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**What is a man? Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity as elicited by the
film *Inxeba: The Wound***

By

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degree of**

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Declaration

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard. I declare that the mini dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Pretoria in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master's of Arts in Counselling Psychology is my original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced following the requirements as stated in the University's plagiarism prevention policy. I have not used another student's past written work to hand in as my own. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone, to copy my work to pass it off as their work.

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Date

Ethics statement

I, **Noluthando Javu**, student number **18342842**, have obtained ethical approval for the research titled: **What is a man? Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity as elicited by the film *Inxeba: The Wound***. On March 22, 2022, I received ethical approval (reference number: **HUM031/102**) from Prof Karen Harris, the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria.

Abstract

The available literature indicates a need for research on the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and culture in South Africa. This study attempted to fill the gap in the existing literature by exploring Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity. The study aimed to address the interrelationship of sexuality, masculinity, and culture by placing extensive focus on the construction of masculinity amongst amaXhosa. To do this, the study gives Xhosa men a platform to voice their responses to *Inxeba: The Wound* and their experience of masculinity as Xhosa males. The study used a qualitative research approach and a hermeneutic phenomenological research design, the theoretical framework underpinning the study was social constructivism. Snowball sampling method was used to recruit eight Xhosa men, four who identified as heterosexual and four who were openly gay. Data was collected using an online focus group discussion, this was then analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). Four major themes emerged from data analysis, namely (i) Masculinity – what it is and what it is not; (ii) doing gender; (iii) homophobia and silencing and (iv) cultural preservation. Various subthemes were identified under each theme. The study found that Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity were heavily influenced by *ulwaluko*, however, participants also inferred that it was not just the rite of passage that defined them as being men. The study highlighted the complexities of the intersectionality of culture, gender and sexuality in the South African context. The findings of the study contribute to existing literature on culture, gender and sexuality in South Africa.

Keywords: *Inxeba: The Wound*; *ulwaluko*; gender; masculinity/ties; culture; sexuality; hegemonic masculinity; social constructivism; homosexuality; heterosexuality; heteronormativity

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mr, and Mrs Javu. Thank you for giving me the opportunity at an education, for all your sacrifices and your unwavering support.

To my sister, Nolonwabo – thank you for being my biggest cheerleader and knowing when to hold my hand.

To my late cousin Lucky, whose untimely death raised so many questions and later became the 'why' behind my decision to venture into the field of psychology.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The concept of masculinity has been widely used in contemporary research on male identity across the world (see Connell, 1995; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Mfecane, 2016; Ratele, 2008; Ratele, 2017; Uchendu, 2008), with South Africa being considered to be one of the leading developing countries in the study of masculinity (Morrell, 2007). Masculinity or manhood is the term given to the behaviours and practices that are expected to be adopted by males and are compared against what is considered non-masculine (Connell, 2005). While most research has been inherently influenced by the West (Mfecane, 2018), there has been a growth in the available literature on the construction and conceptualisation of masculinity in an African context (see Manona & Hurst, 2018; Pyke, 2022; Ratele, 2008; Ratele, 2013; Ratele, 2015; Ratele, 2017) which has highlighted the intersectionality of gender, race, culture and sexuality (Scott, 2021). Given the historical context of South Africa, it is vital to reconstruct a new understanding of masculinity (Ndangam, 2008). Thus, various scholars have attempted to write on liberating masculinities however, to do this successfully it is paramount that we expand on our understandings of sacred texts and review these (Maluleke, 2018).

One practice which has clearly depicted the intersectionality of culture, sexuality and masculinity is traditional male circumcision (TMC) (Lynch & Clayton, 2017). *Ulwaluko* is the Xhosa term for male initiation – a rite of passage which is central in the construction of masculinity amongst amaXhosa (Mfecane, 2016). Acquiring manhood status through the completion of *ulwaluko* provides one the authority to display or practice masculine characteristics and identity (Meissner & Buso, 2007). Released in 2017, *Inxeba: The Wound* (Trengrrove, 2017) is a film that uses Xhosa male initiation season as a backdrop while focusing on constructions of masculinity and the intersections of gender, culture and sexuality. To do this, *Inxeba: The Wound* shares a storyline of a secret love story between

two males Xolani and Vija in a hypermasculine setting. Xolani and Vija are caregivers who help initiates throughout the initiation season, during which time they engage in a secret sexual relationship. During the film the viewer learns that Vija is a married man who has children while Xolani remains unmarried. The complexity of their secret relationship is heightened when Kwanda, an openly queer initiate from Johannesburg, finds out about their relationship. Throughout the film, the audience witnesses these three males negotiate their masculinity in this hypermasculine setting.

Focusing on these experiences which disrupt the heteronormative ideal, *Inxeba: The Wound* also uncovers the treatment and experience of individuals who do not conform to heterosexuality during *ulwaluko*. This offers a clear depiction of how South African men who do not conform to heterosexual ideals negotiate their gendered identities in a society and culture that is inherently heteronormative and values a certain definition of masculinity (Lynch & Clayton, 2017). In the course of the film, an initiate confronts Xolani about his assumed relationship with Kwanda – this initiate states that “a man doesn’t do what you do” (Tren Grove, 2017). This scene raises various questions around masculinity, and more so the interrelatedness of masculinity, sexuality and culture leaving the viewer with questions around gender and sexuality. Considering the centrality of *ulwaluko* in constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa males, the scene also probes the viewer to question what really makes one a man. In contemporary society, Xolani and Vija’s love story is not illogical. However, in this cultural setting, a story of this nature is still considered to be unconventional. So, while *Inxeba: The Wound* is aimed at giving the marginalised a voice (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018), the reactions to the film challenged this. Following the release of the film’s trailer, Xhosa leaders, the Congress of Traditional Leaders (CONTRALESA) and the Man and Boy Foundation held demonstrations across the country, protesting against the release of the film (Scott, 2021). In addition, *Inxeba: The Wound* was rated X18SNLVP by the FPB’s Appeal Tribunal resulting in the film’s classification as hardcore pornography. While this legal dispute was won, the uproar that resulted from the release of the trailer

highlighted the silencing of stories which do not conform to the heteronormative ideal, bringing homophobia to the forefront. The sacredness of *ulwaluko* was underlined as one of the reasons why there was so much outrage when the film was screened (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018; Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018; Scott, 2021), however, the outrage itself was also suggestive of homophobic undertones which are fuelled by heteronormative thinking (Hofstätter & Wöllmann, 2011; Scott, 2021). Amongst the criticism and backlash was hate speech targeted at the cast of the film, with people stating that Nakhane Touré (Xolani) be burnt alive (TshisaLIVE, 2018, as cited in Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). This highlights the restriction of narratives which do not fall into the heteronormative trajectory, the narratives which challenge the norming of sexuality as a binary. The outrage suggests that “some desires are forbidden, because they disrupt the sexual and gender order” (Ratele, 2013, p. 141).

The South African Constitution's provision 9 (3) clearly lists sexual orientation as a category that is exempt from discrimination (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, the lived realities of South Africans who do not identify as heterosexual contradicts this. LGBTQIA+ South African's frequently experience violence, particularly sexual violence (Nyeck et al., 2019). Roughly 3 million South Africans have stated that they might potentially commit acts of violence against those who identify as gender non-conforming in the future (Sutherland et al., 2016). The most current OUT LGBT Well-Being survey found that 11% of LGBT individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 had suffered rape or other sexual abuse at school between 2014 and 2015 (OUT LGBT Well-Being, 2016). In comparison to gender conforming adults, gender nonconforming adults, including those who identify as heterosexual and LGB, reported that they were more likely to feel personally unsafe most days and this feeling was intensified when individuals were walking alone in the dark (Nyeck et al., 2019). Economic discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation has also been documented and it was found that those who are less likely to be employed than gender conforming heterosexuals were individuals who identified as being LGBTQIA+ (Nyeck et al.,

2019). After accounting for sociodemographic traits and employment type, gender nonconforming heterosexual men, gay and bisexual men's monthly earnings were on average, 30% lower than those of gender conforming heterosexual men (Nyeck et al., 2019).

A survey of attitudes towards homosexuality & gender non-conformity in South Africa was conducted in 2016 by the Other Foundation (Sutherland et al., 2016). Of the 3000 people interviewed during the study, it was found that 51% of all South Africans believe that everyone should be afforded the same human rights irrespective of their sexual identity (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, 72% of those interviewed felt that sexual relations amongst same-sexed individuals was immoral (Sutherland et al., 2016). Much like these statistics, in its storyline *Inxeba: The Wound* highlights the gap between the rights outlined in The Constitution of South Africa and the lived realities of those who do not conform to the heteronormative ideal. *Inxeba: The Wound* as well as the reactions to the film, depict the widespread nature of homophobia in society (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). Thus, *Inxeba* brings to the forefront the ideals around masculinity and the manner in which sexuality has been framed throughout society. There is a responsibility that one carries in the social sciences, a responsibility which calls on students to tell stories about the human condition (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018).

1.2. Rationale

The black man's body has received a lot of attention over the years, making it a subject of research amongst various scholars across the world (Tonono, 2019). There has been an increase in literature which considers the intersectionality of masculinity with other spheres of life (Pyke, 2022) highlighting the importance of understanding the intersections of sexuality, gender and culture in today's society.

The current study aimed at contributing to the available literature which explores the role of *ulwaluko* in Xhosa men's constructions of manhood. There is limited research on the implications of placing *ulwaluko* at the centre when theorising masculinity (Mfecane, 2018).

Given the intersectionality of gender, sexuality and culture, this study offers an understanding of the complexities that Xhosa males are faced with and their attempts at negotiating these. Positioning *Inxeba: The Wound* at the forefront of the study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the lived realities of Xhosa men. *Inxeba: The Wound* highlights that films are more than just a collection of images; they are also a body of knowledge that helps us make sense of the world in which we live (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018).

There is more room to explore and re-evaluate the daily contextual realities and subjectivities for males who seek to respond to the various challenges which are associated with the progressive nature of modernisation in contexts where gender norms, moulded by culture and tradition, are reluctant to change (Pyke, 2022). Additionally, given that the mode of inquiry regarding masculinity often results in a production of African masculinities which are colonial and alienating in nature (Ratele, 2017), a study which moves away from this is necessary in the [South] African context.

1.3. Aims and objectives

The study aims to address the interrelationship of sexuality, masculinity and culture by placing extensive focus on the construction of masculinity amongst amaXhosa. To do this, the study gives men a platform to voice their responses to *Inxeba: The Wound* and their experience of masculinity as Xhosa men. The objective of the study is to give Xhosa men a platform to voice their responses to the film *Inxeba: The Wound* and their experience of masculinity as Xhosa men so to evaluate the ways in which culture plays a role in the constructions of masculinity. This is important because we live in a country and a world that is very diverse, and the continuous subordination of various identities is not only dangerous but also violent (Epstein et al., 2003).

1.4. Research questions

The research questions for the proposed study are as follows:

1. What do young black men's responses to *Inxeba: The Wound* reveal about the constructions of masculinity in contemporary South Africa?
2. How do young black men navigate around ideals of masculinity?
3. Do young black Xhosa men consider *Inxeba: The Wound* as marginalising or prejudiced against males who do not conform to heterosexuality?
4. What ideals around heteronormativity has *Inxeba: The Wound* brought to the forefront?

1.5. Theoretical framework

The theory of social constructivism was utilised in informing and guiding the current study. Social constructivism is located with the constructivism paradigm which sees people and society as being in a reciprocal relationship, always having an impact on one another (Onuf, 2015). In 1968, Lev Vygotsky established that language and culture are important in our development and understanding of the world. Language and culture are maintained by the co-construction that occurs during social interaction (Akpan et al., 2020) therefore the individual cannot create their reality in isolation. Given the topic guiding the current study, the researcher saw it fitting to utilise this theoretical framework to understand the co-construction of masculinity amongst Xhosa men. Social constructivism highlights that it is vital to consider culture contextually when attempting to understand what happens in society and how knowledge is constructed based on this (Kim, 2010; McMahon, 1997). This theory postulates that one's understanding, significance and meaning are developed through coordination with others (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The researcher was interested in how knowledge around masculinity is constructed and contested during this reciprocal relationship.

1.6. Research methodology

1.6.1. Data

The researcher used a focus group as a data collection method. Focus groups are a qualitative approach to data collection. During this time a researcher brings together participants to discuss the research topic. Of particular interest is the interactions of the participants with each other. The current study aimed at gaining insight into how Xhosa men define masculinity as well as understanding the role of *ulwaluko* in these constructions of masculinity. The need for in-depth data probed the researcher to select this data collection method. This was guided by the theoretical framework informing the current study. Given that *ulwaluko* is considered as a site of manhood, the researcher believed that a focus group would allow her to investigate how this collective knowledge is constructed and contested. Additionally, considering the exploratory nature of the current study, a focus group was an appropriate data collection method because it allowed the researcher to make sense of the participants' world, from the perspective of the participants. The researcher conducted the focus group in English, allowing participants to speak in their language of choice and the duration of the focus group roughly 120 minutes.

1.6.2. Data analysis

The current study used thematic analysis (TA) to analyse the data collected throughout the focus group. Thematic analysis is a method for codifying qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). It is a technique used for assessing qualitative data that entails examining a piece of data and looking for patterns in its interpretation to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to understand and interpret masculinity from the perspectives and experiences of Xhosa men.

1.7. Structure of dissertation

The study is divided into six chapters:

As indicated above, **chapter one**, offers an introduction to the research study. In this chapter, the researcher offers a discussion of the background and rationale of the study. The aims and objectives of study are discussed, and the theoretical framework guiding the study is briefly introduced. The researcher also introduces the research methods used.

Chapter two presents a detailed review of the available literature. To locate the study, the chapter begins with an introduction to the isiXhosa culture and the importance of their rites of passages. Following this, it looks at *ulwaluko* and its role in the construction of masculinity. This chapter also discusses homophobia, heterosexuality, and compulsory heteronormativity in *Inxeba: The Wound* while juxtaposing it with the lived realities of Xhosa men in South Africa. Chapter two concludes with a discussion on cultural gatekeeping, which was evidenced by the responses to the film.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical framework used in the study. The researcher begins with an overview of constructivism as a paradigm that serves as the current study's epistemological framework. Following this is a discussion of social constructivism which is the theoretical framework informing and guiding this study. Lastly, this chapter concludes by exploring the relevance of social constructivism as a theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter four provides the reader with a detailed account of the research methodology utilised for the study. A detailed discussion of how this study was carried out follows as the researcher provides a detailed account of the research approach and design, presented a discussion of the sample, sampling method, data collection method, and analysis method that was utilised in the study. Moreover, ethical principles guiding the study are presented and the chapter concludes with the researcher's reflexive account.

Chapter five introduces the findings of the study; herein, the researcher provides an analysis and discussion of these findings.

The final chapter of the study is **chapter six**. It provides the reader with a summary of the key findings of the study and offers concluding remarks on the research topic. Additionally, this chapter discusses the strengths and limitations of the study and concludes with a presentation of future recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to masculinity by placing extensive focus on Xhosa culture and the definitions of masculinity therein. To do this, the chapter uncovers society's reactions to the release of the film *Inxeba: The Wound* (Tren Grove, 2017) and the role of *ulwaluko* as a site of masculinity among Xhosa men. Simultaneously, the chapter examines experiences of queer identities in this space, and the impact thereof. This chapter also explores the male body as a site of identity construction, noting the agency that each person may or may not have.

2.2. What/who is Xhosa?

The term isiXhosa refers to the language spoken by the Bantu indigenous Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape in South Africa (Henda, 2021; Pauwels, 2022). Xhosa speaking people form part of the Nguni, who represent nearly two thirds of South Africa's Black population which is divided into four distinct groups (South African History Online, 2011). These four groups are the amaZulu-speaking people, the amaXhosa-speaking people, the Swazi people and amaNdebele (South African History Online, 2011). While Xhosa people are found across the country today, majority of them remain in the Eastern Cape or in the Western Cape (Vivian, 2021). The Xhosa, or amaXhosa, have occupied the Eastern Cape since before 1593 (Henda, 2021). During the apartheid regime, Xhosa people were racially classified as 'Black Africans' and as self-governing indigenous habitants of homelands in Transkei and Ciskei (Vivian, 2021).

As a cultural group, amaXhosa place extensive emphasis on traditional practices and customs inherited from their forefathers (Allegritti & Gray, 2005; Henda, 2021; Venter, 2011). From birth, a Xhosa person goes through various rites of passages which validate their growth and assign them a recognised place in the community (Allegritti & Gray, 2005).

These passages begin with *imbeleko*, a ritual performed to introduce a new born baby to the ancestors (Allegritti & Gray, 2005). During this ritual, the child's ancestors are called upon by an elder male figure and the child's *isiduko* (clan names) are announced to ask for protection over the child's life (Allegritti & Gray, 2005). Failure to complete this ritual is often believed to result in misfortune for the child's life (Allegritti & Gray, 2005; Ramphele, 2002).

Xhosa rituals symbolise an individual's development (Allegritti & Gray, 2005; Henda, 2021). Within the Xhosa culture, amaXhosa use rituals as a way to maintain a relationship with the community, the ancestors, and other divinities (Allegritti & Gray, 2005; Henda, 2021). In the same way that *imbeleko* is central to the identity and heritage of the Xhosa, so are other rituals (Henda, 2021). *Ulwaluko* and *intonjane* are two rites of passages which are central to the lives of Xhosa boys and girls, these are also traditions which separated this tribe from the rest of the Nguni tribes (Dingidlela, 2014). Each of these rituals is met by a graduation stage which is marked by a specific ritual aimed at reintroducing the individual to their community and their ancestors (Dingidlela, 2014; Henda, 2021). *Ulwaluko* is a rite of passage that is performed to transition boys to men (Gwata, 2009; Lynch & Clayton, 2017; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020; Mfecane, 2016; Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016; Venter, 2011). The beginning of this ritual is marked by the seclusion of the initiate who is placed in a hut with his caregiver (Mfecane, 2016). It is in this hut that the initiate is circumcised, herein, his foreskin is removed and he is probed to yell "ndiyindoda" (I am a man) (Mfecane, 2016). During the healing, the initiate is taught lessons about marriage, respect, responsibility and being an adult (Venter, 2011).

2.3. *Ulwaluko*: the journey towards becoming a man

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the continuation of traditional male circumcision is dependent on cultural identity and a desire to preserve ethnic traditions (WHO, 2009). Both males and females undergo initiation rites, but these are conducted differently according to one's sex (Mhlahlo, 2009). Culturally, traditional male circumcision,

or initiation as it is commonly referred to, continues to be an important rite of passage (WHO, 2009). Various South African ethnic groups practice and value male initiation (Venter, 2011). While most initiation practices have a lot in common, these are practiced differently across various cultures in the world (Mckay & McKay, 2010; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020). Not only does initiation define a male's social status (WHO, 2009), in many African societies this rite of passage marks a young boy's transition into adulthood (Magade & Mazwai, 2019; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020).

amaXhosa refer to their traditional male initiation as *ulwaluko*. *Ulwaluko* is a practice that has continued to be important over the years (Manona & Hurst, 2018). It has a long history and it has been practiced for over a thousand years by amaXhosa (Magade & Mazwai, 2019; Ntombana, 2011). Male circumcision plays both a social and cultural role in a man's life, which is why the manner in which it is done carries weight (Manona & Hurst, 2018). Various scholars have highlighted the importance of traditional circumcision as a Xhosa custom, emphasising that the rite of passage marks a man's entry into manhood (Manona & Hurst, 2018; Mhlahlo, 2009; Vivian, 2021). From this it can be deduced that cultural traditions influence how we think about and define masculinity and ideas around manhood.

The desire to conform and acquire a variety of manhood qualities which are deemed unattainable without completion of the passage influences people to undergo *ulwaluko* (Mavundla et al., 2010). Scott describes *ulwaluko* as "the factory of dominant Xhosa masculinities" (2021, p. 27). It feeds into the heteronormative assumption which views heterosexuality as a normative and universal expectation (Lynch & Clayton, 2016). Ratele asks the question "why are some masculinities thought to be less or more traditional than others?" (2013, p. 135). Scott (2021) refers us back to the film to answer this question by highlighting that the film challenges Xhosa culture by asking what position the culture takes where same-sex intimacies are concerned (Scott, 2021). Sexual identity, which is identified as an important aspect of initiation rituals, is also a determinant of social roles in society

(Mhlahlo, 2009). During male initiation, boys are taught how to be real men in society (Mckay & Mckay, 2010; Ntombana, 2011). An initiation ritual “enforces sexual distinctions that are designed to underlie the separation of genders” (Mhlahlo, 2009, p. 57). It is believed that the process of initiation can help change how queer men identify by weaning off their homosexuality and changing them to heterosexuals (Magade & Mazwai, 2019). The criticism towards the film was mostly from Xhosa men and women who were basing their argument on the coverage of a sacred rite of passage, arguing that the film exposed secrets pertaining to what happens on the mountain (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018).

While it is purported that culturally gay men who have undergone *ulwaluko* are entitled to being called *indoda* (a man) and should receive the same treatment that heterosexual men receive (Mfecane, 2016), this is not always the case. Individuals who are rigid, where traditional gender roles are concerned, will not tolerate any behaviour which does not align with their gender norms (Dreyer, 2007). One way in which men affirm their masculinity is by rejecting men who do not conform to the gender binary (Dreyer, 2007). In a study conducted by Lynch and Clayton (2017), participants discussed how their masculinity and social status were compromised by identifying as homosexual which put them under extensive pressure to undergo *ulwaluko* (Lynch & Clayton, 2017). So, for the participants in Lynch and Clayton (2017) study, undergoing circumcision was their way of obtaining social manhood. Thus, telling this story in a hyper-masculine setting offered the directors of *Inxeba: The Wound* an opportunity to question and uncover the silencing of queer men in Africa (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018).

Various South African ethnic groups practice traditional male initiation rituals (Maluleke, 2018). *Ulwaluko* is the term used among amaXhosa to refer to their traditional male initiation. It is performed on adolescents or adults from the age of 15 (Venter, 2011). “What distinguishes the initiation practice from other practices is that, in the Xhosa literature, it is defined as a practice that is not supposed to change with time” (Ntombana, 2011, p. 4). This

rite of passage has been practiced for over a thousand years by the Xhosa people (Ntombana, 2011), it marks a male's transition from being a boy to being a man (Maluleke, 2018; Ntombana, 2011; Ntozini & Ngqangweni &, 2016). There are various labels used to refer to men amongst the amaXhosa: *indoda* (man) refers to someone who has been traditionally circumcised and *inkwenkwe* (boy) is the term given to an uncircumcised male and he is commonly treated like a child (Mfecane, 2016; Scott, 2021).

As one can see, "Xhosa notions of masculinity centre on the practice of *ulwaluko*" (Mfecane, 2016). The importance of *ulwaluko* as an entry to manhood can be seen in how young men demand to go through the rite of passage even at their parent's disapproval (Mdedetyana, 2018). Throughout their time at initiation schools, boys are guided by *amakhakatha* (caregivers) (Pauwels, 2022). As a site of construction, circumcision offers black men an opportunity to learn about the laws, customs and traditions of their various cultures (Mdedetyana, 2018; Tonono, 2019). Within the Xhosa culture, *ulwaluko* offers males an opportunity to learn about their customs and traditions of their culture (Manona & Hurst, 2018). According to Meissner and Buso (2007), *ulwaluko* gives men influence at home and in society. These teachings are preparing the males to obtain power in the spaces within which they exist (Manona & Hurst, 2018). The power obtained by them is associated with the position of manhood, which is attained after successfully completing the ritual. During their time at the initiation school, males are also imparted with teachings related to being an adult and a man within the family context (Manona & Hurst, 2018). Males who have undergone *ulwaluko* are granted more rights and obligations as well as a higher social status (Meissner & Buso, 2007).

Black bodies interact with one another in ways that require the observer to re-evaluate their preconceived notions of what black bodies should look like and behave like (Scott, 2021). The cutting of the foreskin tests a male's bravery, stoicism and forbearance (Manona & Hurst, 2018). The ability to withstand the pain and the requirements of the rite of passage define one as a real man (Manona & Hurst, 2018; Mdedetyana, 2018). In light of this,

Maluleke (2018) asserts that the idea that men must withstand pain and difficulty in order to prove that they are indeed men is the first issue. Ramphele (2002) questions the relevance of *ulwaluko* in contemporary South Africa. However, although times have changed, amaXhosa still consider undergoing circumcision traditionally as their preferred method of circumcision (Mdedetyana, 2018). Considering the arguments against *ulwaluko*, Mdedetyana (2018) asserts that *ulwaluko* must have survived for as long as it has because amaXhosa have constantly reflected and renegotiated the rite of passage's place in contemporary South Africa. *Ulwaluko* is considered to have both a cultural and an educational value (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018; Pauwels, 2022). During initiation, men are also taught *isidoda*, a language only those who have undergone *ulwaluko* understand (Mdedetyana, 2018). It has been stated that the rite of passage also offers boys an opportunity to bond with one another (Pauwels, 2022).

2.4. Xhosa masculinities and queer realities

There is a level of complexity where Black African masculinities are concerned in South Africa – this is evidenced in the cultural and socio-political spaces that a lot of men exist in (Ndangam, 2008). According to Connell, masculinity “is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture” (2005, p. 71). Thus, doing one's gender according to the cultural notions of masculinity and femininity is of great importance in society. It is therefore evident that socio-cultural and contextual specificity are of great importance when studying masculinity.

As previously stated, race, gender and class intersect, which has led to the recognition that there are multiple masculinities and not just one masculinity (Connell, 2005). The realisation that being a man is not limited to one understanding helps one comprehend that “in each society there are multiple forms of masculinities at any particular time” (Mfecane, 2016, p. 205). Western epistemologies have played a significant role in the construction of

masculinity as we have come to know it (Oyewumi, 1997 as cited in Moraka, 2018). Be that as it may, it is important to note that there is a distinction between what it means to be a man, and what it means to be a black man (Anyiwo et al., 2018). Mfecane (2018) and Ratele (2014) argue that one cannot assume that Western models of masculinity have universal applicability as cultural and historical contexts differ. Geographical and historical settings affect how masculinity is defined by permitting some behaviours in boys and men while prohibiting others (Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015). All societies define gender according to their cultural beliefs, but the term masculinity is not widely used (Connell, 1995). Connell (1995) states that definitions of masculinity fail to consider cultural standpoints, such as how different cultures define manhood. For instance, how notions of masculinity are constructed within the isiXhosa culture is dependent on the cultural practice of *ulwaluko* (Mfecane, 2018). This does not only highlight that how black men understand and define manhood is influenced by their interactions with others (Anyiwo et al., 2018) but also that from a young age, men are socialised to adhere to normative traditional masculine ideals (Anyiwo et al., 2018).

The manner in which sexual desire is placed under surveillance throughout *Inxeba* highlights that there are certain expectations for black male sexuality (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). The reality is that there are idealised Xhosa masculinities (Scott, 2021) and in the face of these idealised masculinities is the fact that queer men go through multiple experiences which are considered to be culturally unacceptable (Kukard & van Rensburg, 2018). Ultimately, men live with a wide range of sexual fear pertaining to their inability to live up to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2004). In Africa, the attitudes and behaviours towards men who do not measure up to the ideals reproduce ideas around hegemonic masculinity (Ratele, 2014). Through the character of Kwanda, *Inxeba: The Wound* (Tren Grove, 2017) challenges various preconceived notions of masculinity (Green-Simms & Imma, 2021)

While there were a wide range of outcries when the film was released, this film challenges the various dominant ideals around black masculinity and highlights the role of queer people in this challenge (Scott, 2021). *Inxeba: The Wound* tells the story of three queer men during *ulwaluko*, a hypermasculine setting (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). The film is a potential catalyst for change where lived realities of queer men are concerned. It provides viewers with an understanding of these realities and the struggles faced by queer men in South Africa (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). One of aims of the film was to give the marginalised and silenced a voice as they too go through *ulwaluko* and thus, have lived experiences of this rite of passage as men who do not identify as heterosexual (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). The release of the film *Inxeba: The Wound* has highlighted the intersectionality of masculinity, queerness, and Xhosa culture and has simultaneously highlighted the challenge to how masculinities are understood in traditional settings (Scott, 2021). *Ulwaluko* is a prime example of how the [male] body is a site where meanings of masculinity are constantly constructed and contested (Ndangam, 2008). The involvement that Trengrove awarded his cast and crew throughout the process of shooting the film allows *Inxeba: The Wound* to be a film based on the subjective experience of not just one Xhosa speaking man who has experienced this rite of passage, but many men who have undergone *ulwaluko* themselves (Pauwels, 2022). Given that the film is an adaptation of what many men have actually experienced themselves (Pauwels, 2022), “silencing the film, silences them” (Germishuys, 2018, para 15).

2.5. Homosexuality in [South] Africa

The release of the film *Inxeba: The Wound* received multiple controversies across South Africa (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). While many alluded that the contestation was based on the film’s coverage of the sacred Xhosa rite of passage *ulwaluko* (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018; Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018) what seemed to be the problem with this film was that it brought what many consider to be an un-African expression of love into the isiXhosa traditional

space – that being homosexual love (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018). Gennrich (2013) states that one of the ways that heteronormativity is reinforced in Africa is through the assertion that homosexuality is un-African. Homosexuality is a complex and controversial topic in African culture (Newcombe, 2002). Arguments against homosexuality are commonly based on the assertion that homosexuality is a result of Western influence which makes it unAfrican (Newcombe, 2002; Reygan & Lynette, 2014). While it is true that the term ‘homosexuality’ is a Western concept (Foucault, 1976; Msibi, 2011), same-sex attractions and expressions are not new to African societies (Epprecht, 2004).

Historically, same-sex relations also occurred in culturally accepted ways (Epprecht, 2004) between diverse African people (Amory, 1997). Thus, homosexuality is not a discovered identity, it is a constructed category of knowledge (Foucault, 1976). In the same way that the world has changed over the years, one should consider that the sexual practices, experiences, values and meanings which have produced over the years have changed and will continue to change (Dreyer, 2007). What *Inxeba* has highlighted is that same-sex intimacies exist and they exist even in the most sacred of spaces such as *ulwaluko* (Scott, 2021). However, the film was still considered as being a harmful piece of art in the manner in which it depicted the Xhosa tradition (Khoza, 2018 as cited in Kirby-Hist & Karam, 2018).

Various laws have been drawn up across the world to criminalise homosexuality (Ratele, 2014). During the colonial era, numerous homophobic laws were passed and at present more than 30 countries in Africa still criminalise homosexuality (Ewing et al., 2020). The visibility and rise of homosexuality challenges conceptions of masculinity, which challenges heterosexuality too (Msibi, 2011). In patriarchal societies, the mere existence of individuals who do not identify as heterosexual is considered to be a violation of societal norms (Ewing et al., 2020). Individuals who do not conform to the norms in a heterosexual society are often faced with various violent acts (Ewing et al., 2020). The concept of homophobia brings to the

forefront the manner in which heteronormativity shapes social structures, rules, and policies. Homophobia functions in the social, cultural and political spheres of life in order to regulate sexuality (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). By continually discrediting homosexuality, homophobic utterances and hate crimes reify heteronormative hegemony, and thus contribute to the maintenance of patriarchal structures, policies and discriminatory laws throughout many African countries (Msibi, 2011). Various social changes are questioning the legitimacy of patriarchy in contemporary society (Sutherland et al., 2016). These include the rise of feminism and the changes in cultural hierarchies (Stein, 2005). There has been a decline in cultural hierarchies, which can be seen in the changes of the gender roles in the household (Stein, 2005). Stein (2005) argues that these social changes lead to the reconstruction of masculinity, or the understanding thereof, which leads to the anxious man – that being the heterosexual man (Connell, 1995; Stein, 2005). Heterosexual men are anxious because male homosexuality troubles them, it represents a masculinity which is considered to be feminine (Stein, 2005). Msibi (2011) argues that the rise of human rights in African societies has made it possible for many to claim a 'gay' identity which has intensified the fear of the already anxious man.

2.6. Understanding masculinity and masculinities in South Africa

The expectations around gender lead to beliefs about men's and women's roles in society (Blackstone, 2003). These expectations are taught to children from a young age through socialisation. Socialisation refers to the process through which a child learns and internalises the rules, practices and norms of his or her environment (Vuorinen & Tuunala, 1997, as cited in Crespi, 2003, p. 4). The process of socialization teaches one which behaviours are deemed to be appropriate and which ones are seen as inappropriate for each gender (Blackstone, 2003; Crespi, 2003; Stockard, 2006). Gender role socialisation implies that for everyone to get along, males should adopt a traditional gender role which is inherently masculine whereas females should adopt one which is traditionally feminine (Ickes, 1993).

Individuals are continuously exposed to agents of socialization who teach them their gender roles in society (Crespi, 2003).

According to Uchendu (2008), masculinity is defined by each society according to what they consider to be male gender expressions. Since masculinity is context bound, a man can be defined as “not being a man” if his behaviours contradict the expected behaviours of a man in certain contexts. *Inxeba: The Wound* is an example of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity. While it is said that gay men who undergo the entire process of *ulwaluko* are considered to be real men (Magade & Mazwai, 2019), the treatment that Kwanda received throughout the film contradicts this assertion in various ways. In South Africa, like many other societies, individuals who identify as anything but heterosexual are seen to violate gender norms by virtue of their existence (Ewing et al., 2020). Throughout *ulwaluko*, gay men are expected to prove their masculinity in order to be accepted as real men (Magade & Mazwai, 2019). This suggests that their sexual expression offends heteronormativity (Ewing et al., 2020).

The concept of masculinity has acquired negative connotations throughout time (Ratele, 2008). Speaking on the influence of Western scholars on theories of masculinity, Mfecane (2018), states that these theories may not always capture the essence of masculinity in an African setting. Notwithstanding the numerous criticisms that have been levelled at Raewyn Connell’s (1995) theory of masculinity, the theory has been utilised as a tool to understand the differences and relations amongst South African men according to race, class, and culture (Mfecane, 2018). Over the years, masculinity has brought to light the concept of manhood as a social activity that takes numerous forms, allowing us to speak of more than one masculinity (Ratele, 2008). “Masculinities are social constructs that can and do change, and are responded to in diverse ways” (Pyke, 2022, p. 215). Thus, it is preferable to view masculinities as psychological and social constructs that men actively develop and maintain in their interactions with women, other men, and their own inner selves (Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015; Ratele, 2008).

The intersections of race, gender and class have been central in highlighting that there are various masculinities and not just one (Connell, 2005). To explain the relationality of masculinity, Connell (1995) introduces four masculinities – hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, complicit masculinity, and marginal masculinity. In various settings, one form of masculinity is perceived as prominent over others (Connell, 2005). This masculinity is what Connell (1995) has referred to as hegemonic masculinity – the highest form of manhood. In light of this, other masculinities are often viewed as ‘subordinated’, ‘marginal’ or ‘complicit’ (Connell, 1995).

In conceptualising hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1995) drew from Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Hegemony refers to one’s consensual acquisition and maintenance of power in society (Gramsci, 1971). The concept hegemonic masculinity made its appearance in South African research during the early 1900s and has been widely used since (Morrell et al., 2012). In the South African context, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is used to analyse and understand men and masculinities (Morrell et al., 2012). It refers to a pattern of gender behaviour that legitimises men’s dominance over women and other men (Connell, 2005; Donaldson, 1993). Initially, the concept offered researchers with a lens through which to analyse power dynamics and the hierarchy amongst males (Morrell et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity is frequently controlled by cultural expectations that outline ideal ways of being a man (Connell, 2005; Donaldson, 1993). The maintenance of cultural gender roles and patriarchal ideologies helps sustain the standard for this dominant masculine ideal (Pyke, 2022). As a concept, hegemonic masculinity was especially helpful in a historical environment when racism and social class were dividing factors in colonialism and apartheid’s political and economic landscape (Morrell et al., 2012).

Masculinities that do not fit into the ideal ways of being a man but still benefit from masculine privilege are referred to as complicit masculinity (Connell, 1995). This form of masculinity includes men who adhere to hegemonic masculinity by following the dominant

masculine standards and refrain from questioning patriarchy (Connell, 1995). This masculinity affirms hegemonic masculinity by accepting the status quo rather than challenging the structures and practices that oppress women and some men (Gennrich, 2013).

When males express their masculinity in ways that do not conform to the ideal ways of being a man as prescribed by hegemonic masculinity, they take on a form of masculinity called subordinate masculinity (Connell, 1995; Gennrich, 2013). Subordinate masculinity is the lowest ranking in the hierarchy of masculinity (Connell, 1995). The standard for a dominant masculine ideal continues to marginalise those who deviate from such norms (Pyke, 2022). Male homosexuality is considered to be counter-hegemonic (Donaldson, 1993) and because it is perceived to be a deviation from the ideal ways of being a man it is categorised as a subordinate masculinity (Gennrich, 2013). This highlights one of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity regulates how men do their gender, outlining behaviours which are deemed appropriate and inappropriate at any given time (Connell, 2005). When individuals belong to a subordinate group of people (on the basis of class, race, and/or ethnicity), they are often excluded from the hegemonic masculine ideal – these masculinities are called marginal masculinity (Connell, 1995). While they may adhere to these ideals (Connell, 1995), they lack influence in society (Gennrich, 2013). It is stated that “gay men are marginalised and subordinated in many social and institutional contexts, as in hegemonic settings such as *ulwaluko*” (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016, p. 1311).

The country's colonial and apartheid histories are clearly reflected in today's socio-political landscape (Morrell et al., 2012). Apartheid allowed for widespread racial discrimination to continue for nearly six decades, defining and dictating many facets of everyday life, especially for individuals which the state infrastructure designated as ‘black Africans’ (Bonner & Nieftagodien, 2008 as cited in Pyke, 2022). The effects of the policies of race and gender under the apartheid regime have been central in shaping the evolution of

masculinities, dictating the possibilities for redefinition and renegotiation (Pyke, 2022).

Although conceptions of manhood which were influenced by colonial and apartheid contexts are said to be challenged by the political transitions as a result of democracy (Pyke, 2022), in the South African context, one can postulate that 'black' masculinities are simultaneously hegemonic and subordinate (Ratele, 2014). Similarly, there exists a double-bind in the contemporary South African context. Men are expected to continue adhering to the historic and cultural norms that once constituted masculinities while still being presented with liberal and constitutional mandates to become a 'new man' (Pyke, 2022). While it is true that not every man meets the normative ideals of masculinity (Connell, 1995), traditional and cultural expectations of manhood emphasise strength, provision and protection (Pyke, 2022). The complexities of masculinity are exemplified by the existence of these multiple and fluid masculinities (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), which is why one should examine the relations between masculinities (Connell, 2005).

2.7. Compulsory Heterosexuality in *Inxeba: The Wound*

The outcry around the release of the film suggests that the problem with *Inxeba: The Wound* seems to be the narrative about two queer lovers, which suggests that indeed same-sex desires are forbidden because they challenge normative ideals around sex and gender (Ratele, 2013). The term heteronormativity refers to the view that gender is a binary category (male/female) and that heterosexuality is natural (Hofstätter & Wöllman, 2011). For Adrienne Rich (1980) heterosexuality is enforced by a patriarchal and heteronormative society which supports the assertion that to legitimize patriarchy, heteronormativity is presented as compulsory (Msibi, 2011). Rich (1980) used the term compulsory heterosexuality to highlight that heterosexuality is not a natural way of being, and that it is not the only normal sexuality. Rich (1980) asserts that compulsory heterosexuality emerges from a male-dominated society which prioritises the subjection of women by men. In its storytelling, *Inxeba: The*

Wound uncovered the nature of patriarchy and heteronormativity in contemporary South Africa (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018)

As an institution, compulsory heterosexuality exerts itself onto individuals from birth, and thus individuals are assumed to be heterosexual until proven otherwise (Epstein et al., 2003). What is interesting is that this 'until proven otherwise' is not widely accepted in society, and *Inxeba* highlights this in various ways. One of the characters in film, Vija, is constantly engaging in macho performances of masculinity which could be tied to the ideals around heterosexuality (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). His performances allude to the fear and shame of what being 'caught' would mean for him (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). Thus, we see how compulsory heterosexuality affects queer men by teaching them from a young age that straightness is "normal" and therefore anything that does not align with this norm is othered (Epstein et al., 2003). In omitting any mention or representation of gay men throughout rites of passages, these hypermasculine spaces suggest that gay men are rejected (see Mfecane, 2016).

Within the traditional South African society, heteronormativity has influenced how gender is constructed (Reygan & Lynette, 2014). Not only do heteronormative standards as well as compulsory heterosexuality affect queer men, they also affect heterosexual men by placing unspoken expectations onto them which leave them feeling forced to appear heterosexual (Epstein et al., 2003). A study conducted by Ntozini and Ngqangweni (2016) accounts for the experiences of gay men during initiation. One of the participants in their study, Themba, explains that "the other initiates treated me differently and teased me a lot of the time" (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016: p. 1313). Themba continued to say, "they want to change you so that you're a man" (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016, p. 1315). Themba's experience as well as the character Vija in *Inxeba* highlights the many complexities of the colonial history and cultural system in Africa, which are imbedded with sexualisation and gendered subjectification (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018).

Individuals who deviate from the gender binary are often stereotyped against, labelled and considered to be 'abnormal' (Dreyer, 2007). Following the release of the film, there was a lot of violence aimed at the subject matter of the film (Scott, 2021). The threat of violence that emanated from the release of the film (Scott, 2021) speaks to the homophobia that looms in society. Where prejudice is concerned, various studies have shown that heterosexual males show more hostility towards homosexuals (Dreyer, 2007). Sexuality is highly controlled and policed in many global societies (Msibi, 2011). This control can be seen in many African countries where same-sex desire is continually confined and silenced (Msibi, 2011). The policing of male sexuality in *Inxeba: The Wound* highlights the expectations that are placed on black males' sexuality in society (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018).

There is a constant policing of same-sex desire, love and pleasure and *Inxeba: The Wound* uses the characters of Xolani and Vija to interrogate this policing which promotes normative notions of masculinity (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018). In more ways than one, homophobia itself is a policing agent of gender (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). *Inxeba: The Wound* depicts the various ways in which homophobia places restrictions and causes discomfort (Dreyer, 2007). The fear of being othered and stigmatised results in Vija obscuring his emotional and physical expression of homosocial intimacy (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). Homophobia can present itself in various ways, however, it is commonly seen through social marginalization, language use and physical abuse (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). *Inxeba* highlights the difficulties of queer men's intersectionality of tradition, sexuality and masculinity and how their lived experiences are influenced by a culture that is both heteronormative and homophobic (Scott, 2021). South Africa's progressive legislation of homosexuality has led to the view of the country as a beacon for gay rights, not just nationally but internationally too (Newcombe, 2002). While it may be true that attitudes towards homosexuality have improved (McCormack & Anderson, 2014) and that the Constitution protects against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Sutherland et al., 2016), this is in no way a reflection of the consensus about sexual

orientation among South Africans (Sutherland et al., 2016). The reactions to this film made it clear that there is a silencing of homosexual narratives both in cultural spaces and in society at large. Homophobia places limitations on the manner in which people can have close relationships with others of the same sex (Dreyer, 2007). The importance of the film has been echoed by various people, especially where the message behind the film is concerned (Scott, 2021).

2.7. Cultural gatekeeping: voices denied

The processes of decolonization in Africa beginning in the 1960s, saw the emergence of cinema in sub-Saharan Africa (Murphy, 2006). Filmmaking is an art that is used globally for different purposes (Akashoro et al., 2010; Shepperson & Tomaselli, 2000). The dominance of Western media forms on the African continent has led to using filmmaking as a tool of resistance against Western cultural imperialism (Akashoro et al., 2010; Murphy, 2006). For this reason, cinema and the process of filmmaking can be seen as a useful national development tool (Akashoro et al., 2010). While it primarily serves as a storytelling medium (Cloete, 2017), filmmaking is about giving one's opinion on world stories and a way of capturing and questioning collective memory in different societies (Akashoro et al., 2010; Murphy, 2006). Films create spaces for conversations (Green-Simms & Imma, 2021) which is why it is crucial to consider how film improves critical public engagement (Modisane, 2010). However, the release of the film *Inxeba: The Wound* raised questions around which stories can be told and by whom can these stories be told (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018).

Although *Inxeba: The Wound* enhanced critical public engagement (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018; Scott, 2021), the responses to the film signalled varying public concerns which were negotiated differently. While there were some people who supported the release of *Inxeba: The Wound*, the voices which stood out were of those who condemned the release of the film (Scott, 2021). Despite significant advancements in South Africa's constitution, there has remained a restriction on the availability of queer media (Green-Simms & Imma, 2021).

Queer realities have received very little representation in the South African film space (Andrews, 2018; Magade & Mazwai, 2019). This is contextualised in a country wherein at least 14 films are produced annually, with only a minority dealing with queer themes at a time (Andrews, 2018). Although films have shown their capacity to foster sightings of queer intimacy and a sense of community (Green-Simms & Imma, 2021), the release of the film led to media outrage, the kind of outrage which resembled censorship during the apartheid era (Magade & Mazwai, 2019). *Inxeba: The Wound* is one of the South African queer-themed movies that directly and critically addresses the country's racial and othering challenges (Andrews, 2018). This highlights the many ways that South Africa continues to face a range of challenges due to its peculiar history of colonisation, power, and dominance (Reygan & Lynette, 2014). The relationship that queer films have with other cinemas in South Africa is complicated. Queer films fit into the post-apartheid context while also questioning the prevailing narratives (Andrews, 2018).

Modisane (2010) states that film is not just a modern invention, it is also a social and cultural medium that makes it possible for people to experience modernity. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) argue that the consumption of media, such as film, influences how people perceive the world even though these representations are not always accurate. In as much as films influence how individuals make meaning of life, “no film can ever offer a complete view of a situation” (Shepperson & Tomaselli, 2000, p. 9). Interestingly however, Modisane (2010, p. 31) asserts that “critical appreciation of South African films has shown extensively the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic tendencies at work in these films”. The manner in which men are portrayed and represented in various media texts offers insight into the common understandings of masculinity as well as the interaction between sites of identity construction, gender, and culture (Hanke, 1998). Media coverage of initiation rituals has made it possible for South Africans to gain a better understanding of cultural definitions of masculinity (Ndangam, 2008). *Inxeba: The Wound* challenges normative ideals of masculinity (Scott, 2021).

From a cultural perspective, the cultural rights which *Inxeba: The Wound* are said to infringe on are threefold. The first concern is that the film exposes a sacred practice in the Xhosa culture – *ulwaluko* is considered to be a private cultural practice which prides itself with being intimate and mysterious (Kiguwa & Siswana, 2018; Pauwels, 2022; Strydom, 2018). Thus, ‘lifting the veil’ as many call it, hinders on the secrecy of the Xhosa indigenous cultural knowledge and places the rite of passage in harm’s way (Pauwels, 2022). Secondly, the accuracy of the representation of the Xhosa culture has been critiqued by many (Pauwels, 2022). On one hand, there are those who argue that the manner in which the story was told is a misrepresentation of *ulwaluko* and other aspects of the Xhosa culture and on the other hand, it is argued that the film depicts a story which is based on various misconceptions which are widespread in today’s society (Pauwels, 2022). The third critique is around cultural misappropriation – here, criticism is aimed at those who are not of Xhosa decent who use this culture as inspiration for their artistic expression (Pauwels, 2022). It is important to note that the solution here is not being more discrete or selective of which aspects of the culture to draw inspiration from, instead, it is a plea that urges all outsiders and non-members to adopt a hands-off approach of any cultural representations (Pauwels, 2022).

There seems to be a territorial element regarding who gets to tell certain stories in South Africa (Pauwels, 2022). This has raised a question around artistic expression as done in *Inxeba*, that being “who has the right to thematise Xhosa culture in artistic creations” (Pauwels, 2022, p. 17). While many would assume that only ‘black’ people are allowed to tell ‘black’ stories, the secrecy behind *ulwaluko* coupled with the response to film, suggests that only Xhosa people can tell Xhosa stories (Pauwels, 2022). However, considering that the unspoken rule of *ulwaluko* is that of secrecy as *ulwaluko* is not permitted for public discussion (Strydom, 2018), divulging any details to women, children and men who have not gone through the ritual is often considered to be taboo (Ndangam, 2008). This highlights that it is not a matter of only Xhosa people can tell Xhosa stories, it is certain Xhosa people. The

censorship which characterised the release of the film is similar to that of the apartheid government – a deprivation of valuable information (Magade & Mazwai, 2019). In offering a space for an appreciation for art and activism (Green-Simms & Imma, 2021), queer cinema has the potential of playing a significant role in social change by portraying the lived realities and complexities of queer South Africans (Andrews, 2018).

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework guiding this study. It begins with a discussion around constructivism to introduce the reader to social processes and the impact of language and culture therein. The chapter then explores social constructivism in more detail as the theoretical framework of this study. This chapter concludes by discussing the relevance of social constructivism as a theoretical framework for the study.

3.2. Constructivism

Social constructivism is located within the constructivism paradigm which is why the researcher must begin the discussion with an introduction to constructivism before expanding onto social constructivism theory. According to Lev Vygotsky (1978), all knowledge is constructed socially. As a paradigm, constructivism is an approach to any study of social relations (Onuf, 2015). According to this approach, people and society are in a reciprocal relationship, always having an impact on one another (Onuf, 2015). Constructivism implies that reality is constructed through human interaction (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), such that knowledge production is the result of social and cultural constructions through human interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Onuf, 2015). Through their interactions, individuals create meaning with each other and with the environment in which they live (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Creswell, 2017). This is guided by various rules of engagement which outline what people can and cannot do (Onuf, 2015). The primary objections to social constructivism can be summed up by the way relativism and realism are conceptualized (Andrews, 2012). It is alleged to be anti-realist since it disputes that knowledge is a clear experience of reality (Craib 1997).

3.3. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is based on the principles of constructivism. As a theory of knowledge, social constructivism highlights that it is vital to consider culture contextually when attempting to understand what happens in society and how knowledge is constructed

based on this (Kim, 2010; McMahon, 1997). Considering that language and culture are co-constructed and kept alive by social interaction, individuals cannot create their reality in isolation (Akpan et al., 2020). This theory postulates that one's understanding, significance and meaning are developed through coordination with others (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The social constructivism theory helps us understand one's knowledge transformation process. Jackson and Klobas' (2008) process model suggests that an individual has personal knowledge that is constructed through a wide array of processes – this personal knowledge consists of typifactory schemes and recipe knowledge (Jackson, 2010). Typifactory schemes is used to interpret and make sense of other people's actions and the natural world, while recipe knowledge refers to one's culturally learned formulas (Jackson, 2008).

Social constructivism refers to learning that occurs in social interaction (Kukla, 2000; McMahon, 1997). It depends on three assumptions, namely (a) reality, (b) knowledge and (c) learning (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Kim, 2010). In terms of reality, this premise highlights that reality does not exist in advance, but it is constructed through human interaction (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Social constructivism also highlights that reality cannot be discovered by individuals (Amineh & Asl), but rather it is through socialisation that individuals are exposed to the expectations of their culture. It is the interaction between a person and their environment is what leads to learning (Thomas et al., 2014). As an individual makes meaning of their encounters in the outside world, knowledge is formed (Thomas et al., 2014).

In the same way that reality is constructed, so is knowledge (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Knowledge is considered to be a human product that is constructed both socially and culturally through human interaction and interaction with the environment that one is in (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Second, learning is stimulated by cognitive dissonance, or the uneasy tension that results from having two opposing ideas in the same mind (Thomas et al., 2014). It acts as a motivating factor that forces the mind to develop fresh ideas or revise long-held beliefs in order to lessen the level of dissonance (conflict) (Thomas et al., 2014). The way

that knowledge is organised and what it is ultimately depends on cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957 as cited in Thomas et al., 2014). Thus, knowledge is assimilated through internalisation or accommodation – one either absorbs new information and experiences or adjusts their pre-existing knowledge to incorporate new information and experiences (Jackson, 2010). The last premise of social constructivism is learning and highlights that learning is a social process that depends on engagement with others (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Once an individual has assimilated and/or accommodated new experiences, they can proceed to externalise their new knowledge – by outwardly expressing this new knowledge through the use of speech, gestures and other behaviours (Jackson, 2010). While others perceive this outward expression, they can internalise it (Jackson, 2010). An individual's knowledge may be challenged by others in the social environment, who may also offer opposing viewpoints that make him doubt the validity of his knowledge (Thomas et al., 2014). Through socially constructed learning opportunities, constructivism encourages the development of cognitive processing techniques, self-control, and problem-solving abilities (Thomas et al., 2014).

As previously mentioned, social constructivism argues that the individual cannot be an actor on their own (Akpan et al., 2020; Kukla, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Social interactions shape or mold individuals—including ourselves—into the types of beings that we are (Onuf, 2015). There are various aspects at play which help people make sense of their lived realities, these are social interactions, discourse and processes. Social constructivism asks the “How?” It questions “How do certain actors come to believe certain identities?” or “How can the individual become an actor that influences the state?” After knowledge is externalized, objectivation is the process of developing common social constructions that represent a community rather than an individual view of the universe (Jackson, 2010). This objective information is “stored” in tangible symbols like language, behaviour, or reusable artifacts that have social importance (Jackson, 2010). Constructivism has established that the social world is of our own making (Onuf, 2015). The process of legitimation, in which knowledge is approved by powerful individuals or organizations and interpretations are

verified and accepted by others as being correct or perceived to be the standard, is applied to objectified or shared conceptions (Jackson, 2010). These shared conceptions develop into "institutions" (Jackson, 2010). The societal aspect of constructivism aims to challenge what we know, to contest language, conversation, and the reality of meaning.

Social constructivism is an interpretive framework used to understand the worldviews of others and the manner in which they come to make certain meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2017). These meanings are not etched or innate within each individual. Rather, meanings are formed through interaction with others (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Social constructivists view knowledge and truth as created by the interactions of individuals within a society (Andrews, 2012). Social constructivist theories of masculinities acknowledge that context and people have a role in determining one's gender (Moynihan, 1998). Within this theory, gender expression occurs in social interactions rather than being something we are (Moynihan, 1998). Some researchers suggest that language predates concepts and allows an individual to structure the way their world is experienced (Andrews, 2012). This interpretive framework is useful in phenomenological research studies.

3.4. Relevance for the study

The researcher believes that social constructivism will assist her in understanding the constructions of masculinity from an isiXhosa point of view. As mentioned above, constructions of masculinity are culturally determined and so, it is not what one person says but how several people have coordinated and constructed the ideals around masculinity and in this instance, Xhosa masculinities and the expectations thereof. There are always differences in how societies construct masculinity since they interpret and define masculinity in accordance with their own social and cultural ideals. Thus, gaining an understanding of the process of social constructivism in constructions of masculinity amongst the Xhosa culture will enable the researcher to better understand the manner in which the reality, knowledge and learning are facilitated amongst Xhosa men.

Literature has inferred that *ulwaluko* is central to constructions of masculinity amongst amaXhosa, studies have highlighted that this reality has been created by Xhosa men through their interaction with others in the environment (Lynch & Clayton, 2017). This highlights that the content of their knowledge production is reliant on how it is gained; what an individual understands depends on the learning context, the individual's goals, and the activity in which they are engaged in (Thomas et al., 2014). Ultimately, it is through interaction and collaboration with others that meaningful learning about what is expected of them as Xhosa males takes place (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Through interactions with others, it is common that people have subjective meanings of their experiences – thus, employing social constructivism throughout the study will allow the researcher to understand these subjective experiences of Xhosa males. Social constructivism will be useful in that the researcher will get a sense of how knowledge has been constructed amongst Xhosa men and how individuals create meaning around masculine ideals through their interactions with others and even amongst themselves throughout the study. This theory focuses on an individual's process of learning as they interact with others (Kim, 2010), thus, the researcher believes that it will be a useful theoretical framework in understanding the utterances that are discussed, negotiated and shared throughout the study.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework guiding the current study. Prior to discussing social constructivism in detail, a brief introduction to constructivism was outlined. This chapter concludes by discussing the relevance of the chosen theoretical framework for the study. The following chapter, the methodology chapter, is situated in the theory discussed above.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The methodology chapter discusses how the researcher conducted the research. This study adopted a qualitative methodology to better understand the perspectives, experiences and understandings of Xhosa men. This chapter begins by outlining the aim and objective of this study. Following is a brief overview of the research question that this study hopes to answer. This chapter discusses the research approach, design, sampling method, data collection technique and analytical method used in this study. This chapter will then report on the steps taken to ensure that the study was of quality as well as address the ethical considerations relevant to this study. This chapter concludes by providing a reflexive account of how researcher's biases could have influenced the study's findings.

4.2. Research questions

The overarching research question for the study is “what does it mean to be a Xhosa man?”, to unpack this, the questions for the proposed study are as follows:

1. What do young black men's responses to *Inxeba: The Wound* reveal about the constructions of masculinity in contemporary South Africa?
2. How do young black Xhosa men negotiate normative ideals of masculinity?
3. Do young black Xhosa men consider *Inxeba: The Wound* to be a depiction of marginalisation or prejudice against males who do not conform to heterosexuality?
4. How has the film *Inxeba: The Wound* challenged heteronormativity?

These questions will be investigated through the following **research objectives**:

1. To understand how the intersectionality of sexuality, gender, and culture impact constructions of masculinity in contemporary South Africa.

2. To investigate the role of culture in the construction of masculinity.
3. To investigate the effects of heteronormativity and homophobia within cultural spaces.
4. To understand how [traditional] gender norms have affected the expression of sexuality in South Africa.

4.4. Research approach

This study used a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research approaches place extensive focus on the lived experiences of individuals, groups and communities (Ahmad et al., 2019). It attempts to provide an in-depth understanding of peoples' experiences and perceptions and allows a researcher to yield results that are often expressed through words (Bricki & Green, 2016). Qualitative approaches focus on issues that are up for discussion or up for a debate in order to engage and understand the society around us. As a subjective and holistic approach, this approach asks questions such as 'how', 'who', 'what', and 'why' in order to understand and describe phenomena (Bricki & Green, 2016; Grove & Burns, 2012).

The aim of this research approach is to understand how individuals make meaning of the world around them (Ahmad et al., 2019). As a female researcher, using an exploratory qualitative research approach to conduct research around male initiation allowed the researcher to study an arena that she is personally curious about but that which she is excluded from because of her gender. It is stated that qualitative research grants a researcher access to spaces which are often deemed to be off limits (Tracy, 2019). In view of the fact that qualitative research methods aim to explore human action from the perspective of these humans themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2007), it was important to employ an approach of this nature in order to investigate the participants' responses to the film and to facilitate a conversation about the film's subject matter. As mentioned above, the study was exploratory in nature. Exploratory research allows the researcher to explore the

phenomena which he or she is interested in (Stebbins, 2011) and it allows the researcher to gain new insights about sexuality, masculinity and culture. Additionally, this approach also allowed the researcher to discover new ideas which helped expand on knowledge that already exists.

4.5. Research design

This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The phenomenological movement was influenced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) and it focuses on detailed descriptions of conscious experience (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Groenewald, 2004; Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). It is an approach that is interested in how individuals interpret events and phenomena and make sense of their experiences. It prides itself with being a philosophy without presuppositions (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Phenomenologists, including Edmund Husserl, are concerned with describing and interpreting what research participants have in common as they experience a particular phenomenon through a pre-reflective consciousness (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The assumption in phenomenological research design is that people use a universal structure to make meaning of their lived experiences (Bliss, 2016). Therefore, the fundamental goal of phenomenological research design is to describe as accurately as possible, social, and psychological phenomena as they are lived (Groenewald, 2004; Husserl, 1970).

Aforementioned, phenomenological design interprets the meanings of the lived experiences without making any assumptions about the subjective reality of those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Qutoshi, 2018). It is a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation focusing on the subjective experiences of research participants (Lester, 1999). The approach investigates the everyday experiences of human beings while suspending the researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004).

Further, the phenomenological study examines the unique experiences of individuals in a given situation, thus exploring not what is reality but what is perceived to be reality (Grove & Burns, 2012; Qutoshi, 2018). It is concerned with understanding phenomena from the perspectives of those who are affected (Lester, 1999). The researcher is required to bracket any presumptions they may have about the experience or phenomenon and interpret the participants' feelings, perceptions, and beliefs to clarify the essence of the phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004; Lester, 1999; Qutoshi, 2018).

There are various phenomenological inquiry approaches that, while they all seek to empirically investigate the nature of human experience, use distinct grounding philosophies in different ways (Suddick et al., 2020). One of these approaches is the hermeneutic phenomenology approach which was developed by Martin Heidegger, who was intrigued by the phenomenology concept (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Under this approach, phenomenology is not only perceived to be descriptive, but it is also considered to be a process that is inherently interpretative – wherein the researcher assigns meaning to the lived events of participants (Creswell, 2017). Hermeneutic phenomenology research is interested in life events and the interpretations of these (Creswell, 2017).

It's central assumption is that meaning already permeates our most fundamental and basic experiences of the world (van Manen, 2016). An in-depth understanding of lived experiences may only be attained by asking questions such as what is this phenomenon? How is this phenomenon experienced, furthermore? (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Heidegger believed that one needed to interpret before understanding (El-Sherif, 2017). Thus, Wilding and Whiteford (2005) state that it is necessary to go beyond simply describing the subjective experience, instead the researcher must also consider and critically evaluate what distinguishes a certain phenomenon in its setting and hermeneutic practice is key to accomplishing this (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005).

There are two key concepts that are central to hermeneutic phenomenology, the hermeneutic circle and fusing of horizons (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005). The hermeneutic circle is a reflexive process which refers to the process by which individuals arrive at an understanding of something (Wilding & Whitford, 2005). In research, this infers to carefully considering the statements and stories of the participants throughout the study process in light of what they reveal about both the individual aspects of the phenomena and the phenomenon as a whole (Wilding & Whitford, 2005). Gadamer (1989), who proposed that each human had a "horizon" of understanding, is credited with first introducing the idea of fusing of horizons (Gadamer, 1989 as cited in Wilding & White, 2005). The social, historical, and political circumstances in which a person lives are only a few examples of the influences that make up their horizon and is where one looks at the world and all of its potentialities and starts any interpretation (Wilding & White, 2005). When conducting research, one's own experiences inevitably mediate and shape how they understand the participants' stories (Wilding & White, 2005). This procedure is a pillar of hermeneutics and necessitates a knowledge of the self as the ultimate source of all interpretation and pre-understanding (Wilding & White, 2005). Considering that the study was interested in the subjective experiences of Xhosa men, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was appropriate for gaining insight into these lived experiences while interpreting these lived experiences. The study explored the experiences of ten isiXhosa men.

4.6. Sampling

4.6.1. Sampling size

The topic of sample size is contested amongst qualitative researchers, be that as it may sample size is an important consideration for any study (Polit et al., 2014). The current study aimed at recruiting 10 male participants from Johannesburg and Pretoria as research participants; five of these were required to be openly queer and the other five heterosexual. However, the study faced some challenges during sampling wherein some participants were not readily available to participate in the study. Most potential participants noted that the

sensitivity of the topic was the reason why, relating this to their cultural teachings and beliefs. The researcher was aware of the sensitivity of the subject, as seen in the responses to the release of the film. To mitigate this fear, the researcher ensured that she explained the aims and objectives of the film clearly and allowed potential participants to ask questions freely. As a result only eight male participants were successfully recruited – 4 of which were openly queer and 4 heterosexuals. This sample size was able to allow the researcher to collect rich and in-depth data.

4.6.2. Sampling technique

The researcher used snowball sampling to recruit participants for the study. Snowball, or chain sampling refers to finding one or two individuals who are suitable for the study and asking them to recommend other possible participants who would be open and interested in being part of the sample group (Bricki & Green, 2016). This sampling technique is a non-probability approach in which the researcher makes a non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, allowing them to easily collect data (Bricki & Green, 2016). The scope of the study and the critical nature of the appropriate sample group prompted the researcher to use this sampling method. In this study, participants were selected based on their ethnic group, their gender and their sexuality.

4.6.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The study had an inclusion criteria which was specific to the requirements of the study. The criteria was as follows:

- Each participant had to identify as a male.
- Participants were required to be Xhosa.
- Participants were required to be between the ages of 18-25
- The study was open to participants who were openly queer and participants who identified as heterosexual.

- Participants were required to have seen the film *Inxeba: The Wound* or to be open to watching it.

Participants would be excluded from the study if:

- They did not identify as being part of the isiXhosa South African ethnical group.

4.6.4. Recruitment process

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Pretoria Humanities Research Ethics Committee. Upon receiving ethical approval, the researcher approached a potential participant from her social network and began locating participants. In this study, the researcher recruited the first participant through her social network, identifying a potential participant based on the inclusion criteria and then asked the potential participant to recommend other potential participants. The potential participants were then provided with a participant information sheet which detailed the nature and purpose of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, participants' involvement, assurance of confidentiality, benefits of participation, data storage, and the researcher's contact details. Before conducting the focus groups, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study and what being a participant entailed. In addition, they were reminded that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and that they would not be discriminated against for doing so. An informed consent form was emailed to each participant and individuals who voluntarily consented to participate were asked to sign the informed consent form. Arrangements for the focus groups were scheduled by discussing suitable dates and times with participants.

4.7. Data collection

The data collection procedure for the study was a focus group discussion (FGD) with the research participants. A focus group discussion is a data collection method which is used in qualitative research (Khan & Abedin, 2022; Tracy, 2019). This focus group discussion was facilitated by the researcher and ran for approximately 2 hours. Due to the current

restrictions in place because of COVID-19, the focus group discussion was conducted via Google Meets. Participants were required to have seen the film *Inxeba: The Wound* beforehand and if they had not seen the film they were informed that the film was available on Showmax. To ensure that all participants had access to the film, the researcher created a Showmax account so that the participants could watch the film. The researcher conducted the focus group throughout the month of July 2022.

The researcher chose a focus group discussion as it would allow her to gather information from multiple participants at once, offering her an opportunity to listen and learn from their experiences (Khan & Abedin, 2022). Participants' kept their cameras off throughout the focus group discussion. They disclosed their sexuality throughout sampling and spoke openly about their sexuality throughout the discussion. Throughout the focus group, participants openly engaged on the topic of *ulwaluko* and whether they had been through the traditional rite of passage or not. During the focus group discussion participants were asked a series of semi-structured questions to probe discussions; this was done to ensure that they were given the opportunity to give an in-depth account of their experiences of masculinity and the impacts thereof. A focus group discussion ensured that the researcher got insight from the participants themselves; conducting group sessions uncovers the social structure of the participants that one is working with (Bricki & Green, 2016; Khan & Abedin, 2022; Tracy, 2019). The focus group discussion was recorded on the researcher's personal laptop which is password protected.

4.8. Data analysis

To analyse the data, the researcher employed a thematic analysis (TA). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, analyse and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of data analysis is also useful in interpreting the different facets of a research question (Boyatzis, 1998). TA enables the researcher to see and understand communal or shared meanings and experiences by focusing on meaning across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Braun and Clarke (2012) assert that using this approach might help you find commonalities in the way people communicate or write about a subject and interpret them. Given that the study focused on constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa men, TA enabled the researcher to understand and interpret the lived realities of participants. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to examine the data and identify recurring themes; this made it possible to comprehend and evaluate the raw data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), can be framed within an essentialist, realist, or constructionist framework. Given that the current study aims at uncovering constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa men using social constructivism, the utilisation of TA allowed the researcher to explore and interpret the meanings and constructions of masculinity amongst the participants.

The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach to thematic analysis. Herein, the researcher provides a detailed explanation of her approach to the six guidelines:

- 4.8.1. Familiarity with the data: To ensure familiarity with the data, the researcher transcribed the FGD verbatim by herself. Once this was done, the researcher read and re-read the transcribed FGD to become more familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By doing this, the researcher was able to look for patterns and prepare for coding by making handwritten notes and highlighting any impressions made at this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- 4.8.2. Generating initial codes: The researcher began organising the data systematically, this involved using the handwritten notes which had captured the impressions made by the data and notes which highlighted areas of initial interest. At this stage, the literature that was consulted for the study was utilised too. A code, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a crucial component of raw data that allows for meaningful consideration of the phenomenon of interest. Coding allowed the researcher to reduce the collected data and make it smaller and more manageable. The researcher also coded the contradictions and inconsistencies in the data, based

on the initial ideas and the literature that was consulted. The researcher's coding process was inductive in nature, the identified codes were grounded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- 4.8.3. Searching for themes and sub-themes: The researcher organised the extracts from the transcripts under each code, thereafter she began examining the codes for themes. A theme in a qualitative data collection denotes patterned meaning and highlights something significant about the data in relation to the research question(s) of a study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Potential themes were identified using the codes, and this was followed by the evaluation of the relationship between codes in order to identify patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, when analysing the transcripts, the researcher took into account codes that did not fit any themes and separated these (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- 4.8.4. Reviewing themes: The emerging themes were examined in relation to the coded data and the complete data set during this iterative phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure that the themes were of quality, the researcher compared the themes to the compiled data extracts and determined whether the theme made sense considering the facts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In light of this, the researcher combined several prospective themes into one (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ascertain whether the themes accurately represented the data and addressed, the researcher read the data again and found it to be a distinct and well-coordinated set of themes (Braun & Clarke).
- 4.8.5. Defining and naming themes: The researcher ensured that she was able to articulate what is special and particular about each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme and sub-theme underwent a thorough analysis to determine their core meaning, what the data revealed, and how they related to the study's research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each of these were given names by the researcher.

4.8.6. The presentation of analysis: Given that the goal is to provide an engaging story about the data based on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher provided a report of the data in the form of a mini-dissertation, ensuring that the narrative is compelling, unambiguous, and rooted in academic research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.9. Ethical Considerations

Before commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained ethical approval for the study from the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee. The ethical number for this study is HUM031/102. The next section offers an in-depth discussion of the ethical principles guiding the study.

4.9.1. Informed consent

To ensure that participants were willing to participate in the study, informed consent was obtained from each participant. Upon receiving ethical approval and identifying potential participants, the identified research participants were provided with the essential information required. The researcher was transparent in her explanation of the research study, what the purpose of the proposed study was as well as the role of the participants in the study. Additionally, each prospective research participant was provided with an information sheet that outlined the purpose of the study, and what being a research participant entails. The researcher ensured that this information sheet had sufficient information regarding who she was, to ensure that participants understood why she was completing the study. In doing so, the researcher was guided by the ethical principle of deception (Babbie, 2020), it was vital that the researcher did not deceive her participants in anyway by hiding any information or giving off a false image of the research study.

During this time, voluntary participation was highlighted – the participants' decision to partake in the study was solely theirs and they could not be forced to partake in the proposed study (Bricki & Green, 2016). The information sheet that was provided contained the researchers contact details and prospective participants were informed that they should

contact her if they had any questions or concerns about the study. The researcher used email and WhatsApp to communicate with participants, attaching the documents in the email and WhatsApp. The participant information sheet was clear on the study purpose; objectives; potential benefits; risks and inconveniences; the duration of the focus group; participants' rights to decline to participate or withdraw from the study; how data will be stored; and the contact details of the researcher and the supervisor should the participants have any queries about the study. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the participants understood the aspects mentioned above by giving the participants opportunities to ask questions. Afterwards, written informed consent was obtained from all participants; the participants gave consent by signing the informed consent form.

4.9.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

Given the sensitivity of research, a researcher should be committed to protecting the identity of participants. To do this, the researcher was guided by the principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Babbie, 2020). Anonymity refers to the act of concealing one's identity to ensure that research findings cannot be traced back to the participant (Babbie, 2020). To ensure anonymity, the researcher ensured that transcripts were coded, and pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names. However, participants were informed that direct quotes might be used to capture their experiences. Given that pseudonyms were used, they were once again made aware that these direct quotations could not be traced to their identity – this was done to ensure confidentiality.

Confidentiality refers to the practice of protecting the privacy of all participants by ensuring that participant's information is protected from unauthorised access and use (Babbie, 2020; Baez, 2002; Bricki & Green, 2016). According to Babbie, "a research project guarantees confidentiality when the researcher can identify a given person's responses but promises not to do so publicly" (2020, p. 67). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher ensured and informed participants that transcripts and voice-recordings would only be

accessible by herself and her research supervisor and that these would be kept on the researchers password protected personal computer.

4.9.3. Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

As discussed above, participants were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It has been stated that researchers cannot force participants to partake in a study or discriminate against them for withdrawing (Babbie, 2020; Bricki & Green, 2016). Throughout the data collection process, participants were reminded of their right to voluntarily participate and their right to withdraw their participation even after they have given consent to participate. It was also highlighted that they would not face any negative consequences or penalisation for choosing not to participate in the study. No participants chose to withdraw from the study during the data collection process.

4.10. Trustworthiness of the findings

In research, trustworthiness refers to the "true value of the study; its applicability, consistency and neutrality" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290). To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness to enhance the rigour of the study. The criteria outline four principles that one should follow to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. They include credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These are discussed below.

4.10.1. Credibility refers to the degree of congruence between participants' experiences and the researcher's description or interpretation (Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004). In the current study, the researcher committed to engaging with the data to enhance credibility. Polit et al., (2001) refer to this process as prolonged engagement, which refers to a researchers' investment of adequate time in data collection activities to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' views. The researcher spent sufficient time on data collection activities from the onset, ensuring that her engagements with participants were intentional,

that she prepared well for the focus group discussion and spent time transcribing the data from the audio recordings prior to analysing the data. Additionally, the researcher spent sufficient time analysing the collected data.

4.10.2. Transferability refers to the extent to which study findings can be applied to other settings or people other than the one being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004). In this study, the researcher ensured transferability by establishing a thick description. The researcher provided a thick description of the participants, the data collection method, and the period. In doing so, readers may assess how transferable the findings are and apply them to other people and contexts like those being studied (Krefting, 1991; Streubert & Carpenter, 2003).

To ensure that the study is dependable, the researcher provided thorough descriptions of each concept, the data collection method, data analysis method, and a thick interpretation of the findings. This was important as a study that is dependable allows future researchers to draw similar conclusions when they read the study (Polit et al., 2001).

4.10.3. Confirmability refers to the objectivity regarding data provided by research participants and can be enhanced by demonstrating that the study's findings, conclusions, and recommendations are closely linked to the data (Padgett, 2008). This study enhanced the confirmability of the study through reflexivity.

4.11. Reflexivity

When qualitative research methods are used, it is vital that researchers reflect on the process of the study. Two concepts guide this practice in qualitative research, reflection, and reflexivity (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). These two concepts bring the researcher's experience of the research process into the research study to understand if the researcher's socio-cultural background and/or involvement in the research may have had an impact on its shape and outcome (Madhok, 2013). Similarly, a researcher may be moved by the

participants' contributions to the study which could see the researcher responding to the process in particular ways (Frosh et al., 2002; Tracy, 2019).

The researcher's decision to conduct research on this topic was influenced by the outrage that was sparked by the release of *Inxeba: The Wound*. At the time, the researcher was developing herself as an academic and trying to understand the different phenomenon's that impact the lives of those in society including herself. Additionally, as someone who identifies as Xhosa herself, the researcher had been interested in understanding the outrage from both an academic and a cultural perspective. As someone who grew up in Johannesburg, the researcher had not been exposed to life in the Eastern Cape, a province that is known to be home to amaXhosa.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher was able to access a sphere that she would normally be excluded from by virtue of her gender. Given the sacredness of *ulwaluko*, the researcher wondered how participants would respond to her and how they would engage throughout the focus group discussion. Additionally, given that the research required a discussion of sexuality, the researcher was faced with bouts of anxiousness as she negotiated the data collection space. She wondered how the process would go, worrying that participants would not be fully open to engaging on the topic at hand. This was further perpetuated by the idea of having both the heterosexual participants and the homosexual participants in one focus group, this caused the researcher to feel uneasy as the dominant discourses in society have shown how unfavourable settings of this nature can be for individuals who do not conform to the heteronormative ideal. With the awareness of these fears and her preconceived ideas around *ulwaluko*, the researcher realised that it was important to challenge herself to be objective and be a learner throughout.

Given that the researcher is a Xhosa woman, she understood the sensitivity of the subject matter and more so the importance of the research. While she was disappointed when potential participants decided that they could not participate, she was able to understand

their reasons while simultaneously being disheartened. Once she had identified participants and began collecting data, the researcher found that participants were willing to interact fully throughout the data collection process and was pleasantly surprised by their willingness to share details of their experiences. Being able to engage with males from her culture on a topic that is this sensitive allowed the researcher to gain more knowledge on *ulwaluko* while simultaneously challenging her own beliefs as they related to *ulwaluko*. The researcher was also challenged to question her own preconceived ideas around masculinity, more so within the Xhosa culture. Thus, she was consciously aware of the need to remain neutral and listen from the perspective of a researcher. While it was challenging, it allowed the researcher to prioritise the voices of the participants and learn from their experiences. The researcher did not take for granted that the ease of the data collection process was probably influenced by the participants ages and was overall glad that she was able to have an opportunity of this nature.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study collected from the focus group discussion. It began by describing the sample of the study followed by a discussion of the themes that emerged from the focus group discussion. The researcher elicited Xhosa men's' views, experiences, and constructions of masculinity to answer the research question. Before collecting data, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants and the researcher encouraged all participants to be free and comfortable when expressing their perspectives, highlighting the importance of allowing each participant to share their contributions with no judgement. This was done to encourage the participants to participate openly throughout the focus group and thus enabled the research to obtain rich and in-depth data. All interviews were audio-recorded, and the researcher obtained written consent for recording the interviews. After collecting data, the researcher transcribed the data verbatim and analysed all data following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis guidelines. During the data analysis process, the researcher identified four main themes. These four themes explained the interrelationship of culture, gender, and sexuality in the Xhosa culture. Furthermore, data collected in this study were compared against existing literature to add to the existing body of knowledge relating to constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa men.

5.2. Description of sample

The participants were recruited using snowball sampling, the sample size for the study included eight Xhosa males who were chosen on the condition that they met the inclusion criteria of this study and were available to participate. All eight participants were of Xhosa descent, with four participants identifying as homosexual and the other four as heterosexual. During the focus group discussion, two participants disclosed that they had been medically circumcised. One of these participants identified as openly homosexual while the other one

was heterosexual. The ages of the participants ranged between 18-years-old and 25-years-old. Throughout the analysis process, participants were assigned pseudonyms to avoid tracing the research participants.

Table 1:

Participant's sociodemographic information

Participant	Age	Sexuality	Place of Birth	Place of Residence	Circumcision: Medical/traditional
Melisizwe	21	Queer	Eastern Cape	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Traditional
Ncedo	22	Queer	Eastern Cape	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Traditional
Siphelele	24	Heterosexual	Gauteng	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Medical
Sfiso	21	Queer	Eastern Cape	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Medical
Tenjwa	20	Queer	Gauteng	Pretoria, Gauteng	Undisclosed
Thamsanqa	24	Heterosexual	Eastern Cape	Pretoria, Gauteng	Traditional
Zethu	25	Heterosexual	Eastern Cape	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Traditional
Zipho	22	Heterosexual	Eastern Cape	Johannesburg, Gauteng	Traditional

5.3. Themes

The following themes emerged during data analysis:

- Masculinity – what it is and what it is not
- Doing gender
- Homophobia and silencing
- Cultural preservation

Table 2:

Codes, sub-themes and main themes that emerged from the data

Codes	Sub-themes	Main themes
• Cultural practices • Defining culture • Performances • Displacement	A Xhosa man	Masculinity – what it is and what it is not
• Dominance • Responsibility • Expectations • Social hierarchy	Dominant ideals of manhood	
• Social constructivism • Multiple masculinities	More than just <i>ulwaluko</i>	
• Gender • Performativity • Emasculation • Ostracized • Agents of socialisation	The body as a site of meaning	Doing gender
• Othering • Sexuality	Policing	
• Exclusion • Discrimination • Heteronormativity • Conforming to the expectation	Culture and sexuality	Homophobia and silencing

• Safety • Marginalisation • Compulsory heterosexuality • Social status	Renegotiating ubudoda kwaXhosa (renegotiating masculinity in the Xhosa culture)	
• Community • Protect it at all costs • Power	Sense of Belonging	Cultural preservation
• Sense of self • Sacredness • Agency	Identity politics	

5.4. Masculinity – what it is and what it is not

Throughout the focus group discussion, participants found themselves at two different junctures – on one part there was the realisation that *ulwaluko* plays a vital role in the constructions of manhood, while on the other hand, they also highlighted that there is more to being a man than just going to the mountain. There was a lot of agreement between the participants throughout the discussion, indicating that these participants held some shared views which were not only limited to their cultural experience but also their experiences as males in the larger society.

5.4.1. A Xhosa man

Constructions of masculinity are said to differ across culture and throughout time (Connell, 2005). While there are various notions and descriptions of manhood in contemporary society, what seems to be clearly defined is the path that one needs to take before they can be defined as a man in the isiXhosa culture. Dominant discourses on what it means to be a man amongst the Xhosa culture follow the same path, with the process of *ulwaluko* being a necessary step towards attaining Xhosa manhood (Manona & Hurst, 2018;

Mhlahlo, 2009; Ntombana, 2011). In line with this, Ncedo and Melisizwe had the following to say:

Ncedo: ...So what does it mean for me to be a Xhosa man? Well, I'm not too much into, into tradition and stuff. But I, to those who are very much tradition, traditional, I think it would mean, after you come back from there now you are tasked as being a man in society of which you will attend the traditional ceremonies, you're, you're able to stand up ebhlanti (in the kraal) and speak. And you are able to also participate when new initiates are going into the initiation school. So I think that, that what, that what, that is what it means to me is to recognise myself as a man, recognise myself as an important part of society, who is now able to make decisions that will be taken into consideration by the elders because I have now undergone that process...

Melisizwe: Mna (I) my definition it's more like what Ncedo said, I mean, it's what you go there to become one. So, when you, you and then you're taught, when you're taught there what you do. And then at the very end, you come back, you are regarded as one. So you've got to be, now you're going to be in a different place in a society you will no longer be a boy, or whatsoever, you're doing everything in sight. You are treated as someone, as an adult, if I can say that. And it's more like, it's more like that. I mean, traditionally that's what a Xhosa man is, but also for me it's also has to do with what are your actions are? I mean there's a saying in Xhosa that says *indoda yindonda ngezenzo* (a man is a man by his actions) so it means your actions also must show *ukuthi* (that) you are a man, that's my take.

Ncedo and Melisizwe show an inability to define what being a Xhosa man is. Instead, both their descriptions acknowledge the importance of *ulwaluko* in becoming a Xhosa man and the roles that they now have after undergoing the process. The idea of them going from boys to men is reflected in their assertions, with Melisizwe saying “*you will no longer be a boy*”, “*you are treated as someone, as an adult*”. This suggests that they do not have a deep understanding of what being a Xhosa man is beyond the completion of the rite of passage

and the responsibilities that are bestowed upon them. Ntombana (2011) states that the manhood status that initiates receive following the completion of *ulwaluko* grants them the right to get married, to build a home and to participate in rituals and other community gatherings. However, the privileges that they are afforded do not give a clear understanding of what Xhosa manhood actually is. Similar to other participants, these utterances also indicated that their understanding of Xhosa masculinity was reliant on action – it is more about what you do with your manhood status. This was further supported by the following assertions when asked about the traditional notions of masculinity that they had adopted:

Sfiso: *“Indoda yindoda ngezenzo” (a man is a man through his actions).*

Melisizwe: *“Yah”*

Ncedo: *“I think that answers it.”*

Melisizwe: *“You, you, you, you are not indoda just because you went there, it depends, it’s the actions that shows that you are a man”*

Participants often used the word ‘responsibility’ in their definitions and descriptions of Xhosa manhood – which highlights the doing of gender. This suggests that they understand Xhosa manhood as a performance. This is supported by the expectations that one has to meet following the completion of *ulwaluko*. It has been stated that a Xhosa man’s manhood is measured according to how he carries himself in public after *ulwaluko*, from how he dresses, respects himself and others, carries responsibility and avoids violent acts (Mfecane, 2018). While participants reflected on their understanding of Xhosa manhood and what being a Xhosa man meant to them, Siphelele and Sfiso shared their understanding from the perspective of males who had not undergone *ulwaluko*:

Siphelele: *Being a Xhosa... I think this also applies to every other culture. Is that being, being of a particular descent, you, or you sort of need to find your identity as you... Well, let me just talk from the beginning. I think from ekuqaleni (the beginning), everyone wanted to find their identity within the culture and, we, our fathers and grandfathers may not, may not have agreed with most of the, most of the happenings and most of the, the things that made us who we are, or some of the cultural practices, they would not*

necessarily agree with them, but they just continued with them because that's the type of environment that they grew up in where whereby you do as you're told and you never just question any, any activity, any activity or any sort of traditional custom that, that you're taking part in you, you never question the integrity of it thereof. So, and because they grew up in a, in a, in a communal society, I'd like to think if, I think I'd like to think it was a communal society, um, you tend, you tended to try and find your identity within the culture instead of establishing your own type of identity. So ubangum'xhosa (being Xhosa) for me, I think, it's something I was born into. So, I haven't really navigated my own identity within my, within my culture because establishing your own identity would then mean leaving the pack. So, ubangum'xhosa (being Xhosa) is part of who I am purely by virtue of the fact that I was born into it, as far as everything else, I, as far as every, as far as what it means to be ngum'xhosa (Xhosa) I can't necessarily shine a lot of light onto that because I grew up in a more Zulu type of, you know, society (I grew up in Soweto) you know, my mom is Zulu and my Zulu is much better than my Xhosa. So, I'm not, I'm sure how I can answer that, but just from what I've shared, just mostly, I think that goes across every single other culture.

Sfiso: *Mna (I) personally, I don't um think I relate much to the initiation part of things because in as much as I watched the movie, I never did go to the initiation school. So my definition of being a man is more of a general sense, and a sense that I got from home than that I got from the initiation school.*

Siphelele's prevarication highlighted the centrality of *ulwaluko* in defining one as a man in the Xhosa culture. Similarly, in his response, Sfiso began by negating his experience of being a Xhosa man because he had not undergone the rite of passage. Both participants spoke more generally about being a man. By virtue of not having undergone the rite of passage, these two participants' responses inferred that they had no understanding of what being a Xhosa man meant to them. This also seemed to be influenced by the presence of the other participants in the discussion as the other participants centred their responses on

ulwaluko, suggesting that Siphelele and Sfiso were intimidated by the presence of males who understood centred their definitions of Xhosa manhood on a practice that they had not undergone and could therefore not relate to. Given that Xhosa males who get medically circumcised are considered to be inferior and are commonly othered (Dingidlela, 2014; Mfecane, 2018), their avoidance in this regard is an indication of the inferiority experienced by males who are not traditionally circumcised.

5.4.2. Dominant ideals of manhood

Participants reflected on how they are afforded respect and status in their culture after completing *ulwaluko*. Additionally, their assertions highlighted that the status of being a man comes with a responsibility that is bestowed upon them. This responsibility relates to what they do with their manhood, how they contribute to the wider society, and how they hold themselves accountable for their behaviours. From this, one can understand that for these participants Xhosa manhood is more about action:

Zethu: ... for me being a man is about how I can help those around me, um, how I can help them in, in making their lives better. You know, so especially younger gents, you know, um, and, and younger gents in my family. What kind of example am I setting for them? You know, it's about setting an example for the younger generation and, and trying to obviously sort of change some of the cultural, our cultural ways for the better, you know? Um, so I mean, I have responsibility, like I said earlier on that sometimes *ndikhe ndibe li khankatha* (I am a caregiver). Um, so in that regard, my responsibility is to make sure that I instill certain values in whoever I'm dealing with, you know, so, and certain levels of respect and, and, and, you know, treating women in society with respect, treating kids in society with respect, um, standing up for myself, but also standing up for those that can't stand up for themselves you know? So, because in society, we all know that your voice as a man is, is louder than, than that is of, of a woman. So instead of maybe even standing up for them but making sure that you are allowing children and women a safe space, um, you're allowing *abakwetha* (initiates) that don't feel protected,

um, to have a safe space you know. I don't think it's always about standing up for other people, but rather, also just giving them access. Um, so yeah, I think just how I can make life better for other people and not just for myself. Yeah.

Similar to most participants, Zethu's assertion echoed dominant ideals of masculinity. Without an explicit awareness, these participants showed a preference for a hegemonic masculine ideal that was characterised by power (Donaldson, 1993). In the above, Zethu identifies the roles and responsibilities that he has after undergoing *ulwaluko* while simultaneously highlighting his dominant position in society. His utterances signal the expectations that one has following their completion of *ulwaluko* and their new manhood status. His utterances signal heroism and the other participants shared the same sentiments:

Siphelele: *What does it mean for me, for me being a man means primarily standing up, standing up for what you believe in, um, primarily understanding that, um, you need to treat those around with the same amounts of respect, regardless of class, um, it means that you have a defined role in your society and your community that you then need to fulfill, and, a role that you, and a role in the context of your family, because you're son, you're a son, a brother, and a father to certain people, regardless of, regardless of whether they are biological or not, there could be a young man or whether a young man looking at you as a father figure to a particular point to just being idolized. So, the importance of being a man is more your responsibility and your accountability and your integrity...*

Thamsanqa: *...And yeah, I think for me, just to extend on the top, all point about, you know, your, your responsibility, um, in society. Um, and your integrity as a per, as a person. Um, I think just looking at gender roles, um, you know, you, you, you are responsible for a lot, a lot of things in society, um, whether it's in your own home, um, or out in society, you know, there's certain expectations of you and you know as a man, you should, uh, serve, serve those responsibilities the best way that you can, um, you know, respect everyone as much, like as, as, as much as you want to be respected as a man. Um, and yeah, I think just, just, just carrying out, you know, those tasks with integrity and*

principle, um, I think is what I'll define myself, oh, for myself, what, you know, a man should be. So yeah, I think that's my two cents.

In the above both Zethu and Thamsanqa showed an awareness of the gendered nature of society and how their roles were essentially to be the protector. This is in line with Pyke's (2022) assertion that traditional and cultural expectations of manhood emphasise strength, provision and protection. Thus, by attaining Xhosa manhood, these participants acknowledge that they have a responsibility that goes beyond taking care of themselves. Authority and heroism are signalled in their responses, indicating the hegemonic masculine identity which they have been afforded. Thus, they maintain their power through the accepted ways of being a man (Donaldson, 1993). In this sense, it is clear that dominant discourses about masculinity has created a hierarchy that has resulted in *ulwaluko* legitimising their positioning and affording them a hegemonic masculine identity.

5.4.3. More than just *ulwaluko*

Although participants related their understanding of masculinity around the rite of passage, there was also a tendency to attenuate the rite of passage where definitions of masculinity are concerned. Their arrival at this juncture was interesting in that it seemed that they did not want this rite of passage to be the only thing defining them as men, even though culturally it is the one thing that certifies their manhood.

Zethu: *...Um, I'll say ukwaluka is, is, is a coming-of-age ceremony. It's your passage into, into, into manhood. Um, but I also think it's, it's significant, yes, but it's not, it's not what makes you a man, um, everything you learn there is, is, added on top of what you already know as a person...*

From the above, one would wonder how Xhosa men would construct masculinity if the rite of passage was abolished – would there be no Xhosa manhood without *ulwaluko*? While *ulwaluko* is commonly presented as a natural process in a Xhosa male's life, participants

shed some light on the multiplicity of manhood and how the process of becoming a [Xhosa] man begins prior to them entering the initiation space.

Thamsanqa: *Um, I think for me, um, it's, it's been a linear I'd say journey. Um, so growing up, you know, in my younger ages, you know, it was obviously, um, I think the family influence was the biggest. So, in terms of my father, you know, my uncles and, uh, older siblings, well, not older siblings, older cousins my bad, but, um, cuz I was the oldest one at home so the only older, I guess, siblings I'd have were my cousins. And that's when I, you know, meet them when I visited my grandparents and you know, I'll just learn from um, you know, spend time with them. So I think from a young age, it's been just that family sphere and then obviously the older, you know, I've got, especially here in university, uh, where I met, you know, um, other young men, you know, that have, you know, gone through initiation I'd say, um, and just to hear their experience and, you know, engage with them. Um, they've also taught me a lot as to what it means to be a man, especially from, you know, someone who's, you know, just figuring it out as well. So, I think they've opened my, I guess, uh, perspective of it in terms of, um, what it means to be a man at, you know, I guess at this age, if that makes sense. And the people who share similar experiences with me. Yeah, for me it's just in that linear thing, where at, you know, in my early ages, it was more the family sphere, but the older I got, you know, and more, um, I got exposed to, uh, other men, um, around my same age, well, around my age group, um, I got to learn from them as well as to what it means to be a man."*

Sfiso: *Mna (I) um, for me, a big portion of who I've become as a man comes from I'honestly, from umama no sisi (my mom and sister) um, yeah, basically, and, um, some portion comes from i'family kubo'tata (my family on my dad's side), like there's a lot of guys but um, that they have, they have had impact, kum (to me), now that I am older, now that I see myself as an adult and that I am a man. That's when we started engaging on these meaningful conversations, they started to have an impact. And before that, um, mna (I), I'm one person who has been in a lot of places I have never been raised in one place, or in one setting, I have been here and there. So being here and there, you get*

exposed to a lot of people, a lot of personalities, and yeah, from those interactions, meaningful conversations with those people, you get to take certain parts of, of those people with you. So mna (I), I would say I-ukba indoda (to be a man) or me as a man, I would define myself as just, uh, I, I took it from different people and kind of blended it together to this one mould of something.”

Here, each participant shares who taught them what it means to be a man, and in their responses they highlight that it is more than just about the rite of passage itself. Their utterances indicate that their definitions of manhood were influenced by various experiences, with *ulwaluko* crystalising these teachings over time. Thus, from the perspective of the participants, definitions of manhood were constructed through their interactions with various people in their lives over the years. This is in line with the social constructivism theory which highlights the co-construction of knowledge and reality in society (Akpan et al., 2020). What was evident in their utterances was that masculinity is a concept that is context specific, fluid, and historically oriented (Connell, 1995; Connell, 2005). The agreement amongst the participants regarding the shift from cultural notions of manhood highlights this fluidity of masculinity and how it is context specific.

Ncedo: *My grandfather. Shame, oh, oh, uyabona yena (you see with him), it was never about, um, he, I don't think he, he sort of relied mostly on what tradition, on how tradition defines a man. Yena (he), he was the one, you'd feel that he loves you, he tells his family he loves them, he provides, he, he's the safe space like yoh, he's perfect. So, if – I usually say to myself, if I can be half of the man he is, I'll be the best father and, and spouse ever, because him as a, literally him being a man, is him knowing that, um, yes, he has these advantages that society gives to him based on patriarchy and so on. So, he uses those advantages from patriarchy to actually, um, protect his family, protect his kids, and also love his spouse and yeah, so my grandfather taught me how to be a man, not my dad.*

There was a shift throughout the focus group discussions, with participants starting by protecting *ulwaluko* and all that it stands for and to them seemingly questioning the

importance that they have placed on the practice itself. When unpacking their understanding of *ulwaluko*, participants were found to be appreciative of the initiation process while simultaneously highlighting various concerns where definitions of traditional manhood are concerned. In their responses, there was a retraction from the traditional focus on the rite of passage in defining Xhosa boys as men. The fact that different masculinities exist in different cultures and historical moments is an indication that masculinities are susceptible to change. Different masculinities exist in cultures, which is why Connell (2005) states that masculinities are dynamic, contested and can be replaced.

The participants utterances above highlight the impact of culture on the definitions of masculinity. While the participants attempted to shift away from cultural notions of manhood, there are various ideals which have had an impact on their constructions of masculinity and how they define themselves as men. There is no denying that there has been some cultural influence both from learning what manhood is from elders and other men around them and also through comparing traditional ideals of manhood with their own constructions and/or understandings. The impact of the interactions which participants have and continue to have with others was evident in how their definitions of masculinity differ from one another, while there are similar notions which are evident in all definitions, the differences in their definitions highlights the reality that there is no one way of defining masculinity. Interesting here is that even within the Xhosa culture itself, while the rite of passage is a defining process of manhood, it is not the only thing that defines one as a man and the expectations set upon Xhosa males in different contexts is a contributing factor too. Their utterances indicate that manhood is far more complex than can be contained in one answer, and that indeed *ulwaluko* is an important step towards attaining Xhosa manhood but it is not the only step.

5.5. Doing gender

One cannot deny that we live in a gendered society (Saewyc, 2017). Gender is a social construct used to differentiate between the male and female sexes (Blackstone, 2003)

and it is also used to differentiate between masculinity and femininity in the social realm (Butler, 1988). Additionally, gender is understood as being one of the frames used to organise the social realm (Ridgeway, 2009). It is a cultural underpinning of common knowledge which dictates the appropriate and inappropriate ways of acting (Ridgeway, 2009). As stated by Butler, gender “must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). Throughout the focus group discussion, participants were able to identify that there are natural and innate ways of doing gender as prescribed by society. They had been socialised to see gender expression in a certain way and their experiences highlight the role that agents of socialisation play in reinforcing gender norms. Crespi (2003) describes gender socialization as socialization that is increasingly focused.

5.5.1. The body as a site of meaning

Butler states that gender is socially constructed through speech and nonverbal communication (Butler, 1990). Thus, the way that we communicate defines us as masculine or feminine (Wood, 1995). Herein, communication is not only limited to verbal expression but includes non-verbal expression such as gestures and movements. The performativity of gender, that being acts that are performed and repeated and constituted by social constructions that lay out the ideas around what it means to be a man and a woman in society (Butler, 1988) are an extension of the social expectations on how one performs their gender. One must do gender in a specific manner and deviating from the normative acts, gestures, movements, and use of language that is associated with that gender often leads to being ostracized. When asked how they came to learn about gendered behaviours, the queer participants said:

***Ncedo:** Ah, people tell us, people tell, like in terms of mannerisms and stuff like that. Ah, you do not even have to figure it out yourself. People will tell you, mna (I) I remember, oh my God. I think early in primary, um, a teacher once said to me, why, um, ndi'moodza (I pout) when I'm reading, um o'moodza (to pout) is, I would say it's as if, as pouting, sort of.*

Yes, but in my defence, because I remember after she said that, after she said that, after I, I had finished reading for the class and I was reading sort of a playish, so I'll change voices between characters. And here I'm thinking, I'm like, I'm the best reader in the world. And she was like, why is this person pouting? Listen, I don't wanna see her even today, because she broke my self-esteem for me for a long time and you get told, and why is your voice like that? In church (giggles) there was someone in church, I was singing and then bathi khuteni ucula isoprano (they said why are you singing in soprano)

Everyone: (laughs)

Melisizwe: *That is my situation because I am never in alto or base, I'm always there and, and I'm always gonna be that one. Then I'll be pouting my mouth doing that thing, singing soprano, oh God. It, it can be really embarrassing sometimes because you know, then ukuthi (that), you're not supposed to be there because even the conductors would be like, you're supposed to be there just, just by looking at you not hearing what, what, what pitch you, you, you take out of that mouth. So it, it, it, something like that. And even back, I was back when I was little, I think maybe 10, I think supposedly nine or 10, because I used to dance. I used to dance, uyazi uk'dance nges'Xhosa (you know, dancing the Xhosa way), those things. I used, I used to do that with, like I used to do that freely without anybody like umntu, but then two years later, two years later, then there will be people like haibo uzenza is'xam (you are acting weird) I'm not supposed to, naba abantu badlala ebolo (here are people playing soccer) and that's when I saw that men are supposed to do this, and women are supposed to do this. And that was when I stopped doing that...I stopped doing that, then I was like, okay, let me just stay at home because I know I'm, if I, if I'm not supposed to do this, then what am I gonna do? There is, because even kwi (at) soccer, I'm gonna be a joke because you gonna be that kind of a, you're not gonna be knowing what you're doing, so I decided not to opt in on any of those*

Ncedo: *So basically Nolu, to answer your question, we don't realize ourselves, you will not realize that you are giving Naomi Campbell a run for her money because you're killing that walk, you're not going to realize that, people are gonna tell you that why don't you*

walk like this? And so you have to fix your walk and, and walk uncomfortably. So it is now that you're like, you know what? I need that walk that I had back then. I'm trying to bring it back because I was killing it. I need it now, but it's hard to channel it back. So people will tell me without you even seeing that, why are you crossing imilenze yakho (your legs) when you are sitting down, you recognize it through that. And to you it's just, it's normal mannerism, but people are pointing out, why are you doing that? Why are you snapping your hands? Why are you dancing like that? Why umthanda (do you love) uBeyonce (Beyonce) and not Big Nuz, you know, those kinda things

Tenjwa: *It's more scripted behaviours, like it's learned behaviour, learned things like it's teachings, whether it's direct or indirect. We're learning as we're being reprimanded*

Ncedo: *So basically mna, and this is actually, I don't like talking about it, but it's part of my life. When, when you grow up and you experience that, ukba (that) you're boy and you're doing this and you're not supposed to do it. What you do is you sit back and you realize, I don't fit in with the guys because bazo dlala i'soccer bazo dlala i'cricket and andifuni ukdlala i'cricket (they are going to play soccer, they are going to play cricket and I do not want to play cricket) or I'm not interested, and then you see the girls, badlala udlaphu (are playing skipping rope) and they're playing, you fit there but society tells you not fitting. So what you do is hold back. Nam as uNcedo I stopped uyodlala (playing), I'd come back from eskolweni ndingene endlini (school and go into the house and so on) and so on. So I never had, I think after, I think after being, from 10, I didn't go playing. So basically eteenager life yami (my teenage life) would be, um, to school, back home to school, to school, back home...*

Tenjwa, Sfiso, Ncedo and Melisizwe's utterances indicate that there are normative masculine traits which they could not conform to from a young age which then resulted in them feeling displaced. For these participants, the outward expression of their sexuality often resulted in them being ostracized and othered. Their flamboyance and mannerisms were considered to be consistent with a feminine gender script which contradicted their assigned

gender. As Brown and Gershon (2016) stated, the body is a site where social constructions of gender are mapped which highlights the many ways in which the body is used as a site of meaning making. Thus, society's reaction to their outward expression of their sexuality highlights the repercussions that one faces when one does not conform to the gender script. In this case, their masculinity is questioned which highlights the central role of the body in power dynamics (Foucault, 1990). Their experiences inform us that you either attain power or lose power by virtue of what your body does, and in this case how the body behaves in accordance to the gender order. Thus, one experiences real manhood through their body (Connell, 1995) and are emasculated when they do not display ideal masculine traits. In this case, the participants' experiences highlight how their inability to be 'proper' men resulted in them being subordinated and marginalized.

5.5.2. Policing

Their ability to attain the knowledge of what is accepted and not accepted in society was heavily reliant on their interactions with others. The pressure to conform to the masculine ideology was evident in the statements of the queer participants – they were constantly questioned on their behaviours which then resulted in them concealing that expression in order to fit in to the masculine ideal. As stated by Butler (1988), gender is a performance that is often met with punitive consequences, and this in itself was exemplified by the experiences of the queer participants. This is similar to Kwanda's experience in the film as a queer Xhosa male in a hypermasculine setting. Participants reflected on a scene wherein the character Kwanda was ostracized because his behaviour was inconsistent to that which was displayed by the other initiates:

Zethu: *There, there, it's, it's evident that he's being bullied because of his sexuality. Um, even though no one mentions it, but because it's different and he's got his, his, a cheese boy he's gay and then he's got shoes when the other kids, when the other gents don't abakwheta abanyane (the other initiates).*

Thamsanqa: ...I think even going back to that scene, I mean, just because he wants to wear shoes, um, and everyone else is not wearing shoes, you know, they would always say that, nah, you know, you not man enough, you know, cuz you want to wear shoes and not, you know, uh, endure the pain of, you know, walking barefoot...

The conversation that the participants had about Kwanda's behaviour is also indicative of the policing of each other's gender in settings such as *ulwaluko*. Peers often take on the position of gender police as they constantly look out for behaviours which contradict the masculine order (Kimmel, 2004). This preoccupation with policing each other's gender suggests that males want to unmask what could be deemed as 'unmasculine' (Kimmel, 2004). Msibi (2011) states that hegemonic masculinities "regulate, silence, subvert, and police other forms of masculinity" (Msibi, 2011, p. 71). Men reaffirm their hegemonic identity by marginalizing their peers if their performances do not align with the normative ideal. Performances of masculinity allow men to continuously negotiate their position in the hierarchy of masculinities.

5.6. Homophobia and silencing

While historically, the terms "sex" and "gender" were used to describe biological and socially created distinctions, respectively, today these two terms are often conflated (Giddens, 1997). The traditional distinction between sex and gender was used in this study, with sex referring to the biological difference between boys and girls and gender referring to the social differences between males and females. The prevailing theme throughout *Inxeba: The Wound* was homophobia, this was uttered by the participants throughout the focus group discussion and seen in the media coverage of the film too. During the data collection process, participants relayed their experience in the Xhosa community and more so as it relates to *ulwaluko*. What was interesting was the agreement amongst both queer and heterosexual participants – that being that things need to change. The call to make the initiation space one that accommodates everyone irrespective of their sexuality was in line

with South Africa's post-apartheid new identity – a 'Rainbow Nation'. However, while the legislation in South Africa has proved to be progressive over the past two decades, the experiences of homosexuals suggests that their rights are often paper-based (Reygan & Lynette &, 2014; Morison et al., 2016). Kwanda's character in the film was a clear depiction of this which indicates that while a lot of strides have been made over the years with regard to the attitude towards homosexuals, the society itself is still hetero-centric in nature (Morison et al., 2016).

5.6.1. Culture and sexuality

Inxeba: The Wound was a depiction of one of the ways in which male homosexuality troubles the heterosexual man (Stein, 2005). This draws our attention to what Pringle (2008) refers to as heterogender, that being the intertwining of gender and sexuality in such a way that gender attempts to conceal one's sexuality to favour a heteronormative ideal (Ingraham, 2005). In certain contexts, derogatory words like 'faggot,' and 'sissy' are frequently used to refer to men and boys who do not exhibit acceptable behaviour (Kinsman, 2009). These terms are often thrown at those who refuse to conform to heterosexuality or heteronormativity (Chimanzi, 2016). It has been stated that in the Xhosa culture, and particularly during *ulwaluko*, homosexual acts are forbidden (Pauwels, 2022). As someone who identifies as homosexual and had undergone *ulwaluko*, Ncedo said:

Ncedo: *I think it was, because I think I knew, um, if, how their reaction would be. I am, I am my father's only son imagine me saying, I have a boyfriend, I didn't have a boyfriend but I knew things. So I think my reasoning was for me, wha, wa, was creating a safe space for me because for one I knew ukba (that) if I come out, I don't know the reaction. I don't know, the, how the reaction of the caretakers will be, I don't know how the reaction of my fellow initiates would be. So it is more like creating a wall of like, a safe world for myself, because I feared the reaction, honestly, yes some initiates would understand you and stuff but I really could not expect taBoss who was, who was my caretaker to understand. taBoss umdala (is old), taBoss was not going to understand. So I had to brush it off, yes I have a girlfriend, she's in Cape Town, end it there. You're not gonna get*

deep, deep into business, because you're not allowed to talk about girls there a lot. So, it was just do you have a girlfriend hmm she's in Cape Town. So yeah.

While it is true that “gender and sex are not equivalent, and gender as a social construction does not flow automatically from genitalia and reproductive organs” (Cheng, 1999, p. 296), society often sees the two as intertwined. This has various implications in hypermasculine settings such as *ulwaluko*, highlighting the interrelationship between the two. In fear of being othered, Ncedo speaks about concealing his sexuality while undergoing *ulwaluko*. This position which he took highlights Wood’s assertion that “boys learn they must do things to be valued” (Wood, 1995, p. 20). Additionally, heterosexuality is prescribed as the culturally accepted norm of sexuality and thus, heteronormativity is naturalized through performances of gender and dominant discourses in society (Butler, 1990). Thus, by concealing his sexuality and performing his gender in ways that are valued in the hypermasculine setting that is *ulwaluko*, Ncedo positioned himself to attain hegemonic masculinity. This is also based on hegemonic beliefs which often direct the behaviour of many in society (Ridgeway, 2009). Cheng states that “any nonconformity, particularly with regard to gender, which is supposedly natural, is a threat to hegemonic masculinity” (Cheng, 1999, p. 301). In this setting, he understood the expectations that were put upon him and the other initiates – gender has to be done in a specific manner in order for it to be accepted, in order for it to fit with the norm. While it is stated that the hierarchy that is created by Xhosa manhood is not based on one’s sexual orientation but rather on one’s circumcision status (Mfecane, 2018), participants in a study by Lynch and Clayton (2016), stated that if other initiates identified them as gay they would be at risk of being perceived as being not man enough. This highlights that there are indeed unspoken ‘rules’ which govern the behaviours of people in various settings (Ridgeway, 2009).

In this instance, Ncedo indicates how “our [men’s] efforts to maintain a manly front covers everything we do” (Kimmel, 2004, p. 231). The pressure to conform to these ideal ways of being a male in the traditional sense was heightened for Ncedo as he was undergoing *ulwaluko*. Conformity is a result of social behaviour (Crespi, 2003) and it validates the shared

beliefs around gender (Kinsman, 2009). *Ulwaluko* is considered to be an agent of socialisation (Gwata, 2009) – this rite of passage has an impact on an individual's social and self-development. Since masculinity is context bound, a man can be defined as “not being a man” if he behaves in a way that is not expected of a man in a particular social context. However, men may also fight against being downplayed and can try to obtain recognition for their (alternative) masculinity. In this instance, Ncedo decided to speak about having a girlfriend which is often one sign that one is not gay. Given that society has been constructed in such a way that behaviours are assessed based on socially accepted notions of gender, his performance in the cultural setting had implications on him being accepted as a Xhosa man.

5.6.2. Renegotiating *ubudoda kwaXhosa* (renegotiating masculinity in the Xhosa culture)

As previously stated, *ulwaluko* is a longstanding practice amongst amaXhosa (Allegritti & Gray, 2005; Henda, 2021). The Xhosa people find pride in knowing that the core of this rite of passage does not change, irrespective of time and space (Mfecane, 2018; Venter, 2011). Modernisation has had an impact on various cultural processes, with *ulwaluko* being one (Manona & Hurst, 2018). While acknowledging the importance of the rite of passage as a traditional practice, participants also echoed their dissatisfaction with the manner in which the space is ran, noting the various changes that should take place. This is especially important considering that there are still young males who perceive this practice to be an important part of their lives (Gwata, 2009). Considering the differences in the manner in which each generation interacts with society – one may ask if it is possible to maintain this rite of passage without adjusting it to the lived realities of the males who undergo the practice. In line with this, participants suggested a need to rethink the manner in which this practice unfolds especially where the treatment of initiates is concerned:

Thamsanqa: ...But you know, what I will say is that, you know, the manner in which we do it, surely can change...the views that we have, you know, have to change, you know, the, the, the, um, what's this word? The, the views that I guess, yeah, the views that we,

we, we have, you know, should change and that who should be allowed, you know, and, you know, we shouldn't gatekeep those things, you know, anyone who identifies as a man, you know, or wants to go...should have the choice of going without any fear that, you know, they might be, uh, discriminated against or, you know, treated differently to others...

Zethu: *I think just to add on, I think also another thing that stood out was how being queer is a problem in that space, um, in the initiation space. Not just (pauses) ebhlanti (in the kraal), but it starts there. It, it starts there entabeni (in the mountain). Um, so if you are queer, um, then you are gonna get cast out, you know, and, and I think that's maybe a question that, that came out. Why do we treat, um, um, um, queer men as different to, you know, to straight men, um, in the mountain and how do we – so how do we make the experience there unbearable and what could we do, especially as a abantu (people) that have been, that have been through the process and, you know, have been there quite a long time ago. So how, um, how do I, as umntu (a person), that's almost been indoda (a man) for 10 years make the space friendlier for queer, um, gents that are still gonna go through the process you know, so I think that's probably the one thing that did stand out, in terms of like questioning manhood and, uh, I don't, I don't think there was anything else for me*

Zipho: *Uh, can I just bounce off of what you just said now? And I do think that, I'm not gonna assume that everyone in the group is straight, but, um, there is a certain blind side or blind spot let me say that, straight men might have. Going into the movie again, you know, these preconceptions of what the movie's going to expose and what not, because I mean, having been in that, um, space, even after my own initiation, uh, you do realize that it's a very hypermasculine place. Um, so it accommodates or facilitates – I think it accommodates, you know, particular of expressions. Um, and at the same time it does tend to marginalize, undermine, uh, a particular kind. I think that's what the move is trying to speak to these men who that are, that are frowned upon even within the, the space. I do think though, we essentially live in a very homophobic world and, uh, members of, uh,*

I guess homo-initiates, or graduates of initiation school, aren't immune to this homophobic expression of homophobia...

In this instance, the participants critique the rite of passage in its inability to be accommodative and safe. They subtly hint at the toxicity of compulsory heterosexuality and raise a call to transform the attitudes and behaviours around rite of passage. This call comes from the participants experiencing the space as one that is not accommodative and at times a space that can be toxic to those who do not meet certain ideals around masculinity. By asking the question “how do we”, Zethu highlights the element of ubuntu in this rite of passage. In the South African context, *ubuntu* is a Nguni term which translates to ‘I am because we are’ (Metz, 2011; Williams & Wilson, 2013). In the context of *ulwaluko*, ubuntu relates to the sense of community and the sense of responsibility that one carries. The interconnectedness that Zethu highlights in his question points to a desire to improve the initiation space and emphasises the need for inclusivity and the responsibility that he holds as someone who is afforded more power by virtue of his sexuality and as a Xhosa man. His assertions highlight the active role that he plays in maintaining social power (Salma, 2018). The power that he holds as a heterosexual male in a hypermasculine space has a call to action – he considers himself and other males who have the same power as having a responsibility to future initiates who are not afforded the same power because they do not meet certain ideals around masculinity.

As a space that reinforces compulsory heterosexuality, *ulwaluko* places males in a position to police one another and those who do not meet the social norms around masculinity are often othered and face social exile. This was seen throughout the film wherein the initiate Kwanda is bullied by other initiates. Participants had the following to say:

Thamsanqa: *...I think even going back to that scene, I mean, just because he wants to wear shoes, um, and everyone else is not wearing shoes, you know, they would always say that, nah, you know, you not man enough, you know, cuz you want to wear shoes and not, you know, uh, endure the pain of, you know, walking barefoot...*

Siphelele: *...But yeah, and just also with that scene where they're bullying him is also another depiction of how, when I think when gents (guys) or not gents (guys) per se, per se, but when boys don't want a particular person, there's always that gang mentality whereby all of us need to agree to out shun this person, all of us need to come to the understanding that we're going to shun this person out of the group, he doesn't belong here because he's not one of us. And I think that's, that's a very huge thing that especially queer people would then encounter, especially in a group of men...*

This scene suggests that there is always a desire to achieve social status in this setting and one of the ways that one achieves and maintains this social status is by policing the behaviour of other males. This suggests that when one's behaviour does not match up to the traditional masculinity norms, he is othered while the perpetrator achieves social status. Thus, one can see how sense of community can be positive and negative and Siphelele's utterances highlight the negative aspects of it. The herd mentality which Siphelele refers to above was exemplified in Mfecane's (2016) paper. Mfecane (2016) notes a concern raised by an interlocutor who had seen media reports against a gay Xhosa man who was beaten up and ridiculed for being openly gay. Zipho's assertions highlight the dangers of this treatment:

Zipho: *Um, I can do, um, uh, in relation to that scene. Um, yeah, no, I definitely [inaudible] agree as well in terms of, um, that space not being queer, friendly. Um, I like, I think it goes to, anyone who's been knows how, important it is to always be around abanyanye abakhweta (other initiates). So, like for them to, how to do I put it, try and outcast someone and let them be on their own just shows how, I guess, um, uncomfortable and uninviting the setting is...*

The othering that Kwanda was exposed to throughout the film is a depiction of the hierarchy of masculinities. Each society is characterised by classes of men that are ranked according to their power relations (Ayodabo & Amaefula, 2021). Throughout the film, *Inxeba: The Wound* depicts one of the ways in which Xhosa men use their resources to compete with one another for the various rewards that patriarchy grants them (Ayodabo & Amaefula, 2021). Kwanda's perceived difference due to his sexuality results in him being subordinated

and marginalised. Most participants were able to identify the problematic nature of this treatment and how dehumanizing it is. Although Mfecane (2016) states that one does not have to identify as heterosexual to attain Xhosa manhood, as a hypermasculine setting, *ulwaluko* favours a heteronormative ideal. This is also further complicated by the characters of Kwanda, Vija and Xolani in *Inxeba: The Wound*.

While Mfecane (2016) suggests that it is not being gay that subordinates a Xhosa man but rather his behaviour which does not fit the normative expectations of a Xhosa man – this is suggesting that one needs to conceal his expression of his sexuality. Certain performances and dominant discourses naturalize heteronormativity in the context of culturally accepted norms that set heterosexuality as the standard (Butler, 1990). Unfortunately, what this then does is assert power and control over those who do not identify as heterosexual, limiting their ability to freely express themselves and be their true selves in the initiation space. Ncedo's abovementioned decision to conceal his sexuality during his initiation process is an example of how "heteronormativity silences minorities and the act of silencing is an agent of power in its own right" (Priola et al., 2014, p.3). Foucault (1990) speaks about dominant heterosexual discourses and how they create unequal power relationships between heterosexuals and the LGBTQIA+ community, which highlights the complexity of the relationship between the different masculinities. Reflecting on a scene in the film wherein the initiate Kwanda confronts Xolani about owning his truth, Tenjwa responded by saying "...you tell me to be a man and stand up for myself, but you can't do the same..."

The above highlights the lived reality of many South African gay men, that being that traditional rites of passages value a masculine ideal which contradicts the perception of homosexuality (Lynch & Clayton, 2017). Thus, while Kwanda would have preferred that Xolani owns his sexuality, this would have subordinated him as his display of masculinity would be contradictory to the traditional notions of masculinity. In a study conducted by Ntozini and Ngqangweni (2016), gay men account for their experiences during *ulwaluko*. In this study, a participant named Themba explains that "the other initiates treated me

differently and teased me a lot of the time” (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016, p. 1313), he continued to say, “...they want to change you so that you’re a man” (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016, p. 1315). Themba’s assertions in this study are similar to Kwanda’s experience in the film, and explain Ncedo’s fears around being outted during the initiation process.

The final scene of the film shows Kwanda being killed by Xolani in fear of Kwanda exposing Xolani and Vija’s relationship. Herein, one sees how “the expression of non-normative sexual and gender identities may not always be as emancipatory as we had thought” (Reygan & Lynette, 2014, p. 720). This highlights that while Kwanda assumes that being openly gay might be freeing for Xolani, this might be further damaging to his position and social status during initiation season. Given that there has been a shift in the perspectives of the newer generation of Xhosa males, one needs to consider the impact that modernisation has had on the perception of the rite of passage and the importance thereof. There is no denying that participants perceive this rite of passage to be an important part of their culture and their identity, however, the participants’ utterances highlight that the manner in which the practice is carried out has limitations for those who do not meet the masculine ideals that are central to this hypermasculine setting.

5.7. Cultural Preservation

While participants have found themselves considering the various changes that they would like to see during *ulwaluko*, they showed a great appreciation for their culture and its traditions. This appreciation also highlights their desire to preserve their culture – it is not that *ulwaluko* should be abolished, it is more about making it more accommodative. Additionally, their assertions highlight a desire to modify the practice. Participants showed a desire to ensure that the future generations could benefit from the maintenance of cultural practices and traditions. Seeing that rituals are considered to create a connection between ancestors and Xhosa people (Venter, 2011), one can understand the importance of preserving this tradition.

5.7.1. Sense of belonging

In the Xhosa culture, the longstanding practice of traditional male circumcision has been the only accepted form of circumcision (Mfecane, 2016; Mhlahlo, 2009; Ntombana, 2011). Thus, when males opt to get medically circumcised they are often never accepted in their communities and are therefore considered to not be man enough (Manona & Hurst, 2018). What has become evident is that the completion of this rite of practice comes with bragging rights and acceptance from the community too. While there was a pleasant flow in the conversation throughout the focus group, one could not ignore the silence of various participants. Oftentimes, this silence became louder when participants were discussing their experience of *ulwaluko*. For Siphelele and Sfiso who had not been to the mountain, their silence at this point of the discussion signalled their inability to relate to the experiences of the other participants who have undergone *ulwaluko*. Reflecting on his decision to get circumcised at a hospital, Sfiso stated:

Sfiso: ...And lucky enough, I think my family was very much understanding and they approached the situation, in a very cordial manner, I mean that because mna (I), I did not go there, I never felt the pressure from the family to go there. And even when I did get to the hospital, there were no backlashes, there were no question of why are you doing it like this, why are you not following culture. And if anything, it was my sister and mother's idea to just go to the hospital because why not? And yeah, so I just took it. I never took the whole process from a culture or noncultural point of view, I just took it as a perspective of me defining myself and me standing up for who I am and just carving out my own path from a society that's seemed, not plentitude [inaudible] not, not that was maybe discriminated against me, because I don't think that I ever experienced that discrimination, it's just that it seemed, it was something that I assumed, from what I saw. So I was like, okay, let me just do this for myself to protect myself from any backlash or any kind of unfortunate situations that I might, I might find myself into, rather than expose myself to that.

Sfiso's decision to take the medical route highlights a resistance of cultural power, his utterances indicate that he took a different stance and chose to construct his identity outside of the norms of culture. However, it simultaneously raises questions about his sense of belonging in a culture that places extensive focus on this rite of passage as a transitional process. Some men have expressed that they felt that they would face stigma if they decided not to follow the traditional circumcision route (Dingidlela, 2014). The desire to be accepted as men in the Xhosa community has resulted in men experiencing bouts of anxiety (Manona & Hurst, 2018). A study conducted by Lynch and Clayton (2017) highlights how participants' masculinity and social status was compromised by identifying as homosexual which put them under extensive pressure to undergo *ulwaluko* (Lynch & Clayton, 2017).

Speaking on the importance of this rite of passage, Thamsanqa had the following to say:

Thamsanqa: *Um, yeah, no, I, I, I also share same, um, views as Zethu in that, um, like culture's a very sacred thing because it, it, it gives us our identity. It's what separates us from everyone else, you know, it's what, um, defines us as people and, you know, gives reason to the things we do and, you know, stuff like that...*

This statement by Thamsanqa highlights the role that culture, and cultural practices play in one's sense of belonging. One's identity and values are often rooted within a history and heritage that is shared with others. Thus, while *ulwaluko* is primarily about transitioning from boys to men, there is a deeper underpinning here which relates to community. As a ritual, *ulwaluko* also facilitates a bonding experience amongst Xhosa males (Pauwels, 2022). Thus, not only does a male's identity as a man depend on their ability to successfully complete the initiation process, their sense of belonging seems to be impacted by their decision to undergo the process. In a culture that considers the completion of traditional male circumcision as a marker of manhood as opposed to one's age, the participants' responses highlights that male circumcision is not just about the removal of the foreskin but rather a practice the contributes to one's meaning making (Gwata, 2009).

5.7.3. Identity politics

The framing of *ulwaluko* in the Xhosa culture positions it as an important if not vital rite of the passage (Mfecane, 2016; Scott, 2021; Venter, 2011). This has resulted in *ulwaluko* being a natural part of a Xhosa male's life, something which they ought to go through. This often contributes to one's decision to partake in the rite of passage. Speaking on the film's storyline, Ncedo stated that "... *there are some things that they did that still against shame.*" In response to this, Melisizwe had the following to say:

Melisizwe: *Yeah. Yeah. There are some things that are not supposed, supposed to be, even, even though, the film was, was doing what it's supposed to be doing, it's like they wanted to, to, to add time to the film. That's what they were doing, they were adding certain, unnecessary parts, which are important as us as Xhosa men and they were not supposed to be revealed or disclosed like that.*

The discussion around the film and its depiction of *ulwaluko* was problematised by some homosexual participants. While their utterances speak to the sacredness and secrecy around the practice, their desire to gatekeep the rite of passage suggests that they feel the need to do more to protect the rite of passage. In Lynch & Clayton's study, a gay participant stated that "[we gay men] also do our culture, and even more than you [straight men]..." (2017, p. 287). This continued performativity suggests that while they are subordinated within their culture, their ability to defend the rite of passage in the broader society grants them some advantages. Thus, by doing their gender and culture in this way, these participants obtain a complicit masculinity status. This highlights that individuals who do not identify as heterosexual may feel the need to do more in terms of identity development so as to establish a respectable social identity in cultural spaces (Lynch & Clayton, 2017) and social spaces. While noting the importance of *ulwaluko*, Zethu highlighted the challenges with the automated nature of the rite of passage:

Zethu: *... I mean, not just me, but me and a lot of other people have a problem with sending 15, 16, 17-year old's to, to the mountains. Because at that age you're still a child,*

you know? So, you're sending a child to the mountain and then expecting them to come back and, and sort of be a man is not really fair...

Seeing that these participants go from being boys to men over a few weeks, one then questions the conflict that arises when they return to their ordinary lives oftentimes still as teenagers. Additionally, this raises questions around one's identity formation and the practicalities thereof. This is further complicated by Thamsanqa's excerpt:

Thamsanqa: *Um, okay. Uh, I think from my side, um, what I took from the scene is something I can also relate to in terms of, there's always, well not there's always, but there's, there's a contradiction in, in what you're being told, um, or what you're being taught, uh, a better word, um, on what you're being taught compared to, um, the actions of the people that are teaching you those teachings, if that makes sense...*

Given how young the participants who undergo this rite of passage are, both Zethu and Thamsanqa's responses highlight the complexities of *ulwaluko* as a process that aids one's identity development. Given that culture is a core component in identity formation, Thamsanqa's assertion highlights questions around initiates' ability to discern what is right from wrong in their caregivers teachings. The complexities raised by both these participants highlight that throughout *ulwaluko*, participants may find themselves following the values and norms of their culture, conforming to an identity without a thorough exploration of what is suitable for them.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of the current study. Four main themes emerged during data analysis, with various sub-themes. In the findings of results, it was evident that *ulwaluko* is an integral part of Xhosa men's understandings of manhood; a rite of passage leading to them acquiring a dominant position in society. The hegemonic masculine ideal which *ulwaluko* grants Xhosa men was evident in the roles and responsibilities that the participants had following the completion of the rite of passage. Secondly, although it is stated that the completion of *ulwaluko* grants men the status of manhood, this was complicated by the experiences of homosexual participants whose assertions suggested

fears of being subordinated and marginalised because of their sexuality. These participants highlighted the performative nature of masculinity and how their inability to display normative masculine traits had resulted in their subordination and marginalisation from a young age.

Thirdly, participants critiqued *ulwaluko* in its inability to be accommodative to all men, irrespective of their sexuality. Lastly, apart from contributing to one's understanding of masculinity, *ulwaluko* was seen to contribute to one's sense of belonging and identity development – making it an integral part of a Xhosa male's life. The following chapter offers a discussion of the study's conclusion, strengths, limitations, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is a summary of the key findings of the study. From this, a discussion of the limitations and the strengths of the study are presented. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research on Xhosa constructions of masculinity.

6.2. Summary of findings

Using the film *Inxeba: The Wound* as a starting point, this study aimed at exploring Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity. In response to the question "What do young black men's responses to *Inxeba: The Wound* reveal about the constructions of masculinity in contemporary South Africa?", this study found that *ulwaluko* constructs a masculine identity that favours a hegemonic ideal which gives men who undergo the process advantages in society. Participants in this study negotiated the importance of *ulwaluko*'s dominance in constructions of masculinity, while highlighting the flaws of the practice. Nonetheless, the participants showed a great appreciation for *ulwaluko* and its role in teaching men about Xhosa manhood. This study found that while *ulwaluko* constructs masculinity, it is not the only way that Xhosa men come to define their masculinity.

This study sought to investigate Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity. Most participants centred their definition of Xhosa manhood on *ulwaluko*, with those who had not undergone the rite of passage seemingly struggling to define Xhosa manhood. This highlights the centrality of *ulwaluko* in defining Xhosa males as men and affording them certain privileges in society. This intersectionality of masculinity and culture reveal the hegemonic nature of *ulwaluko*. Dominant discourses on masculinity favour an ideal 'man' and participants definitions of masculinity highlighted these hegemonic masculine traits. Additionally, the cultural significance of the rite of passage was evident in how the participants negotiated their masculinity. This was seen in the inferiority that participants who

had not undergone *ulwaluko* experienced as well as in how men who had undergone the rite of passage positioned themselves in society.

While participants seemed to value *ulwaluko*, their responses also highlighted their fixation on *ulwaluko* not being the only thing that defines them as men. Herein, highlighting the role of socialisation and agents of socialisation in the construction of reality (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Additionally, it reveals the multiplicity of masculinity and depicts that masculinity is indeed a concept that is context specific, fluid, and historically oriented (Connell, 1995; see Connell, 2005; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015). Thus, while participants draw from tradition and culture in their understanding of masculinity, they also noted the influence of others in society. The findings reveal that participants derived their understanding and definitions of masculinity from traditional notions of masculinity while also crediting the teachings that they have received throughout their upbringing as they interacted with society. From this, one can understand how their knowledge of manhood has been constructed in collaboration with others and that reality is indeed co-constructed as posited by social constructivism (Akpan et al., 2020; Amineh & Asl, 2015). Their understanding of masculinity highlighted the similarities between notions of manhood in the Xhosa culture and notions of manhood in contemporary society. The participants who had undergone *ulwaluko* were afforded a dominant position in society which was dependent on their behaviours in society, highlighting the performative nature of masculinity in legitimising men's power. The findings indicate that young black Xhosa men consider *Inxeba: The Wound* to be a depiction of marginalisation and prejudice against males who do not conform to heterosexuality.

Through the reflections of the homosexual participants, this study found that the body becomes a site of meaning from the moment that one is born. Participants highlighted how the policing that they were subjected to impacted not only their expression of their sexual identity, but the manner in which they behaved in society. Thus, the question "How do young black Xhosa men negotiate normative ideals of masculinity?" was answered through the realisation that these participants were harshly met by the expectations of society from a

young age, an experience which facilitated their learning of gender scripts and the desired and undesired behaviours of each gender. This knowledge, which they had constructed over the years helped some participants navigate the *ulwaluko* setting. Thus, when one goes into a hypermasculine setting such as *ulwaluko*, they are aware of the expectations that they will be confronted with. The participants utterances highlighted that each location and context in any given society has its own way of showing manhood. While choosing their safety and avoiding being subordinated, some participants had to conceal their sexuality and/or choose not to undergo *ulwaluko* in fear of being outted. This highlights the impact that heteronormativity has on participants who identify as homosexual and the limitations to their ability to engage freely in cultural spaces.

While one is said to attain *ubudoda* (manhood) through their completion of *ulwaluko*, the experiences of homosexual participants complicates this assertion. Their experiences suggest that cultural spaces still consider sexuality and gender to be intertwined, which is supported by beliefs that undergoing *ulwaluko* can change one from being homosexual to being heterosexual. The discussion of Kwanda's character amongst the participants highlighted the pervasive nature of men's behaviour in order to maintain their hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, participants critiqued *ulwaluko* in its inability to be accommodative to participants who did not conform to heteronormative ideals.

Ulwaluko defines boys as men and similarly aids identity formation. The findings of the study revealed the complexities of the 'boys to men' process of *ulwaluko*, questioning the automated nature of this practice. Galliano (2003) argues that human beings are capable of making sense and finding meaning in whatever happens to them. The meaning that Xhosa males make from undergoing *ulwaluko* is impacted by the agents of socialisation who are present throughout the process, these agents of socialisation include caregivers and other initiates. The findings also highlight that participants are not passive recipients of socialisation. Therefore, their interactions on a daily indicate that there are practices which have contributed to their shared knowledge. This highlights that knowledge is indeed co-

constructed (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The study found that *Inxeba: The Wound* challenged heteronormativity by complicating the relationship between culture and sexuality. Through its depiction of the same-sex relationship between Xolani and Vija, as well as their interactions with Kwanda, *Inxeba: The Wound* highlighted that even though culture and sexuality intersect, they are not dependent on one another. This study highlights the complexities in the intersectionality of gender, sexuality and culture.

6.3. Limitations of the study

One of the methodological limitations of this study relates to sample size. While the study intended on utilising a sample size of ten participants, it utilised a smaller sample size of eight participants. Although the data collected from the eight participants allowed the researcher to investigate constructions of masculinity, the sample size prohibits the generalisability of the findings and conclusions. Thus, these findings and conclusions cannot be taken to represent the perspectives of all Xhosa men.

The data collection ran online due to COVID-19 restrictions, as a result, the researcher was unable to follow all participants non-verbal communication throughout the focus group. Thus, the researcher could have missed out on the attitudes, body language and feelings of participants beyond their spoken word. Nonverbal communication could have added value to the current study by further enriching the findings.

Due to the current loadshedding crisis, the FGD was only able to run for 2 hours so as to accommodate the loadshedding schedules of the participants. Additionally, given the reality of the South African economy, one 2 hour FGD was conducted to mitigate data costs. As a result, this limited opportunities for an extended discussion amongst participants.

6.4. Strengths of the study

The study employed a sample group that was diverse in nature. The study utilised Xhosa males who grew up in various parts of South Africa which enabled the findings to be

reflective of diverse experiences. Additionally, the sample group's diversity extended to the sexuality of the participants. By engaging with both homosexuals and heterosexuals on the topic of masculinity, the study was able to account for the differing perspectives of men who undergo *ulwaluko*. Lastly, in this study, the researcher was able to access a space that she would normally be prohibited from by virtue of her gender. Thus, being able to engage with participants on a topic of this nature enriched the quality of the current study.

6.5. Recommendations

While studies have been conducted on masculinity in South Africa, few studies have explored the intersectionality of gender, sexuality and culture in men's constructions of masculinity. The current study aimed at contributing to the available literature and knowledge on Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity. Given the impact of modernisation on cultural spaces and practices, future studies could benefit from exploring the complexities of navigating cultural spaces while preserving culture. In order to preserve the practice of *ulwaluko*, cultural spaces need to ensure that the space is accommodative and safe to all initiates irrespective of sexuality. In this regard, studies could explore the interventions required to ensure that cultural spaces are more reflective of the rights outlined in The Constitution. Additionally, the multiplicity of masculinities should be investigated in relation to cultural notions of masculinities while considering the lived realities of Xhosa men in a contemporary society. However, with the progression of society, researchers should consider the implications of attempting to conflate cultural experiences with social ones.

6.6. Conclusion

This study investigated constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa men and the centrality of *ulwaluko* in making boys men. Using *Inxeba: The Wound* to foreground the study, this dissertation aimed at addressing the intersectionality of sexuality, masculinity and culture by placing extensive focus on the constructions of masculinity amongst Xhosa men. The findings suggest that while culture and tradition are vital components of constructions of

masculinity, there are other aspects of lived experiences which contribute to one's construction of manhood. The findings of the study highlighted that manhood is context specific, drawing attention to the multiplicity of masculinities. Additionally, through participants responses, the study found that masculinity is far too complex to be contained in one definition.

The findings infer that a man who successfully undergoes *ulwaluko* is afforded hegemony and is considered to be the ideal man. This suggests that queer men who undergo *ulwaluko* should be considered to be real men as their sexuality does not take away from their Xhosa manhood. However, this is complicated by the experiences of homosexual men who have undergone the rite of passage while having to conceal their sexuality. The experiences of both homosexual and heterosexual males in this setting indicate the complexities of the intersectionality of gender, culture and sexuality.

The study found that the storyline in *Inxeba: The Wound* reflects the lived realities of many South Africans, and highlights the struggles faced by Xhosa men who do not conform to the heteronormative ideal. Through the interactions of Kwanda, Xolani and Vija, *Inxeba: The Wound* offered a narrative that complicates traditional notions of masculinity and sheds light on homophobia.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval



Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



28 March 2022

Dear Miss N Javu

Project Title: What is a man? Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity as elicited by the film Inxeba: The Wound
 Researcher: Miss N Javu
 Supervisor(s): Dr AN Ntozini
 Department: Psychology
 Reference number: 18342842 (HUM031/1021)
 Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 28 March 2022. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Harris'.

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokalapa

Room 7.77 Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Deuren Bos VSA, Wierland 0000, South Africa

Appendix B: Participant information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

“What is a man? Xhosa men’s constructions of masculinity as elicited by the film *Inxeba: The Wound*.”

Hello my name is Noluthando Javu, I am currently a Masters student at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria. You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully, which will explain the details of this research project. Please feel free to ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

- The purpose of this study is to understand how young Black South African men form a concept of masculinity and the processes that classify them as men. Very few studies have been done on isiXhosa men’s experiences of masculinity. Therefore, I have decided to conduct a study on the responses to the film “*Inxeba: The Wound*”. The overall aim of this study is to continue the conversation that the film started and to uncover prescriptive conceptions of masculinity, how they are understood and constructed amongst men and the role of compulsory heterosexuality in this understanding and construction.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

- You will be invited to participate because you are a young black isiXhosa man in South Africa.
- You have also complied with the following being within the ages of 18 and 25.
- You identify as openly queer.
- You identify as heterosexual.
- You have seen the film *Inxeba: The Wound* or you are open to watching the film.
- You will be excluded if you do not identify as being part of the isiXhosa South African ethnical group.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

- You will be expected to watch the film *Inxeba: The Wound* prior to our focus group session. Thereafter, you will be expected to participate in an online focus group with myself and include 9 other men. This focus group will take approximately 2 hours. The focus group discussions will be recorded on my personal cellphone which is password protected, I will transcribe the recordings and use a pseudonym in place of your real name

Departmental Research Committee (ResCom)
University of Pretoria, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Psychology
Humanities Building, Lynnwood Road, Hatfield, 0083, South Africa
Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Email: psychology.rescom@up.ac.za
Website: www.up.ac.za/psychology

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Departement Sielkunde
Lefapha la Bomotheo
Kgoro ya Saekolotši

so that no identifying information will be made available to those who will have access to the findings of the study.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

- Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, if you decide not to take part in the study without negative consequences or being penalized

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

- Anonymity will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Confidentiality will be ensured by assigning code names/numbers to each participant, and that will be used in all research notes and documents. Findings from this data will be disseminated through conferences and publications. Reporting of findings will be anonymous, only the researchers of this study will have access to the information.
- Please note participant information will be kept confidential, except in cases where the researcher is legally obliged to report incidents such as abuse and suicide risk.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

- There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study but I hope that the information gathered throughout the focus group will help future researchers in filling gaps of knowledge. Thus, the indirect benefits will be adding to the existing body of knowledge and expanding on conversations around masculinity in today's society and hopefully in the future.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT SOME FORM OF DISCOMFORT OCCUR AS A RESULT OF TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

- Should you have the need for further discussions after the focus group an opportunity will be arranged for you, contact details of Lifeline and close emotional support organisations will be provided.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

- Electronic information will be stored for period of 15 years. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.
- Participant information in hard copies of raw data be will locked in the cabinet and electronic data will be kept in a file that is password protected in the Department of Psychology

WHAT WILL THE RESEARCH DATA BE USED FOR?

- Data gathered from the participant would be used for research purpose that include;
- Dissertation, article publication, national and international conference presentations
- For further research inform of secondary data analysis.

WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- NO, you will not be paid to take part in this study.

- This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

- The findings of the research study will be shared with you by email upon request.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE CONCERN, COMPLAINT OR ANYTHING I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY?

- If you have questions about this study or you have experienced adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided below. If you have questions regarding the rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact the supervisor, and contact details are below.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and in advance for participating in this study.

Researcher

Noluthando Javu
0718805040
Thandojavu18@gmail.com

Supervisor

Dr Anathi Ntozini
021 420 2404
Anathi.ntonzini@up.ac.za

Appendix C: Consent form



What is a man? Xhosa men's constructions of masculinity as elicited by the film *Inxeba: The Wound*.

WRITTEN CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any consequences or penalties.			
I understand that information collected during the study will not be linked to my identity and I give permission to the researchers of this study to access the information.			
I understand that this study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance from Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria.			
I understand who will have access to personal information and how the information will be stored with a clear understanding that, I will not be linked to the information in any way.			
I give consent that data gathered may be used for dissertation, article publication, conference presentations and writing policy briefs.			
I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.			
I consent to being audio recorded.			
I consent to have my audio recordings be used in research outputs such as publication of articles, thesis, and conferences as long as my identity is protected.			
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication whilst remaining anonymous.			
I have sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I agree to take part in the above study.			

Departmental Research Committee (ResCom)
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Website: www.up.ac.za/psychology

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Departement Sielkunde
Lefapha la Bomotheo
Kgoro ya Saekolotši

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Focus group questions



Focus Group Questions

1. What does being an isiXhosa man mean to you?
2. What about being a man stood out to you throughout the film?
3. What was your experience when you watched the film?
4. Did the film remind you of anything you have witnessed or heard of in society regarding masculinity?
5. What did you understand in the scene where the initiate says "a man doesn't do what you do"?
6. After watching the film are there certain behaviours that you associate with being a man?
7. When did you start realising that there are certain behaviours which are for men and for women?
8. How has the above influenced your behaviour?
9. What is your understanding of traditional Xhosa male circumcision/ulwaluko?
10. Would you say that this practice is important in becoming a man? If yes, why?
11. What does being a man mean for you?
12. Who taught you what it means to be a man?
13. What traditional notions of manhood have you adopted?
14. Did you find anything that made you uncomfortable with the film?