by the governments, traditional courts, kings and family households (Pahl *et al.* 1989: 292). The purpose is for the common good of all and that people will live in peace with each other. Pauw (1994:73-100), describes in detail the "traditional" operation of the amaXhosa political and judicial system. According to the amaXhosa, "the execution of authority did not only mean the application of force but also the duty to lead" (Pauw 1994:73). As a result, this duty to lead was applied and in some areas still applied to the domestic and communal laws. Domestic laws are laws which are supposed to guide families and communal laws are for guiding the different communities.

Each family has its own laws that might be different from those of other families. The social laws maintain order and discipline in the communities, whereas domestic laws

make families uniquely different from each other. Laws can change, but in the African context, they can only be changed by those who adopted them. For example, in the case of communal laws, only the *Inkosi* (chief) or the *Isibonda* (headman), and in the case of domestic household laws, only an *umninimzi* (the head of the household) has a right to change them. Contrary to *isiko*, (see below) when a person has broken the law, they are summoned to appear at *enkundleni* (traditional court), where they will be fined if found guilty. The fine can be in the form of sheep, goats, cows or even money. What is common to *isithethe* and *umthetho* is that they are easily assimilated or easily changed with the times. This is contrary to *isiko* which is believed not to change (see below).

#### **4.15.3.2 *Isithethe* (common practice)**

*Isithethe* is the common practice of the particular cultural group in a given community. *Isithethe* is not only what brings the Xhosa together, but it is also a practice that is accepted in a given social context, for example, *isithethe* that exists in Mdantsane township (an urban township) might be different from the practice in Qumbu (a rural area). Furthermore, the common practice goes beyond the Xhosa or Zulu, but becomes a practice that is common among most African cultures. At the same time, it could be a different practice in the western cultures. For example, within South African indigenous cultures, if a man and woman are entering the house, it is a common practice for a man to open the door and enter the house first and the woman follows. This is because, in their society, the man protects the woman by entering first in case there is danger inside. This is contrary to the white cultural practice, where the man gives respect to the woman by opening the door and allows the woman to enter first. This practice is not related to spirituality or worship, but it is an understanding and practice that is accepted in the particular culture.

#### **4.15.3.3 *Isiko* (custom, rite/ritual)**

In the “traditional” cosmology of the Xhosa-speaking peoples, life force originates from the Supreme Being (*uQamata*), God (Hammond-Tooke, 1962:123; Pauw, 1994: 118). Xhosa people believe that *uQamata* is the highest Supreme Being who is far

away from the living. The departed members of the community (ancestors) who Mbiti (1975:65) calls the living dead are the ones connecting the people to *uQamata*. The customs or rites/rituals are Xhosa protocols of communication between the people and the cosmological world. *Isiko* (custom or rite) is a very religious and spiritual custom that connects African people to God and the ancestors. According to McAllister (1981:5), the term ritual means, a religious behaviour which includes “transcendental beliefs and values” symbolising the relationship between men and transcendental reality. The term ritual does not only carry spiritual connotations, but, further, that its results are the receiving of blessings from the ‘transcendental reality’. The examples of such rites are *imbeleko* (initiation into life or infant initiation), which is practised after the birth of a child, *ulwaluko* (initiation) and *amadini* (sacrifices) that are offered to *Umdali* (the Creator or God) and *abaphantsi* (ancestors). According to Pahl *et al* (1989:194), “*isiko ngummiselo osisigxina*” (the rite is a permanent covenant). This means that *isiko* does not and cannot change and if not done right, this results in wrath and retribution upon those who are guilty and upon their homes and families. Pahl *et al* (1989:1194) have a phrase that states, “*AmaXhosa asoze ahlukane nesiko lokwaluka naphakade*”. This means that the amaXhosa will never abolish the initiation rite: not ever. It will persist in perpetuity.

The concept of *isiko* was echoed by most of the informants from all areas of the research. One of the members of the older generation responded that; “*ukwaluka oku lisiko kwaye isiko elinenkqayi elingummiselo osisigxina phakathi kwamaXhosa nabaphantsi*” (initiation is an old practice that is a permanent covenant between the amaXhosa and their ancestors).

#### **4.16 Summary**

With the realities of cultural change discussed in this chapter, the initiation practice is no longer just a cultural phenomenon; it has become a legal, economical and a health issue. A number of criminal activities had been performed, a lot of lives have been lost and boys lost their manhood and the government spends a lot of money on treating initiates. The loss of lives every season causes pain in the communities and, as a result, a debate on initiation is always an emotional debate. The problems associated with this practice have caused some people to lose interest in it and even

call for its discontinuation. The urban and semi-urban areas seem to have a high level of criminal activities performed in the initiation lodges and by *amakrwala*. The Mpondo areas seemed to have a number of illegal initiation schools and health related matters that lead to the escalating number of deaths every year. As much as it has been shown in this chapter that the effects of urban culture have effects on the initiation practice, it has to be acknowledged that the problems associated with initiation are beyond urban or rural lives. They are issues perpetuated by individuals who no longer take pride in cultural activities.

It is clear that there are differences in the initiation practice in urban, semi-urban and rural areas, however, the traditional principle and the intention is the same, which is to make men out of boys. A shift has been observed in the practice but the majority of Xhosa people still adhere to the initiation practice, as they strongly believe it is the only practice that is able to change the behaviour of boys. The differences that are beyond human control such as landscape, fast life, rivers, grass, etc that were observed between urban and rural areas do not deter Xhosa people from practicing this ritual. It was interesting to note that the amaXhosa are able to integrate their cultural practices into whatever natural resource available to perform to their traditional practices. Even the research by Meissner and Buso (2007:371) suggests that the initiation practice in most areas has retained its cultural value. Even though this practice has been met with challenges discussed in this chapter, a lot of cultural elements have been observed and such elements are what uniquely separate the amaXhosa apart from other South African communities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### POLICIES, ACTS AND PROCEDURES TO REGULATE THE INITIATION PRACTICE

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores and evaluates the policies, acts and procedures which have been introduced by the government and other stakeholders to regulate the initiation practice. Furthermore, in what way these regulatory frameworks affect the initiation practice and its role as a rite of passage that instils values and strengthens the moral fibre of the initiates. Lastly, findings from the fieldwork pertaining to the responses from the Chiefs and the older generation regarding their views on the question concerning the current role of initiation in moral building will be presented.

Section 30 of Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) of the South African Constitution of 1996 (hereinafter the Constitution), gives everyone the right to use their language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice. Furthermore, section 31 provides that people belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community to enjoy and practice their culture, which involves; (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use of their language; and (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civic society.

Initiation is practised by some of the South African cultural groups, including the amaXhosa as part of their venerable cultural traditions and thus, by implication, it is recognised by the Constitution. The constitution gives the individual the right to choose a cultural identity. The implication to cultural identity can be twofold: the individual can protest if the expression of his or her cultural identity is subdued and can also resist the imposition of cultural practices that he or she does not choose to follow (Van der Meider 1999:34). These rights must be understood in the context of all other rights that are provided for in the Constitution and may not be an infringement of other rights.

Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights), Section 15 reads,

1. *Everyone has a right to freedom of conscious, religion, thought, belief and opinion*
2. *Religious observances may be conducted at a state or state aided institutions;*
  - (a) *those observances follow rules made by appropriate public authorities;*
  - (b) *they are conducted on an equitable basis; and*
  - (c) *attendance at them is free and voluntary.*

It is argued in chapter 6 (6.4) that, according to the amaXhosa, there is no difference between culture and religion. Religion is part of the African heritage and found in all areas of human life (Mbiti 1976:8). Furthermore, culture is a driving force behind the moral life of Xhosa people. The Xhosa initiation is one of those practices that carry a strong religious command hence the right to religion is important as well. Section 15 (c), in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, further states that the attendance of the religious events or practices must be free and voluntary. The issue of voluntary participation has strong implications for the Xhosa initiation practice, because, according to this stipulation, the decision to attend the initiation should fully depend on the boy (see 5.2.2). This was the main argument of Bonani in his court case (see 5.2.5.1).

Chapter 9 (181 (c) and 185) of the Constitution makes provision for the establishment and functions of a commission for the promotion and protection of religious, cultural and linguistic rights of the communities. The Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders was born out of this provision and its functions are dealt with in Chapter 12: 211 of the Constitution as,

1. *National legislation may provide for a role of traditional leadership as an institution at local level on matters affecting local communities.*
2. *To deal with matters relating to traditional leadership, the role of traditional leaders, customary law and customs of communities observing a system of customary law:*
  - a) *National or provincial legislation may provide for the establishment of a House of Traditional Leaders; and*
  - b) *National legislation may establish a Council of Traditional Leaders.*

The constitutional clauses applicable to circumcision and initiation are not the only ones related to culture. For example, Section 28 of Chapter 2 of the Constitution

deals with the child's best interests, where a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years. The Children's Act (no 38 of 2005) deals in detail with the welfare, promotion and protection of children's rights;

The Children's Act (no 38 of 2005) gives effect to the constitutional rights of children. The Act prohibits children below the age of 16 from being subjected to traditional circumcision that is detrimental to their wellbeing. In addition to that, the Act prohibits that children should be discriminated against, exploited and exposed to any kind of physical, emotional and moral harm.

Chapter 2, Section 12 (8) of the Children's Act (no 38 of 2005) prohibits the circumcision of male children under the age of 16 except when:

- *Circumcision is performed for religious purposes in accordance with the practices of the religion concerned and in the manner prescribed; or*
- *Circumcision is performed for medical reasons on the recommendation of a medical practitioner.*

Section 12 (9) of the Children's Act (no 38 of 2005) states that circumcision of male children over the age of 16 may only be performed:

- a) *If the child has given consent to the circumcision in the prescribed manner;*
- b) *After proper counselling of the child; and*
- c) *In the manner prescribed*

Section 12 (10) of the Children's Act (no 38 of 2005) says that taking into consideration the child's age, maturity and stage of development, every male child has a right to decline circumcision.

In retrospect, the initiation custom has always been practiced without any understanding of controversies or infringements of any human rights. Even after the Constitution of the democratic government was promulgated there were no major complications associated with initiation and, therefore, no one bothered about implementing the above rights and prohibitions. However, as time went by the

cultural practice of initiation became an infringement on other rights, such as the right to life, children's rights and the right to human dignity. This infringement was due to the escalating deaths of the initiates, death of children under the age of 18 in the initiation schools and the negligent behaviour by the surgeons and guardians who are involved in the initiation practice. The problems associated with the initiation practice often lead to large numbers of initiates seeking help in private and state owned healthcare facilities for the management of their health problems. The idea of initiates ending up in hospitals did not go down well with other surgeons, guardians and traditional leaders; as a result some would keep the initiate in the lodge, even when there were complications for fear of being called a failure. A secretive practice that was for many years kept among Xhosa men was negatively exposed to women, the media and even other cultures.

Due to the escalating deaths of the initiates and irregularities in the initiation practice, the government, House of Traditional Leaders and the Department of Health agreed to cater for the regulation of the traditional circumcision practice. These endeavours gave birth to the passing of the Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act, No 6 of 2001. This law sets standards for the safe practice of traditional circumcision, and sets the rules for giving permission to run circumcision schools.

## **5.2 The Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act (Eastern Cape), No.6 of 2001**

In 1995 the Eastern Cape Department of Health began to engage in a process of consultation with NGOs, civics, traditional leaders, traditional surgeons and other stake holders with the intension to establish provincial guidelines and ultimately a legislative tool for the regulation of traditional male circumcision in the province. A process of consultation started and public hearings were held throughout the province. During the public hearings, it was explained that the intention of the legislation was not to interfere in the traditional practice of initiation but rather to apply health standards necessary for the prevention of injury and loss of life. The outcome of the process was the acceptance of the Bill and the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act (Act No. 6 of 2001) (also known as

Circumcision Act) promulgated in 2001 and will be referred to in this study as AHSTC Act 2001.

### **5.2.1 Objectives of the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001:**

The intention of the AHSTC Act 2001 is:

- a) *To provide for the observation of health standards in traditional circumcision;*
- b) *To provide for the issuing of permission for the performance of a circumcision operation;*
- c) *To provide permission for the holding of circumcision schools.*

In terms of the Act, the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) for Health in the Province must appoint at least one medical officer who will be fully responsible for the permission and the application of the health standards.

The AHSTC Act 2001, (3) states that the medical officer must in addition to any other powers and functions entrusted to him or her by this Act exercise and perform the following powers and functions:

- a) *Issuing of permission to circumcise or treat an initiate;*
- b) *Keeping records and statistics pertaining to circumcision and reporting thereon as prescribed, to the Department; and*
- c) *A right for access to any occasion or instance where circumcision is performed or an initiate is treated.*

### **5.2.2 Regulatory measures of the AHSTC Act of 2001**

The following regulatory matters are contained in the Act:

- Nobody may run a circumcision school without the written permission of the medical officer in their area.

- Nobody, including the parents or guardians of initiates, may interfere with the medical officer or prevent him or her from doing his job.
- Nobody may circumcise an initiate without the written permission of the medical officer in that area.
- Permission is not needed to treat an initiate in a hospital or by a medical doctor outside the traditional context.
- Both the medical officer and the person applying to carry out circumcisions or to run a circumcision school must write their full names on the document asking for permission, they must both sign it and the date must be written on it.
- The initiates may not be treated by anyone except a traditional nurse (*ikhankatha*), a medical practitioner, the medical officer or anyone else authorised by the medical officer.
- At circumcision schools, the medical officer can inspect the school and the initiates whenever he or she deems it necessary.
- The traditional nurse must stay at the circumcision school all the time for the first eight days of the initiation process and, after that, must visit the initiates at least once a day until the end of the initiation.
- The initiates must, at least within the first eight days of the circumcision, be allowed by the traditional nurses to have a reasonable amount of water to drink to avoid dehydration.
- The traditional nurses may not expose the initiates to any harmful situation or danger and must report any sign of illness among the initiates to the medical officer as soon as possible.

- The medical officer may prescribe any measure that may be needed for the good health of the initiates, which may include a departure from traditional methods.
- No initiate may treat another initiate.
- Initiates must be at least 18 years old. If an initiate is younger than 21 years old, his parent or guardian must sign a consent form agreeing to allow him to be circumcised.
- Traditional surgeons must be trained and registered.
- The medical officer grants permission to experienced traditional surgeons to conduct circumcisions.
- Traditional surgeons who do not have the necessary experience must act under the supervision of an experienced traditional surgeon.
- Anyone who breaks the laws pertaining to circumcision could be convicted of an offence and fined up to R1,000 or sent to jail for up to six months.
- Anyone who runs a circumcision school or circumcises an initiate without permission could be fined up to R10,000 or jailed for up to 10 years.

For an initiate to get permission to be circumcised, he needs:

- A birth certificate or identity document proving that he is at least 18 years old, or at least 16 years old if his parents specifically request the initiation;
- Consent from his parent or guardian if he is under the age of 21;

- A certificate from a medical doctor, confirming that he passed a pre-circumcision medical examination and is fit to be circumcised;
- To find a traditional surgeon to carry out the circumcision who is known to his parents or guardian or family and who uses instruments which they approve of.

The medical officer must approve the type of instrument that will be used to carry out the circumcision. At the circumcision, the instruments used must be sterilised and the same instrument should not be used for more than one initiate. If the traditional surgeon does not have enough instruments he should ask the medical officer to provide him with a sufficient number of instruments. The traditional surgeons and traditional nurses must co-operate with the medical officers.

### **5.2.3 The impact of the AHSTC Act of 2001**

Since this provincial ordinance was enacted, there has been little improvement to celebrate in some areas regarding the conditions of the initiation schools. Mpondoland is an area that had more catastrophes than the rest of the province combined. According to the findings of the research done by Meissner and Buso (2007:371), there was no significant improvement in the initiation schools between the years 2001 to 2006. There was still a vast number of unqualified surgeons, negligent traditional nurses, irresponsible parents and medically unfit youth going for initiation (Meissner and Buso 2007:371). One of the major reasons for fatalities in the initiation is the stigma attached to the non-completion of the procedure. Some of the traditional guardians and the initiates themselves preferred that an initiate died in the initiation school rather than to be called an *unotywetywe* (a fake man) (see also 6.6.1). One of the major reasons for the fatalities and deaths in the initiation is the incompetent traditional (nurses) guardians (Peltzer, *et al* 2008:1023; Meissner and Buso 2007:371).

## 5.2.4 Challenges to the implementation of the AHSTC Act of 2001

At the time of its introduction the Act was rejected outright by the House of Traditional Leaders and other traditional leaders. There were various reasons for the rejection.

### 5.2.4.1 The lack of cultural and moral standards

The opening paragraph of the AHSTC Act of 2001, reads:

The aim of the Act is to provide for the observation of the Health Standards in traditional circumcision, to provide the issuing of permission for the performance of a circumcision operation and holding a circumcision school; and to provide for the matters incidental thereto;

The objectives of the AHSTC Act of 2001 are clearly stated and have nothing to do with promoting the cultural heritage or moral role of traditional circumcision (initiation practice). Although the objectives were relevant, the cultural and moral stance was not on the agenda at the time of the promulgation of the Act.

Through this Act, the legislator tried to stamp out major health problems hence part of the title refers to the Application of Health Standards. The agenda of the legislator seemed to bring a remedy to many health problems associated with circumcision within the initiation practice. During the discussions with the health officials they pointed out that the intention was not to interfere in the traditional practice of the initiation rite. The traditional leaders feel that the legislation introduced a number of positive changes as far as health and death issues were concerned but that had been done at the expense of cultural and moral values. Most of the older generation interviewed expressed that most of the moral challenges in the practice have been introduced by the Act, newspapers and television. Most of the informants from Mdantsane and Whittlesea suggested that this Act be reviewed in order to recognise the African way of life. One of the old men said: *“uyabona eli siko lingcoliswe yile mithetho mitsha karhulumenet. Ngoku kukho abantu abangolukanga abahambela izikhwetha. Wakha wayibona phi loo nto amakhwenkwe esiya esikhwetheni?”* (You see, this tradition has been polluted by the new laws introduced to it, now you even

have uncircumcised men who are nurses visiting the initiation schools, where did you ever see boys visiting the initiation lodge?).

It has to be noted that, according to Xhosa tradition, a male who is not initiated is not regarded as a human being; so when an un-initiated man visits the lodges, it is not taken lightly by the men. That is regarded as the worst crime and that person can even be killed. In the case of the Act, the medical officers are state employees and seconded to monitor traditional circumcision interventions being carried out by the department and there is no policy requiring only men (who went through the initiation practice) to be on the program.

It is understandable as mentioned before in this chapter that, the Act came as a result of the escalating number of deaths of initiates, illegal initiation schools and the complications caused by HIV and AIDS. Hence, the stakeholders concentrated more on health issues, neglecting other cultural and morality issues related to the initiation practice. There are a number of practices that were mentioned which are regarded as the African way of life and according to the Act, they were against the law. The stipulation of the Act that the same cutting instrument may not be used on more than one initiate is contrary to the customary cultural practice.

One of the older informants from Cala, noted his concern about the Act as follows:

*Lo mthetho ukhoyo wokwaluka awakhiwanga ngokwempilo yabantu abamnyama. Kuthi umntwana uthobela abazali abe yindoda, ngakumbi xa ehlala kum esondliwa ndim. Angathi ke xa enowakhe umzi abeke eyakhe imithetho, ndigqitwa yile yokuba kufuneka ndive ngaye ukuba uyafuna na ukoluka, ukuba akafuni akanakho ukoluka, ukuba uthe wamolusa ngenkani uza kubanjelwa ukumxhwila* (This new circumcision law is not based on the lives of African people, according to our culture the child obeys the parents up until he becomes a man, especially when they are fed by me. When he has his own house he can then set his rules, I am perplexed by the fact that I must hear from him if he wants to be initiated and if he does not want to be initiated he should not be initiated, if you force him to be initiated you will be arrested for abduction).

According to the Act, a child or nobody can be forced to go for initiation and it is regarded as abduction as in the case of Bonani Yanami. What is interesting about the issue of Bonani Yanami is that he was forced to go to the initiation as recent as 2007. This shows that the majority of Xhosa men still see nothing wrong with it (see

6.6.1). Furthermore, it has always been accepted as a norm for un-initiated men to be taken to the initiation by force, like the case of Fikile Mbalula (see 6.7.1) and this has never been a problem in the past.

#### **5.2.4.2 Lack of communication between the Department of Health and traditional leaders**

According to Twala (2007:31), "While the government attempts to regulate the conduct of initiation schools, seemingly little is being achieved as some stakeholders are reluctant to cooperate with the government in this regard." Since the 1990s, the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape has attempted to involve non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civic organisations, traditional leaders, and traditional surgeons and nurses in making the ritual safer. As previously mentioned the intervention was based on trying to save the lives of the boys and minimise mortalities in the practice. Instead of using a clearly defined strategy, however, the Provincial Government started its interventions by merely supporting ad-hoc initiatives by individuals or units within its ranks (Kepe 2010: 734). Medical doctors and other government officials, for example, were instrumental in setting up a Circumcision Task Team to fulfil the Provincial Government's goals on this issue. It appears that the agenda was health and not for the preservation of culture hence the traditional leaders were left out at the beginning.

In 2001 and 2003, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) deemed the Provincial Legislation to be an insult to their tradition and regarded the Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act No 6 of 2001 as infringing on the rights of traditional communities (Maseko 2008:192). Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana, the former Provincial chairperson of CONTRALESA in the Eastern Cape Province, stated that he was prepared to go to jail rather than complying with the Act (Mkokeli 2005:1). Nonkonyana raised six issues with the Act;

1. *That the Bill was sent to the House of Traditional Leaders for considerations and they had filled their objections to it, however the Act was passed despite their objections to it.*

2. *That it was no longer called the Traditional Circumcision Act but the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act.*
3. *The Act did not recognise traditional circumcision as a traditional rite but rather reducing it in a mere circumcision.*
4. *The Act had brought a third type of circumcision, which is “department of health circumcision”*
5. *That the Act recognised that women could act as medical officer and oversee over initiation schools including traditional circumcision, rejecting as involvement of women in the traditionally male exclusive ritual*
6. *The Act undermined the public right to perform traditional customs. (Mkokeli 2005:1).*

The then acting MEC for Health, Max Mamase, responded in the following manner:

1. *That the House of Traditional Leaders was one of the stakeholders that were consulted before the bill was passed; the fact that they filed objections did not mean it would not be passed.*
2. *Nonkonyana’s statements had no substance and were discriminatory against women and that was unfair.*
3. *That Nonkonyana was part of a group of chauvinists who defiled environmental change.*
4. *That there were men among the communities who were circumcised by female doctors.*

The claims by CONTRALESA and the Health officials suggested that there had been communication problems between the government and traditional leaders. Moreover, the public split between the two individuals set a precedent of conflict between the Department of Health and the House of Traditional Leaders. One could argue that these attacks were more personal than a matter of principle. But the fact that they were not ordinary citizens, but were heading the two entities (DoH and CONTRALESA) promoted a negative attitude from the traditional leaders and communities at large towards the Act, which can be observable even today.

The change of leadership in CONTRALESA and the DoH created a change of heart and an improvement in communication between the two entities. With new

leadership, they were willing to listen to each other. The involvement of the new CONTRALESA leaders in the Province, Nkosi Ngubo Mgcotyelwa and later Nkosi Phathakile Holomisa and the guidance by the House of Traditional Leaders and the wise guidance of Mr. Z.H. Dweba (responsible for initiation in the Eastern Cape Province) resulted in improved communication and, as a result, the different stakeholders started hearing each other. The traditional leadership raised its concerns that they were not only stakeholders when it comes to the traditional customs, but are custodians of the tradition. In addition to that, they were not involved in the drafting of the legislative framework and that the state was violating their rights to practice their culture without interference. On the other hand, the provincial government emphasised on a number of occasions that the Department of Health does not view themselves as the custodians of the custom and have no ambitions to do so in the future (Goqwana 2004:38).

Most of the older generation, including the Chief from Mpondoland and the headman of Whittlesea and Cala, raised their concerns about the AHSTC Act of 2001, regarding the Xhosa initiation. The concerns they raised were similar to the ones registered by Chief Nonkonyana and the House of Traditional leaders (see also Kepe 2010: 732-33). Some old men alluded that there was no proper consultation by the Department of Health with the traditional leaders; therefore, most of the traditional leaders and old men had withdrawn themselves and were no longer participating in the practice because their role had been overlooked by health officials.

One of the old men said:

*Sasikade sidlala indima ebalulekileyo sihambela izikhwetha sinika umkhomba ndlela kubafana abangamakhankatha, kodwa okoko kwangenelela urhulumente ngokuhambela izikhwetha nemithetho yakhe emitsha sibonile ukuba eyethu indima ayisafuneki, sesinikele kubo ngoku ngoba balimoshile isiko lethu. (We used to participate and visit the initiation schools in order to give guidance to the young men who are amakhankatha but since the government took over by visiting izikhwetha we realised that our role is not appreciated, we have given over to them now because they have ruined our tradition).*

The Chief in Cala expressed his concern over the lack of communication between the Department and traditional leaders. He said: "*thina asisenandima ingako kweli*

*siko lokwaluka sekulawula izibhedlele ngoku, thina asisayazi ncam indima yethu, namadoda elali ngoku seleqala ukujonga awabo amakhwenkwe kuphela”* (we no are no longer involved in the initiation anymore, the hospitals are in charge and we no longer know exactly what our role is. Men in the villages are only concerned about their own boys).

Some of the old men expressed that one of the reasons for the current challenges and the continuation of illegal initiation schools was due to the Provincial Government's regulatory framework which seems to exclude the traditional law and punishment. One of the old men said that;

*Imvume yokwalusa seyicelwa esibhedlele ngoku, xa umntu ethe wolusa engacelanga mvume uthi atshutshiswe ngurhulumente. Lo madoda agwetyiweyo siphinda siwabone apha elalini engafumenanga sigwebo siqatha. Kanti kuqala imvume yokwalusa yayicelwa eNkosini xa umntu ethe waphula umthetho weNkosi ebetshutshiswa qatha yinkundla ade adliwe iinkomo, kangangokuba apha elalini akakho umntu ebesolusa ngaphandle kwemvume kwaye bekungekho kufa kwabakhewetha kule lali.* (Currently the permission to hold initiation schools is granted by hospital, if one holds an illegal initiation school, they are persecuted by the government. The perpetrators that have been sentenced immediately come back to the community without any harsh punishment. In the past permission was granted by the Chief and in case of disobedience one was harshly punished and fined cows, as a result, it was rare to hold illegal initiation schools and the death of the initiates was rare in the village).

One can observe that there has been a lack of communication between the government and the traditional leaders. Some traditional leaders and old men expressed a feeling that their role as custodians of the custom has been overlooked hence they are not much involved in the initiation practice and hence there are no adults giving guidance to maintain its traditional and moral role. For example, the AHSTC Act No 6 of 2001 states that the surgeon who is less experienced must observe the experienced one. So what happens then when the older generation moved back, who will teach the younger surgeons?

The government continually stated that its role is to prevent an escalation of the public health crisis, but not to act as custodians of the ritual (Kepe 2010:732). Despite the early mixed reaction from traditional leaders to the government's involvement in the ritual and the use of safer surgical instruments, there has since been an all-out war of words between the two institutions (Kepe 2010:736). Even

before the implementation of the Act, traditional leaders claimed that as custodians of African culture they should be given the resources and authority to oversee the regulation of practices such as male circumcision (Kepe 2010:735 and Meintjies 1986:54).

#### **5.2.4.3 The implementation of the AHSTC Act of 2001 is concentrating on the traditional surgeons**

Since the introduction of the AHSTC Act of 2001 it was said that the training of traditional health practitioners had taken place. One assumes that the traditional health practitioners involved both *amakhankatha* and the *iingcibi*. During the interviews, all of the *amakhankatha* mentioned that they did not receive training while all the *iingcibi* replied that they did receive training and were further certified as traditional practitioners. According to some of the *amakhankatha* and some of the *iingcibi*, the training was for the *iingcibi* only and they were regarded as traditional health practitioners and were certified. The researcher is aware that subsequently to his fieldwork in Whittlesea, there was training conducted which involved both the *amakhankatha* and the *iingcibi*. I was invited to do a presentation on issues related to culture and morality, but for the rest the program was dealing more with health and HIV issues. The said training was conducted by an organisation called Africare and was sponsored by the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Health.

The research has shown that there are more problems in the practice than just the circumcision irregularities (Bogopa 2007:7; Ntombana 2009:81). It is true that some of the deaths are due to the negligence of the *iingcibi*, but an *ingcibi* is only involved in the initiation for a few minutes to do the operation while the rest of the responsibilities lie with the *ikhankatha*. In some cases, the *ingcibi* did a good job and the problems were due to negligence by the *ikhankatha*, for example, the perpetuation of alcohol abuse referred to in chapter four (see 4.9), the encouragement of rape (*ukosula*) referred to in chapter six (see 6.8) and the perpetuation of crime (Bogopa 2007:7). One of the *iingcibi* said that, “*Ingxaki ngamakhankatha, ngawo la angawenzi ngendlela umsebenzi wawo, adinga ukufundiswa ukuze awuqonde umsebenzi wawo. Ingcibi yenza umsebenzi omhle ze lona ikhankatha limoshe kuphele kusithiwa yingcibi emoshileyo.* (The main problem

is the guardians, they need to be taught their responsibilities, the surgeon performs a good job and the guardian spoils it and the blame is shifted to the surgeon while it is due to the negligence of the guardian).

A worst case example was where an initiate was beaten to death by an *ikhankatha* following an attempt to escape (Saturday Star 28 June 2002 and Vincent 2008:87). From 2006 onwards, the escalating numbers of problematic circumcisions and of initiate's deaths had been associated with dehydration, negligence, long time infections and delay of referral to a hospital by the *amakhankatha*. In most cases the *amakhankatha* did not recognise that the initiate was not in good health and still refused to refer them to a hospital for medical attention (sending an initiate to hospital was a sign of weakness for both the *ikhankatha* and the *umkhwetha*). One of the *ikhankatha* responded that, "*kubalulekile ukuba ikhankatha ligcine igama lalo lihloniphekile lingathumeli amakhwenkwe esibhedle, kungcono inkwenkwe isokole esikweni kunokuba iyokuphathwa ngabafazi ihlekise ngesiko lethu*" (it is imperative for the guardian to keep his name respected by making sure he does not refer the initiates to the hospital, it is better for an initiate to struggle in the initiation rite than at the hospital where he will be treated by women and making the initiation rite a laughing stock).

The responses by most of the *amakhankatha* suggested that they were not aware of the current legislative framework and had not been trained or equipped as much as the *iingcibi*. The human and financial resources had been spent on the *iingcibi* who were only at the initiation for a few minutes, while the *amakhankatha* were responsible for the boys for almost four weeks. This does not suggest that the role of the *iingcibi* was less important - it was the most important but it has to be acknowledged that most of the recent deaths and complications were not related to how the operation was done but to how the initiates were treated after the operation. The regulation by the AHSTC Act 2001 had in many ways solved some of the problems that are related to the initiation practice. The traditional surgeons began to take their role seriously with fear of losing their practising licences (Mail and Guardian July 18 2008).

Most of the informants and my observations suggested that the major current problems experienced in the initiation were associated with misbehaving and misleading by the traditional guardians and not the surgeons (Ntombana 2009:74).

#### **5.2.4.4 Information dissemination challenges**

The legal and institutional framework that was put in place had been effective in firstly, providing education concerning safer circumcision procedures and secondly, reducing the rate of injury and death among initiates. However, one of the major challenges has to do with making the new legislative framework known to the public. While the government took extensive steps to publicise its regulatory requirements, in a largely rural province, poorly served by electronic media or transport networks and beset by high levels of illiteracy, public information dissemination is a typical challenge facing the government. Clearly, the new laws can only be effective if the various stakeholders know not only what their obligations are in terms of the law but feel that their interests and views had been taken into account in the formulation of the laws. As it stands, traditional leaders and the older generation have not always felt incorporated in the process despite the best efforts of the Department of Health. The lack of information among traditional leaders and old people led to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the legislation on circumcision. Most of the traditional leaders were blaming the legislation for the current challenges in the initiation practice without really understanding exactly what its purpose was. Some of the older informants labelled the legislation a tool to destroy the initiation practice and replace it by western practices. One of the informants said that, “*andazi ukuba la madoda akurhulumente anjani kanti. Wona oluka isintu phantsi kwemfundiso nesigqibo sabazali, aza afundiswa ngobudoda ngendlela yesintu kodwa ngoku afuna ukuba oonyana boluke isilungu*” (I do not understand the men who are in the government; they were initiated under the guidance and decision of their parents. Further, taught about manhood the traditional way but now they want their sons to be circumcised the western way)

Secondly, some of the informants recognised that the AHSTC Act of 2001 would solve some of the health related challenges but in the process will be reducing the

custom to only the cutting of the fore skin (circumcision). One of the informants from Cala said that;

*ingxaki yale mithetho ifakwayo apha esikweni lethu yinto yokuba ingathi ijonga kakhulu ukudlangwa ze yenze eli siko lingabi nantsingiselo eyiyo, injongo yona siyibona kodwa ingathi ngekhe bacele uncedo kwiNkosi nakubantu abanolwazi ngenkcubeko yamasiko ukuze yonke le mizamo iphumelele* (the problem with these new laws that are introduced in our initiation ritual is that it seems to concentrate only on the circumcision and end up making initiation lose its real meaning. They must request the assistance of traditional leaders and cultural experts so that all their endeavours could be successful).

Furthermore, the issue of the AHSTC Act of 2001 concentrating on circumcision and ending up reducing the traditional role of initiation is prevalent in the bio-medical language used instead of the traditional one, such as circumcision instead of initiation (*ukwaluka*) and nurses instead of guardians (*amakhankatha*).

Thirdly, currently under the application of the AHSTC Act of 2001 traditional surgeons are recognised as those that have been trained and licensed, those who are not in this category are not recognised. This role impresses responsibility upon surgeons while leaving out the nurses (guardians), as guardians do not have to be recognised. In Mdantsane and Whittlesea, any person could be a guardian whereas in Cala, they had to be recognised by the *isibonda* and in Njiveni were recognised by the Chief. This research suggests that in the rural areas there were some regulations regarding traditional guardians whereas in urban areas, where there was no traditional leadership, the guardians did as they please as there was no standard regulation for them.

### **5.2.5 Challenges with the implementation of the AHSTC Act of 2001 and other regulatory frameworks.**

In some cases, the issues were not in the Acts and regulatory frameworks themselves, but how they have been interpreted, implemented and applied by the courts and the government departments. Some of the initiation interventions discussed in this chapter are not necessarily in the Act, but interventions to curb the challenges associated with initiation and traditional circumcision. Bonani Yamani's

story and court case will be used as an illustration of the challenges associated with the implementation of the law in regard to initiation.

#### **5.2.5.1 Bonani Yamani's case**

Bonani Yamani is a Xhosa male from Masele village near King William's Town in the Eastern Cape and was a second year microbiology student at the University of Free State. He is said to be a 'born again' Christian and a member of the Burning Bush Ministries under the leadership of Pastor Mcotheli (see also 3.7.2.2 and 4.15). One of the teachings of this particular Church is that boys must not undergo the traditional initiation, but must be circumcised in the Hospitals. His family and his father are not members of this Church and do not subscribe to its teachings. When he turned 18 his father decided that he was to go for initiation and he refused on the grounds that his conscience and religious beliefs did not allow him to undergo the traditional Xhosa rite. It is alleged that his father, Lindile Yamani and a group of about ten men abducted him and took him for initiation against his will. This happened on the 03 March 2007, after being circumcised at the Frere Hospital in East London three Months earlier. With the help of the Justice Alliance of South Africa (JASA)<sup>12</sup> he then decided to open a case against his father and against the traditional leaders, Nkosi Mathanzima, the then chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders and Nkosi Nonkonyane (representing Eastern Cape CONTRALESA).

Bonani explained that his intention was not to have anyone arrested or to get back at his parents who were doing everything for him including paying for his university studies. All what he wanted was to make sure that no other youth goes through a similar experience; his main demands were;

- *That his father admits that he has acted unconstitutional and that he should apologise for his actions.*

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<sup>12</sup> JASA is a non profit coalition of corporations, individuals and Churches that give legal advice and legal representation of its members and those who seek its assistance. All court proceedings and media briefings on the case of Bonani Yamani are available in the JASA website <http://www.jasa.za.net/>

- *He wanted apology from the two traditional leaders and those they represent and an assurance that no one else would be subjected to circumcision against his will in the future.*

In court the charges against Bonani's father were the following:

*1.1 Unfair discrimination on the grounds of religion, conscience and belief, contrary to section 6 of Act 4 of 2000.*

*1.2 Harassment, contrary to section 11 of Act 4 of 2000.*

The outcome of the case was as follows:

- *Bonani's father apologises for his actions of infringing Bonani's rights to religion and forcing him to be circumcised without his consent.*
- *Nkosi Ngubo Mgcotyelwa, who took over from Nkosi Nonkonyana as the chairperson of Eastern Cape CONTRALESA apologises to Bonani Yamani for the remarks made by its previous Chairperson, Nkosi Nonkonyana, (on behalf of CONTRALESA) to the Press to the effect that persons such as Bonani, who refuse traditional circumcision, should be ostracised by the community.*
- *Eastern Cape CONTRALESA accepts that the Constitution of South Africa gives the right to each adult male individual to choose whether or not he should attend a traditional circumcision school according to his religious beliefs.*

#### **5.2.5.2 Thoughts on the case**

Below were the issues that I consider interesting about this case;

- 1) *The event took place in 2007, which is years after all the Acts and regulatory frameworks discussed in this chapter were promulgated. The statements by Nkosi Nonkonyana and the fact that Bonani's father had no knowledge of the irregularity in his actions suggests it is still a long way for communities and traditional leaders to come to terms with the new Act and regulatory frameworks regarding the circumcision and initiation.*
- 2) *According to the AHSTC Act of 2001 one of the main culprits was the incibi who performed the illegal circumcision without following the right procedures as stated in the Act, but he is not even mentioned in the court case.*
- 3) *At the time of the event Bonani's father was convinced that he was right and that he was acting as the father with his son's best interest at heart. Like most of the South African citizens he did not know of any law against his behaviour as that is how things have always been done in the Xhosa communities. Even during the court case it was said that he wrote an affidavit maintaining the he did nothing wrong up until he was oriented on issues of jurisdiction and jurisprudence.*

- 1) *That Bonani is said to have been abducted by his father and a group of ten men but no charges were laid against the ten men. Charges were levelled against the House of Traditional Leaders and CONTRALESA leaders who had nothing to do with the case.*
- 2) *The two traditional leaders never wrote an apology to Bonani, as legally they had nothing to do with the case.*
- 3) *The only apology that was made was in connection to the statement made by Nkosi Nonkonyana and the acceptance that Bonani was unfairly treated.*

In retrospect, the purpose of this case is to illustrate that currently the application of the Act and regulatory frameworks is flawed and difficult to implement. This case is an example of other cases where the boys are forced to be initiated against their will. Some do not see anything wrong with that and accept it as part of the tradition, while others recognise that it is unconstitutional, but for some reason they do not pursue legal actions against the culprits. During this research some of the initiates responded that they were initiated because it was their father's wish. One initiate from Mdantsane, two from Whittlesea and one from Cala responded that they did not support the decision to be initiated because of religious reasons.

One initiate from Whittlesea said that he was taken by force to be initiated. At the time of this research none of them opened a case against anyone, unless they could have done so at a later stage as in Bonani's case. One of the issues that the AHSTC Act of 2001 does not address is the issue of *ukuziba* (see 4.4.4). The Act states that before an *ingcibi* can perform the circumcision he must make sure that all necessary requirements as stated in the AHSTC Act of 2001 had been followed. In case where the boy performs *ukuziba* his actions are not said to be against the law. That is the loophole because some of the boys from all areas performed *ukuziba* and they were all known and sometimes were referred to as '*abakhwetha abazibileyo*' (initiates who did not follow proper channels to be initiated). Thus, *ukuziba* was still an acceptable practice in all areas. In some of the *imiphumo*, as noted in 4.4.4, people mentioned in their words of admonition that the boys had performed *ukuziba*. The main concerns were not that the boy did something wrong, but rather that he decided to be initiated at a time the family did not have money.

One of the issues related to the implementation of the law was raised by the Chief and headman from Mpondoland. It was said that sometimes the *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha* are arrested for performing an illegal initiation and are immediately released without major punishment. Some performed an illegal circumcision and as soon as the boys were healed the case was thrown out of court. When they came back they continued with the same illegal actions hence the problems persisted as sometimes the initiation schools were run by the same people.

Finally, during this research a task team was observed doing pre-and post- initiation visits under the leadership of Mr. Z.H.Dweba (head of Traditional Health Services) and the House of Traditional Leaders. The task team comprised of traditional leaders, police, health representatives and other stake holders. They were observed visiting different areas, including Mpondoland. Some of the illegal initiation schools were closed down and some boys were referred to hospital. I observed boys being referred to Saint Barnabas Hospital in Libode and others to Hewu Hospital in Whittlesea. One of the major challenges about the visiting interventions is that they were done only during the initiation and as an extinguisher in areas that were characterised by irregularities at the time. In some cases they received calls where some community members observed some indiscretions taking place.

### **5.2.6 Review of the regulations**

Most of the informants from Mdantsane and Whittlesea suggested a need to review the AHSTC Act of 2001 so that it does not only recognise initiation as a health issue but as well as a cultural and religious practice. The suggestions were that the framework should recognise that this practice carries strong cultural implications and there was a need to encourage traditional leaders to deliberate on it. These informants recognised that the Act plays a positive role in regulating the safety of the practice and that there is a great need for it. One of their main concerns is that, the Act has left out other important factors that are important in restoring the traditional and cultural role of the practice. Further, that the current Act is based on Western norms and values and the African values regarding the parental role to decide for their children and forcing an un-initiated man to be initiated are deemed illegal. Some of the informants from Mpondoland said that the punishment given to the culprits of

irregularities is not enough. They argued that the punishment must be heavier and that it must not only be fines as boys lose their manhood, while others die from illegal initiation.

### **5.3 Summary**

In chapters two (2.7) and four (3.5.1), traditional leaders have been identified as the custodians of culture including the initiation practice. Even Chapter 12: 211 of the Constitution, recognises traditional leaders as the custodians to oversee all cultural practices, including the initiation practice. The introduction of the AHSTC Act of 2001 seems to have received criticism from traditional leaders as intruding on their responsibility and mocking with their cultural practices. The Eastern Cape Department of Health had in many instances tried to explain that their intention was not to undermine the role of traditional leaders, but to act in order to save lives. Whether the traditional leaders were not pro-active or did not have any resources to intervene, or that the Department of Health took over their role, is a long debate that is still prevailing. The intensions of the framework were honourable and any errors that occurred while formulating the framework should be considered as human errors and be rectified. Both the government and the House of Traditional Leaders had been engaged on the issues related to the initiation practice. The pre- and post-teams that were observed visiting the initiation schools during this study were led by traditional leaders and involved health officials as well. It is possible that at the time when the AHSTC Act was promulgated in 2001, the traditional leaders were not as organised due to political history and the restructuring of the political landscape. As a result, it has taken a long time for the government to find ways of identifying and redefining the role of traditional leaders in the democratic movement. The lack of an undefined traditional leadership role did not only affect initiation but the cultural heritage and cultural practices in all South African societies. Now that traditional leaders are organised and the provincial government approved a budget to have a building erected where they can be housed, they are more capable of identifying issues pertaining to their responsibilities including initiation. One can only envisage that the current relationship between traditional leaders and the government would yield good results in issues pertaining to cultural practices and cultural rights.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PRESENT MEANING OF INITIATION AND ITS ROLE IN XHOSA COMMUNITIES

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the past and the present role of initiation in building the moral life of men within the Xhosa society. The 'emic' perspective will be presented being the views of the insiders, which include *abakwetha*, *amakhankatha*, *iingcibi*, *amakrwala*, *izibonda*, *iinkosi* and *amaxhego* who were chosen from the areas identified for the study. Furthermore, the observations of different initiation practices from different areas will be presented and discussed in line with the purpose of this research as indicated in chapter one. The participants that have been observed were not necessarily comprised of the informants chosen for this study. For instance, there were observations of women giving words of admonition, boys' activities (*umguyo*) and *abafana* (*intlombe* or *umxhentsiso*). The three major areas which this study defined as significant to the role of initiation in moral regeneration will be examined: the religious, educational and socio-cultural significance.

General results on different topics as indicated in the interview schedule (see Appendix A) will be presented. I have observed that different status groups in the process of initiation and manhood experienced different levels or scales of culture or acculturation (see also Zide 1999: 46). Although they lived in the same society and practised the same culture, due to age differences, their experiences of *ukwaluka* differed.

Two generations were identified, the older and the younger generations. The responses and the discussions by the two groups were explicitly different. The younger generation included *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala* while the older generation included *amakhankatha*, *iingcibi*, *iinkosi*, *izibonda* and *amaxhego*. My probing brought into picture the question of how initiation was practised, its meaning to the different generations and how this practice is currently conducted. This chapter will present results according to the views of the two different generations. Furthermore, how the *amakhankatha* described their role as well as how the *abakwetha* and

*amakrwala* experienced their journey into manhood. It has been realised that most of the views expressed in this chapter which are in relation to moral regeneration are mainly based on the views of the older generation. This is not because they were the only ones interviewed but the younger generation had very little to say in regard to the topic but the older generation spoke boldly on their experience and concerns over the current moral role of the initiation.

## **6.2 The role of the initiation practice in moral regeneration**

In chapter three, the meaning of morality and the role of initiation in building the moral fibre was discussed at length. From the literature, the young and the old and all areas except Mpondoland it has been shown that initiation has always played a role in building up the moral fibre of the society (see 3.5). The initiation and morality drew interest among old men, especially those from Whittlesea and Cala. In Mdantsane, there were a few old men who took time to deliberate on the subject and most of what they spoke about was their disapproval of what is found in the initiation nowadays. The results discussed are more of what was discussed with all groups and possibly the response of any Xhosa man irrespective of age and area. As previously mentioned in the introduction (6.1), the major difference is that the contribution and emphasis of old men on the topic is more than that of the younger generation.

### **6.2.1 The socio-cultural significance of the Xhosa male initiation rite**

#### **6.2.1.1 *Ubuntu***

Mbiti (1986:39) suggests that the initiation practice has to be understood in the holistic context of *ubuntu* where the identity of each person is equally respected. The communal life of the African people is poetically portrayed in the Zulu phrase that “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”. This phrase literally refers to the fact that a person becomes a person through other people, with a mutual validation that “only through you do I become an I” (Edward *et.al* 2009:2). Mbiti (1986:44) puts it so aptly, that “I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am.” A notion, too often simplistically held, is that to be African is to espouse the concept of *ubuntu* and to

place communal interest before individual interests. The concept of *ubuntu* suggests a shared sense of self, implying that an individual does not live alone but depends on the community in which he or she lives. Furthermore, the community depends on the existence and contribution of the individual.

According to the old men, the initiation practice is embedded in and espouses the values of *ubuntu*. The initiation practice is not just an 'event' it is an 'experience' and not just an individual experience but a communal experience. The pre-initiation activities such as *imitshotsho*, *imiguyo*, *imigidi*, and *iintlombe* are evidence that the whole community partakes in it. All the household members are involved in the preparation process, some will offer to buy clothes, some will contribute towards food and alcohol and the neighbours contribute by *ukugida* (see 3.6.8). The emphasis is that one's social status is defined by the social collective norms and values; therefore, that will have an impact on how one lives as an accepted member of the collective. The majority of the men in Cala expressed a view that in their villages even today men still strive to live according to the acceptable social norms of the village. One man said that;

*Kaloku apha ezilalini akufani nasezidolophini abantu kufuneka ubacingele, kaloku akuhlali wedwa uphila nabantu. Yonke into oyenzayo kufaneke ucinge ukuba iza kubaphatha njani abamelwane bakho, kanti edolophini umntu wenza ayithandayo akanandaba nabantu* (The life in the villages is not the same as in cities, here in the villages people must consider others, before you do anything you must consider how it will affect your neighbours. In townships each person does as they wish without considering others).

For example, when I was an *ikrwala* I was taught by my elders that a man does not eat *umbeko* (left over food). I am not sure what the motive behind not eating *umbeko* was, but I am sure that the children were beneficiaries of that teaching. It is a known fact that children wake up very early and the first thing they want is food, whereas for most of the adults it is a different case. Even at times, I craved to eat *umbeko*, I would not eat it, but rather left it for the young children. Even the children knew that 'ubhuti' (brother, implies elder and initiated) does not eat *umbeko* and in case when I forgot they would remind me that "*hayi kaloku ubhuti akawutyi umbeko*" (No the brother does not eat leftover food). However, I now eat *umbeko* because I stay in a flat with one child; hence, there is more than enough food. When I visit my family (extended) where there are my sisters, cousins and their children with more

competition for food, I always leave *umbeko* for the children. Even when they visit me, I try my best not to eat *umbeko* in order to keep the 'known' practice and that I do it out of concern for the children. In that way, I maintained household order of taking the needs of the children first.

The following responses in relation to *ubuntu* were made:

*“Ukoluka oku kufundisa ukuba umazi kwaye umhloniphe omnye umntu”* (initiation teaches that you acknowledge and respect the other person).

*“Ukuba khange ufunde ukuba ngumntu ngexesha ungumkhwetha libala uyakuhlala uyinja kude kube ngunaphakade”* (If you did not learn to be a human during the initiation time forget you will never learn you will be a dog forever).

*“Esikhwetheni ufundiswa ukuba ubathande abanye abantu njengokuba uzithanda”* (In the initiation lodge you are taught to love others as you love yourself).

*“...kaloku inkwenkwe yinja akukho nto ingcono ilindelekileyo kuyo, indoda yona ifundisiwe esuthwini ukuba umntu ngumntu ngabantu”* (a boy is a dog and nothing good is expected from it, but a man has been taught that a person is a person by others).

*“...mna ndathi ndakuba yindoda ndaqala ndamazi umntu...”* (when I became a man I then started respecting other people).

The responses above suggest that initiation has always been recognised as a practice that is not for the individual benefit, but for the house and for the society. The meaning of a man and the expectation of how a man lives is constructed by the society; the society has high expectations from the *amakrwala* as *ubukrwala* marks the beginning of a new life and therefore they are expected to bring fresh knowledge, new ideas and new leadership ideas which would benefit the society. The majority of the informants responded that the majority of today's generation of men do no longer uphold the values of *ubuntu* but have embraced the western life of individualism. The reasons given for this situation were that, it is due to westernisation, education,

civilisation, alcohol influence, the impact of media and television, and the lack of male role models. One of the older men from Cala said, “*Uyabona mfo wam ababantwana bahamba apha bafunde intlonipho nendlela yokuziphatha. Bathe bakuya kwezi zikolo zasezidolophini nezesilungu babuya sele bengenantlonipho bethathe impilo yesilungu kakhulu*” (You see, these kids leave from here having learnt how to respect and how to handle themselves and study in the township and English schools, when they return they lack respect and have adopted the western way of life).

### **6.2.1.2 Social practice**

According to Carstens (1982:515), who evaluates initiation from an anthropological point of view, initiation is not just an event for the boys, but the whole community participates. This is clearly demonstrated by the feelings of excitement and fear expressed by the community during the boys’ farewell, when departing for the process, as well as the welcoming of the *amakwala* (newly initiated men), when they were coming back. The jubilation in the community is not an issue of the past - even during this research, in all areas there was a visible excitement when the boys graduated. All people joined together in celebration and in some cases people did not even know which initiate was graduating but the Somagwaza song brought people together. The moment the song is heard people know that there is a boy graduating from initiation. Men were playing with sticks and women were ululating and doing *ukutshayelela* (sweeping, using clothes and garments as a sign of welcoming the new men) (also see 4.3.2.4).

### **6.2.1.3 Social order**

It is not only an ancient view; even presently, the majority of Xhosa kings and leaders still believe in the contribution of the initiation school in building the society. According to Prince Burns-Ncamashe (2000: 9), “the initiation school has a moral obligation and customary duty to produce accountable and responsible citizens of society fully committed and dedicated to the value of nation building.” The emphasis that was expressed in the group interviews with old men was that the initiation practice creates social order or harmony in the community; the boy knows his place

and can never argue or fight with a man. At the same time the *ikrwala* is taught to respect *abafana* and *abafana* know that they must respect *ootata* (fathers) and everybody knows that an *ixhego* is a living ancestor that has to be given a special place in the community. Seniority and each status role was never disputed in the Xhosa traditional communities. Initiation is a social turning point and a practice that effectively replaces birth as a marker of social age (Van Eeden 1991:11). When I went for the initiation, I was 20 years old and was initiated together with a 33 year old man. Even though he was more than 10 years older than me, he knows he is my *saluka* (see also 6.7.2.1) and we are of equal status in the community. I am not expected to refer to him as *bhuti* but *ntanga* (peer, equal) or *saluka* and that will not create disorder or even a debate. Currently, there are major concerns pertaining to the role of social order. Older generations expressed concern over the behaviour of *amadoda* and that in life style there is a thin line between *inkwenkwe* and *indoda*. One old man said, “*Wakha wayibona phi wena indoda incazelana nenkwenkwe, ngoku awusabonakali umehluko phakathi kwendoda nenkwenkwe*” (Where have you seen a man sharing tobacco with a boy, in our days there is no visible difference between a boy and a man).

#### **6.2.1.4 Social privilege**

Some informants expressed a view that initiation is a passage from boyhood to manhood in order for one to enjoy all the privileges enjoyed by men in the society. This seemed to be expressed with excitement by the *amakrwala*. These privileges involve, “*ukungena ebuhlanti*” (enter the cattle kraal), eat meat with other men, contrary to boyhood where one was not allowed to do so. A boy would only receive meat from men who are kind enough to *ukusikela* (giving a piece to the boys). When one becomes a man you do not rely on handouts by adults, but you obtain the privilege to sit with men and that privilege has to be understood in the context of recognising the seniority in the manhood, but also that there are some privileges attached to all manhood stages. Some of the other privileges were to walk in public with one’s girlfriend, a right to get married and to gain the respect of the community. As it has already been mentioned before, it is only after initiation that a male is recognised as a human being. Prior to his initiation, a man is only regarded as a dog and has no place in the cultural and ritual ceremonies in the community. The old

men clearly expressed the opinion that only the males who have been through the ceremony may be recognised as men, may participate in community discussions and may become chiefs, as well as having the right to marry. One will often hear a saying such as “*inkwenkwe yinja*” meaning the boy is a dog, implying that the one who is not initiated is not regarded as a human being in the community, but only as a dog (Mager 1998:660). The issue of social privilege came up several times during the interviews with *abakwetha* and *amakrwala* when it came to their reasons for initiation. Some said that they were initiated so that they could enjoy manhood status; some said that so that they could be taken seriously by others.

#### **6.2.1.5 Responsibility of the household and social responsibility**

Initiation is not about privileges but a man is expected to be responsible for himself, his household and his community. Responsibility was dealt with in relation to keeping the name of the clan honoured and respected. This is achieved by, firstly, financially supporting the household and making sure that there is enough food so that the children would not be beggars. Secondly, making a difference by contributing in the society, that when those who work and study in urban areas are back, they must visit *ikomkhulu* and attend *imbizo* and other people’s rituals and festivities. The man is entrusted with a responsibility to support his household and if there is no father in the house he is expected to be the father. This involves finding work to support his family. Some spoke about how responsible the elders of the clan have been and that the younger generation must keep that legacy. One old man who was related to the *ikrwala* in Cala said that;

*Uyabona nyana, mna lo kule lali andaziwa ngokugila imikhuba, igama lakwa Mthimkhulu ndiligcine lixabisekile. Nabakhuluwa bakho bazeke mzekweni, zange weva bebizelwa intlanganiso nangenye imini pha komkulu. Nawe ke ungasiphoxi uze wenze nangaphezulu ukuphakamisa igama lakwaMthimkhulu kule lali. (As you can see I am not for bad behaviour in this village, I have kept the Mthimkhulu (clan name) name honoured. Even your elder brothers have done the same; you never heard them called to the chief’s place due to ill discipline. Please do not disappoint us; you must even do more to uplift the Mthimkulu name in this village).*

One of the old ladies stood up and said:

*Do krwala, mamela ke, onke amadoda alapha alisebenzele eli khaya, uyakuba ngowokuqala ukuba yigusha ezibhokhweni wena ukuba awunakwenza njalo. Ewe kubalulekile ukufunda kona, kodwa baninzi abantu abafundileyo phandlapha kodwa intsebenzo yabo ayibonakali, ungafani nabo ke. Ungabalahlali ootanci, oomalume, odade wenu nabantakwenu kunu nabantwana babo, kunye nabanye ooJwarha abangekhoyo apha. (New man, listen, all men of this family have worked to support this homestead, and you will be the first black sheep if you do not do so. Yes, it is important to go to school but there are a lot of educated men who are not supporting their families, you must not be like them. You must not forget your uncles from your fathers and mother's side, your brothers and sister including their children and other extended family members who are not here).*

One middle aged man from one of the Whittlesea villages said:

*Mna ke mfo wam uyayazi ndiyile esikolweni kwaye ndahlala edolophini, kanye eMonti apho ufunda khona. Phaya ke ufundiswa ukuba ifamily yakho ngumkakho nabantwana bakho. Amadoda amanizi awasagoduki kwaye awasabahoyi abantu balapha ekhaya, wena ke awukhuliswanga njalo. Uyayazi ukuba ngobani ifamily yakho ungayifundi intlalo yasedolophini eyenza ulahle abazali kunye nabanye abantu beli khaya, sonke siyifamily yakho. (You know my son I have been to school and have lived in urban areas, in East London where you are studying. In urban areas you are taught that your family is your wife and your children only. Most urban men are no longer going back home to rural areas and are not longer supportive to the extended family members of this homestead and that is not how you were taught. You know who your family members are, do not practice urban life, we are all your family members).*

When the informants were asked about the current understanding and role with reference to social responsibility, the majority of the older generation responded that the current *amakrwala* and *abafana* do not show this responsibility. It was said that some of them resort to *ubutsotsi* and some to childish ways. The reasons that were given for the above dilemma varied, some said that it was because those boys went for initiation at a young age. Some said that the boys were more attached to their mothers than their fathers; as a result they rely on their mothers for advice. Some said that sometimes women go easy on the boys while others said that the current laws were the main problem, for example, the removal of corporal punishment at the schools. One of the old men said:

*Kaloku aba bafana baqala ukungabi naxanduva besengamakhwenkwe, thina asisakwazi nokuqeqesha. Kaloku lo mthetho umtsha uthi ukuba ndikhe ndambetha umntwana makandibambise avule ityala lokuhlukunyezwa. Thina sasibethwa kwaye loo nto yiyo eyasenza sabe ngamadoda anoxanduva (These young men start not being responsible while they are boys, due to the current laws we can no longer smack them, the law says that if you smack a child he/she can open a case of abuse against you, we were smacked and as a result we became responsible men).*

### **6.3. The educational significance of initiation**

In the early nineteenth century, it was observed that an important feature of many of the Xhosa initiation schools was the formal teaching, which was given during the period of seclusion by the men of the tribe (Hammond-Tooke 1974:230). Most of the responses by old men from Mdantsane, Whittlesea and Cala concurred with what is written in the literature that the initiation practice in their time was a school where good moral values were instilled. During the seclusion part of the initiation rite, the initiates undergo a period of education or traditional schooling (Mbiti 1986:102). The older men spoke passionately about how this practice was done in their time. They supported the experience of former president Nelson Mandela (1994:27), that to him “it was a period of quietude, a kind of spiritual preparation for the trials of manhood that lay ahead”. It has been discussed in chapter four how the older generation took pride in this practice. This was shown in their eloquent expression of what it meant to be a responsible man. To them, initiation was an institution of instilling good moral values into boys (see also Gitywa 1976:203). They also undergo physical training to overcome difficulties and pain, to cultivate courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience. This educational experience equips them mentally, physically, emotionally and morally for adulthood. There were four aspects of teaching/education that were identified to be taking place while in the lodge.

#### **6.3.1 Knowledge about culture, tradition and history**

A profound aspect of the initiation school is education in the acquisition of cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge involves what it means to be Xhosa as well as the meaning of one’s clan. For example, before I went for initiation I only knew that my clan name is Mpondomise. At the initiation I was taught how to recite *ukuzithutha* (a process of saying your clan names which tells others where you come from) as Mpondomise clan, “*ndiguJola, uMpondomise, uMphankomo, uQhengeba, iThole loMthwakazi, uMfazi obele linye*”. Initiation is a traditional practice by which a man is taught the life of being a man and adult in the Xhosa society, which includes instruction into the beliefs, history, tradition and pride of the clan name. For instance, if a boy was raised by his mother’s family without knowing his father’s clan name, when he goes for initiation what usually happens is that his father or if he has passed

on, his brother or relative has to be in charge of the initiation ritual. In some cases where the immediate family of the father is far away or cannot be found, any responsible man in the village who comes from the same clan has to be in charge. This is done to make sure that the ritual part of the initiation is done according to the clan customs, as every clan does their ritual ceremonies differently. Furthermore, the boy will now know exactly what his *isiduko* (clan) is and learn how to recite *ukuthutha* as well as the importance of knowing his roots.

One of the old men said: *“Kaloku kubalulekile ukuyazi imvelaphi yakho, ungazazanga ukuba uvelaphi soze uzazi ukuba uyaphi, yile nto ke thina sasiyifunda singabakhwetha”* (It is important to know where you come from, without knowing your roots you will not know where you are going).

The headman from Cala said that;

*Ndiyavuya khe nenze olu phando khe nathi sifumane ithuba lokuxelela olu lutsha ukuba ukoluka oku kudlaliswa ngalo namhlanje lisiko lokufundisa ngenkcubeko yakwaXhosa hayi into yokubukwa ngabahambeli nabadlula ngendlela. Mhlawumbe zingatsho zilunge izinto kweli siko libuye libe yindawo yemfundiso njengamandulo”* (I am glad you are doing this investigation so that we can tell these young stars that the initiation practice is a ritual that teaches about Xhosa culture not to be watched by tourists and visitors, and maybe all problems related to initiation will be fixed and it can once more be a place where there is learning taking place).

Most of the old men narrated that they used to make fire in the evenings and sat around their guardians and some visiting elders would teach them about the importance of being a Xhosa and *amasiko* (rituals) and *izithethe* (customs) of the Xhosa people. One of the older informants responded that, *“Ayiyo nto yakudala qha ukufundiswa ngamasiko akho nangoku xa siyala umfana siyamkhumbuza ngeengcambu zakhe nangesiduko sakhe”* (It is not only an old custom, even now when we give words of admonition, we remind the young man about his roots and his clan name). Some of the younger generation, especially those from Cala said that during the initiation they had learnt about their culture and their identity, some said they learnt about reciting their clan name, while others about how to conduct rituals. Some said that they observed how the rituals were conducted, some of the *amakrwala* said they learnt from *abafana* during *umxhentso* the importance of debate when you are a man. One *ikrwala* from Whittlesea said that, *“yeka nje ukuba*

*indlu yesibane iphele kakubi nje ngokulwa kodwa ukuqala kwayo ndifunde ngendlela amadoda axoxa ngayo ngobulumko, indlela yokuthetha ukuze ube yindoda ehlonitshiiweyo ngamanye”* (even though the *indlu yesibane* ended badly with men fighting, at the beginning I learnt about the way man argues in a wise manner and how to talk wisely in order to be a respectable man among men).

One of the *ikrwala* who probably was in his late 20s said that;

*Kudala ndisiva ukubaluleka kokuba ikwekwe yoluke, nam bendikade ndifuna ukoluka kodwa ndingenamali. Ndiye ndasebenza eRhawutini iminyaka emibini ukuze ndizoluse. Ngoku ndibonile ukuba ukwaluka oku kugcwele iimfundiso zamasiko, inkcubeko nezithethe.* (I have always heard the importance of going for the initiation; I have now worked in Johannesburg for two years so that I can be able to go for initiation. Now I have realised that the initiation is full of teaching about rituals, heritage and customs).

### **6.3.2 Behavioural change**

The role of initiation in building up the moral fibre and behavioural change has taken more importance both in the literature and during the field work. Furthermore, the old men, during the discussions and the interviews especially in Whittlesea and Cala, spent more time talking about how initiation is expected to change one's behaviour. A clear distinction can be seen between the one who is not circumcised (*inkwenkwe*) and the one who has been circumcised (*indoda*). Anti-social behaviour is a characteristic of boys and not men (Gitywa 1976:203). Gitywa (1976: 24) went on to explain the importance of the wise speeches given by the old men to the *amakrwala*. These are wise words with a purpose: to show them that now they are men and are expected to live a life that reflects manhood.

The emphasis of the discussions in the initiation was that a man must behave differently from a boy. In relation to that the following issues were discussed; that a man does not drink in the shebeen and drinks responsibly without abusing alcohol, a real man is seen in his responsible actions, he does not participate in criminal activities, a man has to work hard to support his family more especially his mother. This institution is defined as a place where young men receive instructions in courtship, social responsibility and marriage practices (Stinson 2007:2; Meintjies

1998:7). At the welcoming ceremony boys are assembled and old men of the community give them words of wisdom with the purpose of teaching and preparing them for adult life and its responsibilities (Pauw 1994:16). The initiation school was traditionally viewed as an educational institution where initiates learnt about courtship, negotiating marriage, responsibilities and moral conduct (Meintjies 1989:7). The understanding is that when he was a boy he was a dog and there were expectations and responsibility bestowed upon him. By going through the initiation, he is expected to come out as a new man.

The initiation rite is said to be one of the beliefs or practices that changes a person's behaviour in a short space of time (Pauw 1975:89). The change to a new status of manhood also means a change in the behaviour that is appropriate to that status. This man is now expected to live a morally different life style that is totally different from *inkwenkwe eyinja nje* (a boy that is just a dog). "If one was an undesirable member of society previously, after initiation one becomes a trusted, dignified and respected man" (Pauw 1975:89). One of the older men used the religious analogy of baptism to illustrate his point, by saying that, "*ukwaluka kufana nokubhaptiza kwamaKrestu, umtu ufakwa emanzini engumhedeni ngezenzo aphume emanzini engumzalwana ofanele ukuphila njengoMkrestu*" (initiation is like Christian baptism, he is put under water living as a heathen and gets out of the water as a brethren and expected to live a Christian life). "*Ubukhwetha bubulala ubukhwenkwe buvuse ubudoda obukhuthaza ukutshintsha kwesimilo*" (The process of initiation kills boyhood and raises up as a manhood, which encourages with good moral values).

Before initiation, the boy lives his own life of no responsibilities, but after initiation, he becomes a man who is expected to behave differently. His responsibilities involve taking care of the family; he does not live for himself, but now for the whole family. He has now become the provider of the family. The opinion of the old men was that "*indoda ibonakala ngezenzo*" (a man is seen in his behaviour). In cases where a man misbehaves one would hear a saying that that man behaves like a boy, which is a great insult. There was an observation of pride amongst old men as they were talking about their own initiation and manhood. The majority of the informants responded that the initiation has a role in changing the behaviour of men. When asked about the current role, the older informants responded that in the lives of

those who have recently been initiated this moral life style is not visible. The reasons that were cited by the older men for the said lack of moral command in the initiation were the following: the western education, urbanisation, the democratic laws and lack of traditional leadership in the initiation practice. The views by the older men that initiation is losing its moral command corresponded with the observations among *amakrwala* and *abafana*, especially in Mdantsane and Whittlesea (see also 3.6.1; 3.6.9; 4.6; 4.9 and 4.10).

### **6.3.3 *Igama lobudoda* (manhood name)**

The initiation name given to the *ikrwala* is related to change of behaviour. Three types of names were observed, firstly, names with no specific meaning, but rather the symbol attached to the idea of a new name, for example, Nasenti. Secondly, names associated with great leaders like Nelson Mandela, and thirdly, names that carry meaning such as Akhumzi (building the homestead). At sometime the initiation names used to be so popular that they ended up superseding the real ones. A typical example is that of Lepoqo, who was named Letlama after initiation and later Moshoeshe, the founder of the South Sotho nation. In the Christian tradition, the change of name was a symbol of the death of the old life and resurrection into a new life. Just like Saul's name was changed to Paul. Saul was known as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the early Church and when he converted to Christianity his name was changed to Paul.

In the Xhosa tradition the old life was a life of a 'dog' (no responsibility, no conscience, no expectations, no recognition, no meaning, etc.) and the new life is a life of a 'human' (an opposite of the dog life). The giving of the initiation name has slowly lost its meaning and lately some of the *amakrwala* are not even given new names and some of those who were given easily forget it.

In my recollection I was given the name Saneti. I was only called by that name by the group of *amakrwala* who were initiated at the same time with me and thereafter I did not use it. In fact, it was not a popular practice at the time to use the name even after the *ubukrwala* process. I realised that at the time it was important to have the name

so that when one meets other *amakrwala*, and they ask the name, then it would be easy to say it.

During the field work the majority of the *amakrwala* took pride in their names. One of them said “*ndanikwa igama elinqabileyo mna, ongasoze ulifumane naphi na...*” (I was given an unpopular name that you will not just find everywhere).

Most of the names that were used in Mdantsane and Whittlesea were names starting with an ‘S’ or ‘P’ that did not necessarily carry any meaning but one would not find them used anywhere else except amongst the *amakrwala*. Those are names such as Sikali, Saneti, Samora, Spikiri, Sabatha, Pasonti, and Pasente. Some were intentionally given names of prominent African leaders like Gedl’eyhlele (Jacob Zuma, current president of S.A.), Rholihlahla (Nelson Mandela, past president of S.A.) and Samora (the first president of Mozambique). Some of the names that were mentioned were Sobuza, Ngwedla, Arafat, Kofi, but to these African leaders these names were not necessarily initiation names, but have been used in the initiation as a symbol of manhood.

Most of the *amakrwala* from Njiveni responded that they were not given names. Some of them said “*Mna khange ndiliniwe igama*” (I was not given a name). Others, “*igama lantoni?*” (What name?) , “*ewe bendiliniwe kodwa ndililibe*” (yes I was given a name but I forgot it), “*Igama ndiza kuliniwa ngempela-nyanga xa ndenzelwa umgidi*” (I will be given a name by month end during my *umgidi*). A few responded that it was not part of their practice to give new names hence some were not aware of it. Some were given names that were similar to the names given in Mdantsane and Whittlesea.

In Cala, the names that were popular were names such as Akhumzi (building the homestead), Vusumzi (resurrecting the homestead), Sakhe (build us), Sange (embrace us), and other such names that had a meaning related to the homestead as well as taking responsibility.

### 6.3.4 Phases of teaching in the initiation practice

According to the older generation teaching and learning in the initiation practice takes place in four phases, firstly, just before the boy goes to the initiation, secondly, in the lodge by the *ikhankatha* and visitors, thirdly, during *ukuyalwa* and lastly during *ubukrwala*.

1. At home by male members of the household (fathers, uncles and other male family members) - just before the boys had to go for initiation, they were taught about abstaining from alcohol, women and bad friends.
2. In the lodge, learning takes place in two ways, through teaching and through the experiences that the *umkhwetha* has. *Amakhankatha* have been identified as the ones who have been entrusted with the teaching role. The men who visited the *abakhwetha* were expected to teach them about life based on their own life experiences.
3. During the *umgidi* or *umphumo* (graduation ceremony) *ukuyalwa* takes place. That is when the *ikrwala* is given gifts and offered words of admonition concerning the new life of manhood. The literature and old men suggest that this role was usually done by men, but recently it is done by women as well.
4. *Ubukrwala* - the process of *ubukrwala* is a social institution that is meant to integrate the *abakhwetha* back into the society. Learning takes place in various ways during this phase. The *ikrwala* learns from his peers, family members and the community of men during *imicimbi*.

### 6.3.5 How the teaching and learning is communicated

The manhood skills and knowledge is basically communicated in two ways, through hardship experience and through the instructions provided by *amakhankatha*.

### 6.3.5.1 Hardship experience

It is believed that the hardship and endurance the initiates go through will produce a responsible man who will be strong and will be able to support his family. Even during the *ukuyalwa*, most of the wise words that were offered were in relation to the fact that the initiate has to be a strong and responsible man who would support his household. One of the old informants said, “*Bonke obu buhlungu nobunzima ubuve apha, yindlela yokukufundisa ukuba kuyanyamezelwa ebomini*” (All the hardship you have been through, it is a way of teaching you the principle of endurance).

According to Vivian (2008:436), the instructional feature of the circumcision school is aimed at building certain character traits: forbearance, courage, fortitude and strength. These virtues are taught not so much by way of explicit teaching but by exposure to deprivation and a harsh regime of punishments and criticisms that are meant to make the initiate stoically.

Most of the informants from all areas responded that the values that were learnt by the *abakhwetha* involved obedience to elders, patience, integrity, trust, honesty, endurance and responsibility. When asked how these values were communicated, the reply was that the whole experience of going through an “unknown episode” was in itself a process of patience, respect and trust. The initiate had to totally rely on the guardian because the initiate knew nothing about the practice. The pain and the binding of the wound was itself a lesson to learn about endurance, commitment and responsibility. The initiate was told from the beginning that the process of healing depended on him and his commitment - if he was lazy the wound will not heal and he would end up staying for longer in the initiation lodge or end up in hospital. The experience of searching for wood, washing at the river with cold water and sleeping on an *ikhukho* (reed made bed) was in itself a lesson that a man should not expect everything to be easy in his life and must be ready to work hard to support his family.

### 6.3.5.2 The teaching role of the *ikhankatha*

The main teaching was the responsibility of the *ikhankatha*. One of the old men explained that “*Oyena mntu unomsebenzi wokufundisa abakhwetha likhankatha*” (The greater teaching responsibility lies with the guardian). According to the old men, an *ikhankatha* was not just anyone, but a respectable man in the community who was expected to impart good moral values to the initiates. As a result, in the olden days men used to boast about their manhood and during the boasting the issue of who the *ikhankatha* was always used to come up. This was because there was a belief that men would be like their guardians and this is called *ukufuza*. The *ikhankatha* was expected to stay in the initiation school most of the time, but preferably full-time until the boy’s wound is healed and thereafter visit every day until the boy graduates (Pauw 1994:13; Ntombana 2009:80). Even among the amaNdebele there is an emphasis on the role of the *ikhankatha* as the main role player in teaching. The isiNdebele word for *amakhankatha* is *abarhuki*, which means the instructors. They give instructions in a variety of topics such as kinship values, male adult responsibilities and how to recite clan names (Peltzer *et al* 2009:397).

In the olden days, the initiates used to spend between three to twelve months in the school. One month was for nursing the operation wound and the rest of the time was for learning and for the initiates to enjoy themselves. At present the boys stayed for between 3-4 weeks in separation and most of this time was for nursing the wounds and this gave no time for learning at all.

In the past there used to be teaching in the initiation practice, whereas in the present there is less teaching and in some instances no positive teaching at all. Instead, the traditional guardians drank alcohol and used drugs and this behaviour affected the initiates as well. According to the old men in the past, the traditional guardians were expected to stay all the time with the boys and were expected to abstain from alcohol and women. Even those who were married understood that the process of initiation was very serious and that they had to be with the boys all the time.

Some of the *amakhankatha* did teach the initiates about behaviour, more especially towards *umphumo*. In referring to the majority of the guardians, one of the old men

said: “*Abo abawazi umsebenzi wabo, kwa into yokuba intwana eneminyaka emibini yalukile ibe likhankatha, umfana akazinto ngobukhankatha*” (The guardians do not know their responsibilities and that even a young man who has only been a man for two years can be a guardian, he knows nothing about being a guardian). Several contradictions in the roles of *amakhankatha* were observed. It was noted that there were major differences between what *amakhankatha* told the researcher and what the *amakrwala* and *abakhwetha* said. Firstly, most of the *amakhankatha* maintained that they stayed for 24 hours with the initiates and were supposed to abstain from alcohol, drugs and women. Whereas the *amakrwala* and *abakhwetha* responded that the *amkhankatha* were hardly at the initiation lodge. To attest to the responses by the *amakrwala* and *abakhwetha*, I found it hard to get hold of the *amakhankatha* as they were hardly at the initiation lodge during the day. This made me realise that the *amakhankatha* were aware that they were expected to spend most of their time at the initiation lodge and were not supposed to use alcohol while guarding the boys. However, most of them responded positive to the two issues even though they were doing the opposite.

*Amakhankatha* in the rural areas were older people and they spent more time in the initiation lodges. In Whittlesea and more especially in Mdantsane, it was not easy to get hold of most of the guardians during the day and I was advised by the initiates to visit in the evening. I had to keep on visiting the initiation schools until I found the guardians. Some of the guardians were drunk, for instance, in one interview; the researcher asked the guardian “*kukuthini ukuba yindoda?*” (What does it mean to be a man)? The informant replied “*owu kanti wena akuyazi indoda? Akuyondoda kanti?*” (You don’t know what it means to be a man? Are you not a man?) In such cases, I decided to visit again when the men were sober minded (see also 4.2.4).

### **6.3.5.3 The role of visiting men in teaching**

All initiated men have the privilege to enter any lodge as visitors. During the time when I went for initiation, it was acceptable for visiting men to come at anytime to examine the progress of healing of the initiate and further advice when there was a need. Sometimes, they used to do *ukuntlonta* (causing unnecessary pain) so as to make the initiate feel that “*kulukhuni ukuba yindoda*” (it is hard to be a man). It

became worse when the *ikhankatha* was not present because the initiate did not have a right to say no to the visiting men. To make matters worse some of the men were strangers who were just passing by.

Currently, it is no longer acceptable for any visiting men, except the health officials, to examine the initiate. Other men can only come as visitors and are not allowed to touch the initiate. Anything related to the healing progress of the initiate is communicated through the *ikhankatha* and only the *usosuthu* or his representative has a right to examine the initiate. The above was observed as the accepted and popular practice in all the areas. Visiting men normally enters the *ibhoma* and ask from the *ikhankatha* “*uqhuba njani umkhwetha?*” (how is the initiate?) and sometimes ask from the initiate “*kusebenzeka njani?*” (how is the progress?). They ask without necessarily wanting to see the healing progress for themselves. In a few instances where the *ikhankatha* observed some complications he would ask from the visiting man on what to do. Of course, with the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001, officials have a legal right to come and examine the initiates at any time but still when they arrive at the *ibhoma* they are expected to communicate with the *ikhankatha* first. In the absence of the guardian, they ask for any man who is close to the initiate and in the absence of such a man they go ahead to examine the progress of the initiate. In all areas, it was observed that there were fewer men visiting the *amabhoma* than during my initiation in the 1990s. Most of the men visit the *umkhwetha* they know or one to whom they are related. While visiting the initiate, they were related to and heard that there was an initiate or his family they knew they then would pass there on their way home. Some of the visiting men were neither related to the initiate, neighbours nor family or friends but always love visiting the lodges to see the initiates. Such visitors were common in areas closer to the informal settlements in Sada and Mdantsane (NU 4 and NU 9).

It was observed that there were *abafana* and middle-aged men who were visiting the lodges in all areas. The areas that had the most visitors were certain areas of Mdantsane (bushes nearby RDP houses situated closer to the informal settlements) and bushes closer to Sada (Whittlesea) where there are more informal settlements (see also 4.6.5). Such visitors came at any time of the day even during working hours (see also 4.6.5). It was observed that in Cala there were more elders of the

clans who visited the initiate than in other areas and in some cases they would come with the *usosuthu* to visit. Apart from visiting men identified above who came during working hours and the elders in the Cala villages, the majority of the visitors visited lodges after work, which was after 5pm and during weekends.

Some of the visiting men spent time and taught the boys about manhood. For example, some of the boys were not taught by their *amakhankatha* about *ukosula* but by the visiting 'amancentsa' (meaning men in the initiation -*hlonipha* language). In the past there was a strong emphasis on teaching the initiates about the values of *ubuntu* and what it meant to be a man. When I was initiated and this was not that long ago, there was a lot of teaching on values in Whittlesea. In those days there were many people visiting the lodges contrary to the present time and the visitors used to come and spend time in the lodges. Some of the older practices were observed in rural areas, for instance, older men still visited the *izikhwetha* and shared their experiences with the initiates in order to teach them about life.

### **6.3.6 Observations in relation to learning in the initiation**

#### **6.3.6.1 *Umphumo***

*Umphumo* was the graduation ceremony of the initiate(s); it is a welcoming ceremony for the boys who had been away in the initiation process. For the mothers of the boys it is proof that their boys were still alive, bearing in mind that in former times when the boy died during the initiation no funeral was arranged. The boy was buried in the bush and women, including their mothers, were not given an opportunity to attend the funeral. Because women were kept in the dark about the initiation, every time they saw someone coming from the initiation lodge, they wanted to know how the boy was doing but no one told them. Even in cases where the condition was deteriorating, they were told that everything was well. Only when they heard the *Somagwaza* song and they saw the *ikhankatha* with the covered initiate then they realised that indeed their son was alive and had overcome the ups and downs of the initiation practice. *Umphumo* takes place after the *usosuthu*, the elders and the *ikhankatha* have agreed unanimously that the initiate is ready to graduate.

The *amakrwala* from Whittlesea and Cala were observed being chased by *abafana* running at a very high speed to the nearby rivers to wash. In Mdantsane a container was placed at a distance from the *ibhuma* and the initiates were led by *abafana* to the container to wash their bodies (see also 4.12.2). Then the *umthambisi* (see also 3.5.9) performed *ukuthambisa* and later the *ikrwala* was covered in a dark coloured blanket and accompanied by *amadoda* towards the community for his reintegration. *Abafana* played the game of sticks as others sang with excitement. *Usomagwaza* and other songs of victory were sung as the *ikrwala* was slowly walking towards the community.

At arriving in the homestead, the *ikrwala* went to the *ebuhlanti* (a place where the rituals are performed) and sat down while *ukuyalwa* was performed. When *ukuyalwa* has been done then a separate house was prepared where the *ikrwala* was supposed to stay for a number of days. In most of the areas he stayed for three days and in some areas two days from the day of his graduation.

In the evening of the *ukuyalwa* day, *abafana* and other new men who graduated before him held *umxhentso* or *indlu yesibane*. In Cala it was called *ikatala* (see 3.6.9).

### **6.3.6.2 The songs that are sung during *umphumo***

*Somagwaza* is a traditional song that is a symbol of initiation. It is sung at all the *umngeno* and *umphumo* ceremonies, particularly, when the men were coming back with the initiate to the community. While singing the song the men performed the stick fighting game, where each man carried two sticks and fought against one another. At the time the boy was covered with a new blanket and his face was hidden, the only space open was for him to see the road. The *ikhankatha* was walking alongside the initiate(s) and the song became a song of victory for both the *ikhankatha* and the initiate(s). At this point there was a feeling of great excitement because the one who left the community as a boy had been successfully transformed into a new man (see also Ngxamngxa 1971:190; Turner 1967:6). In one of the *umphumo* ceremonies as we were walking and singing the *Somagwaza* song, a middle-aged man said: “*Thina eGcuwa le ngoma siyicula ngomngeno qha, kutheni*

*le nto iculwa apha na xa kuphunywa asisagwazi kaloku ngoku sesiyigqibile loo nto?"* (In Gcuwa we only sing this song during *umngeno*, why do you sing it even during *umngeno* because we are no longer circumcising now that it is over?) ". The *ikhankatha* responded "*unyanisile Rhadebe kunjalo le yingoma yomngeno kodwa safika apha edolophini iculwa xa kuphunywa naxa kungenwa, kwaye ke asizanga kutshintsha iMonti nathi safika linje*" (yes you are right it is supposed to be sung during *umngeno*, when we arrived here in the township that was how it has been, and we are not here to change this East London).

One old man said:

*Ewe Jwarha noRhadebe nobabini ninyanisile kodwa ke kudala phaya ekuqaleni ko-1960 le ngoma yayisisisekelo sokwaluka kwaye yayiculwa xa kungenwa naxa kuphunywa ngoko ke andiboni nto embi ngokuculwa kwayo xa kuphunywa. Okona kubalulekile kukuba iculwa ngamadoda qha, hayi abafazi namakhwenkwe.* (Yes, yes Jwarha (clan name) and Rhadebe (clan name) you are both right, but in the early 1960's this song used to be the identity of *ukwaluka* and it was sung both during the going in and the coming out ceremonies. The most important thing is that it must be sung by men only, not by women and boys).

The above debate between the two middle-aged and the old men illustrates that each village and area is different from the other, for instance, some believe the *Somagwaza* song is to be sung during *umngeno* some during *umphumo*. The argument for *umngeno* is that it is the time of *ukugwaza/ukudlanga* (circumcision) and the song is about circumcision and therefore no longer relevant during *umphumo*. The argument for singing it at the *umphumo* is that this song is more of an identity for *ukwaluka* and, when it is sung, it reminds men of their days of initiation and instils the values attached to it. The old man suggested that both views are right as there is no initiation without the singing of this song and this song is a symbol of rebirth from a careless life to a life full of responsibilities. *Somagwaza* was not the only song that was sung. There were songs that were about victory as a man, such as "*ndoyisile madoda nam ndide ndayindoda*" (I have overcome as well men and I am now a man as well), songs that speak about responsibility and courage, some about ancestors and the elders of the clan.

One old man said:

*Jonga mfo wam uzimamele neengoma ezi ziyafundisa, kwaye ungathi emva kweminyaka uyindoda ukhumbule intsingiselo yokwaluka kwakho. Uze uthi nokuba sele utshiphile ukhumbule ikhaya lakho. Ngaphezu koko ukhumbule ukuba uyindoda kwaye wayalwa.* (Look young man, you must listen to the songs as well, they carry meaning, sometimes years after your initiation you are reminded of the meaning of your initiation. Even in cases where you have not been going home the songs remind you of your rural home. Above that you remember that you are a man and that the words of admonition were offered to you).

### 6.3.6.3 The *ukuyalwa* experience

The *ukuyalwa* took place during the *umphumo* (graduation) where everybody gathered to welcome the initiates back into the community. This was an event full of excitement and the women performed what was called *ukukikiza* (ululating) and they sang songs of praise to thank *uQamata* (God) and the *abaphantsi* (ancestors).

The young men were now graduating from being *abakhwetha* to *amakrwala* as they endured the initiation and its hardships and had proved worthy of being men. In some areas as discussed earlier (see 6.3.3 ) each *ikrwala* was given a new name symbolising the beginning of a new life full of responsibilities and privileges of being a man, whereas in some areas the name did not have much significance (see 6.3.3). They received different gifts like money, clothes and blankets. The kinds of gifts that were brought differed from one area to another as discussed in chapter four (see 4.6.1; 4.6.2 and 4.6.3).

During the *ukuyalwa* men and women were given an opportunity to offer words of wisdom that were about behavioural change to the *amakrwala*. As we were sitting one old man stood up and said: “*Uyindoda mfo wam, uze ungafani nala madoda asixakileyo phandl’apha ugcine iziyalo ozinikiweyo apha namhlanje*” (you are a man today, you must be different from the kind of men who are troubling our society today, keep all what you are told here today). Some men had reference to HIV and AIDS in their speeches. One, for example, said: “*ukhumbule ukuba amaxesha enu awafani nala weth. namhlanje kukho izifo ezifana nale nto iphandl’apha ezigqiba abantu abatsha, uziphathe kakuhle mfo wam*” (your times are different from ours,

today there are diseases that are killing the young like HIV and AIDS; you must take care of yourself my son).

One old man from Mdantsane said: “*Ugawulayo (Zulu name for HIV and AIDS) mntanam is killing the young outside uze uzilumkele ke uziphathe ngendlela eyiyo ungabi ngu prayer boy (playboy)*” (HIV and AIDS is killing young men outside; you must be careful and act responsible and not be a playboy). The moment he said that people laughed for a long time, perhaps they were laughing because he was an old township man who included English words in his speech and pronouncing some words incorrectly, for example, ‘prayer boy’ instead of playboy.

While the *amakrwala* were given the words of wisdom, they were seated on the *ikhuko* before the elders and remained quiet. Their bodies were covered by the blankets and only their eyes were uncovered to show attention to the elders. One of the elders even said: “*Ujonge kum mfo wam ngoba andaziwa nganyala kule lali, onke la madoda angakuxelela*” (You must learn from me my son because I am not known for any evil doing in this village, all these men can attest to that). After the men were done with *ukuyalwa*, the *ikrwala* was led into the house where he was given words of admonition by women. Women as well spent time giving words that were related to a responsible life style as *ikrwala*. The details of emphasis and examples of words that were said during *ukuyalwa* are indicated elsewhere in the thesis - Christian (see 4.3.2.4), rural (see 4.5.1), urban (see 4.5.3) and semi-urban (see 4.5.2). During *ukuyalwa* both men and women showed conviction that the words that they were offering were intended to have a changing impact on the *ikrwala*. Furthermore, if the *ikrwala* does not take those words seriously, he would relapse to ‘boyish’ ways. One of the *zibazana* from Whittlesea said:

*Uyabona kwala zange ngaphambili uhlaliswe ngale ndlela ukuze uyalwe, kwaye akusayi kuphinda ulifumane eli thuba kwakhona. Ndicebisa ukuba wonke lamazwi aza kuwa apha uwathathele ingqalelo ukuze zonke iindlela zakho zilunge.* (As you can see new man, you have never been seated and given words of admonition before and you will never get this opportunity again. My advice to you is that you must take every word said here very seriously so that it may be well with you).

#### 6.4 The religious significance of initiation

According to Mbiti (1975:9-10), the African perspective of religion is not the same as the western definition, “religion is closely bound up with the traditional way of life, while this way of life has shaped religion as well” (Mbiti 1975:9). Religion embraces the tradition (history and identity), the state of being (prosperity, wellbeing, sickness suffering and oppression) and the future state of the person (sickness, ageing and ancestors). Life itself is a spiritual journey hence in all phases of human experiences there is the existence of *uQamata*, *uThixo* (God) or *uNkulunkulu* (Supreme Being). In simple terms, in the amaXhosa cosmology there is no difference between religion and culture but religion is found in all areas of human life. In African society, particularly among the amaXhosa, religion and culture are inseparable. Religion has always been in the thinking of African people to such an extent that it has shaped their cultures, social life, their political organisation and economic activities (Mbiti 1975:8). According to Soga (1930-1931: 46-47), law, customs and religion were regarded as the most powerful agencies of moulding the character of the individual tribesman in maintaining the equilibrium of the tribe. Ancestors (*abaphantsi/izinyanya/amathongo*) have always been at the centre of African religion. Following the *uNkulunkulu* in importance and rank, the ancestors are regarded as the most important beings in the ‘traditional’ cosmology (Petrus 2009:56). African people have always understood *uNkulunkulu* to be holy and supreme and when the elders died they were gone and joined the *ilizwe lemimoya* (the spiritual work) where God is.

They have now been promoted to be mediators between the living and most high God. Mbiti (1975:16) argues that it is inappropriate to use the word worship in reference to the ancestors as African people have never worshipped the ancestors, “it is true that the departed relatives are believed to live and show interest in their surviving families” (Mbiti 1975:16). The African people communicate with God through the ancestors. The ancestors are shown respect and sometimes given gifts of thanksgiving such as food, meat and beer in the form of rituals (*amasiko*) and ceremonies. *Amasiko* as defined in 4.15.3.3 are rituals through which African people communicate with their ancestors (see also 4.15.3.3). *Amasiko* are not just ceremonies but are spiritual rituals that bring together God, ancestors and the clan.

In Xhosa life, the initiation practice has been defined as one of those rituals which is pertinent to mark a journey from one state to another. Initiation has been defined as a spiritual journey that involves *uQamata* and the *abaphantsi nabaphilayo* (the departed and the living) together. The blood which is shed during the physical operation in the initiation binds the initiate to the land, and consequently to the departed members of his society. The blood becomes a symbol of the covenant between the initiate, his community and the spiritual world (Mbiti 1976:92; Mbiti 1986: 98). It was noted that even in the past, there were a few cases where the initiate would fall (die) and the only explanation available was that the ancestors did not approve of him to return and he would be buried in the presence of men only.

The process is associated with the symbolism of the boy's death and resurrection, and of his initiation and acceptance as a full member into his tribe or clan. He now severs his attachment to his mother and other women, who up to now have controlled him, and he passes into a new life which is characterised by male dominance (Weiss 1966: 70-87). The majority of the older informants expressed a belief that if a Xhosa man is not initiated, he would be mad and as a result he would never have *intsebenzo* (make money) until he considers to perform the initiation ritual.

When the boy goes for initiation a ritual is performed where a goat is slaughtered and while being slaughtered the goat has to bleat and the elders will respond by saying *icamagu livumile* (the bleat symbolises that all will be well). The elders speak with *uQamata* and the *abaphantsi* and request protection and a safe journey for the boys. Songs of praise and thanks giving are offered to *uQamata* and the *abaphantsi* for protecting the boys while in the initiation.

The views of the older informants correspond with the literature that initiation is viewed as *isiko elinenkqayi* (an old custom or rite) and a permanent practice that would never end (see also 4.15.3.3). There was a strong emphasis on the phrase; "*AmaXhosa asoze ahlukane nesiko lokwaluka naphakade*" (The amaXhosa will never abolish the initiation rite) (see also 4.15.3.3). It was expressed as a permanent practice that was practiced since the beginning of the amaXhosa nation. The concept of initiation as *isiko* and its effects on the views concerning the debate on

the continuation of or abolishing initiation has already been discussed in chapter four (see 4.15; 4.15.3 and 3.7.2.2).

## **6.5 The younger generation and the teaching in the initiation**

Earlier in this chapter (6.2), I have discussed the moral role of the initiation practice. Most of the information provided has been based on the literature, the views and experiences of the older informants and my observations. The younger generation had little to contribute to the topic as they could not speak from what has been the tradition. Their views were more on how they were experiencing the role of initiation in building their moral life as well as how they were hoping to implement what they learnt. Hence, I chose to separate their views as they were not based on their knowledge but their current experience. The following paragraphs will discuss the 'emic' experiences of the younger generation.

### **6.5.1 *Abakhwetha* (initiates)**

Even though they did not know what was going to happen in the initiation, they were expecting to go through pain and learning. What gave them strength and courage was the knowledge that their elders have gone through initiation and came back. The participants learnt principles such as patience, endurance, courage and responsibility. These they learnt from the whole initiation experience, by enduring pain, sleeping on the floor, fasting from certain kinds of foods, from *ukutheza* (collecting wood) and making fire. As far as the teachings by the *ikhankatha* were concerned, there was not much that they could recall as they spent most of their time alone with other initiates. Generally, the *ikhankatha* was only available in the first week and for some, only during the first four days. Most of them indicated that there were principles that they learnt in the initiation. When asked to mention some of the things they learnt, the majority could not name them and some responded that they had not thought about that. A few spoke more about the endurance of pain and patience that one had to exercise when the wound was treated. Concerning the role of the *amakhankatha* as guardians, the *amakhankatha* were mentioned as having played a tremendous role in showing them how to treat the wound. Some said that the *amakhankatha* were never there even for their healing process and, as a result,

some of their family members had to come and assist. The majority indicated that the *amakhankatha* spent little time with them; one of them said “*Elam ikhankatha lihlala esiXhoseni*” (My guardian lives in the village or at home). The majority did not recall anyone sharing their knowledge and experiences about life and moral issues. The responses of even those who were about to graduate were that they had not learnt much about behavioural issues in the initiation. They mentioned that there had been people visiting them but they did not really share their experience and knowledge with them.

### **6.5.2 Amakrwala (new men)**

As far as teaching about moral values in the initiation school was concerned their response was the same as the initiates, except that, they mentioned that during graduation they were given words of wisdom by mature men who included issues such as behavioural change, how to handle themselves as men, treat their families and provide for their families as men.

The majority of the *amakrwala* responded that they had learnt a lot about moral values from the rules and experience of undergoing the initiation practice and during the *ukuyalwa* by the mature men. The principles they had learnt were endurance, patience, to be hard working and how to conduct themselves as men. They expressed some hope to act differently now that they were men.

### **6.6 Definition of a man**

The definition of a man was similar in all areas that formed part of the research, except in Mpondoland. This led me to decide to discuss the responses from Libode separately from the other areas. Unless otherwise mentioned, the results below are from Whittlesea, Mdantsane and Cala.

### 6.6.1 *Unotywetywe* (a male circumcised in hospital)

*Unotywetywe* was a female nurse in a hospital in Queenstown. At that time it was unpopular for the boys to go for a hospital circumcision. However, there were cases where, due to several health issues, boys were referred from the initiation schools to a hospital. *Unotywetywe* used to assist in treating boys that were sent to the hospital and the community found it very unusual for a woman to treat circumcised men. As a result she was referred to as “*ikhankatha lamadoda asesibhedlele*” (the guardian of hospital men). Due to the concept of *ukufuza*, that a man would resemble his *ikhankatha*, such men were stigmatised by being called *oonotywetywe* (plural of *unotywetywe*). This term spread all over the Eastern Cape in referring to the men that were initiated in hospital.

There were other discriminatory terms used in different communities when referring to those who were circumcised in hospital. Some were called *amadoda ephepha* (paper men), implying that they had taken the western route and were not real men or *abadlezana* (a woman who gave birth in a hospital ward), meaning that such men were the equivalent of a woman (Vincent 2008 (b):81). I remember when I went for the initiation it was the time of the beginning of *abakhwetha* who were referred to hospital due to some health related complications, prior to that such incidences were rare. Even those incidents were more of a family affair and were kept a secret, few people would know and it would not be given much attention. From the early 1990s in Whittlesea, some of the *abakhwetha* were sent to Hewu Hospital. Some would go to the hospital at night and the following morning they would go back to the initiation school. Some would stay at the hospital until they were healed. At that time, the issue of stigmatisation was becoming popular. Some boys would rather stay at the lodges and hide it from their families that they were sick for fear of being discriminated against.

The issue of stigmatisation went beyond just name-calling as the men who were initiated in hospital cannot sit at *emicimbini* (traditional ceremonies) with other men. If they had done so, they would have been told to sit with the boys. The research by Peltzer and Nkanta (2009:94) explain that the majority of the initiates (70%) felt that they could be stigmatised as a result of choosing medical circumcision over

traditional initiation and 20% thought that the relationship between medical and “traditional” circumcised men was hostile.

As previously mentioned, I was initiated in Whittlesea. Sometime after my initiation, I went to visit my uncle in Mdantsane. In that community there was an *umcimbi* (ritual ceremony) and I went to participate in it. Some of the men there knew me when I was still a boy and as they saw me joining them, they asked when and where I was initiated. I told them and they used what is called *ukutshakhwa* which refers to a certain way of testing with questions to check if a man had really been through the traditional initiation, which I subsequently passed. It is believed that this test can only be passed by someone who has really been through the initiation process. It was only then that I was regarded as a man in that community. In cases where a person fails the test, the men would force him to present his physical scar as a proof and apparently there is a difference between a “traditional” and a hospital scar. If one fails *ukutshakwa* and he is not circumcised or the circumcision scar is not according to the expectation, then that person is regarded as a boy. A man has two witnesses, his mouth and his circumcised penis. If he fails to answer convincingly a physical inspection will be carried out in public (Anon, Mail and Guardian 2002).

Even Van Vuuren and De Jongh (1996:143) noted a perception that men who allegedly had themselves circumcised in hospital were physically recognisable among men. All research sites, except in Mpondoland expressed the above views with passion and conviction.

### **6.6.2 Ubudoda (manhood)**

The main emphasis about manhood was that *indoda ibonakala ngezenzo*, (a real man is seen in his actions or deeds). Pauw (1973:89) argued that a male who did not go for the initiation practice remained an object of ridicule, unclean, a dog or “half witter” and no one had any expectations of him. One of the informants noted that; “*Kukhona umahluko omkhulu phakathi kwenkwenkwe nendoda, inkwenkwe yinja kwaye ayinaxanduva kodwa indoda ibonakala ngoxanduva nokuziphatha kwayo*” (there is a big difference between a boy and a man - a boy is regarded a dog with no expectations upon them while men are seen in how they conduct themselves). The

life of responsibility involved working hard to support their families and taking care of their siblings and the extended family. One would find that when a woman was responsible for those duties she would be hypothetically referred to as a man. This view was expressed in all areas but more especially in Libode.

## **6.7 Five stages of manhood**

Five stages of manhood were identified. The stage of a man was not defined according to the number of years since he was born. Instead, it was how many years since he had undergone initiation and this calculation was called *izilimela*. *Isilimela* (singular of *izilimela*) is a Xhosa word for the month of June. In the past, initiation used to take place for a period of a year and initiates used to go for the practice in June and graduated the following June. They would start their counting of how many years they have been men the following year in June. Hence, the amaXhosa have a saying that *ubudala bendoda bubalawa ngezilimela zayo* (the age of manhood is calculated from the day they graduated from initiation).

### **6.7.1 Ubukhwetha (initiation)**

*Ubukhwetha* is where the process of being a man starts. The older men noted that, in the past the decision to go for initiation had nothing to do with age but depended on various reasons such as maturity, readiness of the person, recommendation of the father and elders, or when the boy had come back from working in urban areas. Lamla (2005:6) shared a similar view that the decision of when the boy should go for initiation rested largely with the boy himself, but the father's wishes were important.

This was only the beginning of *ubudoda*. In order for him to enjoy certain privileges enjoyed by men like getting married, sitting and eating with other men in the community he must pass this test. Up until the boy was circumcised, irrespective of his age, he was a boy and could not enjoy the above privileges. If a person became old without being initiated, he would have been abducted and taken for initiation without his approval. In 2008, (Daily Dispatch online 2008) there was a case of the former African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) president who was abducted on his arrival at the Cape Town airport and was taken for initiation. This

was not a new practice and was still happening in areas such as Cala, Qumbu, and the rural villages of Whittlesea. The ANCYL former president was a high profile person fully aware of his constitutional rights and although he could have taken his perpetrators to court, he did not. Furthermore, he was already a married man with children, which implied that he had to be separated from his wife and children. This is just one of the few cases that illustrate that irrespective of how old a male person is, as long as he has not gone for initiation he is regarded as a boy.

### **6.7.2 Ubukrwala (the process of being a new man)**

An *ikrwala* was a man for whom it was less than a year since his integration into the society after the initiation. Such men were regarded as trainees in the manhood community. Customarily, they would smear red ochre (*imbola*) on their faces during this period (Pauw 1994:16). If the *ikrwala* stays in his tribal village area, he would wear the *imbola* for approximately one year after the initiation. In the current practice the majority of the boys who go for initiation are still at high school and some at university. They wear *imbola* for at least while they are still at home (approximately 1-2 weeks) and remove it when they go to school. The *amakrwala* have a dress code of brown and khaki clothes with a cap or a hat on their heads. Their style of clothes differed from one area to another, but the colours were similar. At this stage, they were not recognised as fully fledged men until they have completed this stage. They were called “*ubhuti omtsha*” meaning, a new brother and the community gave them the appropriate respect. There were a number of regulations that the *amakrwala* were supposed to live by, for instance, when I was an *ikrwala* I was not supposed to walk around when it was dark. I was supposed to be at home every day for supper. Also, there were even some kinds of food that they were not supposed to eat and places they were not supposed to go to, places such as night clubs and shebeens. Whenever I misbehaved, I would be constantly reminded that I was initiated so I should behave like a man; as a result, I behaved more responsibly and differently from those who had not been initiated. The worst words one can say to an *ikrwala* were to say that he behaved like a boy. The suffering and endurance of the initiation was still fresh in their minds and therefore they would even fight to be called *bhuti* (brother, a sign of respect). The *amakrwala* were further expected to walk in a certain way and must not make a noise or speak loud. One would see them in all

communities walking together. Even at universities *amakrwala* are visible by their code of dress and always walking together. Some of the *amakrwala*, especially those who were still at high school, mentioned that sometimes they changed the *ubukrwala* attire quickly and remove the *imbola* after a week or so because they are not allowed to wear it at school. Those who were not studying and those who were at universities did not have the challenge concerning their clothes and wearing of *imbola* as they were not expected to wear any uniform.

*Amakrwala* were observed in groups in all areas; in Mdantsane and in Whittlesea, there were more groups than in other areas. This could be due to various reasons, one being that in Cala the majority of the *amakrwala* had to go back to areas like Mthatha, Port Elizabeth and Alice where they were studying. They were not only university students, but even high school learners. There were those who were studying in private high schools in areas such as Mthatha and Gcuwa. Whereas in Mdantsane the high schools and tertiary institutions were close by and students still lived at their homes and commuted to the schools.

There were few groups of *amakrwala* observed in Cala and Mpondoland. In those areas, there were some *amakrwala* who excitedly walked in groups of two or three, sometimes an *ikrwala* with an *umfana*.

In Mdantsane in particular, the *amakrwala* were walking in bigger groups than in all the other areas. Some were walking in a certain similar style and moving their bodies in a certain generic manner, speaking *tsotsi* language, smoking and drinking. Some of the groups were what one would call a *tsotsi* gang and it seemed that they were in competition about who is the best man behaving as expected of them. It appeared that there is a certain definition of *ubukrwala* and all were in pursuit of what they were socialised to be as an *ikrwala*.

#### **6.7.2.1 Oosaluka (initiated at the same time, peer)**

*Oosaluka* (initiated at the same time) were *amakrwala* who were initiated at the same time - even if the areas were different as long as the season was the same. This term is similar to *oontanga* (peers), even if their ages differ, but now they were

equal in manhood and would start counting *izilimela* together. Through this process, a ritual friendship was established (Vizedom 1976:21). During this process, *oosaluka* established a manhood covenant which implied that, in times of need they would help one another (see also Pauw 1994).

### **6.7.3 *Ubufana* (to be a young man)**

This stage started from a year after the initiation up to about nine to ten years thereafter. At this stage, they were regarded as fully fleshed men. They had all the rights and privileges attached to men. It was at this stage that they were married and started families of their own. They had more responsibility in family affairs and rituals as well as community affairs. Community responsibilities included things such as announcing community meetings; building *amabhoma* (initiation huts) for the initiates, digging graves for funerals and called when there was crime, to punish the perpetrators. During the *intlombe*, they are still the ones taking a leading responsibility and this was the case in all areas. Among the *abafana* there is differentiation of seniority that is based on *izilimela* - the most junior members normally respect and serve the senior members. The most senior members enjoy more privileges, such as being entitled to the most delicious meat and beer and larger quantities of them (see also Pauw 1994:63).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, the structure and the responsibilities of *abafana* were clearer with everyone knowing their roles. For example, the *intlombe* had a leader and his leadership had its rights and privileges, he was expected to be a good orator, of good character and had to be a binding force in order to avoid disunity in the group (Pauw 1994:63).

During this research, the *abafana* groups were more visible during the ritual ceremonies, for instance, during *imigidi* and *ukojiswa* they were responsible for slaughtering the beasts. The seniority positions were observed, for instance, in the seating arrangements of the *abafana*. Each man knew his place as they were seated based on their number of *izilimela*. The beer would start with the most senior and end with the most junior. If any beer was left it was then distributed among the senior group of the *abafana*. The *injoli*, who apparently was the leader of the *intlombe*

(Pauw 1994:63), had more beer than all members and no one dared to question his decision.

#### **6.7.4 *Ubudoda* (to be a man)**

This stage started about ten years after the initiation graduation up to the age of fifty-five. This was a stage where they monitored and gave direction to younger men. They were no longer physically involved in the ritual activities such as *ukubasa umlilo* (to make fire), *ukuxhela* (to slaughter) and *ukujola* (to taste and share with others), but in most cases, they showed young men how to perform the above duties. In family rituals, they were the ones to make sure that it was performed in an acceptable manner and when not sure they enquired from the *amaxhego* (old men). In the community and in households they were called upon to resolve disputes. They were called *bawo*, *tata* (father) and other words related to their fatherhood responsibilities. Duties such as to be an *injoli* (to taste and dish the beer) are done by *amadoda*.

#### **6.7.5 *Ubuxhego* (to be an old man)**

This stage began when a person reached the age of fifty-five. They were regarded as living ancestors. No ritual was performed without their presence. They were the ones who were expected to offer words of wisdom and admonition during the rituals including the initiation graduation day. At this stage, they were no longer physically strong and were not expected to do any work but to give instructions to the *amadoda*.

#### **6.8 The sexual intercourse issue and *ukosula* (to have sex with a woman who is not your girlfriend)**

In chapter one, I referred to a rape case of a school girl that happened in Zwelitsha and it was instigated by what is called *ukosula* or *ukukhupha ifutha*. *Ukosula* (literally means to wipe) or *ukukhupha ifutha* (literally means to remove fat). *Ukosula* or *ukukhupha ifutha* is performed by *amakrwala* after graduating from initiation; the understanding is that they should have sexual intercourse with a woman who is not

the stable girlfriend. The intention is said to remove any misfortune they acquired while in initiation. In his article, Vincent (2008 (b):89) referred to a recent case where a group of eight *amakrwala* were reported to have gang-raped a 27 year old woman. Even Meintjies (1998: 57) who conducted his research in the 1980's observed the practice of *ukosula* among amaXhosa. The practice of *ukukhupha ifutha/ukosula* is highly contested. Some said it was never part of amaXhosa practice, some said it was encouraged in urban areas. The youth said they have received it from their fathers. Before the analysis of the practice of *ukukhupha ifutha*, it is important to look at the different perceptions of the sexual practice from the 1950s to date.

### **6.8.1 Sexual penetration prior to the 1970s**

The literature suggests that prior to the 1970s, the amaXhosa did not regard sexual intercourse as taboo but as a normal requirement for every adult, whether married, or unmarried or widowed (Mayer 1961:252). Sexual intercourse was regulated amongst the youth and the emphasis was upon girls to remain virgins until they were married. "In the days when Xhosa girls were regularly inspected by senior women to ascertain if their virginity was still intact, the word *intombi* meant both girl and virgin" (Mayer 1961: 253). The inspection of girls or virginity testing is called *ukuhlolwa kwamantombazana*. Virginity testing has been discarded in the rest of South Africa, but is still performed in some areas of KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland. During the time when the girls were inspected in Xhosa rural communities, of course few of the girls would have been involved in sexual intercourse due to fear of discrimination, rejection and sometimes punishment. Hence, every girl was given the status of virgin (*ubuntombi*). Mayer (1961: 253) further suggests that a girl who became pregnant was not referred to as an *intombi*, but would lose the social status of *ubuntombi* (state of being a virgin). *Ubuntombi* was not just a name given to a girl who was a virgin, but a state of being which included benefits such as being able to play with peers, enjoy youthfulness and perceived as a potential girl to be given into marriage. Furthermore, the clan and the homestead would take pride in their *iintombi* and they would be treated with respect and care, they were their father's pride because he would receive *ilobola* for them. Mayer (1961: 255)) and Van Der Vliet (1974: 236), who conducted their ethnographic research in the late 1950s and 1960s, respectively supported this view that full sexual penetration prior to marriage was

avoided by what they called '*metsha*' (intra-crural intercourse - having sex without penetration).

One of the informants from Cala remarked: "*Thina sasithandana qha. Sasingayazi nokuba ukudibana komfana nentombi kwenziwa njani sasisazi ukuba yinto yabantu abada leyo, yile nto sasiyibiza ngokuba zizinto zabantu abadala*" (We were dating in our own way but did not know how to have sex, all we knew was that sex was for adults, hence we called it adults' things). According to this view, the issue of pre-marital sexual relations was an abomination in Xhosa culture. The boys and girls met but did not have full sexual intercourse and if a girl was found to be pregnant, she would be called an *inkazana* (an insult, implying that she no longer qualified to play with other girls) and the boy would have to pay cows (*isondlo*) for the damage. The majority of the older generation from all areas spoke with passion that it was possible for one to *metsha* but premarital sexual penetration was discouraged. Not only were there measures for girls but even boys were discouraged from sex; as a result heavy penalties were placed upon boys, that is if a boy impregnated a girl, he would be expected to drop out from school and go and work on the mines in order to support the child. He or his father was expected to pay a heavy penalty or sometimes he would be forced to marry the girl he impregnated irrespective of him being ready or not. One of the old men remarked:

*Ekhaya sasingabafana abane kwaye ekhaya kwakuneenkomo ezininzi. Ubhuti wam omdala wenza nzima intombi, utata wathi akasay ikuze amncedise ukulobola, kwafuneka aye kusebenza iminyaka elishumi ukuze athathe umfazi. Olandela lowoyena wazi ngcina waziphatha kakuhle kwaye zange enze nzima. Yena wasebenza nje iminyaka emibini utata wamncedisa ngeenkomo ezintlanu. Loo nto yandenza ukuba nam mandizingcine ndingamoshi ntombi yamntu ukuze ndincediswe ndakuxakeka.* (At home we were four young men and there were a lot of cows; my elder brother impregnated a girl and my father said he will never assist him towards *lobola*; as a result he had to work for ten years before he got married. The second born was responsible as he did not impregnate; he only worked for two years towards *lobola* and my father assisted him with five cows towards *lobola*. That was one of the reasons I acted responsibly and did not impregnate anyone so that when I needed help my father could provide without any complications).

*Ubumdandi neziphumo ezihle zokuzigcina, kunye neengxaki zokuziphatha kakubi zaziculwa mihla yonke ngexesha lethu lakudala. Ukuba intombazana ith e yafumana umntwana ingatshatanga yayisazi ukuba idlale ngeenkomo zikayise, yile nto yayibangela ukuba izingcine, kuba iyazi ixabiso layo libalulekile, kananjalo umfana ongamithisanga waye-xatyiswa likhaya lakhe athi nokuba ubone intombi ancediswe nguyise kwilobola ngoba uligugu lekhaya.* (The privileges and good results of

abstinence and the bad consequences of promiscuity were over emphasised during our time. If a girl became pregnant before marriage, she knew that should have played with her father's cows (*lobola*); hence girls used to preserve themselves because they knew their value was important. Even the boy who did not impregnate a girl was highly valued by his clan; as a result when he saw a girl for marriage he would receive assistance of *lobola* from his father because he is the pride of the clan).

The two above responses suggests that there were strict measures placed upon girls and boys whenever there were pregnancies involved so as to discourage young people from having sexual intercourse. In cases where both girls and boys behaved as expected by their parents, they would be regarded as the pride of the clan and would receive favour from everyone and receive privileges that would not be given to those who were pregnant or impregnated.

In my observations, the people who spoke passionately about the prohibition of premarital sex were mainly the *amaxhego* (old man) and it was interesting to note that even most of these *amaxhego* who lived in Mdantsane and who seemed urbanised, maintained the view, that they had had relationships with girls but such relationships excluded sexual penetration. There were some middle-aged men who maintained that they were initiated in the rural areas and were taught good sexual and moral values and were never introduced to *ukosula*. It is only when they arrived in the urban areas that they inherited this negative influence from boys who were initiated in the urban areas. Some of the older men acknowledged the existence of *ukosula* but emphasised that it was never taught in the initiation, but it was known to be a conduct of some of the *amakrwala* and they would perform it to *amadikazi* and *amankazana* (For the meaning of *amadikazi* and *amankazana*, see below).

### **6.8.2 *Idikazi* and *inkazana***

Prior to the 1970s, it is said that there were two types of women who did not qualify to be referred to as *iintombi*. The one known to have had sexual intercourse or to have had a child before marriage was referred to as *inkazana* (a girl whose hymen had been ruptured but did not become pregnant) and a woman who had returned from marriage was referred to as *idikazi* (*amadikazi*-plural) or sometimes *umabuya ekwendeni* (the one who returned back from married life). *Idikazi* come from the word

*idikwamzi* which is a combination of two Xhosa words, the verb, *ukudikwa* (to be disgusted with) and the noun, *umzi* (a homestead) (Lamla 1985: 22).

An *idikazi* was regarded as a woman who had enough of the married life and went back to her home. According to Lamla (1985: 22) some of his informants equate *idikazi* with concubines, prostitutes or women who 'sleep around'. Later on when the practice of *ukuhlola* was not performed the concept of *inkazana* changed and it referred to a woman who had borne a child and was regarded as a woman available for love affairs especially with married men (Van Der Vliet 1974:237). This concept was not only attached to pregnancy and the existence of the child but, as previously mentioned; *amankazana* (plural of *inkazana*) lost many of privileges that were attached to *iintombi* (Van der Vliet 1974: 237). Furthermore, the terms *inkazana* and *idikazi* were associated with a certain kind of behaviour; *amankazana* and *amadikazi* did not command respect as they were not *iintombi* and were not *abafazi* but had a right to practice full sexual intercourse outside of marriage and with different people. The concepts of *ubunkazana* (being an *inkazana*) and *ubudikazi* (being an *idikazi*) suggest two issues; firstly, that no man would want to be in an open relationship with them; secondly, that married men who wanted to have sex outside of marriage would go to the *amankazana* and *amadikazi* as well possibly reinforcing the idea that the practice of *ukosula* was associated with *amankazana* and *amadikazi* in the pre-1970s. Among girls and boys, it was known that full sexual penetration was for adults or married people. One of the older men argued that, "*Ewe yinyani yona into yokuba kwakuda amanye amakwala ebeye azincede apha kumankazana na kumadikazi, njengoba namanye amadoda ebesenza kodwa ke leyo zange ibeyimfundiso yasebakhwetheni njengoba kunjalo namhlanje*" (Yes, it is true that there were some of the *amarkwala* who used to have sex with *amadikazi* and *amankazana*, just other men in the society but the teaching of *ukosula* was never part of the teaching at the initiation).

### **6.8.3 Sexual penetration post 1970s**

The literature suggests a drastic change in the sexual life of the Xhosa communities. This was the era when the practice of *ukuhlolwa* was no longer in place and no major emphasis was placed on punishments and privileges associated with youth

pregnancy cases. Pauw (1994:19), recorded that sexual penetration among the Xhosa youth was no longer condemned, but that pre-marital sexual relationships among the youth were condoned as long as the girl was not impregnated. At that time, one has to acknowledge that there were no known HIV/AIDS cases and that the youth were more concerned with pregnancy than HIV/AIDS as is the case today. One of the middle aged men replied that “*ngeminyaka yo 1970 thina sasiqinisekisa ukuba amantombazana asebenzisa izithintelo ukuze angabi nabantwana, yayingekho ke i HIV/AIDS ngoko*” (in the 1970s we used to make sure that girls use precaution measure or contraceptives so that they do not become pregnant). Obviously condoms were not popular at that time and, as has been stated, responsible youth would take precautions against pregnancy and this would be through the use of contraceptives.

Pauw (1994:19) used the same term as Van Der Vliet (1974:235) in referring to the boys’ and girls’ relationship as *ukumetsha*. The difference is that, contrary to Van Der Vliet, who states that *ukumetsha* was non-penetrative sex among girls and boys, Pauw’s informants’ definition of *ukumetsha* involved full sexual intercourse (Pauw 1994:19). What one has to realise is that Van Der Vliet and Pauw wrote at different time periods. Van Der Vliet conducted her ethnographic research in the 1960s, while Pauw conducted his in the late 1970s. This represented different times in Xhosa culture. The responses by the young and the old represented by Ntombana (2009) appeared to confirm the ethnographic works by Van Der Vliet (1974), Pauw (1994) and Meintjies (1998). It seems that there was a time when sexual intercourse was regarded as taboo amongst the youth, but then came *kwangena ubulawu* (introduction of a foreign culture) according to the older informants. From the information provided by the old and the young informants, as well as publications by Van Der Vliet, Pauw and Meintjies, one can conclude that the change concerning the sexual penetrating issue was introduced in the early 70s, which may have been influenced by a significant sexual revolution in the West which took place in the 1960s (Escoffier 2001: xi-xiv).

#### 6.8.4 Sexual penetration post 1990

The majority of the informants both young and old and from all areas chosen for the study responded that nowadays full sexual intercourse is popular amongst the youth. The majority of the older informants were reluctant to talk about topics related to sexual intercourse but spent most of their time deliberating on how the youth of today misbehave and lack respect. The majority of the older informants who responded to questions related to sexual behaviour elaborated that, even though full sexual intercourse is popular amongst the youth, it is not supposed to be an acceptable practice. Some ascribed the current sexual dilemma to media and television programs. One old man said that, "*kaloku ngoku aba bantwana babuka lethivi ibonisa izinto ezenzeka phesheya zokuziphatha kakubi nabo bazeke mzekweni*" (no these kids watch TV which shows a lot of overseas life-style which includes bad behaviour and they end up imitating it). Some of the older informants did not show major concern over full sexual intercourse; their main concerns were over multiple sexual partners, high rate of pregnancy and the lack of condom use among the youth. The popular terms used by the older informants in regard to sexual behaviour were *ukuziphatha kakubi* (literally means – to carry oneself in an unacceptable way) and *ukuziphatha kakuhle* (to carry oneself in an acceptable way). According to older informants, *ukuziphatha kakubi* entails unacceptable public behaviour by young people, involving kissing in public, holding hands with each other, inviting girls to boy's homes and pregnancy among the youth. Some responded that one has to have one partner and practise safe sex.

Most of the younger generation responded that it is acceptable for youth to have sexual penetration as long as such relationships are kept away from adults, while some said that as long as adults are respected. When asked about what they meant by 'respecting of adults' their responses were that; youth should not hold each other in public, should not kiss in front of adults, should not talk about their sexual relations in front of adults and should not bring their partners in the house in front of adults.

Some of them mentioned that it is acceptable to have sexual penetration as long as it does not result in pregnancy while others cited the importance of using a condom as a precaution against pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection. Some of them boldly

responded, “*umntu angathandana kodwa kufuneka asebenzise idyas*” (a person can be in a relationship but must use a condom). The majority of youth equated the concept of *ukuziphatha kakuhle* to two behaviours, firstly, to use a condom whenever having sexual intercourse and secondly for the woman not to fall pregnant. Very few young informants regarded multiple sexual partners as *ukuziphatha kakubi*. A few responded that having multiple partners is not ‘cool’ (not a good thing) and that a person should stick to one sexual partner. The majority of the young informants, more especially from Mdantsane, saw nothing wrong with multiple sexual partners as long as a condom was used to prevent pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection.

### **6.8.5 The issue of *ukosula***

#### **6.8.5.1 The older generation rejected the idea of *ukosula***

The issue of having sexual intercourse with a woman to remove bad luck was rightfully rejected by the majority of the older generation as ‘*ubulawu*’<sup>13</sup> (not part of Xhosa culture). They explained that this is one of the elements that have been introduced by the younger generation in the practice and therefore was never part of the amaXhosa culture. One of the old men asserted that, “*Ngexesha lethu thina sasifundiswa esuthwini ukuba umfana akahlangani nentombi bengatshatanga, ukuqinisa lo mthetho umfana wayehlawula inkomo yesondlo, loo nto yayisenza kube nzima ukuba umfana afane amoshe intombi*” (During our time we were taught in the initiation that a young man was not supposed to have sexual intercourse with a woman outside of marriage, if that happened the man was expected to pay a compensation of a cow for damaging the girl - the intention was to make it impossible for them to practice full sexual intercourse).

Some older men argued that *ukosula* did exist in the communities but it was not taught from the initiation schools, it was just a behaviour that evolved from no particular authority. They said that some of the *amakwala* would secretly go out to *amankazana* or *amadikazi* to have sexual intercourse. At the time, the majority of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ubulawu* comes from the Xhosa word *ilawu* which is a derogative word used to refer to coloured people implying people without culture and tradition. In this case any negative tradition or practice that was not part of Xhosa culture is referred to as *ubulawu*.

*izintombi* wanted to preserve themselves until they were married, so some *amakrwala* would go and have temporary affairs with those women. Some of the old men argued that, just like extra marital affairs were never officially encouraged in the community, it was common knowledge that some men would visit some women, as is the case with *ukosula*. It was never encouraged or taught at the initiation school but some of *amakrwala* would secretly go and perform *ukosula*.

#### **6.8.5.2 *Ukosula* in the urban areas**

Pauw (1973: 118), who also conducted his ethnographic work in the 1960s found out that sexual penetration was more prevalent in urban than in rural areas. He said that the amaXhosa regarded the urban areas as a sexually immoral place and that the amaXhosa shared a stereotype that rural people could control themselves sexually while in urban areas people did as they wished. Full sexual intercourse outside of marriage and among the youth was shown in the increase in the illegitimacy birth rate in urban areas (Pauw 1973: 118).

As previously mentioned a few middle-aged men from Mdantsane, who were initiated in the early seventies, maintained that they were initiated in the rural areas and were never encouraged to sleep with girls after initiation. It was when they arrived in the urban areas that they heard other *amakrwala* talking about the practice of *ukukhupha ifutha*, which implied that one was expected to have sexual intercourse with an *unontyintyi* (a woman who drinks a lot of alcohol) or an *idikazi* (a woman who run away from marriage or who have sexual intercourse with everybody) so as to remove the bad luck acquired from initiation. One of the old men asserted that;

*Mna ndafika kweli Monti ndifundiswe ukuba ikrwala alihambi zonke iindawo alityi zonke izinto alilali namantombaza. Ndafika kweli Monti kusithiwa kufanele ndizibonise ubudoda bam, hleze izipems zinyuke zize entloko, yimfundiso yamakrwala alapha leyo yokukhupha ifutha. (I was taught in the rural areas that an initiate does not eat everything, goes to all places or sleep with girls; it is when I arrived in East London that I was exposed to the encouragement that an initiate must sleep with girls; that has been the teaching of the urban initiates).*

One of the middle-aged men brought a very interesting point to the discussion, namely that it is true that the *amakrwala* do practise the *ukosula*, which raised the

question of where they learnt this practice. Obviously, they must have been taught by adults. He said that;

*Madoda ndiyavuma mna andiqali kuyiva le nto niyithethayo yokukhupha ifutha. Sonke siyayazi kwaye siyavuma ayilo siko lethu elo, kodwa ke ngubani ogcina abakhwetha? Ayisithi? Ngubani obafundisayo? Kudala yaba khona le nto okoko mna ndafika kweli Monti ngo-1974 isenziwa. Masivumelaneni yona ikhona kwaye thina sinetyala lokuzisa imfundiso engeyiyo kwisiko lethu, sithi abamosha abantwana bethu. (Men, I agree it is not the first time to hear this intercourse practice, we all know it and we agree it is not part of our culture, but then who takes care of the initiates? Who teaches them? Is it not us? This teaching has been there for some time, I heard of it since I arrived in East London in 1974. It is there and we must agree that we are guilty of introducing a destructive teaching and we are the ones misleading our own children).*

One middle-aged man from Whittlesea remarked that;

*Kukho nale mfundiso iphandl'apha yokukhupha ifutha. Mna bonke abantwana bam ndiyabaxelela bangalandeli yonke into, ziimfundiso zasezidolophini ezo. Khona ngumntakabani lo kuza kulalwa naye ngendlela enjalo. Akho ndoda inengqondo ingavuma ngowayo umntwana. (There is this teaching out there of ukukhupha ifutha, I warn all my children against it; these are teachings from urban areas; who will ever allow their daughters to be treated like that? There is no reasonable man who can allow that to be done to his daughters).*

Most old and middle-aged informants, especially in Mdantsane and Whittlesea, did not deny the existence of *ukosula*, but did not want to take responsibility for it. Even *amakhankatha*, who are reported to have influenced *abakhwetha* on *ukosula*, acknowledged that *ukosula* does exist, but denied that they instructed the *abakhwetha* to do it. One has to realise that this practice has resulted in negative outcomes such as suggesting that women have no rights over their sexual life as well as perpetuating rape and, therefore, it is understandable that no one wants to take responsibility for it.

One old man remarked, “*Ndiyeva ngesi senzo sokwasula kwaye idumile apha eMdantsane, kodwa asinasiqinisekiso sokuba yakhe yayimfundiso ekhoyo ebakhwetheni*” (I do hear that this *ukosula* practice has been very popular more especially here in Mdantsane but there is no evidence that in the past it was part of the teaching in the initiation practice).

### 6.8.5.3 The younger generation on *ukosula*

The younger generation presented a different picture to that of the older one. Most of the *amakrwala* from Mdantsane and a few from Whittlesea responded that it was their understanding that they must have sexual intercourse with a woman who was not their girlfriend and whom they may dislike in the future and called this act *ukukhupha ifutha* (to remove the white clay used while in the initiation). One of the *amakrwala* from Mdantsane said that: “*ukhanki usichazele ukuba indoda kufanele ikhuphe ifutha ukuze izibone ubudoda bayo ukuba buphillile na*”. (The guardian told us that a man must have sexual intercourse to prove that his manhood has been completely healed). Some responded that the men who came to visit them in the initiation told them about *ukosula*. In referring to *ukukhupha ifutha*, there were terms such as *ukutesta Mercedes Benz* (to test your Mercedes Benz (penis)) and *ukuzijonga ukuba uphilile nyhani na* (to test if your one really healed). According to the *amakrwala*, it was not just about sexual penetration, but that they would not have sex with their girlfriends but with “*i cherry nje engengomntu wakho*” (a cheap girl who is not your real girlfriend). It was said that if one has sex with their stable girlfriend, the results would be “*umdini netyheneba*” (Xhosa idiom that means the two would hate each other) and as a result that relationship would not last. When asked how they approach these girls since they only want *ukosula*, one responded that: “*yhoo bhuta (tsotsi term for elder brother) hayi kaloku awunakutsho ukuba jonga sana ndifuna ukosula kuwe of course uthi jonga ndiyakuncanwa (tsotsi for love) mabhebeza (tsotsi for woman) kodwa wena uyayazi into oyifunayo*” (No, no brother you cannot say that look girl I want to practise *ukosula* to you; you will of course say I love you girl, but you know what you exactly want). Most of the *amakrwala* responded that when having sexual intercourse, they use a condom and some responded that sometimes they do and a few said that they use a condom as means of pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention. It was further reported that the majority of girls where *ukosulwa* is performed are known and are usually seen during *ukuxhentsiswa kwekrwala* (ceremony for the new man) occasions for singing and drinking alcohol.

### 6.8.6 My reflection of the *ukosula* practice

When I was initiated about sixteen years ago, my *ikhankatha* was an old man and he never said anything to me about *ukosula*. I do remember a few men who visited me while in the initiation; they were probably less than five years into manhood and spoke about *ukosula* as if it was what every *ikrwala* was supposed to do. In confusion I asked my *ikhankatha* about it and he replied that there was no such thing and I must never do it. He further warned me that while in the initiation, I needed to be careful and not listen to things said by visitors; I must only listen to him and elders of my family. It appeared to me that because the visitors knew that an initiate is a novice they each came with their own theories of manhood, but would need clarification from the *ikhankatha*. Corrupt men take this as an opportunity to introduce distorted influences to the initiates in the name of manhood.

During the night of *ukuxhentsiswa* or *indlu yesibane* (first night in the community where men introduce the *ikrwala* to the life of being a man and involves a lot of traditional dancing), apart from my cousin's sisters and relatives, there were some girls that I noticed, who knew all the songs sung at the occasion and I noticed that it was the same girls who usually attended the *imigidi*. Some of these girls were known for dating *amakrwala*; for example, every year of *amakrwala* graduation one would observe those girls in the evening of the *umgidi* singing and dancing. It was common knowledge that they were *iintombi zabafana/zamakrwala* (girls for young men/new men) and this was an accepted practice. Of course, their role as *iintombi zabafana* involved privileges such as more alcohol and money. It was not openly said that the *amakrwala* performed *ukosola* but relationships did not last as those girls would in a short space of time date *amanye amakrwala* (other future new men). Most of those girls did not attend school, or were unemployed, and they did not seem to be focused on their future but were girls who openly drank alcohol and were involved in fighting. Even though during that time the terms *amadikazi* and *amankazana* were not popular, people referred to some of those girls as *oonontyintyi* because of their heavy drinking. Such girls were known to date *amakrwala* and boys generally avoided them. In fact it was no secret that those girls dated *amakrwala* but it was not general knowledge that they performed *ukosula*.

### **6.8.7 What makes the influence of *ukosula* popular?**

One of the possible reasons why the practice of *ukosula* is popular is that initiation as a rite of passage is a transition progression where the *umkhwetha* has no idea of what the process is all about; he has to fully depend on the *ikhankatha* and visitors who have been through the process. Currently, as indicated in this thesis and by some authors, the initiation practice tends to introduce negative influences, such as crime, alcohol and drug abuse. The initiation practice is understood to be a process that defines manhood, what is done and said there, whether negative or positive is given undivided attention as it is taken as the beginning of a new life. Initiates who are novices approach the practice as a manhood institution with great influence in the identity of manhood. As a result they start to practise what is being taught while in the initiation and after graduation they accept such behaviour as a reflection of their manhood. This then explains some of the reasons why the practice of *ukosula* has received attention from most of the *amakrwala* and some have even gone to the extreme of raping and abusing women in the name of the practice.

### **6.9. The younger generation**

The responses of the *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala* were similar. The difference was that the *abakhwetha* were still in the initiation and did not know what was to come next as far as the future experiences of both *ubukwetha* and *ubukrwala* were concerned. The questions and discussions in these groups were not the same as in the older groups. The questions I asked them were more on how they were experiencing their stages of life.

#### **6.9.1 The reasons for going to the initiation**

The reasons for taking this decision varied. Most of the informants explained that they had just written their grade 12 examinations and did not want to go to a tertiary education institution while being boys. Some mentioned that they were ready for initiation, while some said that their friends were going and therefore they did not want to be left behind. Some mentioned that they wanted to be men and make a positive impact in the community, while others mentioned that they were fulfilling the

Xhosa tradition. They indicated that it was a norm for all boys to be circumcised in their tradition. However, some said that they have done circumcision due to peer pressure as they were teased by their friends because they were not circumcised while their friends were.

The majority of the informants mentioned that no one explained to them what initiation was about and how to behave and what to expect. Those who asked prior to the initiation were told that they must not ask such questions. The simple answer they were given was that they were to fulfil the tradition. This could be due to the fact that initiation was a rite of passage that was kept a secret to those who had not gone through it. When I was an *umkhwetha* or an *ikrwala* I really did not ask questions as to what initiation was about or why I had been going for the practice. I assumed that I was fulfilling the tradition, but it was when I was maturing into manhood that I started wrestling with such questions and seeking answers for myself. I remember when I was an *ikrwala* I was told that an *ikrwala* does not eat the intestines of a sheep or a cow. When I asked my uncle why it is like that he said that I must stop being *unokho ntoni* (literally what is there), meaning that I must stop asking so many questions. This is a popular response by elders when the youth ask questions.

## **6.10 The experience of the *amakhankatha*, *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala***

### **6.10.1 *Amakhankatha* (traditional guardians)**

The ages of the *amakhankatha* ranged between 22-55 years. Most of them were between 22-30 years old and only a few of them were above the age of 40 years and those above 40 were only found in the rural areas and those who were *amakhankatha* for Christian initiates. Most of the guardians took this responsibility every year and regarded it as their full-time job. The guardians were chosen by the families of the initiate. Some of them were not regular guardians, but were related to the initiates or their families. Most of them started by taking care of the boys related to them and afterwards they moved on to other boys. When they started, it was not their intention to be guardians but after the first experience, interest developed and they ended up being asked by other families. Some of them responded that they were once *amangqalathi* to their elder brothers while they were *abakhwetha* and that

was the time they fell in love with the '*impilo yasebakhwetheni*' (life in the initiation). Currently, the work of the guardians can be done by anyone, which is contrary to the past and currently the only prerequisite to be an *ikhankatha* is that one has to be initiated. There were some family members who decided to be guardians for their relatives and did not continue with the guardian work. In some villages, guardians were known, as there were not many of them and they had taken the job as a profession. Concerning how much time they spent with the boys, most responded that they were with the boys for 24 hours a day for the first two weeks and thereafter would only come in the evening. Some responded that they were with the boys 24 hours a day for the duration of the initiation period.

Most of *amakhankatha* responded that they did teach the boys about moral values but when asked to give examples, they could not say exactly what they taught. Some mentioned that they were not involved in teaching about moral values but mentioned that was done during the time of *ukuyalwa*. Some elucidated that some boys were in the initiation for only three weeks, which gave no time to teach about morals and further indicated that if it was at least four to five weeks it could have been better. A few responded that the boys learn about moral values from the rules and regulations that they have to adhere to while they are in the initiation hut and it is the responsibility of the *ikhankatha* to also enforce discipline (see also 6.3.5.2).

### **6.10.2 Financial issues**

In Whittlesea the guardians received between R300 – R500 for the duration of the initiation depending on the agreement they had with the family. On top of monetary gains, guardians received a bottle of brandy plus some gifts at the *umphumo* ceremony. In Mdantsane guardians received a similar amount to Whittlesea, but in some cases it increased to R800. In Cala, there was no specific amount, but any amount the family could afford and in most cases it was R200 - R400 or gifts only. In the olden days, there was no monetary gain for the *amakhankatha*. They were given a bottle of brandy and a sheep or a goat and the money given at the *umphumo* was shared amongst them and the *ikrwala*. The amount was not much and if one received a R100 it was a lot, as the family did not agree on any payment apart from

that. They received gifts during *ukusokwa*. The advantage was that one *ikhankatha* had a responsibility of guarding a group of initiates and would receive gifts from different families. I can recall that my *ikhankatha* received a shirt, jacket and a pair of shoes plus his share of the money given during *umphumo* and the money was around R100.

### **6.10.3 Abakhwetha (initiates)**

Before interviewing the initiates, I had to first seek permission from the *amakhankatha* and I was only allowed to talk to those who were more than a week in the initiation. Those I spoke with had already recovered or were about to recover. Their reasons for going for the initiation practice varied. The majority of the boys expressed passion that they wanted to be men, while others mentioned that they were tired of being boys. Some responded that they had reached the age to go for initiation, some said that they were teased by their friends while they were boys, some were following their peers, while others said that it was their parents who suggested the initiation. Even though they gave different reasons for participating in the initiation, the majority responded that it was because of *sidlulisa isiko* (they were following the custom or rite). Some responded that, it was part of their culture and that their older brothers had been through it and, therefore, they wanted to do *ukulanda ekhondweni* (following what others have done).

The informants from Mpondoland responded different from all other areas. The *abakhwetha* did not show the same passion found in other areas and only a few of them were willing to share their reasons for undergoing initiation. Some responded that “*ndifuna ukuba yindoda*” (I want to be a man) when asked why? Some responded that “*babendihleka esikolweni ngoba bendiyinkwenkwe*” (they laughed at me at school because I was a boy). Very few of them made reference to the words such as culture, rite or custom.

## 6.11 Encounter with Chief Boklein

The reason why I chose to interview this particular chief was because he was one of the few chiefs who took a real interest in the initiation practice. Some of the chiefs around the areas of research were not involved in the initiation practice at all. Chief Boklein's praise name is Jong'usapho, which means looking after the household. Chief Boklein was the chief of the villages that are close to Libode (Mpondoland), and the headquarters is Njiveni as referred to in this study.

I made an appointment with him and after explaining the purpose for the visit, he told me to return the next Tuesday morning. I woke up very early that morning and prepared myself to meet the chief; I had a bottle of brandy and a stick. I arrived at his house at 7 am. As I was entering the yard, I saw about 30 men. Four of them were adults and the rest were young men, who were gathered there. After having greeted them, I introduced myself and one of them told me that the chief would be coming as they were all waiting for him. After 30 minutes, a young man came out and called me to meet with the chief. I went inside and introduced myself and also explained the intention for being there, although he was already aware of it as we had previously discussed the matter over the telephone.

He explained to me that the reason he asked that I come on that Tuesday was because it was a day for initiation related issues. He presided over trials related to initiation (*Uchophela amatyala*). Some of the issues involved illegal initiation schools, he heard from the guardians how the boys already in the initiation were doing, he met with the traditional surgeons and traditional guardians, he met all the boys who were about to go for the initiation practice and checked if all their paper work was in order. The paper work involved the medical report from the clinic or hospital about the boy's health, as well as a consent form from the parent or guardian of the initiate and lastly forms signed by the *ikhankatha* and the *ingcibi*.

In the event where there were complications and deteriorating health among the boys while in the initiation, the initiate would not be taken to hospital, but to the chief's yard where they would be kept in a special hut that was built for this purpose. While the boys were at the chief's yard he would invite the health workers to treat the

boys while in the hut. The boy would be kept in the chief's yard until he recovered. However, if the situation worsened, then the boy would be taken to a hospital. He showed me a hut in his yard where boys were taken care of in case of emergencies. He further explained to me that in the past the boys used to be housed in the *amabhoma* in the bush and now he discourages this practice in his villages. The reason being that in the past some boys died in the initiation due to crime related problems, irregularities and fighting. As a result, all the boys that were present on the day of the interview with the chief were all kept at the huts available at different houses, some were one of the initiate's homes and some were the houses of the *amakhankatha* (see also 4.12.1).

After our meeting, he met with three traditional guardians and two traditional surgeons. One of the *ikhankatha* was in his early 50s, the other two were in their early 40s and the surgeons were in their late 50s. I was invited to their meeting and the chief took out all the relevant forms to be filled in by the *iingcibi* and the *amakhankatha*. The forms were completed and later the chief went to talk to the boys. He made sure that the boys had followed all the necessary procedures.

Then the *iingcibi* and the *amakhankatha* met with the boys for some briefing on the road they were about to take. I observed that the boys were uncertain and also afraid of the unknown journey they were about to take but were brave enough to go ahead with it. However, despite the number of deaths in the Mpondoland area, these boys were seemingly not threatened by that.

The boys were then circumcised in the chief's yard and later taken by the *amakhankatha* to the areas where they were going to lodge.

### **6.11.1 The Chief's reasons for getting involved in the initiation**

Chief Boklein confirmed that there was a time that initiation was not practised in Mpondoland and then the boys introduced it via the back door. The back door approach resulted in a lot of circumcision irregularities and deaths in Mpondoland. Even though the parents wanted to abolish it, he decided to convince them that that will not help as the boys will do it anyway. At that time there was a growing element

of making money out of it, as people would open their schools and charge the boys exorbitant amounts of money. The chief closed all those schools and introduced a law that no one will be initiated unless the process is done in his presence. Since then there has never been circumcision irregularities or initiation deaths in his village. His intervention was for the regulation of the process and the saving of lives as stipulated in the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001 (see 5.2.1). Due to the seriousness of this practice, the chief had two men who came from amaXhosa groups and areas that had been practising initiation to serve as *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi*. One of the *ikhankatha* had to relocate from Mthatha and moved to Njiveni to perform his duties.

The chief emphasised that he believed that if initiation can be practised in the same way as in the olden days it would have value in the society. According to him initiation should be done like a school and have *amakhankatha* trained as traditional teachers who would have an informal curriculum.

## **6.12 Summary**

In most of the results discussed in this chapter, views from the informants corresponded with the literature by different anthropologists and other cultural writers on the role of initiation in building up the moral fibre of the community. General results from the research conducted in all areas identified in chapter one were tabled in this chapter. The results were presented per group interviewed as well as according to the older and the younger generations. It has been established that different generations share different views on the role of the initiation. It has been noticed that there were general responses that every Xhosa man would give on the traditional meaning of initiation, irrespective of his age or area. The responses stated clearly that this practice has a traditional and a historical role in instilling moral values. When it comes to their experiences, the responses differed as the old and the new generations were miles apart in their experiences of the role of initiation in instilling good moral values. Most of the older generation reflected on their experiences with excitement and boldness. They explained that during their time the initiation practice was about moral values; initiates were taught endurance, patience, hardworking, and that a man must not depend on others but work for themselves, a

man must respect the elders and make sure that he supports his homestead. According to the older men, the *ikhankatha*, visiting men and the men of the family intentionally took upon themselves to make sure that the initiation experience was an educational experience for the initiates. They further explained that *amakhankatha* and visiting men used to sit around the fire and share their personal experiences on how they overcame the challenges of life and the initiates would ask questions while elders gave them advice on life issues.

The younger generation did not talk much on values that were taught except the words of admonition that were said during *ukuyalwa* and these words of admonition involved good moral values such as responsibility, education, HIV/AIDS prevention and not to be involved in crime. The younger generation expressed a belief that initiation is about moral values but could not substantiate on their belief. When asked if they were taught moral values most of them responded yes and when asked how they were taught they could not say. The observation that was made in this study suggests that the current practice of initiation is characterised by alcohol and drug abuse, criminal activities, irresponsibility and irregularities. Most of such occurrences are encouraged by the *amakhankatha*. If one observes, more especially in the urban and semi-urban areas, the behaviours that are encouraged in the initiation area and visibly in the behaviour of the *amakrwala*, this explains why the *amakrwala* tend to have a deteriorated moral behaviour to the point, where some people say that they behaved better when they were boys. Despite all the problems and challenges associated with initiation more boys are still determined to be initiated and the majority of the amaXhosa still express hope and hold an opinion that the initiation practice has a major role in building up the moral fibre of men. Their contention is that all communities must join hands and work hard to curb all deaths, irregularities and other challenges associated with initiation. Chief Buklein is just one of the examples that has to be celebrated and adopted as intervention in the initiation crisis.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The findings of this research suggest a number of observable facts related to the Xhosa initiation practice, but there are four main issues that have been visible. Firstly, the amaXhosa male initiation from its inception had a strong moral command which resulted in behavioural change of the men. Secondly, even today this practice still has a great potential to play this moral role if it can be contextualised for today's society. Thirdly, this practice has over the years met a lot of influences, which have caused a change of meaning and in the significance of initiation in the amaXhosa cultural life. Lastly, this change has been felt and experienced differently by different areas such as rural, semi-urban, urban and Mpondoland. The conclusion would, therefore, be that there has been a shift of meaning and value in the amaXhosa initiation practice and that this shift has taken place in all areas, but has been slower in the rural than in the urban areas. Some informants even concluded that the amaXhosa initiation has lost its cultural and moral value and, therefore, there is a need for anthropologists, cultural experts and traditional leaders to take part in reviving, redefining and contextualising this practice to play a role in the moral reconstruction of the society today and tomorrow.

#### **7.2 Characteristics of rites of passage**

Before outlining the findings that are related to the unique differences in the areas that were chosen for this research study as discussed in other chapters, it is pertinent to do a review of the characteristics of rites of passage that are related to morality as discussed in chapter three (see 3.2). Then one can evaluate the findings of different areas based on the traditional expectations of what a rite of passage is. In chapter three, different characteristics which are common to all rites of passage were identified. To mention a few:

1. The rite of passage marks the move from one stage to another, with emphasis on the new status and expectations of behavioural change which is part of that status. The initiation marks the promotion from boyhood to manhood with expectations of behavioural change.

2. The rite of passage exists within a certain cultural context laid down and accepted by the social structure and its norms and values which are a common understanding of the society. In case of the initiation, the definition of who should be an *ikhankatha*, an *ingcibi* and the expectations thereof are identified and accepted by the society.

3. In the rites of passage those who are recognised in the society as custodians and leaders are recognised and are given the responsibility to give guidance. In the initiation practice the kings, chiefs and elders have always been recognised as those who give *umkhombandlela* on how the rituals should be performed. In the rites of passage those who have been through the process have more knowledge and are there to take the novice step by step as he or she embarks on a journey that is unknown to him or her.

4. In the rites of passage there is a spiritual element which involves the supernatural or sacred beings, in that it has strong religious connotations. In the initiation practice the rituals that are performed are done to invite the ancestors for thanksgiving and as well as asking for a blessing and protection of the boy as he goes through the process of initiation.

Based on the outline of the characteristics discussed in chapter three it can be concluded that the amaXhosa initiation practice can be classified as a rite of passage.

### **7.2.1 Mdantsane**

In Mdantsane, there were fewer characteristics that are related to initiation as a rite of passage and the positive moral role. However, there were a few traits that can be related to a positive role, but they were influenced by urban life and its challenges.

The initiation practice is still popular in Mdantsane and there is no sign that it may lose its popularity as one would expect because of the urban influences. As much as there have been a lot of challenges associated with initiation which were not found in other areas, the majority of amaXhosa men strongly believed that this practice has value and should not be abolished. A lot of challenges were observed - the issue of *ukosula* that has been discussed in chapter six was more prevalent in Mdantsane than in other areas. The *amakhwenkwe* who were about to go for initiation and the *amakrwala* in Mdantsane were involved in criminal activities and this was known in the communities and, as a result, the children and especially young girls, were warned to stay away from them. There were cases reported where the *abakhwetha* left their lodges and committed crimes in the community.

The emphasis of the meaning of *ubudoda* is more on one enjoying the social status and less emphasis on the responsibilities attached to the status. As I was walking in Highway (Mdantsane shopping centre) I observed three *amakrwala* following a girl who had a bag hanging on her shoulder. Unknown to her, the *amakrwala* searched the girl's bag. One woman made a sound to alert her and then she looked and the *amakrwala* ran away.

In Mdantsane, there were few elders who were involved in the initiation. Those that were regarded as elders were from the age group that was regarded as *ootota* in Cala. Most of the people who were involved in the initiation in Mdantsane were the *abafana*. Most of them acted as *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha*, which possibly explains why there was more alcohol abuse (see 4.9) and crime (see 4.10) in Mdantsane than in other areas. During the rituals there was a strong belief that the ancestors were involved in the ritual but the conviction was not as strong as in Cala. Just like in Cala and Whittlesea there was an elder who spoke with the ancestors to invite them to the initiation process and to request protection for the 'soon-to-be-initiated.'

There was a strong bond that was not as strong in other areas between *oosaluka* and other new men in Mdantsane. They were always seen in groups walking together and sharing their experiences and ideas. The social status of *ubukrwala* was taken very seriously in this area, and as a result, each *ikrwala* wanted to show how much they knew about *ubukrwala* life and manhood. What was interesting about

Mdantsane is that the urban traits of *imitshotsho*, *imiguyo*, *amafela ndawonye*, *amaqaba* and *amagqobhoka* were still observable, even though they were not the same. However, one could tell the difference between *amakrwala* who were university students and those who were not at university (see 4.3.5.1), *amakrwala* who were initiated the Christian manner (see 4.3.2.) and those who were initiated the “traditional” way (see 6.5.2). Furthermore, one could also observe *oosaluka* together and sometimes they go to an extent of helping each other if one instigated a fight. The zeal and the enthusiasm about *ubukhwetha* and *ubukrwala* that was prevalent in Mdantsane were not observed to the same degree in other areas. In Mdantsane, *amakhwenkwe* who attended *imiguyo* were more in numbers than in all the other areas. Even in Cala, which is a rural area, the attendance was not as numerous as in Mdantsane; furthermore, they were making their demands of *umqombothi* (Xhosa beer) and other western alcohol. Most of the *imiguyo* and *iintlombe* were characterised by fighting and drunkenness. The results suggested that initiation in Mdantsane was no longer playing its educational role and the *amakhankatha* contributed to making the role less effective. It was found to be perpetuating criminal activities, encouraging rape in the name of *ukosula*, encouraging promiscuity and alcohol abuse.

### **7.2.2 Cala**

In Cala the initiation practice seemed to be strong and reflecting the cultural life present in Cala. Cala did not have as many initiation lodges as Mdantsane, but there were more lodges than in the other areas. The lodges in Cala were situated far from each other as a result the connection among the initiates that was observed in Mdantsane and Whittlesea was not common in Cala. This could be due to the fact that houses in Cala are scattered and the population density is not as high as in Mdantsane. In Cala there were no criminal activities and *ukosula* was not a big issue. There the life of the *amakrwala* was not as visible as it was in Mdantsane and Whittlesea. The *amakrwala* were seen walking in groups but then they did not stay very long after initiation as some had to go back to the urban areas for work and schooling. The majority of the initiates in Cala were students at Universities such as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, University of Fort Hare and others. Most of them left after a week of their graduation to their education destinations. In

Cala, there was an involvement of elders which included the *amaxhego* and they were available to give *umkhombandlela*. Some of the *amakhankatha* and *iingcibi* were elders in the villages. The responses in Cala stated that the current *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha* were trained and chosen by their predecessors and the community approved of them as they were responsible members in the village. In Cala, there was a strong emphasis on the involvement of ancestors and the elders of the different clans in the initiation rituals. The attitude that was shown by members during the rituals showed how much trust they had in the ancestors. As the goat was crying after being slaughtered during *ukushwama* that takes place just before the boy goes for initiation, the elders all said *camagu* with seriousness in their voices and on their faces. Furthermore, as the elder was talking to the ancestors just before the *ukushwama* was performed others were in agreement as if he was offering a prayer. This was a prayer indeed to thank the ancestors for their protection and guidance as well as giving the boy back to them as he had to go for the initiation. In Cala, there was more agreement on the involvement of the ancestors than in all other areas. In my observation of the characteristics of a rite of passage and its role in moral regeneration, the villages in Cala showed more features than the other areas.

### **7.2.3 Whittlesea**

Whittlesea falls in the middle of Cala and Mdantsane in the sense that the traits that were observed in the villages were similar to the life in Cala and the traits in the two townships were similar to Mdantsane. In the villages and in the two townships the life was similar as discussed in chapter four. As mentioned in chapters one, four and six, Whittlesea was divided into two areas, the villages and the rural townships. The major difference was that the rural side was less rural than Cala with less urban influence than in Mdantsane. Hence this area was referred to as semi-urban, due to its mixture of rural and urban influences. There were violent and criminal activities observed but they were less than in Mdantsane. Even the issue of *ukosula* does exist but to a lesser extent than in Mdantsane. *Amakrwala* were observed walking together in groups but there was less criminal activities associated with initiation than was the case in Mdantsane. There was an involvement of the elders, but especially more in the villages than in the two Whittlesea Townships. Just like Cala, Whittlesea

had some traits of rites of passage and the moral role of initiation but a lot of urban influence such as the abuse of alcohol and a few cases of crime was observed, however, less than in Mdantsane.

#### **7.2.4 Mpondoland**

The results suggested that the difficulties and challenges experienced in Mpondoland were unique compared to the other areas. Mpondoland is not an issue of rural and urban because the landscape and all resources that are conducive for initiation are all available, but for some reasons, as discussed in chapters four and six, these resources were not utilised. The reality of this area as discussed (chapters two, four and six) is the fact that initiation had recently been re-adopted in Mpondoland. The situation in Mpondoland is opposite to what is defined as a rite of passage. One could conclude that the current practice in Mpondoland is 'bush or backyard circumcision' meaning that it cannot be classified as a rite of passage, initiation or even "traditional" circumcision. There are various reasons for coming to this conclusion and such reasons are reviewed against the definition of a rite of passage as discussed in chapter four and in this chapter. Firstly, there was no involvement of the elders from Mpondoland. In fact, the majority of the elders were the ones calling for discontinuation of initiation. Secondly, the involvement of the ancestors is not well recognised. One of the informants from Mpondoland alluded to a possibility that one of the reasons why there were major problems associated with initiation is that the practice was not properly introduced by communicating with the ancestors and having a ceremony/ritual to invite the ancestors to be present. Thirdly, what was considered to be one of the major challenges is that the initiation was re-introduced by young people, which meant that there were no elders to supervise the process. One wonders how an elder or a chief who has not been initiated can give guidance to the practice he has not been through himself. Furthermore, the young men who had been initiated had shown arrogance which was creating conflict between them and their parents. Moreover, the larger society does not define manhood in the same way as other areas where initiation is at the centre of becoming a man. Lastly, initiation in Mpondoland does not have any traditional educational role. Rather, it was found to be perpetuating criminal activities, encouraging disrespect of parents and results in a lot of deaths among the youth.

The understanding of manhood in Mpondoland did not involve initiation. Those who chose to be initiated or circumcised did it by their own choice but should not expect to gain any social status or privilege due to their decision. The results suggested that in Mpondoland, initiation did not have the impact as a rite of passage or a cultural phenomenon as discussed in this research. In Mpondoland it seemed to be just another business opportunity which drew those who were skilled enough to make money out of it. The discussions with the older generation and discussions that took place on the radio stations suggested that the Mpondo people did not recognise initiation as their rite of passage but as mere circumcision forced onto their area by 'disobedient' youngsters. Mpondoland seemed to be a totally different situation than the other areas, and this reality has not been recognised. For example, in the past years, 90% of the boys who died in the initiation were from Mpondoland and when the newspapers wrote about it they said deaths in the Eastern Cape and the committees would sit and discuss intervention programmes in the Eastern Cape. One of the main issues in Mpondoland is that the amaXhosa initiation is being disowned by the larger Mpondo society and there is no form of community regulation involved in it. Perhaps the fact that the government and the House of Traditional Leaders took a decision to suspend initiation in June 2010 until the summer in Northern Mpondoland is a move to recognise the uniqueness of the Mpondoland situation.

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter in some areas there has been a change in how initiation was practiced and in urban areas the traditional and moral role has been compromised. In Mpondoland, one wonders whether what is practiced can even be called *ukwaluka* (initiation). How a fifteen year old can circumcise other boys (see 4.13), it sounds rather unreal and impossible.

### **7.3 Initiation is a reflection of the society**

The findings of this study seem to suggest that initiation is a reflection of the character of the society it is practiced in. In the introduction to this study, it was noted that South Africa has been going through a state of moral decay and that is the case among all communities, the ones that are initiating and the ones that are not initiating (see 1.2). Furthermore, the four different areas that were chosen for the study

present unique differences regarding the initiation. For example, in Cala which is a rural area, the results suggested that initiation still has those good moral patterns and that there were less complications associated with it. On the other hand, in Whittlesea, which is a semi-urban area with both rural and urban characteristics, the practice was observed to have issues of violence and crime, but to a lesser degree than in Mdantsane which is an urban area. On the other hand, Mpondoland has unique problems that are related to the fact that the practice has been recently re-introduced in the area. The contention is that the character of initiation has been affected by the cultural and moral life of the society it is practiced in. It is simply a symptom of the society and not that it creates the society. The influence of the community behaviour patterns to the initiation practice is what triggered my suggestions of no blanket solutions to the initiation problems (see 7.9.12).

### **7.3.1 The Mpondoland issue**

The unique challenges associated with initiation in Mpondoland have been discussed at length in this thesis (2.6.2; 4.13; 4.14 and 7.2.4). The findings suggest that most of the problems associated with initiation in Mpondoland are dissimilar to other areas. The issues discussed are related to the fact that initiation has recently been re-adopted in the area and most of the traditional leaders and parents are not involved. Furthermore, in other areas, including Mdantsane, it is better community regulated than in Mpondoland. The major challenges to this area are a reflection of a divided community that is not united enough to curb issues due to their retaliation that initiation is no longer part of their cultural practice.

### **7.3.2 The effects of urban poverty on initiation**

Apart from the unique cultural phenomena that have been recognised in different areas, there was another cultural pattern that was prevalent among the informal settlements and the RDP houses closer to the informal settlements (see also 4.6.4). Such areas were characterised by more violence and crime than the other areas. The challenges that were observed in RDP and informal settlements are not unique to Whittlesea and East London but are visible in all RDP housing schemes and informal settlements in South Africa. In addition to that, the reality of the number of

people visiting *amabhuma* at any time of the day, during working hours suggests that most people in these areas are unemployed and those that are employed work part-time or time shifts but not straight shift hours. The whole practice of initiation and activities associated with it are affected and influenced by the living conditions of the people in their areas. Chapter three and four discusses unique characteristics that were more prevalent in the *imiguyo imigidi* and *indlu yesibane* of poverty stricken areas.

### **7.3.3 Crime**

Crime was another characteristic that was observed to be associated with initiation of late. In general, urban areas and township areas are characterised by more crime than other areas. It is said that there is a strong link between domestic and other forms of violence and alcohol and drug abuse (Ezinearticles.com). According to the South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics (SAPS website; News24.com.website), there has been an increase in violent crime in urban areas and townships which are perpetuated by alcohol and drug abuse. This is in accordance with the findings of this study - there were more criminal activities in Mdantsane than in Whittlesea and less crime in Cala than in both the urban and semi-urban areas. The fact that the nature of crime varied from area to area suggests that in looking at initiation and crime, one has to acknowledge that the crimes in the initiation are committed by members of the society which includes, visitors in the *amabhuma*, *amakhankatha*, *abakhwetha* and *amakrwala*. One should not divorce them from their societal influence.

### **7.3.4 Alcohol and drug abuse**

One of the challenges that came out distinctly in the initiation practice and its ceremonies was the abuse of alcohol, more especially among the youth (see 3.6.2; 3.6.9; 4.9 and 4.10). If one regards the abuse of alcohol and drugs as the general problem in South Africa, alcohol and drugs have been popular among all cultures and races. For example, South Africa is said to have one of the highest “drink and drive” related cases in the world, with approximately 10,000 people killed every year due to drunken driving related cases (Suit 101 website). According to statistics

produced by Sahealthinfo.org (website), in all the main South African cities, 45% of all non-natural deaths had high blood alcohol concentrations. Alcohol and drug abuse is not necessarily encouraged by the initiation practice but initiation could be influenced by the community. This is the same as other challenges mentioned in this study, where alcohol consumption was found to be more prevalent in urban and semi-urban townships, with urban townships leading the race.

### **7.3.5 Church initiation**

The issue of initiation being a reflection of a society can be seen in the case of initiation as laid down by the principles of certain Churches. Some Churches as identified in chapter four (see 4.3.1) have some ways of regulating initiation. The *ikhankatha* is known and approved by the Church community. The pastor or Church leader makes sure that the initiates are taught Church or sometimes Biblical principles and the *umguyo* is monitored by the Church leaders. It is made sure that the initiation is conducted and practised in such a manner, but, as a result, it was found that members of the Church do incorporate elements that are regarded as wrong by the Church and for which they are disciplined or expelled from the Church (see 4.3.1). The procedures in place and the sentences in place assist in avoiding those matters that are considered 'unchristian' according to such Churches.

### **7.3.6 Ukosula**

The debate on the question of *ukosula* seems to suggest a variety of issues. There was a time when *ukosula* did not exist as it was not part of amaXhosa practice. In addition writings by Mayer 1961; Van der Vliet 1974; Pauw 1973 and Pauw 1994 and the responses by the older generation seem to suggest that sexual penetration was discouraged among the youth. Sexual penetration was only a privilege for married people and adults including *amadikazi* and *amankazana*; therefore, there is no strong argument for the practice of *ukosula* among young people. There is some indication that the practice of *ukosula* may have been performed with *amadikazi* and *amankazana* but the concept was never recognised and approved as part of the teaching to the initiates. There may have been cases of influence from different communities but not as approved tradition of what should be taught in the initiation.

The introduction of *ukosula* is said to have begun in the urban areas where it is still popular today. Its introduction in urban areas could have been because in urban areas people started to live undisciplined lives characterised by extensive sexual activities. Initially, *ukosula* did not involve young girls and women were not raped in the name of *ukosula*. It was understood to be a mutual agreement with a certain type of women like the case of *amankazana*, *amadikazi* or *oonontyintyi*. As already stated, during my initiation in Whittlesea, there was an influence of *ukosula* introduced by some visiting men who were still young in manhood. My *ikhankatha* refuted such teachings and, as a result, I did not take it seriously. But then the question arises of what happens then to an *ikhankatha* who believes in *ukosula*? Like the case of real versus ideal culture (see 4.2.4). The main challenge with initiation is that Xhosa males take very seriously everything taught in the initiation school.

The current practice of *ukosula* was rightfully rejected by the majority of informants, but accepted by the majority of *amakrwala* from Mdantsane. Even the majority of *amakrwala* from other areas rejected the practice with only a few exceptions who stated that they had practised *ukosula*. My observation was that even the *amakrwala* from Mdantsane who supported *ukosula* and acknowledged its practice were the ones who led the *tsotsi* lifestyle which involved *tsotsi* walks, language, smoking and drinking of alcohol. There seems to be a connection between criminal activities, abuse of alcohol and drugs, disrespecting of elders and *ukosula*. Most of the *amakrwala* who performed *ukosula* were the ones implicated in behaviours mentioned above.

The *amakrwala* responded that they do not force girls to sleep with them but there are girls in their communities who are always available for *ukosula*; consequently, they are known as *iintombi zabafana*. They further mentioned that most of those girls are known and attend the *amakrwala* coming out celebrations. *Amakhankatha*, who are supposed to take care of the initiates while in the initiation and were suspected of teaching the initiates about *ukosula* acknowledged the practice but denied teaching the initiates about it.

It seems that there are many problems associated with the initiation practice such as;

- the *amakhankatha* are young people,
- the over use of alcohol and drugs,
- that *amakhankatha* are hardly ever at the initiation schools
- and inappropriate teachings that the initiation practice has inherited.

The practice of *ukosula* has to be understood in that context. For instance, it is possible that some of the *amakhankatha* do indeed teach the initiates about *ukosula* but because they are aware that it is considered wrong and inappropriate often leading to rape and women abuse, they are embarrassed to acknowledge their guilt.

There seems to be a general understanding among most of the informants to promote the idea of one sexual partner and the use of condoms to curb HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. This response seems to suggest that there is no need for practices such as *ukosula* and other practices that seem to promote sexual promiscuity and the abuse of women.

In conclusion, there seems to be no argument for cases of rape automatically associated with Xhosa culture; this is but one of the excuses used by males of our species. Whenever they want to avoid taking responsibility, they ascribe their behaviour to cultural practice. The current practice of *ukosula* seems to be one of those male practices - interestingly, no one seems to acknowledge its existence and even those who practise it are not proud of it. It is just one of the criminal behaviours associated with the current practice of Xhosa initiation.

#### **7.4 Retaining of the tradition**

Despite all the negative characteristics associated with the South African communities and the initiation practice it has to be appreciated that Xhosa people are still holding on to some of their traditions, including initiation. Even those who now live in cities and in townships are able to find ways to practise initiation and keep some rituals and roles deemed as pertinent for the practice. For example, it

was observed in all ceremonies that the main role players such as *umthambisi*, *usosuthu*, *izibazana* and *amaxhego* still play their roles and that tradition has been kept. Furthermore, even in urban areas where there are challenges such as landscape and other unforeseen problems, the people have found ways to still keep some traditions in their own unique way. The perfect example is the issue of the river; because of the scarcity of rivers in Mdantsane, people bring water with a container in order to still make sure that the initiate is washed. Such findings suggest that, as much as the Xhosa want to keep up to their customs, they are flexible enough to adapt to their current conditions without giving up on their *amasiko* (culture/rites/rituals) and *nezithethe* (heritage/common practice).

### **7.5 Initiation does no longer contribute to moral regeneration**

As discussed above the findings suggest that the amaXhosa have kept a lot of good traditions and roles associated with the initiation practice, but the findings at large suggest that the Xhosa initiation does no longer contribute in building up the moral lives of the boys. It has been discussed in 7.3 that the character of initiation is a reflection of the society, but the reality has to be acknowledged that the issue with initiation is that it has been identified as a traditional practice that instils moral values into the participants. The findings in this study suggest that this moral command has been compromised. As a result the majority of the informants from Mpondoland suggested that initiation must be abolished, more especially in Mpondoland. This practice is no longer contributing to building the moral fibre of men, but has instead become part of the problem. Furthermore, the findings suggest that among the youth the reasons to go for the initiation practice is not motivated by a belief that it is a place that instils moral values. While among the older informants it is strongly believed that this practice did play a moral role in the past in transforming the lives of boys and make them men, currently that role has been compromised.

### **7.6 Initiation still has a major role to play**

In spite of views that the initiation is no longer playing its moral role, the majority of the informants were against the discontinuation of the practice. Most of them argued that if the traditional leaders, community leaders and the government could put more

effort in re-defining this practice, things will definitely change for the better. The majority of the informants argued that the involvement of all stakeholders can make it possible for the initiation practice to be redefined and contextualised in order to play a positive role in building the moral fibre of men. Their contention was that the re-defining will enable the Xhosa initiation to participate in addressing the moral and socio-cultural challenges in the communities.

### **7.7 Discontinuation not a solution**

The majority of the informants, except in Mpondoland, argued against the discontinuation of the custom. Mpondoland is the only area that had a majority of the people arguing for discontinuation. In all other areas, the informants argued against discontinuation. Their argument was that even if the government abolishes initiation people would never stop it because it has value to them. Even if there is a decision to take the boys to the hospital that would never work as the boys themselves want to take the route that was taken by their fathers and fore-fathers.

### **7.8 Procedures in place**

The initiation practice and circumcision are regulated in the Eastern Cape under the Application of Health Standards in Traditional Circumcision Act, No.6 of 2001. However, this framework concentrates more on health related matters than on the initiation practice (see 5.2). Even its application concentrates more on the training of traditional surgeons who have the role of circumcising the boys. This legislation solved some of the problems related to what it calls traditional circumcision (initiation), but the number of deaths has not decreased, especially in Mpondoland. The debate is still ongoing about whether this legislative framework is effective as the number of deaths is escalating every year (see 5.2.3). The findings suggested that the AHSTC Act of 2001 seemed to have focused more on the *iingcibi* and left out the *amakhankatha* who have the main responsibility of nursing the boys until they are healed. As a result, the recent problems including deaths, crime and ill-discipline seemed to be due to carelessness and negligence by *amakhankatha* and not *iingcibi*. As mentioned in chapter five, one understands the reason for the focus on the *iingcibi* and not the *amakhankatha*. The AHSTC Act has been drafted with

strong influence from the health sector and their main concern was about the performance of the circumcision operation.

### **7.8.1 The visiting officials**

One of the intervention strategies discussed in chapter five is the outreach by the group of government and traditional leadership officials that visit the initiation schools during the initiation season. At the beginning of the outreach it was only health officials who were visiting and later other government departments such as the police, social development, arts and culture and traditional leaders became involved. The findings of this study suggest that although this team has accomplished to resolve some problems in areas visited, in general, they have not been effective. The challenge has been that they only visit areas that have been identified as problematic and they only conduct pre-and post-initiation visits. They only meet for the preparations of the visit and come back to report at a later stage thereby neglecting the crucial part of the practice, where the core of the challenges arises and need their strategic intervention to save and improve the practice.

## **7.9 Recommendations**

Most of the informants, especially the older ones, spent time deliberating on what they considered as the suggestions that could help minimise the current problems associated with initiation as well as how to make it relevant for today's society. The following recommendations are based on the suggestions by the informants from all areas as discussed in chapter four as well as my recommendations based on the findings of this study.

### **7.9.1 Further research on the suggestions from the informants**

The first suggestion is that further research ought to be carried out. This is a recommendation made by the informants in this study. Such recommendations need special attention as they are the suggestions by the people concerned. Academics and the research community can investigate ways in which such suggestions could be turned into reality in order to end the problems associated with initiation.

### **7.9.2 Further research in Mpondoland**

Further research is recommended in Mpondoland, but it has to be acknowledged that the initiation practice in this area was not practiced in the same manner as in other areas that have been practicing initiation for a long time. A better understanding of the current initiation practice in Mpondoland is pertinent. This study only covered a small part of the entire Mpondoland area and such results cannot be taken as representative of the Mpondoland area. Further research in Mpondoland alone which would involve interviewing more traditional leaders, the boys that have not been initiated and those who have been circumcised in hospital would offer a better picture of the Mpondoland circumstances.

### **7.9.3 Research among the un-initiated**

In chapter two (2.11), where the limitations of this study are discussed, one of the limitations mentioned is the fact that the males that are not initiated were not part of this research study. The un-initiated included those who are not initiated or circumcised at all and those who have been circumcised in hospital. Those who are not yet initiated or medically circumcised will explain what their plan is as far as initiation is concerned, for instance, if they have plans to be initiated, what is their reason for their decision? If for some reason they plan to be circumcised in hospital, what is the motivation for their choice? Furthermore, those who have been circumcised in hospital will provide a better understanding of their circumstances and why they opted for hospital circumcision. Was it their choice or due to reasons beyond their control? All the above groups would offer their perceptions on the role of initiation in building up the moral fibre of the society. For instance, those who have chosen not to be initiated and those who have intentionally chosen hospital circumcision over initiation would explain, whether or not they believe that initiation has the influence to instil good moral values upon boys as they graduate to manhood and whether initiation has a place in the current post modern society.

#### **7.9.4 Research among the males who are found to be medically unfit**

It is said that before boys go for initiation, they should go for a medical examination to see if they are medically fit to undertake initiation. The interesting part is that it is not said as to what happens to the boys who are found to be medically unfit - such boys could be among those who perform *ukuziba* or those who choose to go for hospital circumcision. Further research among them would bring to light the reality of *ukuziba* and how to better intervene in its practice and further offer better information on males who do not attend initiation due to reasons beyond their control.

#### **7.9.5 Abolishing the practice is not a solution**

Even though I agree with some views and concerns shared by Mcotheli (2006) and Myemane (2004) and others on the present role of initiation, I take issue with their view that initiation should come to an end. Having realised that they both wrote from a Christian point of view, my question to them is: Why do they not suggest the abolition of Christianity? In spite of recent views that South Africa is said to be a Christian country with almost 70% of the population claiming to be Christians, the majority of the so-called Christians do not behave in a Christian manner and that is one of the reasons why we have a moral dilemma (Williams 2004:131). This dilemma leads others to conclude that Christianity has lost its meaning or is not effective in its evangelising mission. Is calling for the abolition of the Christian religion a solution to the problem at hand? The same applies to the initiation rite. Should we call for its abolition, or redefine its meaning for the changing socio-cultural milieu? I think the latter is what needs to be applied in our particular context. The idea of a modified retention makes more sense than abolishing it. The findings of this study show that the majority of old informants from Mpondoland prefer that initiation be abolished in Mpondoland, however, the challenge is that members of the younger generation from Mpondoland are willing to die for this practice. Furthermore, that the majority of informants from all other areas still argue against discontinuation.

### **7.9.6 The Western Cape retention proposal**

Even though the Western Cape proposal received much criticism, there were traditional leaders who supported it (see 4.15.2). One of the major challenges was the issue of permanent initiation lodges which could not be burnt as the tradition requires. My suggestion is for the review of the Western Cape proposal and to identify how all stakeholders can deliberate into making it a workable plan. It is possible that some of the proposals were not rejected due to their nature, but sometimes the traditional leaders can reject it because it was suggested by people from outside their jurisdiction. Traditional leaders themselves can look at the Western Cape proposal and find a way to come up with an indigenous view as well as a healthy contribution. For example, already in Mpondoland, in Cala and other areas some initiates were not sent to the bush initiation lodges, but some families used huts in their yards while some *iingcibi* and *amakhankatha* in Cala and Mpondoland kept the boys in the huts in their yards and instead of burning the hut, they burnt all the clothing and the material that was used by the initiates. Thus, there is already an idea of permanent initiation schools, therefore the Western Cape proposal would not be a new issue. Furthermore, that in areas like Mdantsane and Cape Town corrugated iron sheets are used to build the lodges instead of grass and the material cannot be burnt and can be re-used by other initiates to build their lodges. What happened in Mdantsane is the same as what happened in Pondoland. They only burnt the clothes and the material that was used by the initiates. I am of the opinion that there is not such a major difference between the lodges in Mpondoland, Mdantsane and the Western Cape proposal. In actual fact, the Western Cape proposal makes more sense as it would be better regulated than the initiation in Mpondoland.

### **7.9.7 The holistic approach to the initiation practice.**

The findings of this study suggest that the intervention strategies concentrate more on *iingcibi* and leaving out other participants. I recommend a comprehensive strategy that would involve all those involved in the initiation practice. That includes the *abakhwetha*, *amakhankatha*, *iingcibi*, *amakrwala*, *iinkosi*, *izibonda* and the families of the *abakhwetha*.

### **7.9.8 Traditional leaders as custodians**

Traditional leaders were identified as the custodians of the initiation practice (see 3.5.1 and 5.1). The misunderstandings between the government and the House of Traditional Leaders could be due to various reasons, one of which is that the traditional leaders were silent on the initiation even though there were problems associated with it. The traditional leaders must come up with their plan of action in order to retain the traditional, moral and cultural role of the Xhosa initiation practice. The suggestion is that this practice be regulated under the functions of traditional leaders who will act in a supervisory capacity. Chief Boklein's example is one of the positive models that can be implemented where the chief takes full responsibility for the practice as it was in the past (see 6.11). The intervention by Chief Boklein is not a new concept as it has been shown that traditional leaders have been custodians of the initiation practice in the past (see 3.5.1).

### **7.9.9 *Amakhankatha* and their educating role**

It has been identified that the main teaching role in the initiation rested with the *amakhankatha*. They were the ones that were given the responsibility to stay with the *abakhwetha* for a period of four weeks. The regulation and practice of the Application of Health Standards in the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001 seemed to have overlooked this fact.

The regulation has addressed some of the problems, irregularities and health hazards that are related to the initiation practice. The traditional surgeons have begun to take their role seriously because of the fear of losing their practising licences (Mail and Guardian July 18 2008). Most of the present problems experienced in the initiation were associated with the misbehaving and misleading of the traditional guardians and not surgeons. Furthermore, the results suggested that the *amakhankatha* were major role players in degrading the initiation, especially in the urban areas. The following are suggestions pertaining to the educational function of the initiation.

### 7.9.10 Life skills programme

A more integrated life skills programme should be introduced that involves behavioural change and which covers topics such as, sexual issues, the impact of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, women and children abuse, issues of self esteem and service to the nation, culture and religion, characteristics of being a man, vision and goal setting, HIV and AIDS and hygienic issues. Some of these topics used to be part of the teaching in the initiation schools before the present dilemma in the initiation schools started (Mbiti 1986:98). These programmes can be accredited by the Department of Education and be regarded as part of the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). *Amakhankatha* can be empowered and in return they could teach the initiates, especially in preparation of their *umphumo*. Such life skills could go beyond the *abakhwetha* but involve *amakrwala* as well. As has been discussed in chapter six (see 6.7.2) most of the *amakrwala* walk together in groups. This could be an advantage as they are already organised and the life skills could be conducted in an informal manner that would involve some of the morals related topics learnt while in the initiation schools. My contention is that from the results one can tell that the amaXhosa hold the initiation as a moral command for men, it is like the Bible to Christians and the Koran to Muslims. As for the two religions, for the amaXhosa, whatever is taught in the initiation carries value and weight. It could be one of the reasons why the act of *ukukhupha ifutha* (see 6.8.2) has been so popular in Mdantsane because it is taught in the initiation. To most of the Xhosa men, as it has been argued in this thesis, initiation marked their being and their identity as a person and as a social being (see 3.2 and 6.2.1.4). I believe that the idea of life skills will have an impact because of the influence that the initiation carries. Such a system was used by the Southern Sotho and Tswana people; Van der Vliet (1974:31) refers to it as 'supplementary schools'. Supplementary teaching took place after the initiates graduated from the initiation. Boys were assembled at the Chief's council and were made to go over the principles that they were taught while in the initiation and further received some additional instructions (Van der Vliet 1974:31). The advantage of having life skills programmes just like the case of supplementary schools is that the current initiation time period is short and there is not enough time to teach. Even if there was teaching going on the time is too short to teach

effectively. The life skills programme could start during the initiation period and continue until the *ubukrwala* period.

### **7.9.11 Regulation and Recognition**

My suggestion for the initiation practice is that it must be registered under the Department of Education or the Department of Arts and Culture as an informal school system with the *amakhankatha* as recognised tutors or coaches. While this would obviously be the first attempt of legitimizing culture-related jobs, thereby implying it is the first job created not replicated post apartheid, this would equally have the following implications for the *amakhankatha*:

- 1) They would have to be trained
- 2) They would have to accept the responsibility to act in accordance with the importance of the role that they have to play.
- 3) They would need to have a professional code of conduct and practice like any other profession
- 4) They would have to be registered.
- 5) They would have to receive a licence as traditional teachers.
- 6) In case of irregularities they can face disciplinary actions, for instance, they could forfeit their licences like in the case of traditional surgeons.
- 7) Stricter action to be taken in case of illegal initiation schools.

Once the regulation is in place, communities would know who the registered *amakhankatha* are and that they are accountable for the wellbeing of the initiates.

### **7.9.12 Interventions that are relevant for each area**

Under 7.3 it is argued that each area is unique with its own challenges and it further showed how the differences manifested itself as well as the implications for the current initiation practice. In the light of these unique circumstances relating to the urban, semi-urban, rural and Mpondoland areas, perhaps a blanket approach would not work. Initiation traditions vary across the Eastern Cape and they are less stable and unchanging than we often imagine. This challenges the common

misconceptions that male initiation in the Eastern Cape is performed in the same way in all areas. In fact, the reality is that all areas have different ways of practising initiation and the challenges of each area are unique and dissimilar. Each area must be understood as unique and service delivery mechanisms must take that into cognisance. Some intervention strategies might be relevant in urban areas and irrelevant in rural areas and in Mpondoland. The contention is for a need to recognise that workable solutions be contextualised according to the different areas. For example, the idea of the Western Cape Government's Initiation Village might work in urban areas but not in rural areas. The idea of the separation of initiation from circumcision might work in Mpondoland and not in Mdantsane and Whittlesea. Another matter that has to be considered is that traditional leadership is still relevant and respected in rural areas whereas in urban areas traditional leadership is non-existent. Therefore, it is unfair to generalise and say that the traditional leaders are custodians of the initiation practice whereas in Mdantsane there is no traditional leadership. In fact, most people in urban areas do not see a need for traditional leaders.

### **7.9.13 Challenges in Mpondoland**

In reference to the unique challenges and unique intervention strategies, I wish to suggest the following in Mpondoland:

Based on the fieldwork findings, I wish to propose a cultural village similar to the one that was suggested in the Western Cape. Certain land in Mpondoland, away from the communities be allocated and a substantial number of permanent huts be built and be used as *amabhuma*. The land should be fenced in with one exit point so as to regulate access and mobility. As stated in Chapter five, currently the definition of illegal circumcision or initiation school is when one did not follow the *modus operandi* stated in the AHSTC Act of 2001. In the existence of such a village, the illegality of initiation could be extended to mean any initiation school that is not in that village. The Chief and traditional leaders are to supervise the conduct of the villages and every village will have a main leader who would act as a supervisor. All boys to be initiated should be known on time and the initiation dates arranged on time as well. After the graduation of a certain group then another group should be initiated.

Furthermore, certain male doctors and male nurses should attend to any emergencies when needed. One of the complications that the Chief from Mpondoland mentioned was those people who perform their own initiation school. The challenge is that some do follow all the legal procedures as far as the paperwork is concerned but, then they are not skilled enough to circumcise and to take care of the boys while in the initiation. The village idea would make sure that no one can circumcise and/or conduct his own initiation school. In this case, even the argument that such huts cannot be burned is not relevant as the idea of permanent huts is popular already but it is not regulated. The village would co-ordinate and regulate the practice and further avoid the scenario of having to send boys to the hospital. The circumcision by the current *iingcibi* should be evaluated and see whether it meets the health standards. If it does then they can continue or if not then health practitioners should be introduced to do the circumcision. When the initiates have recovered, the life skills that were discussed in 7.9.10 should be taught. These could then take place and be facilitated by *amakhankatha*. The villages can be organised based on the population of the area, for instance, Libode could have its village, same with Ngqeleni, Flagstaff, etc. When the need arises one area can have more than one initiation village.

#### **7.9.14 In rural areas**

As previously indicated, the rural areas did not seem to have major problems related to disrespect, crime and irregularities as found in the other areas. What could be done in rural areas, including villages in the semi-urban areas where there is still the existence of traditional leadership, is the empowerment of traditional leaders to understand and better deal with initiation. The current bushes where initiation is practiced can be used without change. What could be done is to elect a supervisor or the headman for every bush where initiation takes place to make sure that all what happens in those bushes is co-ordinated. All the *amakhankatha* must report to the supervisor or headman who in turn would be accountable to the traditional leaders in the area. In that way, it would not be necessary to have an outreach team all the way from Bisho to come and organise interventions but the supervisor could organise that all the *amabhoma* be visited by local traditional leaders.

### 7.9.15 In urban areas

As is the case in rural areas, land has already been allocated for initiation schools in urban areas. One of the challenges in urban areas is that there is no traditional leadership. A procedure similar to that of rural areas could be followed where each initiation bush has its own supervisor to make sure that the practice is co-ordinated properly. The supervisor can then report to the health officials and community leaders of that particular urban area.

### 7.10 Conclusion

This study investigated the role of the Xhosa initiation ritual as a rite of passage that instils moral values in men. From the literature as well as findings of this research it has been identified that the initiation practice had a traditional role in equipping and guiding men in living a positive moral lifestyle. The initiation practice like any traditional cultural practice has been met with challenges such as apartheid policies, industrialisation, religion, urbanisation, enculturation and contemporary culture. Owing to such reasons and others it has been identified that that there has been a shift in the meaning and role of the initiation practice and its impact is not the same in the areas identified for the research. From all areas identified for this study there were challenges associated with initiation, more especially in Mpondoland and urban areas, which resulted in some people calling for it to be banned.

The findings indicated that the perceptions and expectations of the people were still that initiation should play a major educational role. It was discussed that there has been a shift in the moral and traditional role of initiation and, as a result, initiation no longer plays the educational role effectively. Moreover, the *amakhankatha* participated in making the role less effective and sometimes introducing teachings that are destructive to the initiates. This study suggests that despite the challenges associated with the Xhosa initiation, abolishing it is not an option. The amaXhosa still regard initiation as an *isiko* and one of those customs that cannot be abolished and the Xhosa boys religiously follow this custom even when their parents object to it. The majority of the informants were convinced that something could be done to re-

define the practice so as to make it safer and more relevant as a character building exercise for young men.

Furthermore, the regulatory framework in the form of the AHSTC Act of 2001 has not borne much fruit in solving the problems associated with the initiation. Even though in the past the traditional leaders have taken a back seat regarding initiation, they are now taking full responsibility and a more active role in the initiation practice. It is hoped that their involvement with other stakeholders will yield positive results. This research suggests that traditional leaders more especially in rural and semi-urban areas are perceived as custodians of cultural practices. Further that they are at the centre of the hopes of finding a solution for the irregularities and problems attached to the practice. The involvement of traditional leaders will solve some of the concerns mentioned in the introduction of this study namely; that the research pertaining to and intervention done in the initiation practice are reducing it to only circumcision. The traditional leadership will bring indigenous suggestions to curbing problems and bring forth mechanisms to make the practice contribute to bringing African solutions to moral challenges that this country is faced with.

The contention is that if this role can be contextualised, then the practice can be part of the solution to the present moral problems experienced in South Africa. The suggestion in this study is not that if the initiation practice can play a positive part then all the problems will be gone. The submission is rather that at least initiation can contribute in its own way in joining other initiatives in combating the present moral challenges that South Africa is faced with. The response and the interest shown by the informants as they participated in this study is an indication that the communities are really distraught by the crimes, irregularities, botched circumcision and deaths associated with initiation. Their unconstrained co-operation suggests their willingness to participate in any research or interventions that will re-define the Xhosa male initiation to play a meaningful role as it used to do in the past. Lastly, the data in this study is provided by both the outsiders and observers (those who did not go through the process but studied it) and the insiders (those who have gone through the process) and can, therefore, be trusted as valid and reliable.

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## Appendices

- (a). Interview schedules
- (b). Letter requesting participation and consent form

### Appendice A

#### Interview schedules

#### SECTION A : FOR *ISIBONDA*

<p>1. Uhlala kweyiphi ilali/ ilokishi? In which village/ township do you live?</p> <p>i). Usisibonda seyiphi/eziphi iilali? You are a headman of which village or villages?</p>
<p>2. Ingaba mingaphi iminyaka yakho? How old are you?</p> <p>i). Uneminyaka emingaphi usisibonda? How long have you been a headman?</p> <p>ii).Ngaphambi kokuba ube sisibonda wawusenza wuphi umsebenzi? Before you were a headman what was your vocation?</p>
<p>3. Njengesibonda ungandichazela ezinye zezinto ezuluxanduva lwakho? Could you tell me some of your responsibilities as a headman?</p> <p>i). Yeyiphi indima oyidlalayo kwisiko lokwaluka? What role do you play in the initiation ritual?</p> <p>ii). Ingaba yintoni indoda? What is a man?</p> <p>iii). Ngexesha lakudala kwakuthathwa ixesha elingakanani na esuthwini? In the olden days how long did the initiates take in the initiation?</p>
<p>4. Ngokokuqonda kwakho kukuthini ukwaluka</p>

<p>According to your understanding what is initiation?</p> <p>i). Ucinga ukuba abantu bayakuqonda ukubaluleka kwesiko lokwaluka? Do you think people understand the importance of the initiation ritual?</p> <p>ii). Kutheni usitsho nje? Why do you say that?</p>
<p>6. Ucinga ukuba kutheni le nto kubalulekile ukuba amakhwenkwe oluke? Why do you think it is necessary for boys to go through initiation?</p>
<p>7. Ingaba zikhona izinto owazifundiswayo esuthwini ngemihla yokoluka kwakho? Were you taught anything during the initiation practice?</p> <p>i). Kutheni usitsho nje? Why do you say so?</p> <p>ii). Ukuba ewe le mfundiso yasesuthwini yayingantoni kanye kanye? If yes, What was the content of the teaching?</p> <p>iii). Ingaba abakhwetha babeyithobela imfundiso le? Did the initiates obey the teaching?</p> <p>v). Ngubani okanye ngoobani abenoxanduva lokufundisa esuthwini? Who was or were responsible for the teaching?</p>
<p>7. Ubona ukuba eli galelo lokufundisa nokwakha izimilo lisekhona esuthwini? Does this teaching and building of moral lives exist in the practice today?</p> <p>i). Kutheni usitsho nje? Why do you say so?</p> <p>ii). Ukuba ewe yintoni engenziwa ukuphuhlisa eli galelo ngakumbi? If yes what can be done to improve this role?</p> <p>iii). Ukuba hayi yintoni mhlawumbi engenziwa ukubuyisa eli galelo? If no what can be done to re-instate this role in the initiation practice?</p>
<p>8. Ingaba unolwazi na ngeli cebo lase-Ntshona Koloni lokuzama ukwakha indawo zolulusela amakhwenkwe?</p>

Have you heard about the Western Cape Proposal as an intervention in the initiation practice?

i) Wena uyibona njani?

What is your view on it?

9. Ingaba ikhona enye into ongathanda ukuyitsho mayela nokwaluka?

Is there anything else you would like to raise concerning the initiation practice?

**SECTION B : FOR AMAXHEGO**

1. Uhlala kweyiphi ilali/ ilokishi?

In which village/ township do you live?

2. Ingaba mingaphi iminyaka yakho?

How old are you?

i). Yintoni okanye kukuthini ukuba yindoda ?

What does it mean to be a man?

ii). Kudala abakwetha babehlala ixesha elingakanani esuthwini?

In the olden days how long did the initiates take in the initiation?

3. Ngokokuqonda kwakho kukuthini ukwaluka?

According to your understanding what is initiation?

4. Ucinga kutheni le nto kubalulekile ukuba amakhwenkwe oluke?

Why do you think it is necessary for boys to go for initiation?

5. Ingaba zikhona izinto owazifundiswayo esuthwini ngemihla yokwaluka kwakho?

Were you taught anything during the initiation practice?

i). Ukuba ewe, le mfundiso yasesuthwini yayingantoni?

If yes, What was the content of the teaching?

ii). Ingaba abakhwetha babeyithobela imfundiso le?

Did the initiates obey the teaching?

iii). Ngubani okanye ngoobani abenoxanduva lokufundisa esuthwini?

Who was or were responsible for the teaching?

7. Do you think that in the olden days the initiation ritual played a positive role in building the moral life of men?

i). Kutheni usitsho nje?

Why do you say so?

8. Ukuba ewe, yintoni engenziwa ukuphuhlisa eli galelo ngakumbi?

If yes what can be done to improve this role?

i). Ukuba hayi, yintoni mhlawumbi engenziwa ukubuyisa eli galelo?

If no what can be done to re-instate this role in the initiation practice?

9. Ingaba unolwazi na ngeli cebo lase-Ntshona Koloni lokuzama ukwakha indawo zokolusela amakhwenkwe?

Have you heard about the Western Cape Proposal as an intervention in the initiation practice?

i). Wena uyibona njani?

What is your view on it?

10. Ingaba ikhona enye into ongathanda ukuyitsho mayela nokwaluka?

Is there anything else you would like to raise concerning the initiation practice?

**SECTION C : FOR AMAKHANKATHA**

1. Uhlala kweyiphi ilali/ ilokishi?

In which village/township do you live?

2. Ingaba mingaphi iminyaka yakho?

How old are you?

i). Yintoni okanye kukuthini ukuba yindoda ?

What does it mean to be a man?

ii). Kudala abakwetha babehlala ixesha elingakanani esuthwini?

In the olden days how long did the initiates take in the initiation?

3. Ingaba ulikhankatha?

Are you a traditional guardian?

i). Unexesha elingakanani ulikhankatha?

For how long have you been a traditional guardian?

4. Waqala njani ukuba likhankatha?

How did you become a traditional guardian?

i). Bangaphi abakwetha okhe wabakhankathela?

How many initiates are you presently guiding?

ii). Ukhethwe ngubani ukuba ubelikhankatha?

Who chose you to guide the initiate/initiates?

iv). Ingaba ikhona indlela oza kubuyekezwa ngayo ngomsebenzi wakho?

Is there a way you will be rewarded for your services as a guardian?

v). Utsho ngoba?

Why do you say so?

5. Njengekhankatha ziintoni izinto ezilindelekileyo kuwe?

As a guardian what is expected of you?

i). Ulindeleke ubelapha esikhwetheni nini nanini okanye uchithe ixesha elingakanani?

How often are you expected to be at the initiation or how much time are you expected to spend at the initiation?

6. Ucinga amakhankatha ayawazi owona msebenzi wawo?

Do you think the initiation guardians know exactly what is expected of them?

i). Kutheni usitsho njalo nje?

Why do you say so?

1. Zeziphi iindlela inkwenkwe emele ukuzilungiselela ngazo xa izakuya esuthwini?

What preparation(s) the initiates need to make before the ceremony starts?

2. Zikhona izinto omele ukuzifundisa umkhwetha esuthwini?

Do you teach the initiates?

i). Ungandichazela imizekelo yezo mfundiso?

Could you give examples of such teachings

3. Ucinga ukuba le mfundiso inendima eyidlalayo ezingqondweni nasempilweni yabakhwetha?

Do you think this teaching impact upon the minds and lives of the initiates?

i). Ungachaza njani?

How/In what way?

ii). Ingaba abakhwetha xa bephumile bayazithobela ezi mfundiso bazifunde esuthwini?

Do the initiates obey the teaching that they were offered during the initiation process?

4. Ingaba yintoni igalelo lokwaluka endodeni?

What is the value of the initiation practice to men?

i). Ubona ukuba isiko lokwaluka ngexesha lakho lalinegalelo ekwakheni Isimilo sendoda ?

Do you think in the olden days the initiation ritual played a positive role in building the moral life of a man?

ii). Kutheni usitsho njalo?

Why do you say so?

iii). Ingaba eli galelo lisafana nangoku?

In your opinion is the role still the same?

iv). Ukuba ewe, yintoni engenziwa ukuliphucula?

If yes, what can be done to improve it?

v). Ukuba hayi, yintoni engenziwa ukulibuyisa?

If no what can be done to re-insatate this role?

5. Ingaba unolwazi na ngelicebo laseNtshona Koloni lokuzama ukwakha indawo yolulusela amakhwenkwe?

Have you heard about the Western Cape Proposal as an intefvention in the initiation practice?

i). Wena uyibona njani?

What is your view on it?

6. Ingaba ikhona enye into ongathanda ukuyitsho mayela nokwaluka?

Is there anything else you would like to raise concerning the initiation practice?

**SECTION D****: INTERVIEW FOR AMAKRWALA**

1. Uhlala kweyiphi ilali/ ilokishi?  
In which village/township do you live?

2. Ingaba mingaphi iminyaka yakho?  
How old are you?

3. Ingaba waya esuthwini?  
Did you go for the initiation?  
i). Uye nini esuthwini?  
When did you go through the initiation practice?  
ii). Yintoni ebangele ukuba uye esuthwini?  
Why did you go through the initiation?  
v). Wawulindele ntoni esuthwini?  
What did you anticipate the initiation to be?

4. Ngubani owayekuhoyile ngexesha ungumkhwetha?  
Who took care of you when you were in the initiation process?

5. Ingaba ziintoni ozifundisiweyo ngexesha usesuthwini?  
Were you taught anything during the initiation?  
i). Nika imizekelo yezinto ozifundileyo?  
Give examples of what you learnt?  
ii). Ufundiswe ngubani?  
Who taught you?

6. Ingaba ukho umehluko kwindlela oziphethe ngayo ngexesha ubuya esuthwini?  
Is there a difference in your moral life style after you have been to the initiation?

i). Xa uqwalasela amanye amakrwala ingaba impilo zawo itshintshile?

In observing other newly emerged men do you see a change in their behaviour?

ii). Nika imizekelo ukuxhasa impendulo yakho.

Give examples to support your response.

7. Ingaba unolwazi na ngeli cebo laseNtshona Koloni lokuzama ukwakha indawo yokolusela amakhwenkwe?

Have you heard about the Western Cape Proposal as an intervention in the initiation practice?

l). Wena uyibona njani?

What is your view on it?

8. Ingaba ikhona enye into ongathanda ukuyitsho mayela nokwaluka?

Is there anything else you would like to raise concerning the initiation practice?

**SECTION F : INTERVIEW FOR ABAKHWETHA**

<p>1. Uhlala kweyiphi ilali/ ilokishi? In which village/township do you live?</p>
<p>2. Ingaba mingaphi iminyaka yakho? How old are you?</p>
<p>3. Unexesha elingakanani ulapha esuthwini? How long have you been here in the initiation?</p>
<p>4. Ingaba yintoni ekwenze ukuba ugqibe ukwaluka? What made you decide to participate in the initiation?</p>
<p>5. Ulindleke ukuba uphume nini? When are you expected to be going back home?</p>
<p>6. Ingaba zintoni ozifundisiweyo ngexesha usesuthwini? Were you taught anything during the initiation?</p> <p>i). Nika imizekelo yezinto ozifundileyo? Give examples of what you were taught?</p> <p>ii). Ufundiswe ngubani? Who taught you?</p>
<p>6. Ingaba ulindleke ukuba uphume apha unesimilo esohlukileyo njengendoda? Are you expecting to come out living a different moral life style as a man?</p> <p>i). Kutheni usitsho nje?</p>

Why do you say so?

7. Lo mahluko uza kukuchaphazela njani wena kunye nekhaya lakho?

How will that difference affect you and your family?

8. Xa ubuqwalasela aboluke ngaphambi kwakho ukhe waqaphela ukutshintsha kwizimilo xa bebuya esuthwini?

In observing those who have undergone initiation before you, in their return did you notice any change in their life style?

i). Kutheni usitsho nje?

Why do you say so?

9. Ingaba unolwazi na ngeli cebo laseNtshona Koloni lokuzama ukwakha indawo yokolusela amakhwenkwe?

Have you heard about the Western Cape Proposal as an intervention in the initiation practice?

l). Wena uyibona kanjani?

What is your view on it?

10. Ingaba ikhona enye into ongathanda ukuyitsho mayela nokwaluka?

Is there anything else you would like to raise concerning the initiation practice?

**Appendix B.**

**LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION**

**To Whom It May Concern:**

My name is Luvuyo Ntombana and I am a Doctoral student in Anthropology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I am currently doing research on the role of the Xhosa male initiation practice in building the moral lives of men. The purpose of this research is to understand the meaning and the impact this practice had in past. Further find out how this meaning and impact is today regarding building up the lives of men as they graduate to manhood.

I would like to request your participation in this research by recording in writing or by tape, your knowledge, thoughts and experience regarding the Xhosa male initiation practice and its role in the inculcation of moral-driven behaviour amongst men.

I wish to assure you that your name will not be recorded and therefore confidentiality will be maintained.

Your participation is voluntary and I want to assure you that you are free to discontinue with the interview whenever you feel so.

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Yours truly,

Luvuyo Ntombana

SIGNATURE .....

DATE .....

## CONSENT AGREEMENT

I.....hereby give consent to voluntary participate in your research in the study about the role of the Xhosa male initiation practice in building the moral lives of men. I understand that the information will be recorded without using my name. I further understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I wish to clearly state that no pressure has been placed on me to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE .....

DATE.....

## INCWADI YOKUCELA UKUTHATHA INXAXHEBA

Igama lam ndinguLuvuyo Ntombana, ndingumfundi kwizifundo zobugqirha kwicandelo le-Anthropology (ufundo ngempilo kunye nenkcubeko yabantu). Ndenza uphando kwigalelo lesiko lamaXhosa lokwaluka ekwakheni izimilo zabafana. Injongo yolu phando kukuqwalasela intsingiselo nendima yeli siko mandulo kunye nakule mihla siphila kuyo ekwakheni isimilo sendoda.

Ndicela imvume yokuba novavanyo kunye nawe, kwaye ingxoxo yethu ishicilelwe ngomatshini wokushicilela okanye ndiyibhale phantsi. Ndiya kuqinisekisa ukuba igama lakho alisayi kushicilelwa ngoko akukho bani uzakwazi ukuba utheni na kum. Neziphumo zolu phando ziza kwaziswa ngaphandle kokupapasha amagama abantu abathathe inxaxheba. Unelungelo lokurhoxa nanini na kolu phando xa uthe wabona amalungelo akho engahlonitshwanga okanye ungasathandi ukuqhubeka.

Inxaxheba yakho ndiyayilangazelela kakhulu.

Obebhala ngokuzithoba

Luvuyo Ntombana

UTYIKITYO .....

UMHLA .....

## INCWADI EVUMA UKUTHATHA INXAXHEBA

Mna .....ndiyavuma ukuthabatha inxaxheba kuvavanyo lophando oluphanda inxaxheba yesiko lamaXhosa lokwaluka ekwakheni izimilo zabafana abavela esuthwini. Ndichazelwe kabanzi ngokulindelekileyo, kwaye ndinelungelo lokurhoxa nanini na kolu vavanyo. Ndiqinisekisiwe ukuba igama lam alisayi kushicilelwa ukuze izimvo zam zingaziwa ukuba zivela kubani na.

UTYIKITYO.....

UMHLA .....