

**Rites Of Passage As The Basis Of  
Programme Development For Young  
People At Risk In South Africa**

**Dissertation submitted for the degree of  
MSocSci in Criminology**

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## **Abstract**

In traditional indigenous communities, rites of passage provide a binding and supportive function which facilitates the transition of young people from childhood to adulthood. However, in contemporary western society transition rites have largely been forgotten or neglected and this loss has resulted in a hunger for initiation which adolescents often attempt to satisfy by using means which are socially unacceptable. This study attempts to understand the mechanisms which lead adolescents into socially unacceptable behaviour by exploring the potential for using the notion of de-labelling as the basis of intercepting and transforming juvenile deviance. As such, rites of passage are explored from the perspectives of a range of social scientific theories in order to assess the value in these processes for young people at risk in South Africa.

The central findings of this study suggest that it is possible to reinstate rites of passage in the form of a de-labelling programme, but that there is a need to go beyond an isolated programme by providing more systemic containment of young people in the form of community support and mentoring.

# Introduction

Childhood and youth are of special importance because there are new things under the sun in every life, and novelties inevitably arise. They emerge from within the person or from the social context, personal relationships, or geographic setting. The family - or what substitutes for a family - is critical if for no other reason than it is one of the continuing influences on the youth's life from childhood through adolescence. But prior choices and experiences combine with continuities in biological constraints and social status to limit changes that are likely to occur. The options for individuals and their behaviours are likely to become increasingly biased in the course of living, except when multiple systems undergo simultaneous transformation in the transition from childhood to adulthood. This is why youth presents special challenges, novel opportunities, and inevitable risks.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1995 and 1996, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth At Risk (IMC) identified difficulties within South Africa's juvenile justice system that were primarily caused by divisions and, hence, a lack of communication between relevant Ministries, departments and disciplines. Historically, this corporatist system has also been characterized by a pathology-based understanding of juvenile crime and behaviour which has promoted tactics of intervention as opposed to prevention, relied on retributive decision-making processes and placement of young people in institutions, limited the participation of families and communities and restricted the range of services available to young people at risk regardless of their needs. It was clear that South Africa's youth justice system was in need of revised policy and new legislation as it could no longer remain placed separately within either Justice or Welfare categories. In response to this need, the IMC proposed a combination of the two models which would replace the "informal indeterminate approach" of the Welfare

model and the “due process and prosecution-oriented” model of Justice with the concept of *diversion* or alternative programmes for young people at risk.<sup>2</sup>

With the help of international instruments and legislation as well as provincial training and workshops, a draft policy framework for a transformed youth justice system was developed by the IMC. The new system is based on the principles of accountability where youth service and/or custodial organizations are to be held accountable for the services they offer; empowerment of young people and their families coupled with their participation in the processes of intervention and prevention; and support and guidance for family-centered development.<sup>3</sup>

The new system promotes the provision of needs-based programmes and services on a continuum of care and seeks to integrate youth services to form multi-disciplinary teams. It encourages the continuity of care in the recognition of social, emotional, physical, cognitive and cultural needs of young people as well as the promotion of ‘normal’ development of young people through appropriate activities and opportunities. There is also emphasis on the protection of the rights of young people as set out in the United Nations Convention as well as the use of restorative justice intervention and prevention processes where services are appropriate to individual needs of young people and their families.<sup>4</sup>

According to the IMC, “[t]he key paradigm shift for the entire system is the move . . . away from the medical model which focuses on weaknesses, categorizing, labelling, helping and curing, towards a developmental and ecological perspective which focuses on reframing problems into strengths, understanding and recognizing

ecological systems around the child, competency building, and environments which empower.”<sup>5</sup> This new paradigm places great emphasis on diversion within the juvenile justice process and is described as “the channeling of prima facie cases from the formal criminal justice system on certain conditions to extra-judicial programmes at the discretion of the prosecution”<sup>6</sup>.

The purpose of this study is to explore the notion of and processes involved in rites of passage in order to determine the value thereof for the development of practical programmes for young people at risk in South Africa. This will involve interrogating the concept of rites of passage and tracing its complex theoretical roots and its viability in a post-modern society. The aim of this research is, therefore, to achieve an understanding of rites of passage in order to formulate a framework of guidelines to make present programmes more effective and strengthen the foundation for future work in programme development. This will involve an attempt to:

- understand the mechanisms which lead adolescents into socially unacceptable behaviour.
- explore the potential for using the notion of de-labelling as the basis for intercepting and transforming juvenile deviance.
- explore rites of passage in the development of a programme of de-labelling.
- design a rites of passage programme using the above understandings.

Taking the goals of the IMC into account, this research locates rites of passage within a framework of restorative justice and is based on the following hypotheses:

- Rites of passage have largely been forgotten in contemporary western society and no longer play a significant role in preparing people for the different transitional phases in life. As such, young people in particular often seek out other ways of initiating themselves into adulthood and in the process risk hurting themselves and others as well as getting into trouble with the law. Hence, it is possible that there is a societal need for rites of passage to be reinstated and, practically, this could best be accomplished within the framework of diversion.
- Many young people at risk suffer from stigmatization which results from a process of self and public labelling and, as a result, are often limited in their personal development due to a negative self-concept and a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is possible that rites of passage could be used as a means of de-labelling young people at risk.
- There is a possibility that rites of passage would not succeed in South Africa due to a general lack of time and attention given to follow-up. There may be a need to look beyond isolated rites programmes towards more systemic containment of young people in the form of community support and mentoring.

### **Restorative Justice**

The broader framework within which diversion is placed is that of restorative justice. This concept is presently being developed using the restorative philosophy that guides the processes of social control within many indigenous communities throughout the world. In these societies, justice involves conflict resolution, victim-offender mediation and, most importantly, teaching young people to take responsibility for their actions. In 1995, I conducted research in the Eastern Cape which involved exploring the notion of restorative justice within a rural Xhosa-speaking community.

My findings suggest that social order prevails within such communities due to the positive influence which restorative justice has on community-building, as one positive factor among others.<sup>7</sup>

Since pre-colonial times, restorative justice has traditionally been practiced in the form of an informal court system known as Inkundla. This system places the offender, the victim and their respective families at the center of the justice process. After an offence has been committed, the whole community gathers together in order to find a solution to the problem. Both the offender and the victim are given an opportunity to speak, and any member of the community may ask questions or put forward an opinion. The person who facilitates the hearing is usually the headman of the local village or the chief of the district. After guilt has been acknowledged, the members of the community, including the victim, consensually decide on a penalty for the offender and appropriate compensation for the victim. Essentially, it is the responsibility of all adults within the community to shape the behaviour of young people and, as a result, the community creates holding structures for young people which guide and support them on their journey from childhood to adulthood. These holding structures provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in the meaningful processes of everyday life which, in turn, enables them to develop a strong sense of belonging and personal significance.<sup>8</sup> Within this community, these structures are reinforced with ceremonies of initiation which recognize and celebrate the points of transition from childhood to adulthood. Pinnock says that, “[i]n each case there is a conscious recognition that adolescence involves a process, a becoming, a transformation”<sup>9</sup> - it involves rites of passage.

By definition, rites of passage may be described as the rituals and ceremonies which surround the life crises of an individual as he or she journeys from one phase of life to the next. Adolescence, defined anthropologically, is a social phase between childhood and adulthood, a period of growth which involves both unlearning and new learning. Adolescents undergo a cognitive and affective shift away from behaviour associated with childhood towards adulthood, and role training facilitates preparation of the young person for active participation within the community. Ideally, this shift is aided

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are “ceremonies surrounding birth, marriage and death as well as customary greetings, the avoidance of sidewalk cracks, compulsive handwashing and liturgies”.<sup>12</sup> As a result, adolescents lack meaningful attachments and consequently create their own rituals to facilitate their transition to adulthood – most of which are in conflict with society’s values and laws.<sup>13</sup>

### **Rites of Passage Theories**

There are many social science theories which aim to provide an explanation and understanding of rites of passage. According to Raphael, most agree that rites of passage generally follow a recognizable, cross-cultural pattern although, individually, different theorists concentrate on different aspects of this pattern ranging from biological to psychological and sociological perspectives. Biologically, rites of passage have been explained in terms of a genetically-based need for male bonding which is described as a “biologically transmitted and socially learned component of the male life cycle which stems, historically, from the evolution of hunting. Psychogenic views (rooted in Freudian theory) attribute the origin of initiation rituals and mutilations (scarification and circumcision, for example) to the Oedipal drama acted out between fathers and sons where the purpose of initiation serves to reinforce the authority of the senior generation. Sociogenic theory, such as structural-functionalism, explains the function of rites of passage as the means of placing young people within a structure of adulthood. Within this space, young people learn their duties of social obligation and adult responsibility. Initiation rituals encourage personal vulnerability and emphasize the need for and importance of the greater collective.”<sup>14</sup>

Each theory has a contribution to make in furthering one's understanding of rites of passage and its importance surrounding life crises and this study will attempt to draw a multi-disciplinary picture of initiation and, as such, present a celebration of a range of theories drawing from the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and mytho-cosmology. All of these theories have some commonality in as far as they deal with transitions and, hence, I will be focusing on the elements which apply to rites of passage. The wide range of theories which deal with rites of passage reflect its importance in our societal make-up, although it is a practice which has been seriously neglected since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

There was no evidence of distinctive or conflicting theories about the applicability of rites of passage in the literature reviewed. Rather, the authors involved in the practical nature of rites of passage in the form of youth programmes or wilderness initiation adventures, for example, seemingly all strive to satisfy the hunger for initiation which so evidently plagues Western society. The rites of passage practitioners attempt to accomplish this enormous task by harnessing the resources which may be found in traditional indigenous initiation rites to build significant and meaningful experiences for people undergoing life crises so that they may assist them to make sense of their transitional period and arrive at the other side of it with a renewed and positive sense of self.

Most of the authors focused on include many of the key theorists in rites of passage work, particularly in the USA. There is also a strong Jungian approach to rites of passage among many of the writers. A reason for this could stem from Van Gennep's classical theory on rites of passage which locates a common pattern surrounding life crises in all cultures.<sup>15</sup> Van Gennep's theory largely complements Jung's theory of

archetypes and the collective unconscious and the latter is supported by Joseph Campbell who identified a common human consciousness present in mythologies and belief systems worldwide.<sup>16</sup>

Most approaches to contemporary rites of passage follow the classical pattern recorded by Arnold van Gennep at the turn of the century and share a common understanding of the principles underlying the processes of initiation.

### **The Main Themes In The Dissertation**

This dissertation begins by exploring the consequences of self and public labelling in terms of labelling theory as well as Erikson's psychosocial theory of adolescent identity formation in an attempt to understand how young people redefine themselves. This chapter provides an understanding of the mechanisms which lead adolescents to behave in socially unacceptable ways and examines the concept of de-labelling as a means of intercepting and transforming juvenile deviance.

This is followed by an exploration of the role of the mythological hero as interpreted by Joseph Campbell. The loss of mythological value in contemporary western society is noted and the consequences this loss has for the development of masculine identity is discussed focusing, in particular, on the father-son relationship. A comparison is drawn between these understandings and traditional indigenous rites of initiation in an attempt to determine the value in rites of passage for young people at risk in South Africa.

Traditional initiation is discussed in terms of the three phases of Van Gennep's theory of rites of passage, focusing also on the importance of ritual and symbolism in initiation. This, in turn, forms the framework for exploring contemporary methods of adolescent self-initiation and the consequences thereof. Here, urban street gang initiation is given as an example of an alternative rite of passage which has negative consequences for both the individual and the community. Two American examples of contemporary rites programmes which have positive outcomes are also presented.

Most of the literature examined focused to a large extent on boys only. This meant that it was difficult locating literature about contemporary initiation processes for girls. As such, the main part of this dissertation deals mainly with issues surrounding the life crises of adolescent boys. However, the topic of female initiation is addressed in chapter 6 and suggests that we have a societal need for female initiation and contemporary rites of passage programmes for girls.

This is followed by a description and evaluation of a pilot rites of passage project undertaken by the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Nicro) in 1996 and is presented in the format of Van Gennep's three stages. This pilot has served as the basis for the development of a de-labelling programme which is outlined in the final chapter.

## End notes

<sup>1</sup>Cairns and Cairns, 1994: 257.

<sup>2</sup>IMC, 1996: 2; 24.

<sup>3</sup>IMC, 1996: 4.

<sup>4</sup>IMC, 1996: 4.

<sup>5</sup>IMC, 1992: 5.

<sup>6</sup>Muntingh, 1997: 7.

<sup>7</sup>Van Eden, 1995.

<sup>8</sup>Van Eden, 1995.

<sup>9</sup>Pinnock, 1997: 5.

<sup>10</sup>Schlegel and Barry, 1991: 8-9.

<sup>11</sup>Douglas-Hamilton, 1995.

<sup>12</sup>1993: 201.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Raphael, 1988: 8-10.

<sup>15</sup>Jung once had a client called Miss Miller who was borderline schizophrenic and in one of her delusional states she poured forth many fantasies high in mythological content. Jung realized that these myths were not limited to any one culture and from this he developed his theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious. This theory argues that all religions and cultures contain the same ancient symbols, and that personal consciousness originates from a collective human consciousness shared by all human beings in all societies.

<sup>16</sup>Cohen, 1991: 5.

# Chapter 1

## ***Labelling and Young People At Risk***

Self-definition and self-discovery is one of the major issues that face adolescents in urban western society today, yet the task of creating a new identity in order to replace an old one is not simple. Historically, in traditional societies, young people have generally been supported during this transition by rituals and ceremonies which have been created to mark the transition and ensure that it is acknowledged with a formal community event. In this way, structured rites of passage guide young people through this process and the formality associated with them translates the difficult problems of identity formation into substantial and uncomplicated tasks. Ray Raphael explains that in traditional indigenous situations, a young person “might be beaten with firebrands or circumcised or made to perform difficult tests of fortitude, but all he has to do is follow the rules, endure the pain, rise to the occasion – and his manhood is assured. In a finite and well defined set of rituals, he proves to himself and to others that he has laid his childish insecurities to rest and that he is ready for the roles, responsibilities, and privileges of an adult male”.<sup>1</sup>

In contemporary western society, however, young people are offered little support and guidance from elders and are mostly forced to rely on their peers for behavioural points of reference. Consequently, it has been found that during the struggle to re-define themselves, adolescents may evoke a negative social response which results in their negative labelling by the community. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People At Risk has recognized that the issue of young people at risk cannot be viewed

in isolation as it involves a combination of psychological, social and economic issues. As such this chapter explores the concept of adolescent identity formation and focuses on the effects of negative labelling. Erik Erikson's holistic developmental model of identity formation will be used in an attempt to understand the psychological, social and cultural factors which influence how young people redefine themselves during this transitional phase. This chapter will also explore the possibility of using rites of passage as a means of de-labelling young people at risk.

### **The Labelling Perspective**

Western society has a history of informally labelling young people and treating them as deviant. Derogatory terms are commonly used to inform judgements which define them as deviant. Schur points out that although not all labels develop from social reactions to criminal behaviour, they are all none-the-less damaging and shaming with regard to reputation and life-chances. According to Schur, labelling is a means of characterising behaviour. Labels are social constructs which result from the definition of and reactions to certain behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

Labelling theory, otherwise known as transactional analysis, originally developed out of ethnographic research. It focuses on the 'real and symbolic' transactions that occur between groups, rather than the "internal world and processes of the group or field".<sup>3</sup> Labelling theory is interactionist in as far as the process of labelling of the deviant by the powers of social control is interpreted by the deviant as meaningful, and interpretation reinforces the individual's commitment to deviance. Hence, labelling theory views deviance as those acts which violate the rules that the powers of control

have made and sees it, not as a natural phenomenon, but rather as the outcome of a particular social construction. Clarke *et al* point out that this process is influenced by “the power to define situations *for* others, and the power to label others - and make those labels stick.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, labelling occurs as a series of happenings during which individuals and/or groups begin deviant careers in which their identities, self-conceptions and commitments” undergo changes. The level of an individual’s commitment to a deviant career is influenced by the dealings (transactions) he or she makes with other groups.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of deviance as a social construction underlines the importance of the relation between deviance and social change. Schur says that “[i]f current deviance definitions have been ‘created’ and imposed, then they can also be modified or removed”.<sup>6</sup> He argues that since deviance is a matter of definition, it is a relative concept which is subject to change depending on the views of the definer. In order for stigmatization of an individual to occur, it is not always necessary for an offending act to take place. In some instances the mere perception of an individual as deviant is often enough to produce stigmatization. This suggests that deviance has less to do with offending behaviour and more to do with the perceived character of an individual, that is “the kind of person one is taken to be”.<sup>7</sup>

The term ‘stigma’ was originally created by the Greeks to refer to non-verbal bodily symbols that signify negative character traits regarding the moral status of a given individual. These symbols were cut or burnt into the body to alert observers as to the status of a discredited person such as a criminal, slave or traitor. Nowadays, the term

stigma still bears its original meaning, but refers more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily symbols thereof.<sup>8</sup>

Schur points out that studies have shown that groups of individuals who have experienced the stigmatizing consequences of labelling have all undergone a process of 'inferiorization'. He says that

. . . for any given category of the 'inferiorized' there is a 'composite portrait'. It is "founded on three axioms: the inferiorized are 1) a 'problem', 2) all alike, and 3) recognizable as such without exception". One sees reflected in categorical devaluation an apparent urge to differentiate as much as possible between 'them' and 'us'.<sup>9</sup>

Goffman distinguishes between three types of stigma<sup>10</sup>:

1. Physical deformities.
2. Negative character traits, for example dishonesty, weak will or unnatural passions which are referred from existing records of crime, addiction, mental illness or imprisonment.
3. Tribal stigma of race, nation or religion. This kind of stigma is passed on to successive generations through lineage and equally affects all concerned.

Goffman argues that the above stigmas possess the same sociological features in that stigmatization prevents those who are stigmatized from being easily received during general social intercourse. Stigmatization usually involves categorizing the person with the stigma and this results in objectification of the person. Schur observes that when this happens the stigmatized person becomes "an instance of the category" and is reduced to "nothing but 'a delinquent', 'a cripple'" and so forth. He says that "[t]he

indefinite article 'a' underlines the depersonalized nature of such a response".<sup>11</sup> Examples of objectification may be seen in the ritual identity stripping which inmates of total institutions are required to undergo. Whether in prisons, mental hospitals or the military, individuals are stripped of everything that reflects their personal identity: their hair is shaved, their personal clothes are replaced with a uniform, and their name becomes a number.<sup>12</sup>

The consequences of stigmatization involve a reduction in social acceptability and the limiting of life chances as well as social and economic opportunities. Psychologically, there is a danger that stigmatization or false definition of a person can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy where the individual internalizes the stigmatizing label and "accepts the beliefs and values on which the stigma is grounded".<sup>13</sup> This, in turn, can impact negatively on self-esteem. Schur argues that when this happens, the stigmatized person may exhibit "traits due to victimization". These may include defensiveness, passivity, withdrawal, in-group hostility and low self-esteem.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, social reaction theorists like Erikson, Schur, Goffman and Clarke *et al* argue that deviants assume deviant identities by accepting negative labels. As their identities are devalued by society their sense of self-worth decreases and negative stereotypes may characterize the way in which deviants see themselves. However, young people may not do this without attempting to defend themselves, which could reinforce inverted negative labelling and the acceptance of subgroup or gang definitions of themselves.

## **The Effects of Labelling**

Jeanette Covington argues that since attempts to rehabilitate certain deviants such as juvenile offenders, for example, have often failed, deviants may be capable of protecting themselves from societal rejection by exercising defences while at the same time accepting negative labels. She explains that

For some, this may entail accepting negative labels applied to their behaviour accompanied by explanations that simultaneously excuse or justify it. Others may reflect deviant labels and identify with other more praiseworthy social roles. Still others may be converted to a view that allows them to regard deviant lifestyles as prestigious and desirable.<sup>15</sup>

The latter example would include gangsters who largely respect the deviant way of life which they follow. For most, having inverted society's negative labels of them into positive ones which reinforce their deviant behaviour, there is little motivation for them to change. Covington suggests, however, that deviants' "general resistance to rehabilitation" is due as much to their ability to insulate themselves from labelling using defences as to their reaction to society's continuous rejection of them "despite efforts at change".<sup>16</sup>

Historically, labelling theory has generally assessed the responses and attitudes of conventional public members to deviants on the basis of a negative status. Labelling theorists argue that these negative responses "restrict alternatives for the actor within a relationship . . ."<sup>17</sup> Hence, deviants must deal with public labelling as well as self-labelling whether or not their deviant status is known to others. The concern here is the effect of labelling on interactive processes.<sup>18</sup>

Alternatively, Poole *et al* point out that a negative or deviant status may give rise to “feelings of shame, guilt or fear of exposure”.<sup>19</sup> This may lead to an attempt by the individual to hide knowledge of his or her deviant status from the public. The authors support the argument that “self-labelling may produce as much of a self-fulfilling prophecy as does labelling by society’s agents” and explain that as individuals are unable to escape self-recognition of their deviant status they are forced to deal with the feelings which arise from it – usually guilt, shame and anxiety.<sup>20</sup>

This self-consciousness increases an individual’s awareness of his or her deviant status and the possibility of being transparent and in the end serves to reinforce his or her deviance. Poole *et al* explain that

A self- labelling model, then, proposes that actors are faced with a crisis of negative status that they must resolve after becoming aware of the application of the label to themselves. Management strategies that actors may employ are numerous; still, such attempts are expected to violate routine interaction patterns. For others, these violations serve either to confirm an already known negative status or to establish a new one if the negative status were unknown.<sup>21</sup>

Hence, self-labelling functions to maintain a negative status whether or not it works co-operatively or independently of public labelling processes.<sup>22</sup> It is important to note - as Poole *et al* point out – that one’s self-image is largely “a product of the feedback received from others via the role one occupies”.<sup>23</sup> As the feedback from others or one’s roles change, so does one’s self-image. Thus, an individual’s thoughts, perceptions and opinions are shaped according to his or her frame of reference <sup>defined from</sup> of the community to which he or she belongs. According to this view, the deviant’s changing

self-image is a result of contact with external stimuli that restructure the individual according to the “imagery, expectations, and prescriptions of the negative role”.<sup>24</sup>

Erik Erikson argues that labels provide adolescents with ready made identities and prevents them from accepting responsibility for finding their own. According to Jane Kroger, the converse is also true: “society’s *refusal* to provide ready role definitions for such adolescents and *not* to treat their experimentation as the final identity are in the best interests of the entire community”.<sup>25</sup> She continues by saying that society needs to do more than simply respond to the achievements of adolescents by providing genuine opportunities for young people to realize their talents and says that “no longer do we need to consider an individual with the label ‘sociopathic personality disorder’ as having a static personality trait unamenable to change, but rather as someone with a condition of childhood development arrest who, with appropriate intervention, may be helped to embark on a more normative development course”.<sup>26</sup>

To summarise it has been shown that there are essentially three types of labelling,

1. The negative labelling of young people at risk by society.
2. The labelling of young gang members by their gangs through a process which converts the negative labels of society into positive images. For example, society frowns upon a young person who sports tattoos, wields knives and associates themselves with a gang, while a gang would celebrate these with positive reinforcement.
3. The self-labelling which may result from the above points.

Considering that labelling is indeed a social construction, it stands to reason that the process of labelling is reversible. This suggests that a process of de-labelling may be possible. Given that this is so, and taking into account the negative effects which labelling has on the self-conception of an individual, it is plausible that a process of de-labelling may be useful in intercepting and transforming juvenile deviance. This idea is carried forward in the following section by examining a developmental model of identity formation which holds definite implications for social response. The developmental approach conceptualizes identity as a structural organization, as opposed to a series of status traits, which responds positively to situations which development and maturity promote. The possibility of using rites of passage programmes as a means of de-labelling young people at risk will also be explored. This process, it will be argued, offers young people an opportunity to re-direct the course of their development.

## **The Redefinition of Self During Adolescence**

In their book, Theory and Problems of Adolescence, Ausubel *et al* point out that all societies recognize and distinguish between three primary phases of development during the life cycle, namely childhood, adolescence or youth and adulthood. They suggest that even though expectations various societies have of their members during each phase may be different, the stages of development remain universal. Hence, adolescence may be viewed as a unique transitional phase of development that is not only biological and psychological, but cultural and sociological as well. Adolescence

represents a time of change that involves responsibilities, privileges, social and economic roles and relationships.<sup>27</sup> Ausubel *et al* say that

[adolescence] marks the beginning assumption of adult biological and social sex roles and of a cluster of personality traits that the culture deems appropriate for the mature adult . . . In short, adolescence everywhere is a time of extensive personality reorganization.<sup>28</sup>

As the early adolescent begins to experience biological changes so too are they exposed to new social obligations. Ausubel *et al* argue that “in a very real sense the adolescent is forced to break with what is familiar – biologically, psychologically, and socially – and to enter into a new relationship with . . . body, . . . self and . . . social world”.<sup>29</sup>

This will be identified as the so called Separation phase of a rite of passage. Note that although all cultures recognize adolescence as a unique developmental phase, many differ in terms of the extent of recognition offered through rituals, training and initiation rites. These differences are further enhanced by the various ideals by which different societies define adulthood. These ideals or values shape the process of indoctrination and determine the social duties and expectations that children-becoming-adults all over the world must face. Ausubel *et al* point out that “although adolescence manifests many general structural properties of psychological transition that can be found in any culture, marked individual differences in content will nevertheless prevail among cultures”.<sup>30</sup> This results from the influence that social factors have on the developmental transition which affects the length and difficulty of adolescence. The authors also emphasize that although adolescent development is

generally characterized by conflict (as are the other transitional phases), the expression thereof varies according to a given individual's ability to cope and to adjust to change, as well as the availability of "external social supports".<sup>31</sup>

As the adolescent begins to redefine him or herself, personal and social factors determine whether this redefining process renders a positive or negative outcome in terms of a given society's expectations.<sup>32</sup> According to Ausubel *et al*,

Developmental tasks are the areas of life adjustment in which the gains of adolescent personality development must be applied before the various component requirements of adult status can be met.<sup>33</sup>

Erikson's model of identity formation is in keeping with this developmental theory. Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development begin at infancy and continue through to old age. According to Erikson, every phase contains developmental tasks which must be successfully completed if a given individual is to proceed to the next phase. This psychosocial theory goes beyond Freud's psychoanalytic thinking by combining psychosexual development with "cultural and historical factors which surround individual development".<sup>34</sup>

Ausubel *et al* say that, in terms of Erikson's theory, "an individual not only lives in a culture with certain norms and customs, but the culture and its norms also live within the individual. The infant is not a social creature on whom socialization 'acts' to form a member of a society; rather, the infant is essentially social, biologically predisposed to seek out and interact with other individuals and by so doing to naturally become a

member of the society into which he [or she] is born".<sup>35</sup> The ways in which developmental tasks are completed and the 'potential outcome' of each phase is influenced by given historical factors and the "cultural models and expectations available to youth . . . at a particular time".<sup>36</sup> A prime example of this may be found in South Africa's history where apartheid has greatly hampered the potential outcome of the development of young people at risk.

### **Erikson's Model of Identity Formation**

There are two contrasting approaches to identity formation, namely quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach is linear and does not view change in stages, but rather argues that things simply become more noticeable with time. Some non-developmental perspectives describe personality in terms of character type, body build (for example, endomorph), character disposition (for example, introvert) and psychiatric classification (for example, sociopath). These labels suggest that "a person's type resides within and is stimulated to unfold with experience".<sup>37</sup> This approach does not take cultural and social factors into account and is therefore in conflict with the rites of passage model. In contrast, the qualitative approach is explained by Kroger who says that "developmental stages exist in a hierarchical and invariant sequence, each building on that which has gone before, incorporating yet transcending the last stage to provide a foundation for the next".<sup>38</sup> Erikson's model of adolescent identity formation is qualitative in nature rather than quantitative. As such, it is developmental and attempts to describe the transformation that takes place as the young person progresses from earlier stages in life.

According to Erikson, identity may only be resolved during adolescence “through a synthesis that incorporates yet transcends all previous identifications to produce a new whole, based upon, yet qualitatively different from, that which has gone before”.<sup>39</sup> Expanding this idea, Kroger points out that identity may be most easily defined if one has experienced loss or developmental failure thereof. Absence or loss of identity provides an opportunity to study normative processes of identity formation and the role that society plays in promoting positive development thereof.<sup>40</sup>

Erikson differs from psychoanalytic theory stating that it leaves no room for the environment and argues that an individual’s life history as well as the existing cultural and historical contexts are as important as biology in personality development. His definition of identity is interdisciplinary, incorporating biology, culture and personal organization of experience in order to give one’s existence “meaning, form and continuity”.<sup>41</sup> Hence, Erikson views identity psychosocially, placing it both within the individual and the community. As will be shown in later chapters, this is central to the concept of rites of passage which focuses on the importance of relationship between individual and community.

Kroger says that the process of adolescent identity formation cannot be understood without also taking childhood and resulting adult states into account. For this reason she considers the period of adolescence to be especially important when studying the concept of self-definition and identity formation.<sup>42</sup> This view stems from Erikson’s developmental principles which distinguish between adolescent identity formation and childhood introjection and identification. The latter occurs as the infant begins to trust the parent or caregiver and starts to develop a sense of self that is separate from the

parental figure. It is during this process that *introjection* takes place as the child incorporates the caregiver's image. This process "prepares the way for more mature forms of identity resolution".<sup>43</sup>

Identification refers to the process of assuming the roles and values of respected others by the child and facilitates structuring of the self. Kroger explains that "it is only when the adolescent is able to select some and discard others of these childhood identifications in accordance with his or her interests, talents, and values that *identity formation* occurs [original italics]".<sup>44</sup> Hence, identity formation takes place when earlier identifications fuse together to form a new unique identity that although resembling earlier identifications, is different.<sup>45</sup>

Erikson describes the process of identity formation during adolescence as being dependent on the meaning that both the young person and significant others attach to him or her at the end of childhood. He comments that it is understandable for some adolescents to attempt to "regress" or drop out in order to "gain time". Others go on to either create their own dramatic and spontaneous rites that function to separate their generation from the status-possessing adults and children, or participate in formal structured rites designed to facilitate their transitions to adulthood.<sup>46</sup> This suggests that there is a societal need for structured rites of passage.

Identity formation is dependent on social response and "relies on the way society identifies the young individual, recognizing him [or her] as somebody who had to become the way he [or she] is and who, being the way he [or she] is, is taken for granted".<sup>47</sup> Thus, identity formation may be viewed as an evolution which takes place

from childhood through to adolescence after which it is continually moulded during adulthood. Erikson refers to this evolutionary process as *epigenesis* where literally, *epi* means upon and *genesis* means emergence. Kroger says that

for some troubled adolescents, it is better to be somebody totally other than what existed during childhood rather than struggle to reintegrate the past into a present and future having some continuity with one's previous existence. There is often much relief following the choice of a negative identity, however destructive that solution may ultimately be.<sup>48</sup>

Erikson says that adolescence is a time of "identity confusion" which acts as a warning "that youth's adjustment is not to be taken for granted without the promise of decisive renewal".<sup>49</sup> He argues that ritualization is the key to renewing a sense of 'I' and promoting a sense of community. The need for ritualization is evident in the contrast between those young people who participate in formally arranged initiations, and "the tendency of de-ritualized youth to improvise counter-ritualizations".<sup>50</sup>

Erikson distinguishes between rituals or rites and everyday ritualized customs. The former, according to anthropological definition, refers to rituals which are performed ceremonially with the general aim of deepening a sense of community, and healing both individual and community. The latter refers to "the formalization of minute patterns of daily interplay" which in the end creates the need for ceremonial rituals.<sup>51</sup>

Erikson says that

. . . by combining and renewing the ritualizations of childhood and affirming generative sanction, they help to consolidate adult life once its commitments and investments have led to the creation of new persons and to the production of new things and ideas. And, of course, by tying life cycle and institutions into a meaningful

whole, they create a sense of immortality not only for the leaders and the elite, but also for every participant.<sup>52</sup>

It is clear that Erikson attributes the formation of identity to two important factors: the affirmation of childhood identifications, and the role of the greater community in giving recognition to those young people who seek it. Accordingly, it should be noted that society tends to reject those youngsters who do not seek its acceptance, but rather turn to gangs, for example, in search of a sense of community.<sup>53</sup> In Identity, Youth and Crisis, Erikson suggests that many young people living in Western societies experience difficulty in adopting roles which society forces upon them. As a result, they may run away from home, drop out of school or stay out all night, for example, in an effort to stall the inevitable. Erikson says that

Once 'delinquent', [a young person's] greatest need and often his [or her] only salvation is the refusal on the part of older friends, advisors, and judiciary personnel to type him [or her] further by part diagnoses and social judgements which ignore the special dynamic conditions of adolescence.<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, it is generally the difficulty to decide on an occupational identity that causes the most anguish. In an attempt to cope, many worship heroes of various groups and in the process may lose their sense of individuality almost completely. By projecting his or her self-image onto someone else, the young person is offered an opportunity to clarify it as it is reflected back to him or her. Clarification may also be achieved through destructive ways. This may take place when young people exclude those who are different from them with regard to culture, socio-economic background, dress and so forth. Erikson suggests that this behaviour may be understood as a reaction to and necessary defence against the loss of identity.<sup>55</sup> He points out that

Adolescents not only help one another temporarily through such discomfort by forming cliques and stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies; they also insistently test each other's capacity for sustaining loyalties in the midst of inevitable conflicts of values.<sup>56</sup>

It is easy to understand how gangs fulfil this function, and amidst a fastidious definition of what constitutes perceptions of *us* and *them*, individual identities are lost to the greater collective.

The strength of adolescence identified by Erikson is referred to as *fidelity*. This is said to emerge due to infantile trust as well as mature faith, and during adolescence begins to shift focus from parental figures to mentors and leaders in search of guidance. The opposite of fidelity is referred to as *role repudiation* and, as discussed above, manifests in the form of defiance which usually gives rise to a negative identity or socially unacceptable "identity elements"<sup>57</sup>. Hence, social settings are responsible for offering credible alternatives to prevent a given individual from attempting self-rebirth (or self-initiation which as discussed earlier generally leads to destruction).<sup>58</sup>

Erikson, however, points out that

Yet again, an identity formation is impossible without some role repudiation, especially where the available roles endanger the young individual's potential identity synthesis. Role repudiation, then, helps to delimit one's identity and invokes at least experimental loyalties that can then be confirmed and transformed into lasting affiliations by the proper ritualizations or rituals.<sup>59</sup>

Kroger explains that, according to Erikson, identity is part conscious, part unconscious and develops during adolescence when it is characterized by conflict. It is

during this developmental period that the combination of an individual's biology and intellect meet societal expectation when young people are required to begin to behave as adults. Consequently, Erikson highlights the responsibility of parents and the adult community to provide young people with an ideological framework "against which to rebel and forge their own values".<sup>60</sup>

Erikson says that ". . . the community's response to the young individual's need to be 'recognized' by those around him [or her should] mean something beyond a mere recognition of achievement; for it is of great relevance to the young individual's identity formation that he [or she] be responded to and be given a function and status as a person whose gradual growth and transformation make sense to those who begin to make sense to him [or her]".<sup>61</sup>

Erikson emphasizes that this recognition is a necessary form of ego support during the essential tasks of adolescence: the maintenance of ego defences against increasing impulses which arise due to sexual maturation and increased physical strength; aligning 'conflict-free' achievements with work opportunities; and re-working childhood identifications in a way which is acceptable to a wider community for example, neighbours or a potential occupation.<sup>62</sup>

For this purpose, moratoria function as a period of delay before adolescents are required to assume adult responsibilities. It is a kind of mutual agreement between the young person and the community where the individual plays with experimentation and the community allows it.<sup>63</sup> This period may be compared to the liminal phase in Van Gennep's formulation which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3 and generally

leads to a commitment to the wider community by the young person and is characterized by elements of transition. The community may confirm this commitment ceremonially.

Erikson points out that moratoria may differ greatly depending on the individual, the culture and subcultures. Hence, moratoria tend to consist of activities which reflect the values of one or all of these. As such, part of the problem of juvenile delinquency, especially in a structural form such as a gang, may be attributed to the need for a psychosocial moratorium. Erikson suggests that some delinquency occurs within an almost institutionalized moratorium which we have been forced to recognize due to the large numbers of young people who find it attractive.<sup>64</sup>

Erikson warns us to be aware “that any experimentation with identity images means also to play with the inner fire of emotions and drives and to risk the outer danger of ending up in a social ‘pocket’ [for example, a gang or the criminal justice system] from which there is no return. Then the moratorium has failed; the individual is defined too early, and he [or she] has committed him [or herself] because circumstances or, indeed, authorities have committed him [or her]”.<sup>65</sup>

Kroger warns that parents, as well as “educational, employment, recreational, religious, health, political and legal systems”, all have an important part to play in facilitating adolescent identity formation. By ‘regulating’ the attitudes and behaviour of young people, the above mentioned systems may co-operate to attach labels to young people in search of identity which may not have a positive effect on them.<sup>66</sup>

Conversely, as Kroger says, “it is through social willingness *not* to predetermine roles

and to allow youth a moratorium that identity formation can best be facilitated; it is social tolerance for role experimentation without labelling that eventually benefits all concerned".<sup>67</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The developmental theorists reviewed in this chapter emphasize the importance of social response in the development of identities of young people. Erikson has suggested that the factors which contribute to the formation of negative identities and, hence, lead young people into socially unacceptable behaviour include the lack of structured rites of passage which facilitate their transition from childhood to adulthood, and the disregard of the importance of this transitional period by the community.

Clearly it is not enough for the greater community to simply recognize a young person for who they are and what they have achieved. There is a need for the community to go beyond this and to offer young people the opportunity to grow and develop into young adults by providing them with moratorial space and freedom to experiment with different identities without risking the possibility of being negatively labelled. Added to this, there is a need for this space to be contained through attentive guidance from significant elders who are willing to offer their support in the form of mentorships. Taking youth at risk through experiential processes used in rites of passage could be the starting point for de-labelling these young people and allowing them to realize their potential with a renewed sense of self. Rites of passage could provide a unique framework for all of this to take place and would allow for the special

creation of ritual space. The importance of ritual for inner psychic transformation will be explored throughout this dissertation and has been noted in this chapter where Erikson points out the function of ritual in promoting a sense of community and meaning. Bearing the above discussion in mind, the value in rites of passage for the development of a de-labelling programme will be explored in the following chapters.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup>1988 : x.
- <sup>2</sup>1984: 4-5.
- <sup>3</sup>Clarke *et al*, 1977: 249.
- <sup>4</sup>1977: 249.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup>1984: 18.
- <sup>7</sup>1984: 21-22.
- <sup>8</sup>Goffman, 1963: 11.
- <sup>9</sup>1984: 28.
- <sup>10</sup>1963: 14.
- <sup>11</sup>1984: 30-31.
- <sup>12</sup>Schur, 1984: 31.
- <sup>13</sup>Schur, 1984: 39.
- <sup>14</sup>1984: 39.
- <sup>15</sup>1984: 620.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Poole *et al*, 1986: 345.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup>1986: 346.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>1986: 347.
- <sup>22</sup>Poole *et al*, 1986: 348.
- <sup>23</sup>1986: 349.
- <sup>23</sup>Poole *et al*, 1986: 349
- <sup>24</sup>Poole *et al*, 1986: 349.
- <sup>25</sup>Kroger, 1989: 41.
- <sup>26</sup>1989: 5.
- <sup>27</sup>1977: 4.
- <sup>28</sup>1977: 17.
- <sup>29</sup>Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 24.
- <sup>30</sup>Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 32-33.
- <sup>31</sup>1977: 35.
- <sup>32</sup>Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 35.
- <sup>33</sup>1977: 36.
- <sup>34</sup>Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 23.
- <sup>35</sup>Erikson quoted in Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 23.
- <sup>36</sup>Ausubel *et al*, 1977: 23.
- <sup>37</sup>Kroger, 1989: 4-5.
- <sup>38</sup>1989: 5.
- <sup>39</sup>Quoted in Kroger, 1989: 6.
- <sup>40</sup>1989: 13.
- <sup>41</sup>Kroger, 1989: 13-14.
- <sup>42</sup>1989: 3.
- <sup>43</sup>Kroger, 1989: 15.
- <sup>44</sup>1989: 15.
- <sup>45</sup>Kroger, 1989: 15.
- <sup>46</sup>Erikson, 1977: 107.
- <sup>47</sup>Kroger, 1989: 15.
- <sup>48</sup>1989: 16-17.
- <sup>49</sup>1977: 108.
- <sup>50</sup>Erikson, 1977:109.
- <sup>51</sup>1977:79.
- <sup>52</sup>1985: 72.
- <sup>53</sup>Erikson, 1985: 72.
- <sup>54</sup>1968: 132.

- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> 1968: 133.
- <sup>57</sup> 1985: 73.
- <sup>58</sup> 1985: 74.
- <sup>59</sup> 1985: 74.
- <sup>60</sup> 1989: 14.
- <sup>61</sup> 1968: 156.
- <sup>62</sup> 1967: 157.
- <sup>63</sup> Erikson, 1968: 157.
- <sup>64</sup> 1968: 157.
- <sup>65</sup> 1968: 158.
- <sup>66</sup> 1989: 40.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2

### The Hero Archetype

Chapter one has shown that labelling has a powerful hold over young people and, thus, the question must be asked about positive labelling or even de-labelling. There are current practices in South Africa which deal with these concepts and point the way. For example, in many urban African townships community courts operate as strictly community-based structures. These courts place great emphasis on community participation with regard to the process of dispute-settlement and the restoration of interpersonal harmony.<sup>1</sup> The general functioning of community courts involves court 'hearings' that take place regularly during times suitable for community members to attend, for example in evenings or over week-ends and in the language most suitable to those participating. Those presiding are democratically elected community members who then form part of a Street Committee, and jurisdiction is restricted to domestic and interpersonal disputes as well as petty crime and rights violations.<sup>2</sup> Freddie Mafu, vice-chairperson of the Gugletu NY141 Street Committee, points out that the aim of the hearing is to determine

[h]ow we can solve the very problem that [the offender] has made so that he or she must understand that we are not dealing with the issue because he or she is a criminal. We are dealing with the issue because he or she is part of the community. He or she is needed in the community. He or she can be an asset to that community. But now we are trying to turn him or her back to what is right so that he or she can be a good father or mother. We are building these youth so that as the times go on when they are old enough we can rely on them and have a good leadership.<sup>3</sup>

Popular justice in South Africa does not distinguish between crime, criminal law or private law. Community courts speak of wrongful acts as *problems* not *crime*. In this sense, African traditional practices of social control involve a de-labelling process. To label something as a 'crime' is to immediately lock into a logic or binary thinking of 'guilty' versus 'not guilty'. This limits any means of dealing with the problem and, as such, is not very useful for problem-solving.

The lesson to be learned from this may be found within the notion of restorative justice. Restorative justice views crime as a social phenomenon and draws solutions from within the community. This demands a form of community justice, requiring that justice institutions be in and of the community and be open to maximum public participation. A restorative system would therefore rely on informal control systems to prevent crime and limit cost escalation while formal mechanisms would address the shortcomings of the former and "play an enabling, reinforcing, co-ordinating and resourcing role in relation to it, functions which themselves demand changes in the present character of formal [western] justice systems".<sup>4</sup>

It is possible to take this notion further and explore de-labelling in the context of mythology in general and, specifically, in notions of the hero. Through an exploration of the mytho-cosmological conceptualizations this chapter attempts to unfold the mythological elements in rites of passage which assist in psychological and social transformations. The loss of the mythological hero in contemporary Western society is discussed and the effects this has had on the Western image of masculinity are

considered. Using the medium of story as an analytical tool, the fairy tale *Iron John*, is used to explore the formation of masculine identity and it is suggested that the key to healthy masculine development lies in the ancient practice of traditional rites of initiation. This will form the groundwork on which notions of de-labelling will be built.

## **The Passage Through Life**

One knows the tale: it has been told a thousand ways. It is the hero-cycle of the modern age, the wonderstory of mankind's coming to maturity. The spell of the past, the bondage of tradition, was shattered with sure and mighty strokes. The dream-web of myth fell away; the mind opened to full waking consciousness; and modern man emerged from ancient ignorance, like a butterfly from its cocoon, or like the sun at dawn from the womb of mother night. . . . And within the progressive societies themselves, every last vestige of the ancient human heritage of ritual, morality, and art is in full decay.

Joseph Campbell

It is generally agreed by social scientists that the journey through life is made up of several passages through which human beings must pass: birth, childhood to adulthood, mid-life, ageing and death. Essentially, these passages are transformations which individuals undergo as they pass from one stage to the next.<sup>5</sup> Carl Jung identified these human experiences as typical stages through which all people pass during their life cycle, unless the process is aborted by early death.<sup>6</sup> Jung said that the reasons for the repetition of these stages by every generation are due to the collective unconscious, a system within the psyche which stores 'latent memory traces inherited from one's ancestral past'.<sup>7</sup>

Jung maintained that, structurally, the collective unconscious is composed of archetypes (also known as primordial images, mythological images and behaviour patterns) which are ideas or universal thought forms that embody a large element of emotion, and create images that mirror a part of the conscious situation. Archetypes originate as “permanent deposits in the mind of an experience that has been constantly repeated for many generations”.<sup>8</sup> An example of this could be the many powerful natural forces such as fires, storms, lightning, earthquakes and volcanoes to which human beings have been exposed throughout history. Over many generations these experiences created an archetype of energy which forms a predisposition to perceive power and a longing to control it. This predisposition is evident in a child’s fascination with fire or a young person’s preoccupation with speed and danger.<sup>9</sup>

An archetype is revealed through imagery. That is, in order to be revealed, an archetype must be spoken of, described or referred to. For example, initiation of the unconscious into another phase of human life may be referred to as an archetype of initiation. Anne Maguire<sup>10</sup> points out that “whatever the archetype itself is belongs to the realm of darkness, but the image which human consciousness perceives is quite simply in the life of an individual an initiation into a new area of the vastness of the life process itself which in the course of time confronts or besets the being”.<sup>11</sup>

According to Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, the critical stages or crises through which all people pass during their life cycle are structured by archetypal unconscious potentials. In indigenous cultures around the world, these passages are prepared for and celebrated,

ensuring that every individual is sufficiently equipped and ready to be initiated into the next phase of life. Rituals have been created to mark the changes that occur, and to pass on the knowledge of ancestral teachings. Initiation involves assessment of, and preparation for new experiences as well as the notion of making a choice about one's future.<sup>12</sup> Initiation ceremonies involving childbirth, adolescence, marriage or ageing, for example, are of much importance in traditional societies where the various life crises are marked by a radical severance of the mind from attitudes and attachments of the phase being left behind. The initiate enters a period of seclusion where he or she learns of the proper forms and feelings associated with his or her new state before re-entering the community as one who has been reborn.<sup>13</sup>

These rituals can be likened to the adventures of many characters in mythological stories:

“ A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”<sup>14</sup>

The 'Wise Old Man' guides the hero through the various crises of self-development usually portrayed in the trials and tribulations of unusual or supernatural adventure. The Wise Old Man is an experienced initiator whose task it is to lead the way to the captured princess, or point the way to the magic sword that will slay the dragon. Once the hero has crossed the threshold into the unknown, he or she undergoes a series of trials and tests which must be survived. This is a time of both danger and discovery where these are

represented in various ways such as a faraway land, high on top of a mountain, deep within a forest or even underground. Whatever the representation, the place of adventure is filled with 'fluid images, extreme torments, superhuman deeds and sheer excitement' and finally, when all is accomplished and the adventure is over, the hero is reintroduced to the ordinary life.<sup>15</sup>

Within myths or fairy tales, the hero's role is to "retreat from the world of secondary effects" to the causal area of the psyche where the real challenge lies. Here the hero must identify the difficulties and work through them, thereby giving rise to a real and integrated experience of the archetypal images. Hence, the hero of the story is any person, woman or man, who has managed to break free from both personal and historical limitations in search of pure human life and thought. The hero, as modern being, dies in order to give rise to the hero as eternal being. While popular mythological tales describe the hero's adventure in terms of physical action, and higher religions portray it as moral, there is very little difference between the form, the character and the victories of each.<sup>16</sup>

The story of the hero in mythology who self-sacrifices in order to achieve his aim by defeating the 'dark force' can be interpreted in Jungian terms as "the journey of the ego getting to know its shadow side - all the parts that have been repressed, both good [the shadow also contains positive elements or abilities which may be repressed when one fails to take responsibility for them] and bad".<sup>17</sup>

Mythologist Joseph Campbell observes that the hero's journey parallels real life-crises where traditional indigenous communities used symbols and spiritual exercises from their religious or mythological past or inheritance to guide the hero or initiate through the psychological dangers of transformation.<sup>18</sup> The passage from childhood to adulthood was traditionally celebrated with ceremonies and initiation rites through which the child earned his or her place as an adult among adults. Within indigenous cultures, this passage was acknowledged by the whole community and guided by respected elders. These ceremonies, signifying either physical or social maturation, provided a meaningful process of transformation for young individuals undergoing both personal and social change. In contemporary Western society, this passage is referred to as 'adolescence', a state in which the young person is no longer a child, but not yet an adult. Virginia Hine<sup>19</sup> argues that Western culture does not properly define when this phase begins nor when it ends. It is a time of waiting - frequently lasting for a period of up to eight years - the end of which is signified for many when they may legally drive a car, purchase alcohol or possess a fire arm.<sup>20</sup>

Campbell points out that in modern Western society, our heroes or initiates must face transformation and all of the psychological dangers that accompany it alone and with very little, if any, guidance at all. There are no 'Wise Old Men' to help them through this time because, as 'enlightened' individuals, we no longer place the symbols, rituals and beliefs of mythology within the realm of rational thinking.<sup>21</sup> It can be argued that it is a result of this that, today, many modern young people instinctively look for experiential ways of marking adulthood and often create their own rites of initiation into adulthood. Hine hits

the nail on the head when she says these rites (or means of ‘proving’ themselves) are often socially unacceptable. “Like flightless airplanes, they are allowed to taxi up and down the runway or to rev up their engines, but the control tower will not give them permission to take off. Those who persist in proving that they can fly anyway are liable to become entangled with the law”.<sup>22</sup>

Anne Maguire says that

for thousands of years rites of initiation have been teaching rebirth from the spirit, yet [people have] forgotten the meaning of divine initiatory procreation in our times. This forgetfulness causes . . . a loss of soul, a condition which sadly is everywhere present today.<sup>23</sup>

## **Masculine Identity**

Since the growth of industrial-urban civilization began, Western society has allowed traditional processes of initiation to degenerate, no longer aware of the reasons for their necessity, and the lack of sufficient affirmation and validation of the male’s ‘hero role’ has resulted in great confusion regarding masculine identity within Western culture. Jerome Bernstein<sup>24</sup> argues that the formation of the heroic identity of young men occurs primarily during the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, and suggests that it is during this stage that the archetype of initiation is broken down in Western society. The disappearance of private men’s clubs, the all-male army, and even the ‘males only’ YMCA, has steadily resulted in a decline of male cohesiveness. Many of the all-male groups have been penetrated by women, and those that have not have lost their

purpose. "They no longer serve as secret societies where masculine mysteries are shared and learned."<sup>25</sup>

Some of the remaining men's groups include various sports teams, Lions Clubs, poker clubs and certain health clubs. However, not all surviving male groups are a positive example of male bonding. This is evident in the many gangs which govern township ghettos where the masculine identity is primarily formed and maintained through, if not the exclusion of women, the perception of women as objects or property (group or individual) who exist to be controlled.<sup>26</sup>

Bernstein argues that this identity is enforced by the mass media who have taken it upon themselves to act as 'oracles' for the youth. Through music, sport and advertising, the media projects a stagnant image of what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' in our society. Advertisements tell young people that if they wear certain clothes, drink certain drinks or smoke a particular brand of cigarettes, they can be heroes too - just like those in the ads. The message that these advertisements convey is that the individual only has to identify with the hero in the ad in order to become one. This implies that young people do not have to earn their 'hero' title nor experience their own rite of passage and, in this way, the mass media undermines the necessary processes of self-reflection that are so important to both masculine and feminine ego development.<sup>27</sup>

The 1950s saw the emergence of the feminine archetype, portrayed as images of the Old Wise Woman, Wild Woman or hag, for example, after it had been dormant for a long

time. Today, women are triumphing in social and legal battles to live as more complete people in our society. They are now represented in many of the occupations that were previously only available to men, and women no longer need to choose between having a career and being a mother. Bernstein suggests that

rather than being inactive over the centuries, the archetype of the feminine has been incubating and gestating. . . . Because women were forced to protect and nurture their egos through deep inner reflection and self-awareness (rather than in a more extroverted manner, like men), they tended to focus on their state of being and became more psychically active in their own growth and development. It appears that this introverted process has peaked in the last fifteen years and, with considerable help from the animus, is becoming more outwardly manifested. Sleeping Beauty has finally awakened, if not leapt out of bed!"<sup>28</sup>

When a woman's need for 'connectedness with a man' hinders her self-realization, it is the feminine hero which breaks the bond. This woman travels the uncertain road to find her individuality, even at the pain of intense loneliness. Noticeably, the more independent and assertive women become, the more pressure is placed on men. This may be seen in both the labour market and in politics. Most of all, women are applying psychological pressure on men to relate to them in a meaningful way.<sup>29</sup>

The feminine hero's claim to individuality and her demand for independence is threatening to many men. Modern men have not been prepared for this social and psychic revolution, and often equate their loss of power over women with a loss of masculine power. Contrary to this general perception, however, Bernstein suggests that men are not losing their power to women, rather women are withholding the power that they formerly

used to support the male's emotional side. This has left many modern men with feelings of "uncertainty, depression, dependency, loneliness [and] despair".<sup>30</sup> Behind the hard, unfeeling and arrogant exterior of the men who rape or batter women, abuse children or are chemically addicted, there is often a wounded, suffering and vulnerable interior to be found.<sup>31</sup>

Robert Bly - mythologist, poet and founder of the American Men's Movement - attributes this darker side of men to the elusive and confusing Western image of masculinity:

[Men's] mad exploitation of earth resources, devaluation and humiliation of women, and obsession with tribal warfare are undeniable. Genetic inheritance contributes to their obsessions, but also culture and environment. We have defective mythologies that ignore masculine depth of feeling, assign men a place in the sky instead of earth, teach obedience to the wrong powers, work to keep men boys, and entangle both men and women in systems of industrial domination that exclude both matriarchy and patriarchy.<sup>32</sup>

The subject of manhood is prevalent in much of the literature on gender and violence that has been written in the last five years or so. Sam Keen points out that men are being forced to re-evaluate the concept of 'manhood' by a changing society with its pressing social challenges. The traditional notion of what it means to be a man is gradually, but surely, being broken down, and the macho image which heroes of the past created for themselves through war, work and sex is fast becoming less appealing.<sup>33</sup>

Keen quotes from an article called 'Guns and Dolls' which appeared in an edition of *Newsweek*:

Perhaps the time has come for a new agenda. Women, after all, are not a big problem. Our society does not suffer from burdensome amounts of empathy and altruism, or a plague of nurturance. The problem is men - or more accurately, maleness . . . Men are killing themselves doing all the things that our society wants them to do. At every age they are dying in accidents, they're being shot, they drive cars badly, they ride the tops of elevators, they're two-fisted drinkers. And violence against women is incredibly pervasive. Maybe it's men's raging hormones, [or] . . . because they're trying to be a *man*.<sup>34</sup>

What is known as the 'Men's Movement' has grown remarkably quickly in recent years throughout America and Britain. Perhaps its popularity may be attributed to the unconscious need Western men have for a new definition of manhood. A definition which makes it acceptable for men to feel, to hurt, and to experience emotion. In an attempt to re-assess what it is to be a man, the men's movement involves workshops, retreats and meetings (either set up by established organizations or privately) where men of all cultures and occupations gather together to embark on a spiritual journey. Through story, mythology, poetry, ritual, music, dance, solitude and nature, each explores his Self, investigates his wounds and begins a process of healing, within the safe and trusted environment of brothers.<sup>35</sup> Once again it can be seen that the form of this psychological and spiritual journey parallels that of the physical journey of the ancient mythological hero:

1. Separation from everyday normality;
2. Descent into the underworld: encounters with demons, physical and mental exertion, "maidens guarded by dragons".
3. The return home to negotiate normality with renewed inner strength.

## Iron John

In his book *Iron John: a book about men*, Bly narrates the fairy tale of 'Iron John' or 'Iron Hans' written by the Grimm brothers in approximately 1820. The beginning of the tale of Iron John reads as follows:

Once there was a King who lived in a castle. There was a great forest near this castle which had a bad reputation - whoever went in did not return. Many hunters disappeared there, and whole platoons of soldiers. Soon no one went into the forest. A long time passed, until one day a fearless hunter from another land arrived and offered to enter the forest. He went in, alone, with only his dog for company. The dog came to a pond, but an arm came out of the water and dragged the dog under. The hunter fetched help and slowly bucketed out the pond, until he found a wild man lying at the bottom - covered in hair with skin the colour of rusty iron. The hunter tied up the wild man and carried him off to the castle, where the King locked him in an iron cage in the courtyard, and gave the key into the keeping of the Queen. One day the King's eight-year-son dropped his golden ball into the wild man's cage. He asked the man to give it back. Iron John answered, 'Not until you have opened the cage door'.

For two days the boy said, 'No'. On the third day he said, 'I can't open the door because I don't know where the key is.'

The wild man replied, 'It's under your mother's pillow.'

The boy stole the key and opened the cage, pinching and wounding his finger as he did so. Afraid, he cried out, 'Wild man, don't go away, or I'll get a beating!'

The wild man turned around, picked up the boy, put him on his shoulders and strode off into the forest . . .<sup>36</sup>

Bly suggests that there is an Iron John, a Wild Man waiting to be discovered within the psychic territory of every male. According to Bly, most men are not in touch with their natural instinctual world, they are not in touch with the Wild Man energies. For fear of

being labelled 'macho' or perhaps of offending women, men are afraid to meet and get to know Iron John. They 'forget' him, repress him or simply ignore him and, as a result, they forfeit their male energy, their creativity.<sup>37</sup>

In his natural form, Iron John represents the "unintegrated, undirected yet dynamic movement of masculine energy".<sup>38</sup> This energy creates and destroys. Psychically, it is an unwavering determination to succeed at all cost. With the modern man who ignores him, Iron John is not generous - he does not share his many treasures, but sends only grief. When this happens, the Wild Man is very often experienced unconsciously through violent acts. When Iron John is repressed, he may abandon the repressor leaving him feeling unfulfilled and empty.<sup>39</sup>

The key to this creative, raw male energy is guarded (as is the key to Iron John's cage) by mother. Should her son attempt to take possession of the key - the key to his masculine development - he is met with her disapproval. Through her subtle and unconscious reproof, mother enforces her son's repression of Iron John. Fred Gustafson says that modern men, who have never formally severed the ties to mother, are aware of a need deep within to leave her - separate from her - psychologically. An 'over-nourishing' mother unconsciously stands in the way of her son's independence. Women whose husbands are absent more than they are present during the parenting process may attempt to compensate for the father's absence by 'over-nurturing' their sons.<sup>40</sup> Jung stated that

Because the mother is the first bearer of the soul-image, separation from her is a delicate and important matter of the greatest educational significance. Accordingly among primitives we find a large number of rites designed to organize this separation. The mere fact of becoming adult, and of outward separation, is not enough; impressive initiations into the 'men's house' and ceremonies of rebirth are still needed in order to make the separation from the mother (and hence from childhood) entirely effective.<sup>41</sup>

Traditional initiation consists of a combination of both an introduction of the initiate to the procedures, obligations and prerogatives of his or her new state, and a major readjustment of his or her "emotional relationship to the parental images".<sup>42</sup> For example, some native Australian mythologies instruct that from birth the father is the archetypal enemy, having intruded in the relationship between mother and son and, thus, for the remaining journey through life, all enemies symbolize the father. This belief accounts for the continuous compulsion of men to make war, where the desire to destroy father is manifested in public violence. To protect themselves from their growing sons, the elders in the community enact the monster during totem ceremonies, but afterwards reveal themselves as the nurturing mother, simultaneously fulfilling the role as both guide and initiator.<sup>43</sup>

## **The Father-Son Relationship**

Masculine maturity is the 'archetypal focal point' during adolescent ego development. This stage, if healthy, typically involves psychic separation from mother which largely requires strong support and encouragement from father. In contemporary Western society, however, the high divorce rate is just one of the factors which leaves adolescent boys to endure the process of transformation alone, or with mother as the primary supporter -

which, in Jungian terminology, means that the “process of masculine initiation is archetypally inverted.”<sup>44</sup>

Gustafson suggests that many fathers are regarded by their sons as competitors for authority with whom they must contend. This competition is often controlled by power tactics which serve to distance men from each other. Consequently, the relationship between father and son degenerates, masculine creative attributes fail to be passed on from father to son, and the son grows up weak.<sup>45</sup>

In his essay, The Erosion of Male Confidence, Robert Bly argues that older men have betrayed younger men by failing to provide meaningful values and valid models of manhood. Consequently, young men have no knowledge of the values they should teach their sons, and have often lost contact with their own fathers and grandfathers and no longer feel part of a ‘community of men’. They have lost confidence in older men. Bly points out that this lack of confidence is not limited to any particular social class and is thus affected by many factors: the Industrial Revolution meant that many fathers had to work far from home, work which they could not teach their sons, and the disappearance of male societies has left a lack of opportunities for older and younger men to meet and work together.<sup>46</sup>

Gustafson, points out that

in today's culture, the father-son relationship is in terrible condition. It is both wounded and wounding. It is armoured with a rage that rarely gets defined and tightly conceals a pain and a sadness that, once touched, usually brings tears or uncontrolled weeping. When the father-son bond is not intact in a way that nourishes the son's growth, and when the father does not act as a vehicle for transmitting some of the masculine mysteries to the son, that child will grow up with a limited and crippling sense of his masculinity.<sup>47</sup>

The connection between a father and his son is deep and surreal and exists from the time the son is still in the womb. According to mythologist Michael Meade, the feelings that occur because of this shared connection are often difficult for a father to verbalise, and when confusion or conflict between the two arises, fathers often find themselves being torn between two extremes - especially when a child's spirit is in need of protection or needs space for expression.<sup>48</sup>

These two extremes have been likened to two types of father. One type mysteriously passes through his son's life and is always just out of reach. The other is like a storm - always thundering about and threatening to destroy. The Romans referred to these two extremes as Jupiter and Saturn respectively, while in contemporary psychological terms these fathers may be referred to as 'absent' or 'devouring'.<sup>49</sup>

Jupiter, or the absent father, leaves a distance between himself and his son and the void between them causes his son to feel abandoned, overexposed and vulnerable. This father denies the emotional-world that exists between fathers and sons by hiding behind abstract principles, his career or his news-paper. He denies any obligation he may have to

communicate with his son and, as a result, leaves him with nothing - neither sweet nor bitter - in the form of acknowledgement or recognition.<sup>50</sup>

Saturn, or the devouring father, oppresses and dominates his son, recognizing in his son his own wounds. The approach of his son, of his 'wounds', is threatening and must be prevented. If this father does not strike his children physically, he strikes their spirit emotionally. No matter what the child does to gain the attention of Saturn, his efforts are quickly squashed with bitterness or sarcasm that "chews up the enthusiasm of the child".<sup>51</sup>

Both Jupiter and Saturn may prevent the son from moving towards 'the sweet things in life'. The son is left only with bitterness that severs communication between father and son and inhibits personal growth.<sup>52</sup>

Meade says that

The tree with the honey is a universal symbol of life but also of initiation. The tree combines masculine and feminine characteristics, and different cultural groups will initiate boys and initiate girls at this tree. Grandfathers and grandsons meet at the roots of the tree. The grandson prepares to climb up into life's bittersweet branches and the grandfather prepares to join the ancestors below. What passes between them has mythic and spiritual value.<sup>53</sup>

For these reasons, it is the way of traditional indigenous cultures for the son to be initiated by men who are not as closely connected to the son as the father is. It is the uncles or

unrelated older men (usually elders) who are given the task of introducing the son to the challenges and bitterness of adult life. According to Meade after initiation has been completed the son “re-meet[s] the father on the ground of adult men. . . . Often sweetness can re-enter the relationship then, for they each carry their own bitter things and their own dreams of sweetness”.<sup>54</sup> Bly, Gustafson and Meade imply that the prevalence of unhealthy father-son relationships in Western society today signifies an urban cultural problem. A group of adolescent boys whom I interviewed at various institutions had the following to say about their fathers:

I’ve got a father, but he has divorced with my mother. I see him, but not so much. He was paying for me for a school and buy for me some new clothes. We never did any fun things together. I left my father many years ago. Seven years.<sup>55</sup>

I grew up in Brakpan. I lived with my mom and my sister and my aunt. My dad, well, my dad . . . was staying with another woman. I don’t see him often. My grandparents are dead. I came to [the Place of Safety] in 1991. I came because my parents . . . my father was drinking. My parents were fighting and then they split up. My mom she take her clothes and go and my father he leave us alone. A social worker came to takes us.<sup>56</sup>

I grew up in Pretoria. I lived with my mother. She come for me in Natal when I was young. She go to find work at Pretoria. She find a husband at Mamelodie so we stay there and she get there a boy and the next was a girl. So we are three and after that she died. I came to [the Place of Safety] because after my mother died my stepfather chase me away. I don’t know my [biological] father.<sup>57</sup>

Hy’s ‘n man hy praat nie baie nie. Hy’s ‘n snaakse man jong. Hy praat nie nog baie nie en hy gryp my net af en hy slat my met die hosepipe. Sluit my nat eerste met die hosepipe en ek was vol blou merke en rooi merke en daai man hy slat aanmekaar. Dis true.<sup>58</sup>

The images of Jupiter and Saturn are clear in these words.

### **The Value in Traditional Indigenous Initiation**

Gustafson asks some very significant questions: How does a man relate to Iron John and still continue to be respected by the collective? How does he use his masculine energy without allowing its power to inflate him? How is he able to prevent himself from either repressing the energy or acting out wildly and irresponsibly? How does a man separate from mother in order to further his masculine development?<sup>59</sup>

The answers to these pertinent questions are embedded in the age-old practice of traditional rites of initiation where the fathers, elders and Ancestors are ‘called upon’ to initiate the young people and bring them into awareness of their internal and external powers. The transition from boyhood to manhood is treated as a very important process involving total separation from mother which often requires isolation of the initiate for an extended period of time.<sup>60</sup>

While apart from the community, those being initiated undergo a ritual death and rebirth. The boy dies and the man is reborn. Primitive men were aware of the energy of Iron John and knew how to control its power when manifested. Thus, the boys were taught to adopt and live the virtues of strength and courage through initiatory ordeals involving self-denial and danger. Through these experiences they learnt that the virtues of courage and strength, if used irresponsibly, could also be to the detriment of others and, as such, they

were taught to “work in harmony with the collective”. Psychologically, these ordeals revealed the archetype of the hero to the initiate.<sup>61</sup>

The individual in his or her life form is only a small, possibly distorted part of the complete and whole image of the human being. As either male or female, he or she is limited at any given moment to either child, youth, adult or aged. His or her life role is also further specialized as husband, wife, craftsman, tradesman, leader, servant or thief. Hence, the wholeness or totality of a person is not found in a separate individual, but rather in the society as a whole. From the society, he or she has learned the techniques of life and a mother tongue, and his or her genes are those inherited from past ancestors of that same society. To sever connection with society, be it in thought or in deed, is to sever the connection to the source of one’s being.<sup>62</sup>

Campbell suggests that traditional ceremonies of birth, initiation and burial, for example, echo the individual’s life-crises in a form of a more impersonal nature. They reveal the initiate to him or herself as a warrior, bride, chief, and so forth, instead of an arbitrary personality, and, at the same time, the archetypal stages are narrated for the broader community. Everyone participates in the ceremony, making the community visible as an interdependent living whole. Generations may come and go, but the structure and form of the community remains the same. By embracing the initiate each member of the community is enriched, and no matter how insignificant his or her role may be, each member is able to contribute to the “festival image of the human being”. “Rites of initiation and installation, then, teach the lesson of the essential oneness of the individual

and the group: seasonal festivals open a larger horizon. As the individual is an organ of society, so is the tribe or city - so is humanity entire - only a phase of the mighty cosmos.”<sup>63</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Traditionally, meaning was found in the group and not in the individual, however, today exactly the opposite exists where almost all meaning is sought from the individual and very little from the group. The individual meaning is largely unconscious, though, as one is unaware of one's purpose, unaware of what one moves towards or by what one moves. The communication lines linking the conscious and the unconscious within the human psyche have been weakened.<sup>64</sup>

In contemporary Western societies, emphasis is placed on the individualistic and democratic ideal of self-determination. The state replaces the clan as the frame of reference so that the socialization agencies are fragmented: parents and extended family (and perhaps Church) remain the agencies generated through community or individual choices. But the state provides the other social support (for example, schools and welfare) and social control agencies (for example, police, courts and prisons) while private enterprise and/or the state provides the media and definitions of leisure and influences moral boundaries as important if not more important definers than the family, school or Church.

With the advancement of scientific research methods and electronic machinery, human life has been transformed so completely that there is no longer much place left for mythological symbols.<sup>65</sup> Contemporary initiations into adulthood are very often limited and sometimes even unconscious. Many adolescent boys attempt to initiate themselves through rebellious and dangerous activities, while others are initiated only after experiences of alcoholism, divorce or prison, to name a few. These ‘initiations’ break men down and leave them feeling defeated.<sup>66</sup>

However, although modern Western culture no longer recognizes the archetypal value in rites of passage, it is possible to find again what has been lost in the evolution of industrial society. Lately, and world-wide, there has been a marked increase in the interest of marathon races, the Olympics (from which many heroes emerge), men’s consciousness groups, and organizations such as Outward Bound which offer outdoor initiatory experiences. All of these activities recognize a “psychic need for rites of passage and a true initiation into [adult]hood”.<sup>67</sup> Reinstating dramatic experiences of initiation for adolescents could further the reconstruction of the psychic boundaries which represent the different phases of masculine (and feminine ego) development.<sup>68</sup> It is to this that we now turn.

## End notes

- <sup>1</sup>Schärf, 1992: 4.
- <sup>2</sup>Nina, 1992: 32-33.
- <sup>3</sup>Interview conducted in Guguletu, 14/07/1995.
- <sup>4</sup>Marshall, 1992: 22.
- <sup>5</sup>Cohen, 1991; Foster and Little, 1987; Turner, 1987; Van Gennep, 1960.
- <sup>6</sup>Hall and Lindzey, 1978: 120-122.
- <sup>7</sup>Hall and Lindzey, 1978: 119.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid: 121.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>Maguire is a consultant physician and analytical psychologist in London. Her extensive exploration of the psychic significance of physical disorder and disease has earned her acknowledgement as an authority on psychosomatic medicine.
- <sup>11</sup>Maguire, 1987: 61.
- <sup>12</sup>Coppock and Warfield-Coppock, 1992: 3.
- <sup>13</sup>Campbell, 1968: 10.
- <sup>14</sup>Campbell, 1968: 30.
- <sup>15</sup>Campbell, 1968: 9-10, 58, 97.
- <sup>16</sup>Campbell, 1968: 17-20, 38.
- <sup>17</sup>Luke, 1995: 191.
- <sup>18</sup>Campbell, 1968: 104.
- <sup>19</sup>Hine was a social anthropologist and author. Her death in 1982 prevented the completion of a manuscript entitled Rites of Passage for Our Time: A Guide to the Self-Creation of Ritual.
- <sup>20</sup>Hine, 1987: 305.
- <sup>21</sup>Campbell, 1968: 104.
- <sup>22</sup>Hine, 1987: 305.
- <sup>23</sup>1987: 61.
- <sup>24</sup>Bernstein is clinical psychologist and Jungian analyst in Washington, DC.
- <sup>25</sup>Bernstein, 1987: 143.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid: 144.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid: 146.
- <sup>29</sup>Bernstein, 1987: 146.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid: 146-148.
- <sup>31</sup>Gustafson, 1987: 160.
- <sup>32</sup>1990: x.
- <sup>33</sup>Keen, 1992: 5.
- <sup>34</sup>1992: 5-6.
- <sup>35</sup>See Bly, 1990; Meade, 1993; Keen, 1992; Olivier, 1995.
- <sup>36</sup>Quoted from Olivier, 1995: 34-35.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid, 165.
- <sup>38</sup>Gustafson, 1987: 165.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid: 166-167.
- <sup>41</sup>Jung quoted in Gustafson, 1987: 170.
- <sup>42</sup>Campbell, 1968: 136.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid: 155.
- <sup>44</sup>Bernstein, 1987: 152.
- <sup>45</sup>Gustafson, 1987: 168.
- <sup>46</sup>Bly, 1987: 189-190.
- <sup>47</sup>1987: 169.
- <sup>48</sup>Meade, 1993: 68, 76.

- <sup>49</sup>Meade, 1993: 76.  
<sup>50</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>51</sup>Meade, 1993: 77.  
<sup>52</sup>Meade, 1993: 78.  
<sup>53</sup>1993: 80.  
<sup>54</sup>Meade, 1993: 80.  
<sup>55</sup>Pretoria, March 1996.  
<sup>56</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>57</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>58</sup>Cape Town, June 1997.  
<sup>59</sup>1987: 170.  
<sup>60</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>61</sup>Gustafson, 1987: 170.  
<sup>62</sup>Campbell, 1968: 328.  
<sup>63</sup>Ibid: 383-384.  
<sup>64</sup>Campbell, 1968: 388.  
<sup>65</sup>Ibid: 387.  
<sup>66</sup>Gustafson, 1987: 170-171.  
<sup>67</sup>Bernstein, 1987: 154.  
<sup>68</sup>Ibid: 155.

## Chapter 3

### *Rites de Passage*

Full circle from the tomb of the womb to the womb of the tomb, we come: an ambiguous, enigmatical incursion into a world of solid matter that is soon to melt from us, like the substance of a dream. And, looking back at what had promised to be our own unique, unpredictable, and dangerous adventure, all we find in the end is such a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization.

Joseph Campbell<sup>1</sup>

In 1909 a French anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep, coined the phrase *rites de passage* when he undertook a study of the various life-crises which an individual experiences during a life-time. He examined the ceremonies which accompany these crises and discovered that it was possible to classify the order and content of such ceremonies into three different phases: **separation, transition and incorporation.**<sup>2</sup> It appears that, since then, all cross-cultural studies of rites of passage and initiation processes have been influenced by Van Gennep's theory. This chapter explores rites of passage in terms of the pattern formed by Van Gennep's three phases.

#### **The Pattern of Rites of Passage**

The first phase of a rite of passage, namely Separation, symbolically signifies a withdrawal of the initiate from a social, structural position as well as from the cultural conditions that define this position.<sup>3</sup> In traditional societies, the initiate is physically separated from his or her parents as he or she is taken to a secluded area. Here the

individual can no longer afford to be emotionally dependent on the parents, and at the same time the parents are unable to influence their child. In the story of Iron John, the boy discovers his 'golden potential' or sense of self-worth as an individual, and not as a son, only once he has separated from his parents.<sup>4</sup>

Once the initiate has undergone a separation, he or she passes through an interstructural liminal phase where the state of the individual is characteristically ambiguous, possessing none of the attributes associated with the past nor the future state. During traditional initiation this is the phase where the young person is required to complete a series of trials, and he or she is also taught 'dances, poems, songs, tribal secrets and myths'. Initiates are taught their cultural history by the elders and this serves to take the focus off the individual parents.<sup>5</sup>

In the final phase of a traditional rite of passage, the subject enters into a structural position once again and thus possesses the rights and duties associated with the new position, and is expected to comply with the prevailing social norms and values.<sup>6</sup> Reintegration into the community is usually commemorated with a celebration ceremony. Rituals involving the sharing of a meal are evidently rites of incorporation where eating and drinking together signifies physical union.<sup>7</sup>

Like Van Gennep, Victor Turner notes that rites of passage are present in all societies, but to a higher degree in those which are smaller, predominantly stable, and where change is directed, not by technology, but rather by biological and meteorological rhythms. Rites

denote a change from one state or condition (be it physical, mental or emotional) to another, where this change involves a process or transformation. Rites of passage are not restricted to individual life-crises, but may be associated with any change that involves a transition from one state to another. Neither are they restricted to transitions between 'ascribed statuses' as one may enter a newly achieved status. Here Turner gives the examples of a political office and membership of a private club or secret society. These groups may permit membership of an individual, but not be open to the whole society.<sup>8</sup>

Initiation of young people into adulthood is of primary importance among traditional indigenous communities. Through initiation the community's 'conception of the world' is slowly revealed to the young person. The world and all of its wonders are attributed to the work of Supreme Beings and, hence, are regarded as sacred. Mircea Eliade says that "the world has a 'history': first, its creation by Supernatural Beings; then, everything that took place after that - the coming of the civilizing Hero or the mythical Ancestor, their cultural activities, their demiurgic adventures, and at last their disappearance".<sup>9</sup> This history (or mythology) relates how things originated to the initiate, it accounts for human behaviour and culture. Thus, according to Eliade, initiation "denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become *another*".<sup>10</sup>

## **Ritual and its Relationship to Rites of Passage**

According to Catherine Bell<sup>11</sup>, the nineteenth century saw ritual used as a term of analysis to establish a “universal category of human experience”.<sup>12</sup> Ritual marked the initial change in the way in which the European culture compared itself to the rest of the cultural and religious world. Following this, definitions of ritual continued to be developed by scholars including “myth-and-ritual” theorists who attempted to explain religion, social functionalists who attempted to analyse society and social phenomena, and anthropologists who explored the dynamics of culture.<sup>13</sup>

Ritual, in Durkheim’s view, produces collective representations and bestows a “mystical ethos upon them” which promotes acceptance of and responses to these representations during communal experiences. According to the social solidarity thesis of Durkheim’s model of ritual, ritual may be used as a means of social control as it promotes consensus which usually has psychological and cognitive consequences.<sup>14</sup> Bell points out that supporters of this view “see social solidarity as ‘a requirement of society’ and ritual as ‘an indispensable element in the creation of that solidarity’”.<sup>15</sup>

Among the supporters of the social solidarity theory are Max Gluckman and Victor Turner who take a slightly different approach by analyzing the effects of ritual on conflict. They conclude that ritual sustains social unity by diffusing social tension.<sup>16</sup> Bell explains Turner’s description of how ritual preserves a given group’s value system and experience of community (or ‘*communitas*’ which Turner uses to refer to ties of social relationship as opposed to an area of common living<sup>17</sup>) by transforming “the obligatory

into the desirable”, that is “norms and values, on the one hand, become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions become ennobled through contact with social values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the ‘love of virtue’”.<sup>18</sup>

Bell suggests that even though Gluckman and Turner were concerned with structural and social conflicts as opposed to individual psychological conflict, their approach is psychosocial, arguing that the individual is controlled by group processes as the ongoing conflict between an individual’s psyche and society exists within both. To regard cultural rituals as stemming from psychological conflicts only “is to see ritual as an oppression inherently necessary to society, which is defined in turn as the repression of the individual”.<sup>19</sup>

A final Durkheimian approach is concerned with “how ritual models ideal relations and structures of values”.<sup>20</sup> Supporters of this ‘definition of reality thesis’ argue that ritual plays a symbolic role in shaping the social order and are primarily concerned with the way in which ritual “ ‘defines’ social norms and presents them for internalization” as opposed to how it controls.<sup>21</sup> According to psychogenic interpretation, it is the symbolism in rituals which creates meaning which, in turn, has the power to transform. Rituals, as such, simply function to remind one of what it means to be an accepted adult member of a community.<sup>22</sup>

Bell says that

proponents of the definition of reality thesis seek to find in ritual a single central mechanism for the communication of culture, the internalization of values, and the individual's cognitive perception of the universe that generally fits with these values.

This view largely parallels traditional indigenous thought and provides an explanation for the function of ritual in initiation ceremonies. Malidoma Patrice Somé<sup>23</sup> says that the Dagara people of Burkino Faso in West Africa consider the replacement of ritual by everyday living in modern industrial societies to be a source of social decay which is evident in the diminishing links with the spirit world and increasing alienation of people from self and other. "In a context like this there are no elders to help anyone remember through initiation of his or her important place in the community".<sup>24</sup>

The term *ritual* has Indo-European origins and means " 'to fit together' for the purpose of creating order".<sup>25</sup> According to anthropologist Larry Peters, the psychological transformations involved in the Birth / Death / Rebirth cycle of life are aided by the "transitional and sacred symbols of the ritual process" and if this process is welcomed with sensitivity and understanding it can be used to facilitate personal growth.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the underlying philosophy of a rite of passage is that, through ritual, the initiate changes completely - even the character and destiny of the body. David Parkin argues that:

it is often part of the alleged special character of ritual that it [presupposes] an action or series of actions which does not need speech. Thus, while myth is rendered as privileging words, ritual is held to privilege physical action . . . . If such movements are a principal

feature of ritual, then it must be through them rather than through verbal assertions that people make their main statements.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, ritual is synonymous with rites of passage. Both have 'phasal movement, directionality, and positioning', and through movement those participating in the ritual are able to describe the world as well as the ritual itself.<sup>28</sup> Parkin describes two approaches or emphases of ritual:

1. that which tends to treat ritual as a process of such internal conceptual significance, if not consistency, that we are given only a limited idea of that ritual's movement through social space, and
2. that which, instead, emphasizes the ritual as clearly concerned with directionality and as making up a journey or passage undertaken and/or marked by participants standing in social relationships to each other.<sup>29</sup>

The ability of ritual to change direction and spatial orientation in an infinite number of ways suggests that not only may ritual be described as a form of art, but it may be described as purposeful as well. Thus, ritual is not simply performative, but is performative with the intention of achieving a specific goal for a specific person.<sup>30</sup>

Somé refers to the structure of a given ritual as *ceremony* because it changes according to time and place. Ceremony is "the anatomy of a ritual". According to Somé, there are two parts to a ritual. The first is visible and may be seen, observed and corrected while the

second is invisible and exists because of the ceremony, that is it “carries the ritual quality within itself”.<sup>31</sup>

A practice that is common among many traditional initiations involves blindfolding the initiates at the beginning of the rites. This symbolizes the fact that they will no longer know and see what they knew and saw before. They are blind to the journey ahead of them and know not what lies before them.<sup>32</sup> During this process the initiate’s focus is turned inwards to his or her own ‘wounds’, those breaks in life which precipitate transformation and change. Thus, initiation does not only leave its own wound, but improves the neophytes insight into wounds as well. Ritual performances symbolize the process which the psyche undergoes in order to know and feel the transformation which the initiate has undergone.<sup>33</sup>

Somé insists that the content of ritual must remain confidential if it is to retain its unifying power and suggests that sharing the ritual content with those who did not participate in the ritual risks tearing the group apart and in the process affects everyone.

It should be noted that different societies and subgroups may attach different meanings to ritual activities and, as such, theories of ritual as a means of social control need to establish which communities will make use of this method of social control and why.<sup>34</sup>

## **The Importance of Symbolism for Initiation**

Among the Dagara of Burkino Faso, it is believed that if an adolescent is not initiated into adulthood, he or she will remain an adolescent for the rest of his or her life. The Dagara consider this to be both unnatural and dangerous and, as such, the importance of initiation lies in its ability to integrate the body and soul. It is a means of locating the centre of our being - that which is both within us and without us and all around us. It is Dagara belief that the birth of a person weakens the contact between that person and his or her centre, and the purpose of initiation is to relocate the centre and become familiar with it. "Without the centre we cannot tell who we are, where we come from, and where we are going".<sup>35</sup>

The symbol for the centre is the circle. Somé explains that one is both circle and centre for without the one there cannot be the other. The circle has four living parts: "the rising part in the east and its right side, the north, and the setting part in the west and its right side, the south".<sup>36</sup> The setting part symbolizes water which in turn symbolizes the peace and harmony of body and soul. It forms a link between what we are on the inside and what we show on the outside. The other half of the circle, the rising part, is symbolized by fire which represents things such as passion, anger, love and action. Fire has the power to move. From without it moves us towards each other, towards fulfilling our goals. From within it directs us and is responsible for the force which pulls us towards our true family.

Somé says that

The Dagara view fire much differently from Westerners, both literally and figuratively. The two ideas are almost exact opposites. In the West, fire is dangerous and unmanageable. It drives the individual into uncontrolled fits of passion and a restless

pursuit of material things. It always seemed humorous to me that there are fire departments in America and Europe. To a Dagara, the craziness that fire inspires in the West comes from the fact that fire is upset that Western people have forgotten their purpose in life".<sup>37</sup>

The two primary emotions that initiates experience are those of anger and sorrow. Meade says, "The territories of sorrow and anger are places where things are born, increased and buried".<sup>38</sup> When these two emotions are not experienced, the soul, the 'emotional body' cannot grow.

Initiation is not something which can be forced on somebody - the soul cannot be coerced. The extent of transformation depends, to a large degree, on the initiate's longing for "greater knowledge, feeling, and spiritual depth".<sup>39</sup> Luke points out that the word 'spirit' is ordinarily used to "express that which brings about a transformation". For example, the spirit in petroleum changes oil into power; the spirits of salt and ammonia "purify and destroy"; and the personality of a person may be transformed by the spirit in alcohol. These examples suggest that, to Westerners, the spirit appears as an active principle, and has therefore been likened to the creative power of the masculine.<sup>40</sup>

Drawing from Jung's ideas, Luke argues that the 'spirit' cannot be rationally explained but can only be experienced through symbols in images from 'the unconscious of humankind' which represent the power of the spirit. Of all the images, the one most common is that of 'wind' or 'the breath of the spirit'. "It is that which bloweth where it listeth and no man knoweth whence it cometh and whither it goeth".<sup>41</sup> Related to the

image of wind is that of fire as, according to the ancients, from wind came fire. In order for the man or woman to be *creative*, the wind and fire of the spirit must enter each being.

Luke suggests that

thoughts and actions that remain untouched by this mystery may produce new forms in abundance, bring good and evil in equal measure to our collective life, but nothing is essentially changed in the psyche of man [or woman], whereas, whenever a breath of that wind or a spark of fire lodges in mind or heart or body, we are immediately aware of some kind of newness of life.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the essence of symbolism is its ability to give meaning to things - most importantly, it gives meaning to life. "For what is it in fact to live the symbolic life? It is most definitely not to spend certain hours of the week on the study of symbols and images and then to live the rest of our lives on a non-symbolic level . . . We live symbolically when each thing we do or say, think or feel is *whole* - not split into the 'fact' and the 'meaning', not marred by ulterior motives however lofty, when it simply is in itself, not done or said *because* it is useful or good or whatever."<sup>43</sup>

Jung distinguishes between 'natural' and 'cultural' symbols where the former stem "from the unconscious contents of the psyche". They represent different archetypal themes which may be traced back to ancient times and primitive societies. Cultural symbols, on the other hand, are the 'eternal truths' of civilized societies. Although they may have undergone various transformations or conscious development, they still possess their 'original numinosity', and continue to be found in many religions.<sup>44</sup>

Jung stressed that these numinous factors cannot be ignored on the basis that they are irrational because

they are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society, and they cannot be eradicated without serious loss. When they are repressed or neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unpredictable consequences. The energy that appears to have been lost revives and intensifies whatever is uppermost in the unconscious - tendencies, perhaps, that have hitherto had no chance to express themselves, or have not been allowed an uninhibited existence in our consciousness. They form an ever-present destructive 'shadow'. Even tendencies that might be able to exert a beneficial influence turn into variable demons when they are repressed. This is why many well-meaning people are understandably afraid of the unconscious, and incidentally of psychology.<sup>45</sup>

Today, Western civilization has little symbolic life. We only have the ordinary, the rational or the irrational. We no longer create symbolic space through mythology and, preoccupied with science or business, very few really participate in the ritual of life.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Separation Phase of Rites of Passage**

The cultural process of initiating a boy into manhood traditionally begins with the breaking of ties between mother and son. Usually at the beginning of adolescence, boys are taken away, without warning, to live among men in order to be taught the ways of men by elders.<sup>47</sup> Meade tells of an ancient belief shared by many cultures which says that the trauma of childbirth causes the new born to forget its experience of the womb, its origins, its spirit and all the knowledge of itself that it possessed in utero. All of this must

be relearned after birth. Hence, the purpose of initiation is to help people to discover who they are and who they want to become.<sup>48</sup>

Keen explains traditional indigenous separation rituals by saying, “Premodern societies knew the overwhelming power of Woman [the feminine] and that boys could only emerge into manhood if they separated from her and entered for a time into an all-male world. Male rites of passage were designed to allow boys to escape from Woman’s world long enough to discover the shape of man’s world. They knew that men must resist the danger of being defined by Woman (and vice-versa). The sexes were pried apart and isolated to explore their separate truths before they could come together.”<sup>49</sup> For mythic, archetypal or unconscious reasons, young neophytes are given some form of scar as a reminder that they are part of the community and hence must be willing to work for the good of the community as a whole. Separation is usually reinforced with a painful experience such as scarification, burnings, circumcision or subincision of the penis.<sup>50</sup>

Cohen seems to agree with Keen as he explains that symbolically, the act of circumcision should be understood in terms of having social significance and not physiological significance. As such, the practice of circumcision as part of initiation rites may be compared to any form of body mutilation which signifies the incorporation of a given individual into a defined group. For example, in Turkey boys are circumcised at the age of about seven or eight years, during an elaborate ritual ceremony. This rite, known as the *sunnet*, marks a separation of the boy from mother which is necessary for the boy to become a man. In Sudan, Kau girls are marked with scarification welts at the time of

pubescence. The scarring is increased once they have reached sexual maturity and again, for the last time, after their first child is weaned.<sup>51</sup>

## **The Liminal Phase of Rites of Passage**

Although Van Gennep's theory put rites of passage on the map, so to speak, Turner is generally considered to be the authority on the transitional phase. In his essay Between: the liminal phase in rites of passage, Turner focuses on initiation rites as rites which predominantly promote transition due to the dominance of their liminal phase, and considers the rites of separation and incorporation to be more closely linked to the social structure. He views the basic structure of society as a structure of positions and, thus, refers to the marginal or liminal period as the 'interstructural situation'. During this phase, initiates move away from their structural positions and consequently dissociate from the values and norms which accompany those positions as well as the thoughts, feelings and behaviour associated with them. In turn, they are encouraged to "think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. *Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection*".<sup>52</sup> "Reflection", in the words of Helen Luke, is "a looking anew from a different angle".<sup>53</sup>

The core of the liminal process in initiation rites world wide ultimately revolves around the 'communication of the **sacra**'. According to Turner, this may occur in three ways, namely **exhibitions**: what is shown; **actions**: what is done; and **instructions**: what is said. The initiates are encouraged to believe that, by way of the sacra (that is, by what they see and understand of the archetypal event), they acquire mystical power needed to

successfully manage the duties of their new structural position. “Thus, the communication of the *sacra* both teaches the neophytes how to think with some degree of abstraction about their cultural milieu and gives them ultimate standards of reference. At the same time, it is believed to change their nature, transform them from one kind of human being into another. . . . For a variable while, there was an uncommitted [person], an individual rather than a social persona, in a sacred community of individuals”.<sup>54</sup>

Jung’s description of archetypes provides a deeper understanding of Turner’s *sacra*. According to Jung, archetypes are much more than just images or word-pictures. They contain psychic energy, and it is this numinosity which makes a given image dynamic, filling it with the power to act as a catalyst for transformation within an individual who is connected to this archetypal image by emotion. Thus, it is essential to learn about the numinosity of archetypal images in order to understand its relationship to the individual. Jung points out that meaning cannot be found in names alone, but in the way they are related to people.<sup>55</sup>

Turner says,

The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible’. As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture. A society’s secular definitions do not allow for a not-boy-not-man, which is what a novice in a male puberty rite is (if he can be said to be anything).<sup>56</sup>

Together with the definitions of a given culture, there are also religious definitions which attempt to define the “structurally indefinable transition-being” with a name as well as with symbols. The name is often used to assign the initiate into another state or condition.<sup>57</sup> Pinnock gives an example of this where, among the Xhosa people, the young female initiate is referred to as ‘intonjane’ while the boy is called ‘makwetha’. These names denote the actual transition taking place, rather than one of the states between which it occurs. During a traditional intonjane ceremony, the young woman is secluded behind a curtain in an ‘intonjane hut’. She remains so for approximately twenty-eight days where she is naked and painted white. Her nakedness symbolizes the ways of her previous state which she leaves behind, and the white paint represents the sacredness of the transition-being. During the seclusion the intonjane is taught about “her ancestors and about magic and being a woman” by her grandmother. After the seclusion period is over, the intonjane emerges from her hut and is given a community celebration.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, according to Turner, the function of the symbolism associated with the liminal persona is to give an outward form to an inward process. The transition-being, during the liminal phase, is “no longer classified and not yet classified”. Being no longer classified, the symbols primarily signify an absence or loss of the structural position and are, thus, frequently drawn from the “biology of death”.<sup>59</sup> Hence the practice of seclusion or separation, where the initiate’s name is disregarded. In the case of the Xhosa, the young woman is referred to as *intonjane*, someone who is neither one thing nor another, and yet is both. In this sense, transition-beings possess nothing - no status, property, rank or

kinship position to distinguish them from their peers on a structural level. To a large extent this explains the need of adolescents to define themselves with ritual.

Despite the unstructured interstructural features of the liminal, Turner identifies a unique social structure that develops from the relations that form between the initiates and their instructors and/or between the initiates themselves. Between instructors and initiates the relationship is one of authority and submission, while between initiates it is predominantly one of equality.<sup>60</sup> According to Youniss, adolescents share values and aspirations through the transition from childhood to adulthood. During this transition, changes are effected both within and without the individual in the form of biological and cognitive functions (within) and social relations (without). Levels of cognition reach maturity at the time of adolescence and this enables the individual to gain abstract views on the “self, society, and moral values and ethics”.<sup>61</sup>

It should be noted that the authoritative position of the instructors or elders is not of legal sanction, but rather prevails by way of tradition. This authority is a representation of the social values of the community, an authority which must be obeyed by the initiates for the good of the whole group. Turner says

that the authority in question is really quintessential tradition emerges clearly in societies where initiations are not collective but individual and where there are no instructors or gurus.<sup>62</sup>

## **The Reintegration Phase of Rites of Passage**

The final stage of a traditional rite of passage is a social event. One which proclaims to the world the fact that the initiates are now adults, having made the transition from 'me' to 'we'.<sup>63</sup> The initiates, having successfully passed through the liminal phase, return to new structured positions within society having been equipped with 'enhanced knowledge' of the way things are. On their return, they are once again required to obey social custom and law and "they are shown that ways of acting and thinking alternative to those laid down by the deities or ancestors are ultimately unworkable and may have disastrous consequences."<sup>64</sup>

Dadisi Sanyika describes this phase as a process of remembrance for all the adults of the community who have survived this journey in the past and it is a hint of what is to come for those who have yet to do so. In this sense, the final celebration is a means of affirming the community and reinforcing its identity, values and ideals.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Together, the three phases of traditional indigenous rites of passage honour the period of transition that occurs between different phases of life. The pattern Separation -Transition - Incorporation forms a sacred journey, a path which leads to new knowledge and inner transformation. The following chapter explores what the relevance of these notions is to young people at risk in South Africa.

## End notes

- <sup>1</sup>1968: 12-15.
- <sup>2</sup>Kimball in Van Gennepe, 1960: vii.
- <sup>3</sup>Turner, 1987: 5.
- <sup>4</sup>Olivier, 1995: 41.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup>Turner, 1987: 5.
- <sup>7</sup>Van Gennepe, 1960: 29.
- <sup>8</sup>1987: 4-5.
- <sup>9</sup>Eliade, 1958: x.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> At the time the book was published, Bell was Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University.
- <sup>12</sup> 1992: 14.
- <sup>13</sup> Bell, 1992: 14.
- <sup>14</sup> Bell, 1992: 171.
- <sup>15</sup> 1992: 171.
- <sup>16</sup> Bell, 1992: 172.
- <sup>17</sup> Turner, 1969: 96.
- <sup>18</sup> Turner quoted in Bell, 1992: 172.
- <sup>19</sup> 1992: 172-173.
- <sup>20</sup> Bell, 1992: 175.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Raphael, 1988: 11.
- <sup>23</sup> As a young boy Somé was abducted from his Dagara village in Burkina Faso and taken to a Jesuit mission school where he was forced to learn and adopt European ways of thought and religion. After fifteen years he returned to his family and was initiated in the traditions of his ancestors. Somé is a medicine man and diviner in his culture, and also has three master's degrees and two doctoral degrees from the Sorbonne and Brandeis University.
- <sup>24</sup> Somé, 1993: 30.
- <sup>25</sup> Peters, 1994: 42.
- <sup>26</sup> Peters, 1994: 40.
- <sup>27</sup> 1992: 12.
- <sup>28</sup> Parkin in de Coppet, 1992: 12.
- <sup>29</sup> 1992: 16.
- <sup>30</sup> Parkin in de Coppet, 1992: 17.
- <sup>31</sup> Somé, 1993: 50.
- <sup>32</sup> Meade, 1993: 169.
- <sup>33</sup> Meade, 1993: 170.
- <sup>34</sup> Bell, 1992: 176.
- <sup>35</sup> Somé, 1994: 23, 198.
- <sup>36</sup> Somé, 1994: 199.
- <sup>37</sup> Somé, 1994: 200.
- <sup>38</sup> Meade, 1993: 122.
- <sup>39</sup> Meade, 1993: 146.
- <sup>40</sup> Luke, 1995: 11.
- <sup>41</sup> Luke, 1995: 10.
- <sup>42</sup> Luke, 1995: 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> Jung, 1974: 253.
- <sup>45</sup> Jung, 1974: 254.
- <sup>46</sup> Jung, 1974: 273.

- <sup>47</sup>Keen, 1992: 29.  
<sup>48</sup>1993: 103.  
<sup>49</sup>Keen, 1992: 28.  
<sup>50</sup>Keen, 1992: 29, 30.  
<sup>51</sup>Cohen, 1991: 54, 93.  
<sup>52</sup>Turner, 1987: 5, 14.  
<sup>53</sup>1995: 4.  
<sup>54</sup>Turner, 1987: 12, 17.  
<sup>55</sup>Jung, 1974: 257.  
<sup>56</sup>1987: 6.  
<sup>57</sup>Turner, 1987: 7.  
<sup>58</sup>1997: 10-11.  
<sup>59</sup>1987: 7-8.  
<sup>60</sup>Turner, 1987: 9.  
<sup>61</sup>Youniss in Cairns and Cairns, 1994: 90.  
<sup>62</sup>1987: 9.  
<sup>63</sup>Keen, 1992: 32.  
<sup>64</sup>Turner, 1987: 15.  
<sup>65</sup>1996: 120.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Rites and Adolescence**

This chapter focuses on the need for Western cultures to acknowledge the transition phases in life and the crises which surround them, particularly for adolescents. Today, there are many competing scripts which are presented to young people. Understanding how they choose or get forced into a role is of particular relevance in understanding socially unacceptable behaviour of adolescents. The example of street gang initiations is explored as substitute rites of passage and the importance of ritual is discussed with regard to the facilitation of positive transformation. Two examples of contemporary rites of passage programmes (currently running in the United States) are presented, namely the VisionQuest programme and David Oldfield's Journey programme.

#### **Adolescence: a Time for Initiation**

"Graduation ceremonies are for parents", said one high school senior during a planning session for an 'alternative graduation ceremony' in San Rafael, California. "I want a ceremony, but not theirs. The white gowns, the procession and all - it's like two lines of ants."

"Yeah", answered another. "Little ants coming out of a cage. I wonder - are they really letting us go or just cleaning the cage?"

Virginia Hine, 1987 (311-312)

According to Meade, “initiatory experiences carry a person away from what they know and outside the normal rules, beliefs, and boundaries. While in that separated state outside of normalcy, radical change can occur and radical healing is possible. Initiation involves both suffering and healing, makes the ‘self’ a territory of great learning, and connects a person to the essential mysteries of life”.<sup>1</sup>

There are generally three primary groups which are affected by initiation. Firstly, those who are in the throws of transformation relating to life crises. Secondly, those who are dealing with ordeals, events, emotions or memories from the past, and thirdly, those who, although experiencing ordeals, are not yet ready for transformation.<sup>2</sup>

The first group refers to all young people undergoing the transformation from adolescence to adulthood. The ordeals that these individuals experience are usually directly related to life-crises and may even include “dangerous brushes with death”. Western society does not often perceive these events (which usually involve separation, disorientation or ‘near death’) as initiatory and, hence, neglects to realize that whether or not these experiences are negative or illegal is irrelevant. What matters is the need of the soul to undergo transformation.<sup>3</sup>

Meade says that “entering into the depths of the psyche can be overwhelming and dangerous. Rites of initiation intentionally put people at the edge, where they must sink or swim with the capacities and resources they carry within themselves. When there are no prepared rites, the psyche of a person will take any significant interruption of the daily

world and throw a person into the realm of ordeals and trials.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the psyche both needs and expects rites of passage which deepen the individual’s spiritual and emotional capacity. When a culture or society has forgotten these rites or simply neglects them, the individual may use anything that might sever the ties to childhood.

If parents, adults, and / or the community did not perceive what was happening at the time to have any initiatory meaning at all, they probably were not supposed to. Meade says,

. . . it is not that the boy within missed the ‘initiation’. Rather, at the time it wasn’t seen as an initiation. Perhaps there was an accident, an illness, or a big mistake; rules or bones or hearts were broken. Things were never the same again and people never saw each other the same way. There was an outbreak of passion, foolishness, or violence. There was a mental breakdown or an emotional collapse. Perhaps the event was overlooked, mistaken for a crime, or considered something the boy would outgrow instead of something he’d grow into. As a result, the event needed and was covered with layers of disappointment, cynicism, shame, or blame.<sup>5</sup>

Meade points out that “one of the problems today is the increasing alienation of young people during and after periods of ordeal, which is intensified because there are generation gaps without generation bridges. When there is no community waiting to welcome, acknowledge and close the life breaks of youth, the separations and ordeals tend to continue. They may quiet down, they may submerge, they may be repressed, and they may cause people to be depressed, but they continue”.<sup>6</sup> This pattern is strongly evident in South African society and simply highlights the deep yearning that young people have for rituals of transformation.

As Meade says, “getting to the imaginal, emotional, spiritual heart of a person requires something extreme. Thousands of years ago our ancestors knew this was necessary. Elaborate rites were developed to connect the fires in the hearts of youth to ancient images that would sustain and unite the tribe”.<sup>7</sup> He continues by saying that

What modern society tries to dismiss as a stage out of which youth will grow automatically is actually a crucible in which the future of the culture gets forged. Adolescence is a return to the womb - not the physical womb of the mother, but the womb of culture and nature. . . . Adolescents are always absorbing whatever the culture is digesting, especially its inner concerns and attitudes towards the nature of the world and of people. The word *adolescence* derives from *ado*, adult, and *lescere*, to nourish. The *adolescere* group are the next adults being nourished by the psychological, emotional, sexual, and spiritual foods of the culture.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the spirit in youth should not be repressed, but rather recognized and contained through ritual guidance from elders. According to Meade, initiation by fire - that is initiation by ordeal - transcends family and cultural norms and reveals the true Self of the initiate. If this process does not happen for whatever reason, this prevention can turn natural instinctual needs into deviant, even criminal, behaviour. He says that “[i]n contemporary cultures, there is no assumption that boys can walk through a fire and reach an inner sense of beauty and spiritual worth. Yet, the capacity of youth and men to erupt in aggression, rage, and violence is in daily evidence”.<sup>9</sup> Many structures which exist in our society such as schools, universities and the military, follow an initiatory form, but neglect to recognize or acknowledge the deeper meaning in their power to motivate transformation and, hence, the value in them is lost.<sup>10</sup>

## The Separation Phase in Gang Rites of Passage

. . . Indeed, during that extended period of rage that goes by the name of adolescence, what terrified me most about my father was not the violence I expected him momentarily to unleash upon me, but the violence I wished every night at the dinner table to commit upon his ignorant, barbaric carcass. How I wanted to send him howling from the land of the living when he ate from the serving bowl with his own fork, or sucked the soup from his spoon instead of politely waiting for it to cool, or attempted, God forbid, to express an opinion on any subject whatsoever.

. . . And what was especially terrifying about the murderous wish was this: if I tried, chances were I'd succeed! Chances were he would help me along! I would have only to leap across the dinner dishes, my fingers aimed at his windpipe, for him instantaneously to sink down beneath the table with his tongue hanging out. Shout he could shout, squabble he could squabble . . . But defend himself? Against me?

"Alex, keep this back talk up," my mother warns as I depart from the kitchen roaring like Atilla the Hun, run screaming from yet another half-eaten dinner, "Continue with this disrespect and you will give that man a heart attack!"

"Good!" I cry, slamming in her face the door to my room. "Fine!" I scream, extracting from my closet the nylon jacket I wear only with my collar up (the style she abhors as much as the filthy garment itself). "Wonderful!" I shout, and with streaming eyes run to the corner to vent my fury on the pinball machine.<sup>11</sup>

This behaviour is typical of the processes or 'separation rituals' adolescents experience. These rituals or "rehearsals for psychological autonomy" usually begin just before puberty and follow the need for physical autonomy which began during infancy. The quest for psychological autonomy is assisted by cognitive and neurological development and is influenced by experiences during childhood. Once adolescents have developed the ability to distinguish between and integrate different ideas, they are able to begin to see different points of view, however, this usually only occurs nearer to adulthood. For this reason, younger adolescents are easily critical of the values or reasoning of others.<sup>12</sup>

Separation anxiety, however, is not only a side-effect common to adolescents, but also affects parents who fear a sense of loss regarding their children, their youth, or simply “the dream of a compliant son or daughter who lives out the projections of their own hopes”.<sup>13</sup> When adolescents challenge their parents (or the adults in their lives) with rebellious or delinquent behaviour, parents may feel threatened. This fear commonly manifests itself in the form of compensatory behaviour where, for example, parents may ridicule their sons or daughters in order to repress their own feelings of depreciating self-worth, and in the process it is forgotten that young people need assistance and encouragement to be more receptive to adulthood. The energy of youth needs to be given an opportunity for expression, and their spirit requires protection and nurturing. Transformation and change are not restricted to any specific time during an individual’s life, but the hunger for change is particularly strong during adolescence.<sup>14</sup>

In contemporary society boys are no longer required to face wild animals alone, or hunt and kill for food as a test of manhood. Today, the testing ground for a boy’s courage and strength is largely provided by gangs and fuelled by a constant flow of fantasy images of power portrayed by the media.<sup>15</sup> The process of separation is evident in the activities of gang youth as they search for a passage to adulthood. The process of separation begins as soon as the young person starts to associate with a deviant group such as a gang, for example. Douglas-Hamilton observes that “it is a multi-layered process that engages the youth at all levels. . . . Through a dual process of differentiation and alignment the youths break their ties of childhood which bond them tightly to the adult community while simultaneously trying to gain acceptance into the adolescent group. Hence, the rituals of

separation act simultaneously as a rite of exit from society and as a rite of entry into the group.”<sup>16</sup>

A fourteen year old boy awaiting trial in a place of safety in Cape Town described his separation process as follows:

Toe ek met die bende begin saam staan op die hoek en so aan dan sê my pa ek moenie so by hulle staan nie. Hy was bang ek sou met die bendeskap betrokke raak. Ek het nie geluister nie en toe ek terug van die hoek afkom dan slaan hy my aanmekaar. Ek het geweet as ek nou weer huistoe gaan dan gat hy net weer slat. Toe weet ek ek kan nie hier bly nie, toe verlaat ek die huis.

Ek het eers begin om met [die Hard Livings]<sup>17</sup> wyn te drink en so aan. Hulle het mos ‘n winkel daa’ wat hulle games in het en so aan en ons het altyd games gespeel en wyn gekoop en later aan het ons [ek en my vriende] toe begin te spele saam met hulle games en ons drink saam met hulle en toe het ons besluit ons wil bende raak. Ek het besluit ek wil maar kyk hoe is ‘it nou in bendeskap te wees want as ‘it nie vir my nou goed gaan wees nie dan sal ek maar weer uit. Want in daai tyd het ek nie geweet wat is die nagevolge nie, wat gaan gebeur.

Ek het vir die principal<sup>18</sup> gevra toe sê hy “Ja daar’s klomp plek hier vir die wat wil kom. Ons jaag nie weg nie en ons nooi ook nie. Djy kom uit jou eie uit.” Hulle sou my geld gee, wyn gee en drugs en sulke goetes, jou eie kamer. Djy kan in motors ry en so aan, ‘n kamer vir jouself.<sup>19</sup>

Being communal groups, gangs associate themselves with the place in which they live. The bond between members is also identified with their locale, and their loyalty to each other extends to their ‘territory’ which many are prepared to defend to the death. Much of the activity and communication between gang members is in code. This serves to distinguish between members and non-members and also helps to keep gang activity hidden from adults in an effort to challenge authority.<sup>20</sup>

The objective of the complex 'wheeling and dealing' money spinning ventures of gangs involves more than the desire for pocket money. The money, drugs and weapons that are acquired are ceremoniously displayed as symbols of success which simultaneously enhance the status of both the individual and the gang to which the individual belongs. In this way members create a socially significant identity for themselves through possessions which they display publicly.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Transitional Phase in Gang Rites of Passage**

According to Professor Daniel Monti of Boston University,

"Gangs may serve as a substitute family for some youngsters or give less well-to-do youths a way to make money. The most vital service they render, however, may be to put young persons in contact with each other at a time in their lives when developing greater independence and a more adult-like identity is really important."<sup>22</sup>

Monti recently undertook a study of gangs in the Fairview School District. He interviewed over 400 school children in an effort to determine the extent of the youth gang problem in schools, and the impact that gangs have on the lives of children, and found that to a large extent gangs provide 'mediating structures' for young people negotiating adolescence. The young people interviewed advocated the need for "sound families, effective community groups, and the imposition of limits on student conduct". Monti noted the difference in the effect on gang activity made by the presence or absence of the afore-mentioned factors, and argues that "stable communities dampen delinquent activity and promote conventional adult behaviour".<sup>23</sup> Thus, gangs perform the same

function as conventional structures like the family, school and church in shaping the lives of adolescents. Among other things, gangs

- teach the difference between right and wrong (according to gang ethics).
- construct boundary lines between themselves and outsiders.
- provide young people with a sense of themselves in relation to others in the group.
- provide role models as certain kinds of people and allow youngsters to practice being those people.
- acknowledge and reaffirm appropriate behaviour and accomplishments.
- make it known when young people are accepted as full members of the gang.<sup>24</sup>

Gangs do not give meaning to the lives of young people, but they do provide the necessary means for building a meaningful life. Gangs are important to young people for this reason and, as a countless number of studies has shown, it is useless to attempt to eradicate gangs by suppressing them. Gangs thrive and will continue to do so because they put a lot of effort into building members who are loyal, competent at what they do, and generally worthy of wearing the gang colours. Monti says, “To put it plainly, we adults do not see the building of healthy, emotionally sound, well-informed, and competent human beings as the central project of our lives. We have lost sight of the kinds of persons it is important for a society to make, if it is to work well”.<sup>25</sup> Gangs know this.

Having separated from the community through association with a gang, wannabes turn their attention to gaining acceptance and status in the gang. This begins with the use of socially significant symbols such as gang mutilations. These include tattoos, bullet wounds, stab wounds, or any scars obtained during ‘battle’ and are proudly displayed as visual signs of gang membership. Although the process endured to obtain these wounds may be considered unconventional when compared to that of traditional initiation ceremonies, the symbolism of each is the same since both signify a formal shift into a world of ‘betwixt and between’ and reinforce separation from the community.<sup>26</sup>

Further acceptance into the gang is acquired through brave and heroic performance in gang fights - the ‘first kill’ being the ultimate test of manhood. According to Pinnock, the first kill signifies the final break from the community and tests a boy’s commitment to his gang.<sup>27</sup> Speaking about his own experience of this with the Hard Livings, the boy quoted earlier said:

Die principal het gesê ek moet nou stam vat [tattoo]. Toe het ek begin saam met hulle na hulle huise te gaan. Gaan koop vuurwapens en so aan en drugs om weer te verkoop. Die principal het my geroep en gesê ek moet nou ‘n enemy kan dood maak: “Djy moet daai een kan dood maak daa’. Lat ons kan sien djy kan staan.” Ek het vir die Americans<sup>28</sup> gaan kry. Ek het vier van hulle dood geskiet sodat [die Hard Livings] nou kan sien. Nou kan hulle sien ek’s nie verniet daa’, net om die nice times te het nie. Ek doen darem iets wat hulle kan sien haai ek maak my bene sterk.

Dit was ‘n bietjie moeilik om te skiet. Maa’ dit voel nice. Lekker lat voel. Ek het sterk gevoel. Ek het krag. Ek kan bystaan as daa’ ‘n noodgeval is. [Die Hard Livings] het gesê: “Ja ons tell op. Pakamiza”. Hulle was bly. “Djy het jou werk gedala. Ons kan pakamiza”. Dit was nie nodig om hulle dood te maak nie maar ek het besef dat hulle gekom het as my enemie nou as ek nie vir hulle geskiet het sou hulle vir my geskiet het.<sup>29</sup>

This fourteen year old boy's first kill afforded him respect from fellow gangsters and increased his status within the gang. After killing four people he was well on his way to proving his manhood.

Monti says that

Children, particularly children facing many real hardships, cannot be expected to take seriously our declarations of caring and warnings about the harm they do to themselves, if they see adults as weak, ineffectual, and unengaged in their lives. Too many youngsters see adults in that way. Gangs introduce children to adult responsibilities and concerns first as play and then as work. They give children an opportunity to achieve mastery in these endeavours. It does not matter that the behaviour and values being extolled are, in their most extreme expression, inherently dangerous and ultimately corrupting. The behaviour and values work well enough and long enough to imprint on youngsters a way of relating to each other and to the larger world that helps some of them make the difficult passage from childhood to adulthood a bit less problematic.<sup>30</sup>

It can be seen that many of the values and customs of gangs are not necessarily all that different from those of the larger society. 'Loyalty to one's kin', 'attachments to the neighbourhood or community', and 'support for economic ventures involving the co-operation of friends or family' are just a few which are similar. Gangs also have a family-like quality about them and are often in fact the closest thing to a family that many young people on the streets or in urban townships have.

### **The Reintegration Phase of Gang Rites of Passage**

Pinnock points out that the moment of the first kill is the moment when the notion of 'enemy' becomes a permanent label. This makes the chances of ever leaving a gang very

slim since this is risky both in terms of betraying one's gang and giving up protection from other gangs which membership to one's gang affords.<sup>31</sup> For example, a sixteen year old boy with whom I spoke was awaiting trial on charges of assault. The incident took place during a revenge attack following the assault of the boy's sister by a rival gang, namely the Hard Livings. This boy now wishes to leave his gang (the Americans), but risks repercussions from the Americans who refuse to let him go. Added to this, his family have been receiving death threats from the Hard Livings.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of adolescent gang members, violent behaviour and criminal activity prevent their reintegration into the greater community. A need for ritual orientation as a means of defining and understanding their confusing transitional process, and of gaining acknowledgement and respect as individuals, leads them into a world of violence and crime out of which they seldom escape. Some researchers have argued that this is a state of "eternal liminality", challenging the traditional view of rites of passage by saying that the reintegrative phase is absent from gang rites.<sup>33</sup>

Western society fails to recognize the necessity of acknowledging and celebrating the transitional phase of adolescence, and it does not perceive the initiatory value in ritual. Ritual allows for metaphorical experience which symbolically marks a transition in the life of the young person and is intended to motivate real transformation. In South Africa, urban youth, unlike their counterparts in traditional indigenous communities, are not offered sufficient guidance from elders that is required for initiation. Consequently, they rely on their peers for behavioural points of reference and this often results in deviant

behaviour and membership of gangs in an effort to give meaning to this confusing transitional process. The following are examples of contemporary rites of passage programmes that incorporate the concepts necessary for Western adolescent initiation and follow the same pattern, namely separation, liminality and reintegration. They are designed to offer young people at risk a positive alternative pathway to adulthood.

### **VisionQuest (USA)**

VisionQuest is a private corporation that offers programmes for adolescents at risk through contracting with public agencies. Referrals are by juvenile courts, probation departments and social service agencies. VisionQuest aims to give young people an opportunity to recognize their self-worth by participating in group adventures such as the wagon train, OceanQuest sailing programmes, community service and Buffalo Soldiers. These programmes bring troubled young people into contact with nature in an attempt to encourage them to find “a sense of family, a positive connection with one’s heritage, a sense of self-worth, and a respect for nature and for values beyond one’s self”.<sup>34</sup>

VisionQuest uses a process called *guided centering* to encourage young people to confront issues that are problematic for them. These include abandonment (death or divorce of parents), boundary issues (failure to respect limits), abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or addictions), and self-esteem (often a result of the former issues). Guided centering is concerned with the ‘why?’ of these issues and focuses on re-education so that future choices may be positive.<sup>35</sup>

Bob Burton and Steve Rogers of VisionQuest explain that

[VisionQuest's] first contact with a youngster often occurs when a member of our staff comes to interview him or her in jail. During this early interview we present a challenge, an opportunity to experience a modern-day quest designed for such young people. Before we will accept a youngster into VisionQuest, we require that he or she make a commitment to remain with us for at least one year, to complete at least three of our high-impact programmes and to abstain from sex, drugs, Alcohol and tobacco. This is usually very difficult for them, but it teaches them that they have an inner power; they are able to abide by restrictions they impose upon themselves. We encourage them to be willing to face - rather than to run away from - the issues raised in family and VisionQuest life.<sup>36</sup>

Parents are included from the beginning and are encouraged to discuss family problems openly.

## **Adventures offered by VisionQuest**

### **Impact Camps**

This camp lasts for about three to five months and involves a structured routine of physical training, group and individual counselling, and culminates in a quest for a few weeks. These camps are set up as tipi villages and introduce the youngster to new surroundings in which he or she is able to achieve physical fitness and deal with issues facing him or her.<sup>37</sup>

### **Quests**

Quests are intense physical, mental, emotional and spiritual challenges that demand self-control and the ability to trust. According to Burton and Rogers, "Each quest centers

around a primary activity such as hiking, marathon running, bicycling, riding horses or camels, or rock climbing”.<sup>38</sup> Different quests may have different themes and are of different lengths.<sup>39</sup>

### **Wagon Train**

The wagon train involves travelling across country in about twelve mule-drawn wagons. Wagon trains set up camp every night and combine pioneer adventure with education and counselling.<sup>40</sup>

### **Buffalo Soldiers**

According to Burton and Rogers, Buffalo Soldiers were the first African Americans recruited into the US army at the end of the nineteenth century. They overcame obstacles such as racial intolerance and defective weapons and went on to win many Congressional Medals of Honour. VisionQuest continues to practice the Buffalo Soldiers’ tradition of excellence and service and Burton and Rogers say that

During their training, our Buffalo Soldiers learn that their former ways of responding to situations with unfocused anger and aggression are self-defeating and counter-productive. They develop responsibility, tenacity, self-discipline, and a solid work ethic. These modern-day Buffalo Soldiers are a new kind of warrior: they are soldiers of Peace.<sup>41</sup>

### **OceanQuest**

OceanQuest is about sailing programmes which aim to help youngsters develop “s sense of responsibility, teamwork, rigorous self-discipline, and respect for authority.”<sup>42</sup>

Participants learn all the skills necessary to sail tall ships, namely: navigation, maintenance, coping with crises, and teamwork. These skills promote self-confidence as OceanQuest becomes a metaphor for the participants also learning to navigate their own lives.<sup>43</sup>

### **HomeQuest**

This is the final stage of the VisionQuest experience and aims to reintegrate the youngsters into their families and communities. Through an intensive programme young people are offered support, in the form of counselling and are shown how to apply the values they learnt during VisionQuest in the home and community. Before moving home some youngsters stay in group homes and are supervised by live-in staff members who assist with their transition. The youngsters participate in chores as well as community service and attend school. Burton and Rogers explain that their progress at school and their relationships at home and in the community are monitored closely. Weekly discussions, conferences and counselling exists for parents.<sup>44</sup>

### **VisionQuest Education and Community Service**

The VisionQuest school offers small classes of about fifteen students and teaches the required academic curriculum. Many VisionQuesters graduate from high school while attending. VisionQuest also offers volunteer projects in which both staff and youth may participate. These range from recycling programmes to re-building schools and houses.<sup>45</sup>

## **VisionQuest Rituals and symbols**

VisionQuest draws on the traditional rites of passage of Native Americans. This involved the whole family, tribal elders and mentors to facilitate the young person during their journey, and after the ritual experience the initiate would share thoughts and dreams and visions with the elders in a spiritual experience of creativity and healing. One of the symbols used by VisionQuest is the Native American medicine wheel which symbolises “a way of life representing the order, harmony and philosophy of the universe”.<sup>46</sup> Burton and Rogers say that the center of the wheel represented all living things, people included. The spokes of the wheel connected the outer circle, representing the universe, to its center.

The VisionQuest philosophy is based on honour and the authors guarantee that the youngsters return this honour in full - especially after the wilderness experience has softened the pain of their life situations and taught them that it is not possible to manipulate things such as the weather and animals. Burton and Rogers attribute much of the success of VisionQuest to its philosophy and methods which are kept up to date through regular staff training programmes.<sup>47</sup>

## **David Oldfield's Journey Programme**

This programme has been developed by David Oldfield<sup>48</sup> for adolescents who come from a wide range of backgrounds, but particularly for those in crisis who are experiencing problems related to growing up. The programme is multi-disciplinary in order to reach as

many adolescents as possible, as Oldfield says: “What works for one youngster or group may fail miserably with another”.<sup>49</sup> Speaking specifically of America, although this applies to South Africa as well, Oldfield points out that in designing appropriate rites of passage programmes it is necessary to “avoid cultural, subcultural, and ethnic biases”.<sup>50</sup> He suggests that the way to do this is to use concepts that have universal meaning.

In developing the Journey programme, Oldfield sought to find a common language for the adolescents who participate in his programme. He turned to the principles of experiential or natural learning which promote the use of the imagination in order to put “adolescents and adults on an equal footing so that neither [are] more fluent or linguistically advantaged than the other”.<sup>51</sup> Oldfield says that mythology, being “the richest form of the language of imagination”, offers good role models and a sense of what life is all about. The hero in myths provides an example of how to deal with life’s challenges and how to take responsibility for our lives.<sup>52</sup>

There are five stages in Oldfield’s Journey programme and each one parallels a stage in the journey of the mythological hero. Oldfield does not describe these stages in great detail, but focuses rather on the concepts used in each.

### **Stage One**

The first stage is named *The Call to Adventure* and symbolizes the hero’s adventure into the unknown. Oldfield says that

Ninety percent of all heroic myths begin with a call to adventure that is negative; very few heroes go forth simply because they want to find the Golden Fleece, for instance. More often, they are called away because something has fallen apart. For example, in the myth of the Holy Grail, the king has a wound in his side that won't stop bleeding. As long as his wound bleeds, the land is fallow and nothing will grow. So someone has to go forth to find the secret that will stop the king's wound from bleeding.<sup>53</sup>

The hero's call to adventure parallels the adolescent's first crisis, namely separation, where the young person enters the unknown world of adulthood and seeks "a whole new way of being".<sup>54</sup> Questions asked in this phase of the programme focus on how today's young people can accomplish separation and find their own world distinct from that of their parents and, more specifically, what calls young people to adventure.<sup>55</sup>

## **Stage two**

This stage is referred to as *Finding One's Path* and focuses on the crisis of independence, the time when traditional indigenous initiates entered the wilderness to find their path or vision in life. According to Oldfield, it is during this crisis that adolescents transfer their dependence from parents to peers. This is often when peer pressure limits the growth of individuality and creativity. Hence, the programme encourages participants to focus inwards and highlights things such as values, goals and independence. Oldfield says that there are various ways to approach this stage:

One way is to ask the youngster to look at his or her life as though it could be depicted on a map. We ask the youth to describe the path he or she has followed so far: What has he or she seen in life, what has life already shown, and what still lies ahead?<sup>56</sup>

The Journey also uses improvisational games to encourage participants to discover their individuality through spontaneity.

### **Stage three**

This stage is known as *Entering The Labyrinth* and focuses on the time of ordeals. This focuses on the issues that face young people today as they identify them and the programme deals with their problems and solutions through the use of imagery and metaphorical language. For example, youngsters depict their feelings in the form of pictures which they draw or in stories that relate their life situations.<sup>57</sup>

### **Stage four**

The fourth phase of the Journey is termed *The Wood Between The Worlds* and is concerned with achieving a balance between “the inner experiences of the first three phases [and] the outward journey toward actively caring for and sharing in the world outside oneself”.<sup>58</sup> The participants are encouraged to use the resources they discovered on their inner journeys to contribute to the world. This stage is based on ancient rites of passage which encouraged initiates to express the vision they had found in the wilderness in a way the community could understand. This could include music, dance, story, poetry or art.<sup>59</sup>

## Stage five

The last stage of the programme is *The Ceremony of Passage* and it is during this stage that the participants create a ceremony to celebrate the knowledge and insight that each has gained on their journey. Oldfield describes a celebration that took place:

One of our groups gathered with their parents and guardians in a final ceremony of passage that included a unique “gift-exchange”. Gathering all the participants into a circle, the youngsters explained that they had placed an invisible box in the center. One at a time, the teens approached the box and picked an imaginary gift from it. One of the girls, for example, reached into the box and pulled out a brick and a hammer, describing them in mime. She carried the brick to her parents and placed it at their feet. Then she whacked the brick with her hammer. It crumbled into sand, which she tossed over her shoulder, bushing her hands clean of the “brick wall” she had come up against - in her case drugs - for good.<sup>60</sup>

Oldfield concludes by saying that “traditionally, rites of passage initiated the young into the sacred heritage of their community, village, tribe, or clan. But just what is our modern community? -If anything, it is humankind, the all-encompassing global village *into which few of us have been initiated as yet!* [Oldfield’s italics]. In creating or helping to create truly modern rites of passage for our children, we thus have a marvellous, unparalleled opportunity to open up an ongoing dialogue among all our planet’s ethnic and cultural voices”.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

Rites of initiation influence children-becoming-adults in order to ensure the continuance of community. Malidoma Somé teaches that without ritual a community cannot exist.

Ritual is the force that creates and sustains communities and it “must be constantly invoked as an opportunity for the weak to become strong and the strong to get even stronger”.<sup>62</sup> In a sense, street gangs form unique kinds of communities which are held together and made strong by ritual. Gangs perform processes of initiation that test young boys and make them worthy of respect from older gang members. They educate them in the history, culture and values of the gang and they teach them skills that will ensure their survival on the streets as well as the survival of the gang. Although popular media discourse and music culture provide an alternative (anti-establishment) set of 'acceptable' behaviours which offer a range of discourses for young people to choose from, the gang process does not promote socially acceptable behaviour or renew the greater community. It lacks the ability to provide young people with opportunities for increasing their self-knowledge and insight, for healing or attending to their spiritual needs, exploring their creativity, or developing their human potential. In the long run, gang rites are self-destructive and damaging both to the individual and the greater community.

Rites of passage programmes such as VisionQuest and Oldfield's Journey programme facilitate the conscious initiation of young people that is necessary for personal growth. Although these are vastly different types of rites programmes, they are very similar in many ways. Both focus on experiential means of promoting personal growth and positive self-image while attempting to facilitate the initiation of young people into adulthood. With the supportive help and guidance from elders and mentors they provide the challenges necessary to encourage a positive transition to adulthood avoiding the destruction that is inherent in gang rites.

One may question the viability of implementing rites programmes such as VisionQuest in third world countries which may be unable to afford the resources needed to run them. However, although large-scale rites programmes are generally dependent on private funding, it is possible to run local small-scale programmes effectively by making use of existing community structures such as sports clubs, churches, schools and community centres, to name a few. Indeed, the principles underlying rites of passage stress the importance of mobilizing a community support network. Also, the concept of experiential education involves trust-building, group developing and initiative-encouraging activities, most of which can be carried out in nature. A part of adventure learning involves activities like ropes courses, abseiling and river-rafting, but does not necessarily have to include them. An experiential education conference was recently held in Cape Town and demonstrated many activities which do not require expensive equipment or props – merely some imagination and creativity. However, this would need to be supplemented with personal growth and development skills, vocational guidance and job skills training. Without the creation of economic opportunities for young people at risk, rites of passage will provide little incentives for transformation.

There is a societal need for conscious initiation of our young people. Programmes that are culturally specific and address the needs of all our young people as they struggle to attain adulthood need to be established. As Meade says, “there can be no exact way or absolute method for creating them. Rather, opportunities exist for embracing that which is locally true and for healing that which has been torn individually and collectively. The troubles of an individual or a generation don’t simply dissolve or disappear. Rather, the

completion of a conscious transition creates points and moments of wholeness and mutual acceptance. In the 'ritual moment' the community accepts its youth completely. That gesture allows the youth to accept themselves as they are and creates their place in the society".<sup>63</sup> This supports Erikson's argument for a moratorium and suggests that rites of passage can provide the framework for the development of a de-labelling programme.

## End notes

- <sup>1</sup>1993: 12.
- <sup>2</sup>Meade, 1993: 152.
- <sup>3</sup>Meade, 1993: 152.
- <sup>4</sup>1993: 172.
- <sup>5</sup>1993: 190-191.
- <sup>6</sup>1993: 195.
- <sup>7</sup>1993: 220.
- <sup>8</sup>1993: 237.
- <sup>9</sup>1993: 245.
- <sup>10</sup>Meade, 1993: 312.
- <sup>11</sup>Roth, P. (1987) Portnoy's Complaint. Bantam Books, New York.
- <sup>12</sup>Phillips, 1991: 56.
- <sup>13</sup>Phillips, 1991: 57.
- <sup>14</sup>Meade, 1993: 234.
- <sup>15</sup>Miles, 1992: 100.
- <sup>16</sup>1995: 24.
- <sup>17</sup>The Hard Livings are one of the biggest and most feared gangs on the Cape Flats.
- <sup>18</sup>Here 'principal' refers to a gang member with authority.
- <sup>19</sup>Interview, 11 June 1997 in Cape Town.
- <sup>20</sup>Monti, 1994: 43, 48.
- <sup>21</sup>Monti, 1994: 59.
- <sup>22</sup>1994: 140.
- <sup>23</sup>1994: 154.
- <sup>24</sup>Monti, 1994: 155.
- <sup>25</sup>1994: 156.
- <sup>26</sup>Douglas-Hamilton, 1995: 38.
- <sup>27</sup>1997: 47.
- <sup>28</sup>A rival gang of the Hard Livings.
- <sup>29</sup>Interview, 11 June 1997, Cape Town.
- <sup>30</sup>1994: 164.
- <sup>31</sup>1997: 47.
- <sup>32</sup>Interview, 11 June 1997, Cape Town.
- <sup>33</sup>Douglas-Hamilton, 1995: 39-49; Pinnock, 1997: 50.
- <sup>34</sup>Burton and Rogers, 1996: 202.
- <sup>35</sup>Burton and Rogers, 1996: 203.
- <sup>36</sup>1996:205.
- <sup>37</sup>Burton and Rogers, 1996: 206.
- <sup>38</sup>1996: 206.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup>1996: 207.
- <sup>42</sup>Burton and Rogers, 1996: 207.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup>1996: 208.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup>Burton and Rogers, 1996: 210.
- <sup>47</sup>1996: 203.
- <sup>48</sup>Oldfield is Director of The Center for Creative Imagination at The Foundation for Contemporary Mental Health in Washington, D.C.
- <sup>49</sup>1996: 147.
- <sup>50</sup>1996:149.

<sup>51</sup>1996: 151.

<sup>52</sup>ibid.

<sup>53</sup>1996: 155.

<sup>54</sup>ibid.

<sup>55</sup>1996: 156.

<sup>56</sup>1996: 158.

<sup>57</sup>1996: 160-163.

<sup>58</sup>1996: 163.

<sup>59</sup>ibid.

<sup>60</sup>1996: 163.

<sup>61</sup>1996: 164.

<sup>62</sup>1996: 25.

<sup>63</sup>1996: xxv.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***What about girls?***

As literature for this thesis was reviewed, it was disappointing to find that so much of the research that has been done on adolescence and/or initiation has focused almost entirely on 'boys, men and warriors', to the general exclusion of the opposite sex. One found oneself asking, "But, what about girls?". It may be argued that the reason for neglecting women is that they do not constitute as big a threat to public order or public morality as do men, but this does not adequately justify the lack of attention given to girls' rites of passage. This chapter suggests that, like men, women have an innate psychic need to undergo processes of transformation surrounding life crises. This is particularly important for adolescent girls who often find it incredibly difficult to redefine their relationship needs and attachments (especially to maternal figures) as they begin their separation from childhood.

There is a societal need for girls' rites of passage that provide the opportunity for girls-becoming-women to become aware of the journey upon which they have embarked. Although this applies particularly to girls at risk whose self-concepts are probably influenced the most by patriarchal ideas of femininity, this chapter by no means focuses on girls at risk as the research needed to do so is beyond the scope of this dissertation. As such, it simply explores the need, or otherwise, for feminine initiation through the

medium of story which is analyzed from a Jungian perspective. This method facilitates an exploration of the feminine psyche as expounded by Clarissa Pinkola Estés.

## **The Inner Feminine**

Psychologist and academic Shelley Phillips attributes the absence of research on mother-daughter relationships to psychological and psychiatric research which in the past has greatly encouraged the adjustment of human beings to the status quo. According to Phillips, “these disciplines have preserved traditional doctrines, with roots in a patriarchal society, which has tended to regard the male perspective as the universal reality and male norms as ‘normal adjustment’, by which women can be assessed”.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the literature on adolescence is either a product of ‘all-male’ research, or follows the patriarchal theme where the son leaves mother to join the world of men, leaving behind the world of feeling and caring, as he begins his journey in pursuit of manhood. This literature has not provided discussion on relationship needs and attachments which adolescent girls experience. Phillips observes that the personality development of girls is not affected by their childhood attachment to mother as their traits of feeling and caring are accepted. This means that they must redefine their attachment in order to give it adult form. Phillips points out that “the reworking of old and deep ties to their mothers is a central theme of female development and a life-long task”.<sup>2</sup>

This task of introversion may be compared to the experience of the heroine in feminine fairy tales. Her adventure involves a time of seclusion or withdrawal from the world

where she must suffer in silence while awaiting her deliverance. Only then can she reunite with the hero who, by comparison, has endured strenuous physical challenge.<sup>3</sup>

Robert Grinnell writes in his book Alchemy of a Modern Woman that a modern woman's "transformational activity has a certain bisexual quality which is mercurial rather than strictly feminine. She performs heroic tasks. But these have something of the character of ancient ceremonies and rituals rather than raiding expeditions".<sup>4</sup>

Helen Luke stresses the importance in the recognition by individual women of the need to bond the emotions they feel, with "the symbolic life of [their] feminine psyche". She says,

As we look back on the extremely rapid emergence of women in this century into the masculine world of thought and action, it is not surprising that woman has fallen into increased contempt for her own values. It has surely been a necessary phase, but its effects have been devastating not only on woman herself but also on the men around her.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, once the unconscious masculinity or animus of a woman controls her femininity it becomes charged with the numinous power of the unconscious which, in the face of men, causes them "either to retreat into an inferior passive femininity, seeking to propitiate the power of the animus, or else react with brutal aggressive masculinity. Small wonder that women thus possessed, having lost their true roots in nature, are constantly beset by the anxious feeling of being useless, however outwardly successful. The dreams of modern women are full of this basic insecurity".<sup>6</sup>

In her book, Women Who Run With The Wolves: contacting the power of the Wild Woman, Pinkola Estés warns of the dangers that can befall women who constantly strive

to live up to the expectations which patrilineal society has of them. She insists that “[a] woman’s issues of soul cannot be treated by carving her into a more acceptable form as defined by an unconscious culture, nor can she be bent into a more intellectually acceptable shape by those who claim to be the sole bearers of consciousness. No, that is what has already caused millions of women who began as strong and natural powers to become outsiders in their own cultures. Instead, the goal must be the retrieval and succour of women’s beautiful and natural psychic form”.<sup>7</sup>

Here the importance of story is emphasized once again as Pinkola Estés teaches women how to achieve this goal through the use of story, fairy tales, folk tales, myths and poetry. Her lessons teach that women must embark on a journey to discover the Wild Woman archetype that resides in the collective unconscious. The aim of this journey is to undergo transformation necessary to achieve self-fulfilment, and archetypes are catalysts for transformation. As discussed in chapter two, an archetype is an image in the collective unconscious that must be defined if it is to be brought into consciousness. This can be achieved through art that gives form to images, and significance to universal symbols of transformation. Hence, story can be used as a medium by which women can discover the “ways of the natural instinctive psyche, and through its personification in the Wild Woman archetype we are able to discern the ways and means of woman’s deepest nature.”<sup>8</sup>

Pinkola Estés describes the feminine instinctual nature as follows:

Healthy wolves and healthy women share certain psychic characteristics: keen sensing, playful spirit, and a heightened capacity for devotion. Wolves and women are relational by nature, inquiring, possessed of great endurance and strength. They are deeply intuitive, intensely concerned with their young, their mate and their pack. They are experienced in adapting to constantly changing circumstances; they are fiercely stalwart and very brave. Yet both have been hounded, harassed, and falsely imputed to be devouring and devious, overly aggressive, of less value than those who are their detractors. They have been the targets of those who would clean up the wilds as well as the wildish environs of the psyche, extinguishing the instinctual, and leaving no trace of it behind. The predation of wolves and women by those who misunderstand them is strikingly similar.<sup>9</sup>

The word *wild* is used in its original sense meaning *natural*. To connect with the instinctual nature does not mean one becomes out of control or that one forgets one's fundamental socializations. Rather it means to "establish territory, to find one's pack, to be in one's body regardless of the body's gifts and limitations, to speak and act in one's behalf, to be aware, alert, to draw on the innate feminine powers of intuition and sensing, to come into one's cycle's, to find what one belongs to, to rise with dignity, to retain as much consciousness as we can".<sup>10</sup>

Pinkola Estés calls the Wild Woman the Life / Death / Life force:

She is intuition, she is far-seer, she is deep listener, she is loyal heart. She encourages humans to remain multi-lingual; fluent in the languages of dreams, passion and poetry. She whispers from night dreams, she leaves behind on the terrain of a woman's soul a course hair and muddy footprints. These fill women with longing to find her, free her and love her".<sup>11</sup>

Finding the Wild Woman means embarking on a journey to one's instinctual life, one's deepest knowing. This journey is illustrated in the story of Vasalisa.

## **Vasalisa<sup>12</sup>**

There once was a mother on her deathbed. She summoned her daughter, Vasalisa, and gave her a doll saying: "Should you lose your way or need help, ask the doll. Keep her with you always and feed her when she is hungry. Tell no one about her." Having said this, her mother died peacefully. Some time passed and Vasalisa's father remarried and the young girl's new stepmother and two stepsisters came to live with them. What her father did not know was that his new wife and stepdaughters despised Vasalisa. One day in his absence they plotted to ensure her demise. Complaining that their hearth fire was out, they sent Vasalisa into the forest to ask Baba Yaga for a burning coal, and they expected her never to return.

Vasalisa was afraid, but kept her doll close to her for comfort. With the doll directing her she was soon on her way to Baba Yaga's hut. Along the way she met a man dressed in white on a white horse. Suddenly it was dawn. Next, she met a man in red on a red horse, and the sun rose. Her final encounter was with a man in black on a black horse, and night came.

Baba Yaga's hut stood on chicken legs and walked around by itself. The shutters were made of human fingers and the lock was made of pointed teeth. The hut was surrounded by a fence made of skulls and bones. Baba Yaga was fearsome with long wild hair and warts and she travelled in a cauldron which flew along by itself. She rowed her cauldron with an oar and swept away her tracks with a broom. "What do you want?", she screeched at Vasalisa.

“Grandmother, I come for fire”, replied the girl.

Baba Yaga agreed to give Vasalisa some fire if she managed to complete the tasks the witch gave her. If not, she would die. Baba Yaga flew off in her cauldron and Vasalisa consulted her doll: “How will I complete these tasks in time?”. The doll told her to go to sleep and completed the tasks for her. When Baba Yaga returned, the floor was swept, the clothes were washed and the food was cooked. Each time the Yaga returned she set more tasks for Vasalisa until finally she was satisfied. Then, on a stick, she handed Vasalisa a burning skull from her fence and sent her home. Vasalisa arrived home triumphant having completed her dangerous journey, and the wicked stepmother and stepsisters were burnt to cinders by the skull.

## **Feminine Initiation**

Vasalisa is essentially a story about feminine initiation. Like Campbell’s hero who must venture forth on a journey of physical challenge and mysterious adventure in order to ‘defeat the dark force’<sup>13</sup>, so too must Vasalisa risk the journey into the forest and complete certain tasks in order to acquire intimate knowing about the Life / Death / Life cycles.

For the journey to begin, the ‘good’ mother must die. There comes a time in every woman’s life when her mother must cease to dominate. She must be freed from ~~maternal~~ protection so that she can further her own personal growth. Hence, Vasalisa’s initiation begins with the death of her ‘good’ mother and she learns to allow death to come to ~~the~~

dying. In Jungian terms this means that a woman must let go of the values and attitudes within her psyche which no longer support her. According to Pinkola Estés, allowing the good mother to die involves “accepting that the ever-watchful, hovering protective psychic mother is not adequate as a central guide for one’s future instinctual life (the too-good mother dies). Taking on the task of being on one’s own, developing one’s own consciousness about danger, intrigue, politic [sic]. Becoming alert by oneself, for oneself. Letting die what must die. As the too-good mother dies, the new woman is born.”<sup>14</sup>

With the birth of the new woman, her shadow-side must also emerge. The wicked stepmother and stepsisters must make an appearance. They represent what Jung referred to as the shadow - those aspects of self which the ego represses and labels unacceptable. Pinkola Estés says that “the stepfamily in the psyche is different from the soul family, for it is of the superego, that aspect of the psyche which is structured according to each particular society’s expectations - healthy or not - for women.”<sup>15</sup>

Embracing the shadow side of the psyche means allowing the good mother to die. Estés believes that being good, sweet and nice “will not cause life to sing”, rather, a woman must experience the exclusionary, jealous and exploitative nature of her shadow-side.<sup>16</sup> Explicating Pinkola Estés’ insights, Professor Elaine Newton of York University in Toronto emphasizes that if one does not embrace one’s own shadow one runs the risk of compressing it, and energy which is refused life eventually explodes. She warns us to beware of too good, too sweet, too nice children because, in her opinion, they are the one’s who will resort to the shotgun or the knife.<sup>17</sup>

In the story, the symbolism of the doll is very significant. It represents the deeply buried numinosity within us. It is a symbol of intuition and intuition is a woman's formidable psychic strength. Pinkola Estés says that the greatest gift a mother can give her daughter is true sense of the power of her own intuition.<sup>18</sup> Vasalisa thus relies on the doll, her intuition, to assist her in navigating her way through the dark forest. The three horsemen she meets on her journey represent birth, life and death, or youth, adulthood and death respectively. Their colours, black, red and white, are symbolic of the three stages of initiatory rites of passage, namely descent, death and rebirth. Black symbolizes the death of one's old values, red signifies the sacrifice of past illusions, and white represents the birth of new knowing that comes only from experiencing the first two.<sup>19</sup>

Vasalisa eventually arrives at the hut that walks on chicken legs. Her encounter with the Baba Yaga is her encounter with the Old Wise Woman, the Life / Death / Life goddess, the Wild Woman. Pinklola Estés explains that

In this initiation drama, Baba Yaga is Wild Woman in the guise of the witch. Like the word *wild*, the word *witch* has come to be understood as a pejorative, but long ago it was an appellation given to both old and young women healers, the word *witch* deriving from the word *wit*, meaning wise.<sup>20</sup>

What Vasalisa wants from Baba Yaga is fire - knowledge and insight. But, this she must earn, and she does so by performing tasks for the witch. In traditional indigenous communities, initiates are expected to earn acceptance into adulthood by performing or fulfilling certain expectations of the community. In the story, the tasks of sweeping,

cooking and washing symbolize the need to keep the psyche orderly, nourish it with energy and creative ideas, and purify the fibres of the being. They are the personal growth skills that she needs.<sup>21</sup>

In mythology, this part of the journey is commonly known as the time of descent and transformation, and is traditionally followed by the return home. Thus, on completion of her tasks, Vasalisa returns home empowered, and discovers that her stepfamily has been without fire all the time she was away. (Those who do not risk the journey into the forest will remain without the knowledge and insight which the instinctual life has to offer. As the Dagara people of North Africa believe, those who remain uninitiated remain forever children.)

Finally, the journey completes with the destruction of the negative aspects of the shadow which delight in affirming one's weaknesses: 'You're stupid'; 'You're not good enough'; 'You don't have time'; 'You can't do this'. Pinkola Estés warns that

We too are pinched off when the stepfamily within us and / or around us tells us we are not much to begin with and insists we focus on our shortcomings, rather than perceiving the cruelty whirling around us - be it within our psyches or without in the culture. However, to see into or through something requires intuition and also the strength to stand upon what one sees . . . it is just this psychic tension that is needed in order to make soul and to create change.<sup>22</sup>

## **The Importance of Initiatory Practices Surrounding Puberty and the Onset of Menstruation**

It is believed that the feminine soul was strongly influenced by matriarchal cultures of ancient India, Egypt, Asia and Turkey. Initiatory practices indigenous to these cultures involved the staining of initiates' feet with red pigment during threshold rites. This was particularly significant in rites surrounding the onset of menstruation, childbirth, and miscarriage. Pinkola Estés says that “this rite celebrated the crossing from childhood into the profound ability to bring forth life from one’s own belly, to carry the attendant sexual power and all peripheral womanly powers”.<sup>23</sup>

Lesse girls in Zaire begin menarche with a puberty initiation which involves seclusion in a menstrual hut for one month. The hut is off limits to men and boys, and the female community elders teach the girls about sex and childcare. Cohen has found that seclusion is a widespread response to the onset of menstruation in communities not modernized by industry. The menstruation hut represents a place of safety where young girls complete their transformation to womanhood and assume adult responsibilities. Traditionally, Xhosa girls in the Eastern Cape are secluded for up to a month, while Ndembu girls in Zambia are secluded for three months. These menarche rites are usually completed with a joyous community celebration where the girl is presented to the community as a woman.<sup>24</sup> These rituals celebrate and honour womanhood and in so doing fill daughters with pride and self-esteem and also “establish a proud sense of continuity with their mothers and all women”.<sup>25</sup>

Pinkola Estés says that “one of the most striking examples of loss of natural perception is in the generations of women whose mothers broke the tradition of teaching, preparing, and welcoming their daughters into the most basic and physical aspect of being women, menstruation.”<sup>26</sup> She says that a countless number of women lost their “inheritance of the miraculous body” when they were taught to believe that they were unclean or being “punished by God”.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, instead of a sense of wonder which ought naturally to surround the menstrual cycle, one often finds humiliation and shame.

When female biological functions are belittled or made fun of (for example, the ‘curse’, the ‘wrong’ time of the month) women may be embarrassed with themselves and consequently lose pride in themselves and their ability to bring forth life. Phillips says that

the pity of it is that patriarchal attitudes link the arrival of menarche with trauma and early fantasies of castration. Where these negative attitudes are scorned and positive folklore is substituted, the mother-daughter relationship benefits.<sup>28</sup>

In a research study conducted by Phillips, it was found that countless younger women, when asked to relate their experience of the commencement of menstruation, remember this significant event with embarrassment and discomfort. Rarely, if ever, was menstruation regarded as something to be valued as a celebration of womanhood. Instead, the fact that it was (and often still is) kept secret from male members of the family suggests that it is something shameful and worthy only of ridicule. This attitude does not encourage women to take pride in their femininity.<sup>29</sup>

## Creating Feminine Rituals

It is widely evident in industrial societies that no meaningful societal rituals exist to guide adolescent girls into adulthood. Where certain rites are performed they are primarily religious and/or institutional, and generally do not have the strength necessary to be of significant initiatory value. It was with this understanding that I was excited to discover that a group of women in Cape Town, recognizing that their daughters had an innate need for an initiation process into adulthood, came together on their own initiative to create such a process which would be wholesome and useful in its context.

One of the women who has played an active role in this process is Marion Goodman, Director of the Educo Adventure School in Cape Town. She explains

Two women, who happened to have teenage daughters at the time, drew around them a circle of women friends, and together we raised what would be the kind of factors that would be part of such a cycle. We realized that as we were working through them we hadn't ourselves been through anything, and realized we would have to explore, at greater depth, stages of the passage of womanhood from birth to death and how that impacted historically and currently, given hindsight. From that came an initial process which remained the kind of blue print for the process. It's gone through changes, but it's been the basic skeleton process of what we've done with the girls since then. It is an eight session experience focusing in each session (except the last one) on a different stage in life. Each session is taken by one, or a cluster of women, who feel a particular affinity with that stage for some reason. The final session is a 'coming out' into the larger circle of women and this is symbolic of the larger body of womankind.<sup>30</sup>

According to Goodman, the women as elders are the key movers in the process although lately male figures who are important to the girls being initiated have been included to an

extent in order to represent the different aspects of malehood as well as each girl's relationship to the masculine. Goodman described the first session as follows:

The first session is usually on conception and birth and a bit of early childhood and is always just the girl and her mother. After this session the mother steps out completely until the very end and her process is taken over by the rest of the women. This symbolizes the break and change in relationship from mother-daughter to a more equal relationship. It is symbolic as well as very precious for the two of them to look at things around that topic including the girl's own conception, birth and early childhood. It tends to be a very intimate, womb-like setting, usually a new setting unfamiliar to both. Very often the mother sits waiting in the setting which has been very carefully and beautifully set up with candles or flowers or whatever, symbolic or otherwise. And the daughter, not knowing where she is going, is brought there by someone else. This creates an element of really having to step over a threshold into the unknown. She knows she is going through a rite of passage, but she is unaware of what is involved.<sup>31</sup>

Goodman says that the mothers involved in this process are aware of the need for them to re-work the ties of motherhood. They are conscious of the need to transform the relationship from mother to daughter-as-child, to daughter-as-woman.

The rites continue with sessions on early adolescence which includes puberty and menstruation; later adolescence which includes sexuality and relationships; careers which includes discussion on choosing a path of singlehood or marriage and looks at relationship from all angles, all genders, etc. Another session is on motherhood and includes people who are mothers of children, and people who are mothers of projects. Discussion also revolves around topics such as menopause, middle-age and the process of ageing. The final session is a celebration and the time when the young woman presents

herself to the whole group in a way she chooses. The group is given an opportunity to honour her and acknowledge her womanhood and “the beauty of her own being”.<sup>32</sup>

These sessions are structured in a way that creates awareness so that when the young woman in question is faced with decisions to make, she knows there are different options and choices available. Goodman further explains that a key element in the initiatory process is the sharing that takes place. The ‘elders’ share the wisdom of their experiences, both good and bad, with each initiate when her time comes to participate in the process. (The timing, in this sense, is development-based rather than age-based, where there is a sense that the girl is ready.) Space is also created for each girl to share her views on things. This sharing ensures that the process is not dictatorial, but is rather an exchange. Goodman says, “It is simply to sow seeds and open the way for further relationship because the whole process at its core is initiation into relationship with ‘the web’ - the web of womanhood, one’s own womanhood, malehood, the larger community, the people who will serve as mentors and elders for the rest of her life because she’s had this close time with them”.<sup>33</sup> This web also means that the young woman concerned need not only rely on her peers or her mother for future counsel or advice if and when she needs it.

Goodman says that this initiatory process is about “establishing oneself in the context of the community and, in a larger sense, becoming part of the community of humankind really, adulthood definitely, and conscious aware function [sic] particularly. So that when, as a girl, as a human being, she approaches passage times [transitional phases] in her life, she approaches them from a level of some understanding and consciousness, even if at the

moment she can't see what it is that's happening, she may have a sense that something's going on here - what is it? - and then be able to traverse that passage without the mess-up that most of us have had to deal with previously because everything is such unconscious function".<sup>34</sup>

The concept of feminine initiation explored by Goodman and friends offers an opportunity for women to collectively acknowledge and celebrate the feminine by consciously reworking the ties between mothers and their daughters. However, for many young girls the opportunity to be mentored by older women and experience the closeness and sharing of womanhood does not exist. Many are forced to look for means of initiating themselves into adulthood and in the process become chemically addicted or end up awaiting trial in institutions. A sixteen year old girl awaiting trial on two charges of house-breaking had the following to say about her experience of adolescence:

I just need to get my life back together again. Since I was 13 it's just been drugs and stealing and those stresses are getting to me now. Crack is the reason I stole. Otherwise I wouldn't have. I'm not that type of person. [Crack] just changes you so much. I even used to . . . sometimes when we would go smoke crack, [my friend] used to buy rocks for both of us and I even used to steal his rocks. I used to steal from him too and he used to provide me with it. It was terrible. I wonder how I would have been different if I hadn't taken drugs? I know I am stronger now from my experiences. I don't know why I did these things . . . Do you think it could have been because of my home life? I don't know. I'll find out one day . . .<sup>35</sup>

There are many young girls in our cities today who are living through similar crises. A rites of passage programme designed for adolescent girls at risk could provide a turning

point in their lives: an opportunity to gain self-confidence, self-respect, inner strength, community support, new friends and “a new understanding of deep universal human values”.<sup>36</sup> It would be interesting to explore Goodman’s initiatory process in other cultural settings in order to establish whether or not it would be successful in facilitating the transition of adolescent girls to womanhood cross-culturally.

## **Conclusion**

Due to limited relevant literature on mother-daughter relationships and girls’ rites of passage, it is useful to explore the feminine in story. Feminine fairy tales provide insight into the meaning that experiences and symbols of life have for the feminine psyche. Story electrifies archetypal energy which encourages inner transformation when contact is made with it. This power renders ancient stories of initiation valuable, but also dangerous. In as much as they are able to initiate positive transformation, so too can their effect be negative. The story of Vasalisa is valuable for many teachings, but most of all it highlights the importance of the Life / Death / Life cycle of rites of passage and the need to consciously celebrate the feminine nature.

Magazines, advertisements and western society in general which encourage women to conform to the cosmetic feminine stereotype, expect them to forfeit their sense of individuality as well as the necessary processes of self-reflection needed to define the inner Self and its values. The desperate need our society has for rituals and rites of passage which facilitate the transformation of individuals during their various life crises and alleviate the intense anxiety which generally surrounds them, can be witnessed in the countless number of women who are addicts or have eating disorders. Jungian analyst

Marion Woodman says that rituals which celebrate the female body can be very powerful mystery rites for women who, in the past, have not known how to cherish their bodies. She reminds us that “the power of transformative love cannot be articulated. Groups of women who love and support each other in attempting to find their own feminine rhythms and values are the touchstones of the growing recognition of the meaning of femininity”.<sup>37</sup>

In this chapter I have suggested that there is a universal female psyche and construction of self. I am, however, aware that various cultures may differ in terms of their requirements for and expectations of women. Although the pattern of all rites of passage should remain the same in order to retain meaning, it is possible that the context of programmes for girls should differ from that of boys. As Bruce Lincoln<sup>38</sup> points out, if women are initiated by men, the initiation becomes an act which is “imposed on women from outside, an indoctrination, a subjugation, an assault”.<sup>39</sup> However, if *women* are the agents of initiation then the initiation becomes an event which is “celebrated collectively rather than imposed from outside”.<sup>40</sup>

This chapter is just the starting point for the research that is needed to gain an understanding of feminine initiation. Any future development of rites of passage programmes would need to further this research in order to adequately address the needs of girls-becoming-women.

## End notes

- <sup>1</sup>Phillips, 1991: viiii.
- <sup>2</sup>Phillips, 1991: 47.
- <sup>3</sup>Luke, 1995: 23.
- <sup>4</sup>Quoted in Luke, 1995: 137.
- <sup>5</sup>1995: 8.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup>1992: 6.
- <sup>8</sup>1992: 4.
- <sup>9</sup>1992: 4.
- <sup>10</sup>Pinkola Estés, 1992: 12.
- <sup>11</sup>1992: 13.
- <sup>12</sup>Adapted from Pinkola Estés, 1992: 75-80.
- <sup>13</sup>Luke, 1995: 191.
- <sup>14</sup>1992: 81.
- <sup>15</sup>1992: 85.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Lecture at the University of Cape town, January 1997.
- <sup>18</sup>1992: 89.
- <sup>19</sup>1992: 102.
- <sup>20</sup>1992: 93.
- <sup>21</sup>1992: 94.
- <sup>22</sup>1992: 86.
- <sup>23</sup>1992: 235.
- <sup>24</sup>Cohen, 1991: 58.
- <sup>25</sup>Phillips, 1991: 69.
- <sup>26</sup>1992: 436.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>1991: 69.
- <sup>29</sup>Phillips, 1991: 68.
- <sup>30</sup>Interview in Cape Town, 29/01/1997.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup>Interview at Huis Rosendal in Faure, 19/06/1997.
- <sup>36</sup>Mahdi et al, 1996: xiv.
- <sup>37</sup>1987: 208.
- <sup>38</sup>Professor of Humanities at the University of Minesota.
- <sup>39</sup>1991: 92.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter 6

### ***The Journey Programme: a South African case study***

Violent behaviour and aggression in adolescents may be fuelled by various factors, some of which include the biology of the individual, the family environment, peers, and culture. Many young people (especially those growing up in the poorer communities) who experience problems of failure in school, associate with peers who engage in deviant behaviour, and experience a lack of social and community support, are at risk of developing ‘problems of living’ which will most likely involve them with the criminal justice system at some point.<sup>1</sup>

The term ‘at risk’ is a relative one when referring to youth because adolescence is a general time of risk for young people who, by nature, will test their limits while exploring the unknown territory of adulthood. For this reason, the critical issue facing people working with youth at risk is the “level of ‘at riskness’ ” involved which may range from life threatening risk to mild or petty offences.<sup>2</sup> Nic Fine, formerly involved in designing and running group training workshops for youth at risk in the UK, points out that

Many of these young people are in conflict with the law, their community and family, as well as with critical choices that could mean the difference between a future and no future for themselves. Many have experienced living in an institution without a family. Many have needed protection. Many are now awaiting trial, or serving custodial sentences.<sup>3</sup>

Fine argues that youngsters in trouble with the law often live within an internalised prison, namely the limits of their thinking, which promotes an attitude of 'nothing matters'. Institutionalisation aggravates the situation in which these young people have already placed themselves and serves to extend the limitation on their choices. When young people in this predicament eventually leave the institution, their attitude towards life has not changed, but has rather been confirmed.<sup>4</sup> For this reason there is a great need for youth workers to "support young people at risk by helping them transform the way in which they think about their past, their present and their future."<sup>5</sup>

The central part of this dissertation is concerned with the development of a programme of de-labelling in the form of alternatives to sentencing for young people at risk in South Africa. This involved spending time with young people at risk who were participating in a rites of passage pilot project called 'The Journey'. This project was established by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young people at Risk towards the end of 1995, and was co-ordinated by Nicro. The journey pilot took place in Pretoria and sessions with the participants began in February 1996.

## **Methodology**

The first phase of the research involved participant observation of 17 juveniles at risk who took part in The Journey programme which began in Pretoria during February 1996. The nature of the research was ethnographic in the sense that I observed and monitored the actions and behaviour of the participants in order to view the social context in which they were situated from their perspective while at the same time remaining relatively

detached. As an organizer, shaper and observer, I was also involved in the planning process of the programme which took place over a period of two months and participated in weekly evaluation meetings which took place at Nicro, Pretoria. As the programme was a pilot project and the participants were not a representative sample of any wider group, I have used the programme as a case-study for my research. This programme was chosen for practical and financial reasons.

The second phase of the research employed qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured, personal interviews supplemented by documentary sources. Interviews were conducted with as many of the participating juveniles as possible. The interview schedule included both closed and open-ended questions to allow for flexibility in the research process for unexpected issues which could have arisen and necessitated a change in the direction of the research.

All data gathered was transcribed. Interview questions concerned with each participant's life history were asked in order to get an idea of their social and family background. Questions were also asked about their experience of adolescence in an attempt to determine their need for a rite of passage transformation process. As such, questions were structured around the following:

- fathering
- role models
- who they identify with

- their perceptions of older people
- what role older people play in their lives
- moments of ritual or of belonging
- labelling: when and how they got into trouble, who dealt with it and how.

### **Limitations of the Programme**

- The research process was made difficult by financial constraints as well as time limits. The latter, especially, inhibited the process of building feasible relationships with the participants and it was only towards the very end of the project that the boys began to open up and accept me more noticeably. This adversely affected the interviews which were conducted at the beginning of March as issues of trust and general shyness prevented the boys from talking more freely.
- At the end of 1996 I contacted the Pretoria branch of Nicro to get feedback on the follow-up process and was told that no follow-up had taken place after the final phase of the programme. Nicro could not give any reasons for this. No follow-up meant that no continued support was provided for the participants who, as a result, were left hanging. Various promises made to the group members during the course of the programme were also not kept. These included a mentor programme, involvement in community projects, outings, and training in facilitating ropes courses in order to be able to assist and teach the next group of journey participants. The opportunity to reinforce the learning and skills that the boys acquired during the programme was lost

and the disappointment and sense of abandonment that the boys may have felt can only be anticipated.

- Nicro failed to keep adequate documentation of the programme which complicated any process of evaluation.
  
- During the second phase of the programme one of the participants was arrested for breaking into a motor vehicle. He was placed in detention while awaiting trial and was not permitted to continue with the Journey sessions. In my opinion, this incident should have been kept within the boundaries of the programme and should have been dealt with by the programme participants themselves. The content of a rites of passage programme is created within delicate emotional space, and the consequences of breaching the group contract should be dealt with within that space. For future reference issues such as this should be worked out with the relevant authorities beforehand.

## **Analysis of the Programme**

Since Nicro did not keep any formal documentation of the programme and held infrequent evaluation meetings for which no evaluation criteria were established for the pilot study at all, I have drawn on some of the criteria suggested by Warfield-Coppock and Coppock in a study conducted by them to assess the types and models of rites of passage programmes in America. According to Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, research on this matter has been infrequent, namely because most rites programmes are based

within the community and have not been afforded noticeable acceptance. Also, evaluation of programmes does not seem to receive a high priority since the programmes are designed to address the needs of individual groups and communities and therefore have no need to be replicated.<sup>6</sup>

In their study, Warfield-Coppock and Coppock collected data on the demographics of organizations which run rites of passage programmes in America, their target population, theoretical background, programme components, successes and challenges. They assessed twenty culturally specific (Afrocentric) rites of passage programmes in terms of the implementation of the programmes and concluded that the rites programmes existing at the time of their research functioned to serve young people, families and communities to promote African-centered development in response to risk factors such as crime, drugs and violence within the community. Although most of the programmes researched were based on Afrocentric philosophy, that is the premise that African Americans are essentially an African people, all were concerned with the self-development and life skills necessary to facilitate the transition from childhood to adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the rites of passage programmes assessed by Warfield-Coppock and Coppock did not conduct formal evaluations, but determined success according to the aims and goals of the programmes and often included issues such as self-esteem, cultural awareness and improved attitudes, behaviour and relationships. Outcomes were generally based on changes in participants that were noted during and after the programmes.<sup>8</sup>

In their research on culturally specific rites of passage programmes, Gavazzi, Alford and McKenry<sup>9</sup> discuss Merton's argument that the study of social phenomenon in rites of passage programmes requires more than one paradigmatic approach in order to investigate "the entire range of socially interesting questions"<sup>10</sup> effectively. They point out that although quantitative methods enable the objectives and outcomes of programmes to be assessed systematically in terms of theory, their eurocentric approach lacks cultural sensitivity. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, use snowball sampling procedures, peer debriefing and reflexive journaling to aid intensive and in-depth descriptions of natural human groups. The authors suggest that although qualitative methods are a preferable choice for naturalistic researchers, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods may be a more effective approach and could ensure more comprehensive evaluations.<sup>11</sup>

Borrowing from the suggestions of Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, the criteria used to determine the rate of success of the Journey programme include:

- level of attendance
- level of interest / participation / initiative
- leadership abilities
- completion of the programme
- observable changes in attitudes, behaviour and relationships:
  - improved self-concept
  - improved self-esteem

- improved relationships with facilitators
  - increased responsibility
  - improved communication skills
- an idea of what worked well in terms of what the participants liked and how staff and initiates felt about the programme activities.

Based on the above criteria, analysis of the Journey programme was performed by means of an informal, qualitative evaluation which is presented in narrative form. Note that this applies only to the short-term effects of the programme on the participants while the programme was in progress for three months.

## **Selection Process**

Nicro in Pretoria selected seventeen young people at risk to participate in The Journey programme. The selection criteria used were as follows:<sup>12</sup>

- All males.
- Between the ages of 15 and 18 years.
- Mostly school drop-outs.
- No previous record of a sexual or violent offence.
- No recidivists.
- Youth deemed most likely to benefit from an adventure-based outdoor experiential programme. (No assessment criteria for this were provided.)

At the time, the boys selected resided in Jabulani Place of Safety in Shoshanguve township near Pretoria. They were not on conditional sentences, but were deemed to be at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system by Nicro.

## **Introduction of Youth to Programme**

Participants were introduced to the design and structure of the programme and made fully aware of what The Journey entailed. They were given an overview of the time demands of The Journey as well as an opportunity to define their goals for the programme. As participation in the programme was voluntary, participants were requested to sign a form committing themselves to the programme for the required period of time.

## **Aim of the Journey Programme**

The aim of this programme is to empower young people to take control of their lives by learning to solve problems experientially in an outdoor environment where the element of risk is controlled. Central to this process is the teaching of life skills through experiential education which aims to provide young people with a greater sense of their own potentiality as well as opportunities for group interaction and leadership. Based on the theory that the desire for adventure and danger is a natural part of adolescent development, The Journey attempts to provide young people with the necessary challenge and guidance needed to assist them with their transition into adulthood.

## **The Three Phases of the Journey Programme**

### **1. The Separation**

The programme began with a two-week retreat into the wilderness of Hogsback in the Outeniqua region. Ideally, Separation should take place away from that which is familiar to the young person, away from people he or she knows, and away from security. As the majority of youth at risk involved in the programme reside in urban areas, a retreat into nature was the perfect option to begin a process of de-labelling. As was argued in chapter one, labels are a social construction and, hence, would have little meaning in the wilderness. Keen reminds us that

Wildness, first and foremost, comes from identification with the literal wilderness - rugged mountains, virgin forests, barren tundras, the habitat of untamed grizzlies, undomesticated wolves, fierce mountain lions. Wildness is no metaphor whose meaning we may learn when we are comfortably housed within a city or enclosed within the boundaries of the civilized psyche. We need large expanses of untouched wilderness to remind ourselves of the abiding fundamental truth of the human condition: We are only a single species within a commonwealth of sentient beings. When we forget this, we first kill off our co-inhabitants and then destroy our own habitat.<sup>13</sup>

This part of the course was co-ordinated and managed by a trained Outward Bound team. During the two weeks in Hogsback, the Journey group participated in outdoor activities such as abseiling, river-rafting, rock-climbing, hiking, and a solo experience where individuals spent a night alone in a forest. The Outward Bound team claimed that these activities were often more of an ordeal than a pleasure for the participants as most of them had never experienced anything of this sort before. In the process, many limits were tested. The aim of the Outward Bound adventure was to challenge and encourage the

youngsters to confront their fear - fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of making a fool of themselves in front of their friends, and fear of being hurt (both physically and emotionally). The team leaders reported that the majority of the boys rose to the challenges without any problems, however, some needed more encouragement. All expressed a sense of pride and achievement on completing the activities.

According to the authors of the book Islands of Healing, these experiences are designed to challenge an individual's self-concept and expose both its strong and weak points. The testing is experienced at an individual and a group level and encourages self-reliance as well as an acknowledgement of a need for others. These activities highlight the fact that each participant has a contribution to make which is important if the group as a whole is to succeed by overcoming the challenges.<sup>14</sup> Through experiential activities these processes of self and other awareness are crucial to the larger process of personal identity formation as expounded by Erikson.

Criticos relates a description of adventure education as "a state of mind that begins with feelings of uncertainty about the outcome of a journey and always ends with feelings of enjoyment, satisfaction or elation about the successful completion of that journey . . . The initial feeling of uncertainty of outcome is fear: fear of physical or psychological harm. There can be no adventure in outdoor pursuits without this fear, (for without it) there would be no challenge".<sup>15</sup> Without challenge there can be no inner transformation.

It should be noted that in a rite of passage, discipline is necessary in order to teach the value of self-control. This can be taught experientially using dietary restrictions or fasting as fasting is often used to heighten one's sense of awareness and spirituality.<sup>16</sup> During the Outward Bound course the participants in The Journey programme were forbidden to smoke. When the participants returned from Hogsback a Nicro facilitator, during a post-Separation debriefing, asked them whether abstaining from cigarettes had been difficult. One boy answered that he had been tempted to smoke, but another boy in the group had encouraged him not to. The rest of the group were visibly impressed by this. Cairns and Cairns suggest that it is not often that peer influence gets any respect, in fact mostly peers get blamed for deviant behaviour, drugs and other 'developmental disasters', and it is overlooked when peer influence transmits moral values and courageous acts.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. The Transition**

This phase of the programme continued with the rites of passage theme and began when the group returned from their adventure at Hogsback. Life skills were taught by means of experiential learning which enabled participants to be involved in their own self-awareness and skill development through a process of group interaction.

The group met at a centre in Atteridgeville once a week for two hours. It is generally acknowledged by traditional indigenous cultures as important to have a special place or 'sacred ground' to which initiates can retreat to begin their work of separation and transformation through ritual and symbolism. The sacred place was traditionally an "isolated circular encampment" situated in the wilderness.<sup>18</sup> Those who were not

themselves initiators or initiates were banned from entering this place which, according to Dadisi Sanyika<sup>19</sup>, may be created in different forms. It may be found deep within a forest, in a cave, in the wilderness or it may simply be a hut. Anywhere that initiation and new birth can take place. Sanyika says that it “is a re-creation of the original space where the gods or original ancestral hero first descended to earth and initiated the history of the family, clan or particular ethnic group. The sacred place goes beyond the mundane and is a place where the human and the spiritual will commune”.<sup>20</sup> For this purpose The Journey group were given the use of the Atteridgeville centre, a house which at the time was in the process of being built by Nicro. This was supposed to serve as a base, a sacred ground, for the group which the young people could adopt as their own. However, although it was possible to use, lack of funds and poor building management meant that it was far from finished thereby prohibiting involvement of the participants in creative activities in a team effort to decorate the centre as they would have liked it.

It is interesting to note that the processes of group development that occurred during the Journey programme correspond to Northen’s Life Cycle Model of Group Development. Valerie Moss-Morris<sup>21</sup> discusses the five stages of this model in terms of understanding group processes and dynamics.<sup>22</sup> The first of these stages involves planning and intake and focuses on criteria for group composition. The second phase is known as Orientation and marks the beginning of group interaction. Generally, this phase is characterized by the ambivalence and apprehension of group members towards the unknown and most are preoccupied with issues of acceptance and approval. This was evident in the very beginning of the transitional phase as the boys were generally quiet and unsure of the

situation in which they found themselves. Not knowing what to expect or what was expected of them, most viewed the activities with scepticism and were not eager to volunteer themselves. It was clear that many had limited interpersonal relationship skills such as not listening or showing interest in what others had to say. This, however, began to change once the boys became involved in creating the Bravo group.

### **Forming The Bravo Group**

The sessions continued with a process of group formation in an attempt to promote a sense of unity among the participants. It was therefore necessary to choose a group name.

Helen Luke observes that

The power of the *Name* is a great and holy theme in all religion and myth, in the whole history of consciousness. The name is the word, the symbol of that which separates man from the beast, from unconscious nature, and with it comes power . . . Primitives are extremely careful about the speaking of names. If an enemy knows a man's name, he automatically gains power over him. Even today the signing of a man's name is an irrevocable commitment, a handing over of power to someone else.<sup>23</sup>

Choosing a group name proved to be difficult. At first gang names were popular - the more feared the gang, the better the name. This was one of the examples of how many of the boys identified with a negative label, in this case the gang. Eventually the supervisor from Jabulani suggested the name 'Bravo' meaning 'brave'. The majority wanted the name, but two members disagreed claiming that it was not a name thought up by the group as a whole. Tempers started to rise and the facilitator was forced to split the opposing groups with a board acting as a wall between them. Each group was given the

This parallel's the third phase of the Life Cycle Model of Group Development referred to as *Exploring and Testing the Group*. It is during this phase that issues of dominance, control and power arise. Conflicts may occur between group members or between members and leaders. These conflicts facilitate the exploration of interpersonal potential and promote emotional integration once resolved.<sup>24</sup>

### **Group Values**

Once group formation had taken place, unity was reinforced with a group motto and group rules. Two sessions were used for this and involved the use of creative games and activities that stimulated thought relating to the need for interpersonal support and interdependence. Group values were decided on and a ritual was created and performed to pledge loyalty to the group and what it stood for. From here onwards, the group expected the behaviour and attitude of each group member to reflect the values which the group as a whole supported. The Jabulani supervisor reported that the group took this sense of responsibility home with them as they continued to reprimand each other in terms of the Bravo group rules even when they were not within 'programme space'. This showed that the boys were beginning to identify with the positive values associated with the group.

During the next sub-sections, namely Story, Ropes Courses and Goals, it is evident how the fourth phase of group development began to unfold. This is the *Working Phase* and is largely characterized by members co-operating together interdependently to form a cohesive unit. Group work becomes more personal dealing with issues that will promote change and growth.<sup>25</sup> It is during the above-mentioned activities that the participants

where offered the opportunity to experiment with different positive roles such as that of leader or supporter, for example.

### **The Use Of Story**

A primary objective of the programme involves encouraging participants to develop their capacity to combine different perspectives or points of view which will enable them to think objectively about both themselves and others. By the time they have reached the age of about eighteen years, adolescents should be able to recognize and understand “that others are also selves with fears, doubts and hopes and strengths that may be similar to or different from their own”.<sup>26</sup>

For this reason, one of the rules of the programme was ‘no physical violence’. When confronting fears, if emotional tensions arise or ‘wounds’ are re-opened, then, as Meade points out, in order for the troubles of the culture to be faced and challenged, physical violence cannot be turned to as a solution. As an alternative, story and mythology should be used to provide space for emotions to ‘erupt’ in the form of images rather than physical acts.<sup>27</sup> The following is my description of a story-telling activity which took place during a Journey session:

‘Story telling’ began with an attempt to get each young person to use each other as props in a picture-acting form where each would tell a story using the human props to demonstrate. This proved very difficult both for the facilitator to explain, and for the participants to understand. As a result, it was democratically decided that every one would sit in a circle and listen as each group member told a story about his experiences (good and bad) during the Outward Bound adventure. This worked really well. There

were no problems with talking or admitting to emotions like fear, crying, and pain. The group seemed to support each person as they spoke - chipping in when details were forgotten and encouraging those who were hesitant. No one was mocked or jeered at for admitting that they had been scared or had cried.<sup>28</sup>

According to Meade, story provides opportunities for people to “relive and re-examine personal traumas” as well as a chance to experience the meaning of community. In his experience, the analysis of myths and fairy tales encourages people to share their own personal stories and re-experience the emotions associated with them.<sup>29</sup> “Storytelling is designed to provoke emotional reactions in the listener, and these reactions awaken images that the listener must try to capture. The story comes to life through emotions and memories so that the two aspects of remembering and making continue in the listeners”.<sup>30</sup>

After each story was told, the group discussed what each member had learnt from their individual experience and then affirmed what the member had learnt in a ritual that they created for the occasion. For example, if Siphon overcame fear then Siphon would stand in the middle of a circle with all the others gathered around him sitting on their haunches. They started chanting “Siphon overcame fear” very softly and gradually got louder and louder eventually jumping up in the air.<sup>31</sup> This ritual proved to be very meaningful for the group. Everybody was enthusiastic and each individual affirmed practically burst with pride. The participants slowly became aware of what they had accomplished, what they were capable of and what their potential is. Activities such as this one improved self-awareness and enhanced self-esteem.

According to Ewert and Heywood, ritual is of significant value to the process of group development as rituals “symbolize the reality of the group and the individual’s membership in it”<sup>32</sup>. Group identification is referred to by Van der Zanden as ‘Consciousness of Oneness’ and marks the receptive relationship the individual has with the group.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Ropes Course**

Another experiential activity which made a big impact on the participants was the ropes course. Group members took part in a high and low ropes course at the University of Pretoria.<sup>34</sup> This involved various physical activities which required group participation, co-operation and responsibility in order to be successfully completed. One of the high ropes activities consisted of two vertical poles (about 15 - 20 meters high) joined together at the top by a horizontal pole of approximately the same length (so that the feature resembled rugby posts). The aim was to climb to the top of one of the vertical poles and walk across the horizontal pole without holding on to anything. On a safety note, each participant was harnessed and belayed by two experienced people on the ground.<sup>35</sup>

This activity aroused much fear and anxiety in the participants, and following through with the activity required a lot of courage. The aim of this course was to teach the value of trust, co-operation, responsibility, encouragement and support, and these values were evident as the boys assisted and encouraged each other while yelling advice and edging

each other on. Those who attempted the activities first automatically took it upon themselves to coach the others through them.

Afterwards, during the debriefing process, the activities were discussed in terms of what group members had felt and how it had affected them. The participants talked about a range of feelings that they had experienced. These included the physical difficulty of some of the exercises, the emotional difficulty, namely the fear of falling, the fear of embarrassment or humiliation, fear of “not making it”, and self-doubt. They spoke about feelings of accomplishment and achievement coupled with many shouts of joy and ‘high fives’. They also mentioned the importance of encouragement from their group members. They pointed out that it was important to trust others and to let others trust them and that this involved confronting and overcoming fear. Summing up the high ropes, one participant said: “You must take your heart and put it up there”.

After the ropes courses many of the boys expressed an interest in learning how to belay. This would mean that they would be given an opportunity to learn more experiential skills as well as an opportunity to take on more responsibility as belaying involves using safety precautions.

### **Goals and Thoughts for the Future**

A primary theme of the Journey sessions involved encouraging participants to think about their past, present and future. In an effort to avoid limiting the personal development of the participants the facilitators decided not to focus on the past in isolation, but rather to

focus on the past “in relation to the present and future”.<sup>36</sup> Two sessions were dedicated to this theme. Questions that were focused on included:

- Where am I going?
- What are my goals?
- What do I need to attain my goals?
- What do I want my life to be like?
- What is my life like now?
- What do I need to change in order to fulfil the above?

Some wanted to finish high school and said that they would need to work hard in order to pass. Others were more ambitious and wanted to become doctors or teachers. They realized that in order to attain these goals they would have to finish school and get good enough grades to attend university. Others felt that they would need to work before attending university in order to be able to pay for their education. One boy wanted to get married and have a family. For this he knew he would have to find work so that he could support his dependants.

The participants were enthusiastic during the first of these two sessions and eagerly discussed their future hopes and dreams as well as how they intended to fulfil them and what they would need in order to do so. The second session did not run as smoothly as the first as there were complaints of boredom and suggestions that this particular topic had already been covered.

### 3. The Reintegration

Ceremonies of reintegration serve to celebrate the achievements of the young people. Warfield-Coppock and Coppock point out that “they should not be used for the self-aggrandizement, developing or reinforcing political alliances or otherwise purposes of a self-serving nature for the adults.”<sup>37</sup> Meaningful tokens or symbols of accomplishment may be presented to the young people to honour the success of their journey.

Here the fifth and final phase of group development, that is *Termination*, takes place and Moss-Morris discusses the importance of terminating the group appropriately. It is here that unresolved issues of separation may surface and group members may react to the termination by being evasive, either ignoring or denying the process, or they may be angry and regress to the beginning phase of development. Termination includes a time of mourning and if dealt with effectively results in a “graduation effect - [where] the future is regarded with optimism, and there is considerable rehearsing for new stages of experience.”<sup>38</sup>

The boys were prepared for the termination throughout the programme. Every session was geared towards the final celebration and the participants were reminded of what they were working towards during every activity. In my estimation, this helped the group accept the inevitability of the end and look forward to the next phase (which should have been the follow-up) with optimism.

The three phases of the Journey programme were terminated with a celebration which was held for the Bravo group at Jabulani Place of Safety on 29 March, 1996. Friends of the group members were invited as well as various people from Nicro and Child Welfare. Parents had been excluded from the programme from the beginning. According to the facilitators at Nicro it would have been difficult to locate them. The boys were asked to plan the event and host it, with each boy contributing to at least one part. The group elected a Master of Ceremonies who introduced each section as it began. The group started with a testimony about the programme from two of the boys followed by a few words from the rest so that each group member was given an opportunity to tell the guests what he had learned from the programme and how it had affected him. Some of the participants described The Journey programme in the following ways:

“In our group we have laws. The first law is love. We come together to talk about that. Second, no fighting. If there is fighting no one will enjoy their life. Everybody was responsible for a law. Another law was trust. Another law was support.

“At Outward Bound I learnt to love, trust, rock climbing and canoeing. It was hard, but I did it.”

“At Hogsback I’ve learnt expedition and abseiling and to stop people fighting. Most people think I am a fool, but now I have learnt to trust and love.”

“Some people thought we were going to have a good time. But it was very hard to do all those things. We were very interested to do those things because there were people there to encourage us.”

“I was thinking that I could give up. But because I stayed you can call me General.”

Perhaps the most touching account was related by one member who is remembered most for his positive attitude and his willingness to participate in everything with commitment and compassion:

“It was very hard. I wanted to come back from Hogsback, but we had to sign papers before we went to show that we knew it would be hard. Before [the Outward Bound course] we took it for granted that we could do everything.

We went on hikes. We climbed rocks and once you get to the top you look down and you don't want to go back. But they told us we could do it. We abseiled and river-raftered. There were life savers so it was OK if we fell in. Another thing was the expedition. We walked a long way. We carried heavy bags with food and things. We started in the morning until the evening. They told us that all the way was 36km. I wanted to quit, say: “No, I'm not doing it”, but I had signed so I did it. I know now I am a man. I have stayed in a forest alone and walked on top of mountains.”

This was followed by some entertainment for the guests. The boys divided themselves into small groups and each group performed for their audience. There was dancing, miming to rap music, and a ‘comedian’ who had the audience in stitches with his jokes.

After this, the Bravo group gathered together in one part of the room while everybody present (about sixty people) formed a semi-circle around them. Everybody went down onto their knees with one fist in the air while those who wanted could speak to the group, acknowledging their successful completion of the programme and their personal growth.

A number of the staff from Jabulani commented on the transformation that they had noticed taking place in the boys over the two and a half month period. They pointed out that the boys seemed somewhat happier, more confident and seemed to have a sense of purpose. They congratulated them on their completion of the programme and hoped that they would continue to carry with them the values that they had learned as members of

the Bravo group. Members of Nicro also affirmed the boys' accomplishment and praised their efforts and dedication to the programme. With each affirmation the group seemed to swell bigger and bigger with pride.

Certificates from Nicro were handed to each boy and the Bravo group ended the formalities with the following message which the facilitator had helped them with:

“Society we thank you for giving us another chance. We commit ourselves to loving you and showing you respect and we ask you, society, to stop fighting, to begin to love and to begin to care.”

The celebration continued with music, dancing and a braai.

## **Follow-up**

After the third phase of the Journey, a follow-up programme was planned. This programme was co-structured by Nicro and the University of Pretoria which placed students majoring in third year undergraduate Psychology and Experiential Education as mentors. The idea was for the mentors to meet with the Journey participants approximately once a week to facilitate experiential activities such as games and community projects, and to fulfil a supportive role. However, Nicro did not continue with the programme after the celebration, and the follow-up did not take place. The organization was unable to provide reasons for this.

In a programme such as *The Journey*, follow-up is essential. This is a crucial time where young people returning to the routine of their lives, either in an institution or in a gang infested community, need guidance and support. They need mentors to assist them as they continue with their individuation process. A mentor should ideally be a respected member of the young person's community and possess the knowledge and wisdom that comes from life experience. Both rites of passage and de-labelling are not only about transforming young people, but are also about changing the community's attitude towards those young people. Setting up a mentoring programme within the community would be a starting point to furthering this goal.

## **Parent and Community Participation**

Traditionally, indigenous African families have been characterized by a large group of extended members. Indeed, the African proverb *It Takes a Whole Village To Raise a Child* aptly describes these networks. Indigenous rites of passage all over the world place great value in community involvement and a primary function of initiation and ritual is to bring members together in an effort to strengthen and unify both the individual and the community. Malidoma Somé says that

A true community begins in the hearts of the people involved. It is not a place of distraction, but of being. It is not a place where you reform, but a place you go home to. Finding a home is what people in community try and accomplish. In community it is possible to restore a supportive presence for one another, rather than distrust of one another or competitiveness with one another. The others in community are the reason that one feels the way one feels. The elder cannot be an elder if there is no community to make

him [or her] an elder. The young boy cannot feel secure if there is no elder whose silent presence gives him hope in life.

Although mobilization of communities in urban South Africa is difficult, creating a support network for youngsters during and after a rites programme such as the Journey could greatly reduce recidivism. Where possible it would be ideal to involve parents in the process from the beginning as well as significant others such as relatives and members from schools, churches, community agencies, law enforcement agencies and small businesses. It is the responsibility of the programme organizers and facilitators to research the community and identify both formal and informal leaders. Warfield-Coppock and Coppock suggest that contact be made with these leaders to introduce them to the programme and explain how they may be involved and what roles they could adopt. Following this, continuous contact with all community members and parents concerned is necessary to reinforce their involvement.<sup>39</sup>

This involvement could take place in various ways. For example, adults could be included in the planning process by contributing ideas. They could assist with leadership, liasoning, resources such as supplies, materials, books, fundraising, organization or special skills such as music, sewing, cooking, martial arts, culture or history. They could also play a specific role in the final celebration ceremony by offering support, taking part in some of the activities or playing a ritualistic role.<sup>40</sup> Had there been more efficient planning before implementation of the Journey programme took place, more community members could have been involved in the process and there could possibly have been more emphasis on culturally appropriate activities and rituals.

Somé explains that ritual is needed because it expresses the recognition that creating “a different and special kind of community” is difficult.<sup>41</sup> He suggests that “[w]hat we need is to be able to come together with a constantly increasing mindset of wanting to do the right thing, even though we know very well that we don’t know where to start”.<sup>42</sup>

Blumenkrantz and Gavazzi suggest that to get the community involved in rites of passage, four things need to take place:

- the community needs to understand and accept the importance of rites of passage.
- resources in the form of people need to be identified targeted within the community.
- the community needs to commit to making a difference by employing the rites of passage prevention and intervention strategies.
- training of and consultation with the community needs to take place in order to identify the community’s needs and establish strategies.<sup>43</sup>

Young people at risk need to be linked up to important community resources which can aid in their positive development. This does not only refer to community input, but also to input by the youth in the form of community service. With regard to adolescents in trouble with the law, this could double as a learning experience and a penalty for unacceptable behaviour. South African urban township street committees are well known for their informal hearings in which offenders are ‘sentenced’ to a certain amount of community service. In this way, both the offender and the community benefit from the

process and the youngster is offered an opportunity to right any wrongs and in the process is able to learn important human qualities.

Community service may involve anything from assisting with informal hospital, police or fire station duties to care of the elderly.<sup>44</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Despite all the criticisms about process and the crucial omission of follow-up and community participation, what was observed was positive. The level of attendance of the participants was very good as approximately 80 percent attended all the sessions. As the process of group development began to take place, all the boys (except for one who was not Sotho speaking and, as such, found communication difficult) showed a marked improvement in their level of participation. As they began to initiate things more, the self-confidence of the boys grew considerably. Towards the end of the second phase they were more willing to accept responsibility both for good behaviour and for carrying out tasks as the success of the celebration (which the group organized) proved. Individually, the boys were definitely more focused in terms of what they hoped to achieve in the future and many had set specific goals for themselves, realizing that they could make choices in life. If one compared the boys at the beginning and the end of the programme, a definite change took place. When the time came to say goodbye, they exuded a self-confidence and radiance that only comes from having experienced something positive.

However, the lack of follow-up, and support in the form of mentoring, meant that these positive experiences were not reinforced. This means that the de-labelling process was hampered. The boys were not encouraged to continue with any leadership initiatives which could have furthered their personal growth and identity 're-formation'. Added to this, the adult community members involved in the process were not encouraged to continue supporting and guiding them through community projects. Rites of passage should be thought of as processes of community prevention and intervention where significant community members such as parents, relatives, schools, churches, community agencies and law enforcement agencies all strive to come together to support children-becoming adults during their transitory journey. Blumenkrantz and Gavazzi point out that the notion that interventions are about process as well as content is all too often forgotten. They warn us that forgetting that intervention is an ongoing process which may be used to unify communities and transmit values to the younger generation is a mistake.<sup>45</sup> Hence, the following social and managerial guidelines should be taken into account:

- Networking needs to be encouraged among existing organizations and community agencies working with youth and/or adventure education to share ideas and resources. Marion Goodman refers to the concept of "turfism" where organizations protect their information and ideas by refusing to share them. This does not build, but inevitably destroys. Through the Usiko research it came to light that many organizations involved in youth work are unaware that many of them are working towards the same goals and that much of their work overlaps.

- Rites programmes should make use of as many existing community structures as possible in order to cut costs as well as mobilize communities to provide assistance and support - after all the youth problem is a community problem.
  
- Participants who are at different degrees of risk should be kept separately in order to maintain focus on similar goals and intensity of programmes.
  
- An effective mentoring support structure needs to be established from the very beginning of the programme. Without continuous support coming from within the community, the chances of a young person reverting to past, negative attitudes and behaviour is great and this could result in a re-experience of failure.
  
- Follow-up after a programme is essential. This should include psychological assistance when necessary. Regular contact should be made with the young people and their mentors and intermittent getaways should take place once or twice in the following year to reinforce what was accomplished during the programme and allow participants to make contact with their group members again.
  
- Staff training is very important to ensure that the safety (both physical and emotional) of the participants is fully guaranteed. South Africa has a controversial history regarding the efficiency and competency of child care workers and institutional staff. Siyakathala Place of Safety which was situated near Stellenbosch is just one example of this. Programme facilitators, mentors, care workers and institutional staff need to

be trained in order to gain an understanding of the concepts involved in rites of passage and everything that these entail.

Programmes based on rites of passage ideals can provide the security necessary for adolescents to experiment and explore their potentialities. By using the transformatory power of ritual, rites programmes offer the opportunity to guide young people at risk back into society while at the same time avoiding the stigmatization that accompanies retributive punishment. However, if we are to think about implementing rites programmes as a de-labelling option for young people in trouble with the law, much more planning needs to go into a programme such as the journey in order to make it more effective. High risk youth need a more intensive programme over a longer period of time and the transitional phase would need to be supplemented with job skills training and an established mentoring programme. Added to this, the assessment phase would need to be more intensive to ensure that the programme is suitable for given individuals. If one considers other forms of intervention such as psychotherapy and the amount of time and attention it takes to produce results, rites of passage programmes should not be considered a quick fix solution. Rather, they should be viewed as a comprehensive approach to the time of transition surrounding the adolescent life crisis.

## End notes

<sup>1</sup>Cairns and Cairns, 1994: 89.

<sup>2</sup>Fine, 1996: 4.

<sup>3</sup>1996: 4.

<sup>4</sup>1996: 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>1992: 33.

<sup>7</sup>1992: 37.

<sup>8</sup>1992: 39.

<sup>9</sup>Gavazzi is an Assistant Professor in the Depart. Of Family Relations and Human Development at the Ohio State University; Alford is an instructor at the School of Social Work at Syracuse University; and McKenry is a Professor in the Depts. Of Family Relations and Human Development, Black Studies and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center at Ohio State University.

<sup>10</sup>In Gavazzi, Alford and McKenry, 1996: 168.

<sup>11</sup>1996: 168.

<sup>12</sup>Branken, 1995: 12.

<sup>13</sup>1992: 183.

<sup>14</sup>Schoel et al, 1989: 14-23.

<sup>15</sup>1989: 83.

<sup>16</sup>Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, 1992: 100-101.

<sup>17</sup>1994: 90.

<sup>18</sup>Sanyika, 1996: 118.

<sup>19</sup>During the sixties Sanyika was an active member in the Black Consciousness Movement and in 1978 was a founding member of the Mori Nimba West African Dance Company. He is currently chairperson of the Watts Community Policy and Planning Institute in California.

<sup>20</sup>1996: 118.

<sup>21</sup>At the time of writing, Moss-Morris was a group work and therapy tutor for the School of Social Work at the University of Cape Town.

<sup>22</sup>1987.

<sup>23</sup>1995: 124.

<sup>24</sup>Moss-Morris, 1987: 17.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Phillips, 1991: 57.

<sup>27</sup>1993: 89.

<sup>28</sup>Fieldnotes, Feb 1996.

<sup>29</sup>1993: 9.

<sup>30</sup>Meade, 1993: 114.

<sup>31</sup>Fieldnotes, Feb 1996.

<sup>32</sup>1991: 601.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>27 March, 1996.

<sup>35</sup>Fieldnotes, 27 March, 1996.

<sup>36</sup>Fine, 1996: 19.

<sup>37</sup>1992: 102.

<sup>38</sup>1987: 17-18.

<sup>39</sup>1992: 156.

<sup>40</sup>Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, 1992: 165.

<sup>41</sup>Somé, 1993: 70.

<sup>42</sup>Somé, 1993: 71.

<sup>43</sup>1993: 204.

<sup>44</sup>Blumenkrantz and Gavazzi, 1993: 209.

<sup>45</sup>1993: 200.

## **Chapter 7**

### ***A De-labelling Rites of Passage Programme for Young People at Risk in South Africa***

The notion of punishment is central to any considerations for a new juvenile justice system and will determine whether or not legislative proposals will stand or fall in both public and parliamentary discussion. Added to this is the question of redirecting young offenders away from the formal court-to-prison route and ensuring that they take responsibility for their actions within a process which, while insisting on punishment, restores harmony to the community and provides reparation for the victim while simultaneously building the self-esteem of the young offender. This chapter suggests how rites of passage may be used for de-labelling and gives particular reference to experiential learning. The research for this dissertation has provided the groundwork for a de-labelling programme which is currently in the process of being implemented in Cape Town and the proposal for this programme is outlined below.

#### **Rites of Passage as a Process of De-Labeling**

Rites of passage programmes are able to be used as a process for de-labelling young people at risk. This is able to take place at two levels, namely at an individual and a community level and would involve:

1. a re-evaluation of the individual by him or herself.
2. a re-evaluation of the individual by the community.

The above two points correspond to Erikson's primary arguments for positive identity formation, namely that the young person needs to affirm childhood identifications, receive recognition from the community, and be given 'permission' to experiment and explore different roles within a contained space, that is a moratorium.

Rites of passage programmes are able to fulfil these functions in the following ways:

- they allow young people to experiment and explore different (positive) roles within a space which is contained by facilitators and mentors who provide support and guidance.
- through experiential activities, young people are able to experiment with various roles such as leadership, creative, helping, nurturing and supportive roles.
- throughout the rites process, participants are given recognition and affirmation of positive identity formation.

The de-labelling process of a rites of passage programme would take place as follows. A young person would enter the programme already labelled, however, it would be at this point that the label ceases to have meaning for the facilitators and mentors. To them the young person would simply be seen as "a young person". During the programme the participant's defences or personas would begin to be broken down while self-confidence is slowly built up. There would be a discovery of different positive roles affirmed by elders as well as peers, new skills would be learned, symbolic meaning would be attached to the learning process through ritual, and inner psychic transformation would begin to take place.

Through a process of rites of passage young people at risk are able to be held socially within a new concept of self and community. By discarding the labels of 'delinquent', 'skollie' or 'gangster' and exposing young people to themselves as they are without the labels is a fearful and vulnerable experience for the young people concerned. Using the combination of culture, environment, ritual and fear, rites of passage are able to create a safe and sacred space for the youngsters to confront themselves without the personas of gangster, drop-out or delinquent. In this sense, rites of passage go beyond psychosocial theories which simply reconceptualize labelling, and actually attempt to change the way young people see themselves.

The outdoor and experiential components of the programme are designed to expose the inner self (as opposed to a persona) and build it up by providing an opportunity for the young person to learn to trust, rely on and have confidence in himself or herself. In a society where personal growth is restricted by negative criticism and a judgmental attitude, the worth of many young people at risk often goes unrecognized. By tapping into their inner resources and bringing these to a conscious level, rites of passage are able to facilitate their personal growth.

As previous examples have shown, a major focus of rites programmes is experiential. With this in mind, the following section attempts to provide an understanding of what experiential learning entails and what it aims to achieve as it relates to both rites of passage and de-labelling.

## **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is also known as participative learning or adventure-based education and it directly involves the knowledge and competence of learners. The use of experiential education is especially significant with regard to the beliefs and attitudes of people, or any “emotionally charged or value-laden material”.<sup>1</sup> It differs from didactic teaching which takes place in the format of a lecture or lesson and generally encourages learning at an intellectual level only. Hobbs points out that

[the didactic] method of teaching involves a predominantly passive form of learning in which students are not required to examine their own response to the subject material. They are able to remain personally unaware either of intensity or the effect of their own emotional response to the subject material on themselves or on other people. This can on occasion be a basis for later damagingly inadequate application of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, experiential learning differs qualitatively from didactic learning which “has its appropriate place and . . . its limitations”.<sup>3</sup> The quality of experiential learning stems from its ability to incorporate as many aspects of the participant which he or she is willing to contribute to the process of learning. This means that learning is then able to take place in an integrated way at intellectual, behavioural and emotional levels. This method of learning paves the way for actual change to occur in the attitude and behaviour of the participant. “It involves all participants, teachers and learners alike, in a process of mutual vulnerability and risk-taking, of personal challenge and learning.”<sup>4</sup>

According to Hobbs, there are four main principles by which experiential learning can be defined:<sup>5</sup>

1. the learner is aware of the processes which are taking place, and which are enabling learning to occur;
2. the learner is involved in a reflective experience which enables the person to relate current learning to the past, present and future, even if these time relationships are felt rather than thought;
3. personally significant experience and content: what is being learned and how it is being learned, hold a special importance for that person;
4. there is an involvement of the whole self - body, thoughts, feelings and actions, not just of the mind; in other words, the learner is engaged as a whole person.

In turn, these components of experiential learning propose the following:<sup>6</sup>

- Experiential learning is concerned with the experience of individuals not just with their participation. Participants are asked to consider and utilise their own experience as a basis for self-understanding and assessment of their own needs, resources and objectives.
- The individual participant is regarded as an active rather than a passive participant in the process of defining and putting into practice educational agendas and methodologies.
- Through this process, power (locus of control) is shifted away from the teacher in the direction of the learner. Another way to put this would be to say that the nature of the teacher-student relationship is usually asymmetrical; the former has more power than the latter.

- The participant becomes responsible for his or her own learning. The expert is a resource and a provider of structure, but learning is seen as taking place when the learner is trying actively to assimilate external knowledge into his or her own internal frame of reference.

## **Behavioural Change Through Experiential Learning**

Johnson and Johnson advocate that learning as an active process is much more effective than learning which is passive. This means that knowledge which is attained by way of experience is “more meaningful since the learner is able to integrate thought and action by linking concepts to behaviour. Effective learning requires a conceptual framework against which the experience is tested.”<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the key to the attitude and behavioural change of participants lies in the emotional challenge that experiential learning provides.<sup>8</sup> However, not all the benefits of participative learning reap immediate results. More often than not changes are developmental and thus not immediately observable but “are intended to stimulate the person in their own development towards greater personal autonomy and a greater sense of their own internal locus of control”.<sup>9</sup> For example, at a basic level, changes are intended to motivate self-evaluation through the use of “active learning methods and by introducing new experiences (by means of role plays, games, simulations) and concepts”.<sup>10</sup> Increased self-evaluation and awareness leads to better use of personal resources.<sup>11</sup>

The primary goal of adventure-based experiential learning<sup>12</sup> is improvement of the self-concept. The self-concept was defined by Carl Rogers as “the way an individual perceives himself in relation to the world around him”.<sup>13</sup> This refers to the image one has of oneself and that which one values in oneself and in one’s relationships with others. Schoel *et al* give the following example:

If whenever anger is expressed openly you experience a feeling of physical or emotional isolation, you might learn to deny yourself the right to express or, eventually, to feel anger. Then, when angry feelings bubbled up, you might experience both isolation and denial. This would lead to a lack of ‘congruence’, in Roger’s view, between ‘self’ and ‘organism’, and lead to a loss of self-esteem and a more negative self-concept. Conversely, to the extent that a person’s self-structure can become ‘congruent’ with the real life experience of the person, then the person can grow in integrity, a sense of positive worth, and the ability to take the risks necessary to grow.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, experiential learning through adventurous activities which “focus on success experience”, can enhance a person’s positive self-concept.<sup>15</sup> Developing a positive self-concept involves the following primary elements:

### **1. Trust Building**

Participating in risk activities promotes individual reliance on the group and builds trust at a group level. “The physical nature of the program activities builds in the necessity of achieving a basic level of physical trust before moving on to more complex psychological and social interaction issues. Later activities recycle the trust themes as participants risk feeling foolish, failing or in other ways becoming vulnerable to social judgement. Appropriate trust and risk-taking judgements are intertwined necessarily”.<sup>16</sup>

These activities prove to be therapeutic with regard to group development and team support which builds emotional trust and in turn promotes “sharing, openness, acceptance and support of others”.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. Goal Setting**

According to Schoel *et al*, it was established by Outward Bound founder Kurt Lewin in 1944 that if an individual is able to

- define personal goals,
  - relate these goals to primary needs and values,
  - map the way to achieving these goals,
  - set goals which are realistic in terms of aspiration, yet which present a challenge,
- then he or she will be psychologically successful.<sup>18</sup>

Through experiential learning participants are able to see the difference that their actions make, and since each agrees before-hand not to “devalue or discount themselves or other group members”, the experience is both supportive and therapeutic. The main point of goal setting is, therefore, to teach participants to focus on both the present and the future as well as the process of planning to realistically meet one’s needs.<sup>19</sup>

## **3. Challenge / Stress**

Young people in trouble with the law are often involved with the criminal justice system for participating in high risk activities. Adolescence is a time characteristically filled with risk, and Bly suggests that this risk-taking signifies an unconscious need for initiation.<sup>20</sup>

Research conducted by Cairns and Cairns suggests that adolescent males are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in life-threatening activities:

Direct challenges are a part of the male role stereotype that becomes intensified in mid-adolescence. It appears in direct aggressive confrontations as well as in serious risk activities (e.g., playing “chicken” on the highway to see who is the first to swerve from a high-speed, head-on collision; challenging for the ultimate ‘high’ with rock cocaine; playing ‘Russian roulette’).<sup>21</sup>

Virginia Hine suggests that “the restless searching of our youth for ‘grown up’ experiences which satisfy their need to be ‘adult’ often result in feelings and expressions of frustration, low self-esteem or alienation, especially if peers and parents are as confused as they”.<sup>22</sup>

One of the reasons for initiation is to show young people how to challenge themselves and seek meaning for their actions in socially acceptable ways. The design of adventure-based activities is such that the participants experience ‘perceived risk’ which promotes feelings of stress. The use of goals (both group and individual) transforms perceived risk activities from a ‘thrill-seeking’ category to one of self improvement and social meaning.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Peak Experience**

Abraham Maslow studied ‘peak experiences’ among psychologically healthy individuals, and came to the conclusion that these experiences involved an “acute identity experience of the most positive kind”.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Miholy Csikszentmihayli studied those involved

in demanding and challenging activities and discovered that participants experienced the following<sup>25</sup>:

- Merging of action and awareness.
- Centring of attention on a limited stimulus field.
- Loss of self-consciousness, transcendence of individuality, or fusion with the world.
- A perception of control over self and the environment.
- Coherent, non-contradicting demands for action, and clear, unambiguous feedback concerning the person's actions.
- The absence of a need for external rewards.

According to Schoel *et al*, ". . . the character-change component of Outward Bound is a form of 'metaphoric' education. Participants immersed in profound experiences cannot help unconsciously absorbing lessons for their lives."<sup>26</sup>

## **5. Problem Solving**

Experiential learning activities constantly encourage participants to solve problems collectively as a group. In this way each member is given an opportunity to experience the need for problem-solving skills. Post-activity reflection is important to analyse and reinforce learning. Schoel *et al* point out that

The fact that the problem-solving process is experiential deepens the process of learning problem-solving skills as participants all need to be involved with their bodies, minds and emotions to succeed.<sup>27</sup>

## **What Is Experiential Learning About?**

Essentially, experiential learning is about five things: co-operation, creativity, self-esteem, values, and questioning.

### **1. Co-operation**

When working towards a goal, participants can relate to each other in three different ways:

1. An individualistic way would mean that the achievement of one participant's goal would have nothing to do with any other participant's achievements.
2. A competitive way would mean that the achievement of one participant's goal would depend on the failure of other participants to achieve theirs.
3. A co-operative way allows all participants to achieve their goals on condition that everyone involved works together to do so.

It has been established that co-operative learning promotes favourable interpersonal relationships, open communication, peer learning, conceptual learning and divergent thinking. At the same time, it also diffuses anxiety and apathy common to the learning experience.<sup>28</sup>

### **2. Creativity**

Much experiential learning involves the use of games to facilitate learning. These activities are structured in such a way as to encourage participants to make and execute decisions in order to fulfil their objectives. Experiential learning activities are very

similar to the games created by children in order to help them deal with reality through experimenting with their feelings and beliefs. Thus, the question asked is “Who am I?” as opposed to “Who will win?”.<sup>29</sup>

### **3. Self-esteem**

Research has established that effective learning is largely dependent on positive self-esteem. Experiential learning activities promote co-operation, participation and responsibility which in turn promotes a healthy self-esteem for participants. Criticos suggests that “[a] great deal of this is due to the fact that in these games nobody wins and nobody loses because everybody’s contribution to the game is used to develop the insight and understanding that the participants are searching for”.<sup>30</sup>

### **4. Values**

A value may be described as “a belief that one has chosen freely from alternatives; that one is prepared to act upon and live by; and that one regards as enabling one to enhance one’s well-being, one’s development as a human being. Experiential learning is about questioning and exploring values.”<sup>31</sup>

### **5. Questioning**

Experiential learning activities attempt to promote a questioning attitude among participants by encouraging them to make decisions.<sup>32</sup>

## Debriefing

The process of 'debriefing' or 'reflection' is an important part of any experiential learning activity. It focuses on the experiences of the participants. Through structured outdoor activities, adventure educators aim to promote the growth of participants. Some of these activities include rock climbing, boating, canoeing, hiking, abseiling, ropes courses and initiative challenges. Each activity is ended with 'debriefing' - a process which "assist[s] the participants in internalizing and generalizing the lessons learned".<sup>33</sup> During debriefing any learning that took place is "recognized, articulated, and evaluated".

According to Laura Joplin

Debrief is a sorting and ordering of information, often involving personal perceptions and beliefs. In experiential learning - as opposed to experiential education - debrief may occur within the individual. However, in experiential education debrief needs to be made public. It can be made public through group sharing of personal journals, doing a class project, or a class presentation. It is the publicly verifiable articulation which makes experience and experiential learning capable of inclusion and acceptance by the educational institutions. The public nature of debrief also ensures that the learner's conclusions are verified and mirrored against a greater body of perception than his [or her's] alone. The process of reflection on the past often includes decisions about what needs to be done next or how it should have been done initially.<sup>34</sup>

Criticos points out that "[t]his reflective phase has been referred to as a process of reconstruction and construction, looking backwards and forwards for the purposes of achieving a particular end".<sup>35</sup> Also, reflection attempts to identify and highlight what the learner has gained in view of potential changes.<sup>36</sup>

Not all adventure education programs have the same objectives. The aims of a programme may depend on whom the leaders and participants are as well as where the programme is being run.<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that experiential education is contextual and

thus flexible in its response to the needs of the learner. The large real-life nature and physical component of adventure-based education allows for a wide range of varying theories to be applied to experiential activities. Schoel *et al* point out that

The activities, like life itself, are by definition 'holistic' and are as open to differing interpretation on what and why something is happening as any other real event. This openness is a strength of the [adventure-based] programme and one that fits in with a trend in the helping fields.<sup>38</sup>

It must be noted that, ultimately, the function of a rite of passage is to facilitate the individuation process. Herb Martin<sup>39</sup> warns against rites of passage programmes which attempt to initiate young people by indoctrinating them. He says that any attempts to manipulate initiates during this time could impact negatively on the inner process of transformation.<sup>40</sup>

## **Mentoring**

John Lee, a psychologist, counsellor and leader in the men's movement describes a mentor as someone who "nurtures [their mentee's] talents and encourages them to pursue their passions. The mentor's role is not that of a father or a therapist; a mentor does not feel or heal the younger man's pain, he is there to stimulate his curiosity and provide information and share experiences".<sup>41</sup>

There have been many references to mentors throughout history. Whether they appear as Merlin in Camelot, Gandolf in Tolkien or Charlotte in Charlotte's Web, mentor figures can be found in myths, fairy tales, fantasy and children's stories. The most prominent

example is related by Homer in *Odyssey*. He tells of an adventurer by the name of Odysseus who, in about 1200BC, prepared to depart to Troy. Before he left, however, he employed a guardian who became “teacher, advisor, friend and surrogate father” to Odysseus’ son, Telemachus. The guardian’s name was Mentor.<sup>42</sup> Being a “classic transitional figure”, Mentor had an instructive role in assisting Telemachus to achieve his manhood and establish an adult identity.<sup>43</sup>

“Homer’s story reflects one of the oldest attempts by a society to facilitate mentoring. It was customary in ancient Greece for young male citizens to be paired with older males in the hope that each boy would learn and emulate the values of his mentor, usually a friend of the boy’s father or a relative.”<sup>44</sup> Murray and Owen point out that

[t]he Greeks based these relationships on a basic principle of human survival: Humans learn skills, culture, and values directly from other humans whom they look up to or admire . . . . When the interactions are healthy and successful, valuable behaviour is copied and repeated. And unfortunately, unpleasant or destructive behaviour is just as likely to be repeated. Humans tend to emulate the behaviour they see in others,, especially when that behaviour is rewarded.<sup>45</sup>

In Jungian terms, the mentor archetype represents knowledge, wisdom and insight, and aids one with understanding, and advice when one is unable to gather one’s own at a given phase in the journey of life. Daloz says that “[w]hether as close as the classroom or as distant as history, mentors are creations of our imaginations, designed to fill a psychic space somewhere between lover and parent. Not surprisingly, they are suffused with magic and play a key part in our transformation”.<sup>46</sup> Inevitably, fear surrounds transformation and a mentor provides the initiate with the support that enables him or her

to move through the fear, not around it.<sup>47</sup> Mentors are necessary in order to provide nourishment, comfort and advice for those who have separated from mother and father for the purpose of initiation. The age of the mentors is not significant. What is important is that the mentor be “familiar with exile”, that is he or she should be familiar with the ordeals which life offers, that is with the cycles of life and death.<sup>48</sup>

Mentors differ from sponsors and role-models as a sponsoring relationship is informal since neither parties (the sponsor and sponsored) necessarily need to interact. Indeed, very often the sponsored person is unaware of who the sponsor even is. Likewise, the activities of role-models may be much the same as those of sponsors. A role-model is someone who is held in high regard by a certain person (or people) who wishes to emulate the behaviour of the role-model being observed. Similar to the sponsoring relationship, the role-modelling relationship is unstructured, and often the role-model is unaware of the observer. By contrast, with facilitated or structured mentoring, both the mentor and the mentee know each other and are aware of what each expects from the other. The mentor, however, may perform some of the functions of sponsor and / or role-model in addition to teaching the mentee skills that will further his or her personal development.<sup>49</sup>

Based on the philosophy that ‘fewer failures improve the chances for success’, mentoring is becoming a popular educational tool, especially for young people at risk.<sup>50</sup> In 1990 the US Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, stated that

[t]he risks that all young people face are compounded for those who are poor, members of racial or ethnic minorities, or recent immigrants . . . For these youngsters, studies are finding that those who receive support from a mature, caring adult - a mentor - are more likely to finish high school and more likely to hold a job. These are significant behaviour changes, and necessary ones, because we as a society cannot afford to allow our children to fail. Their failures are not only personal tragedies but also direct threats to our national standard of living and our democratic institutions.<sup>51</sup>

Murray and Owen point out that “facilitated mentoring is a structure and series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behaviour change of those involved, and evaluate the results . . .”<sup>52</sup> They suggest, however, that the process of mentoring, which is essentially about ‘helping someone to learn’, cannot be expected to work only by structural change. In order for the benefits of mentoring to be reaped, the participants need to undergo a change in behaviour, and, through mentoring, an environment conducive to motivating change in behaviour can be created.<sup>53</sup>

Importantly, Murray and Owen say that “a mentoring programme should be one component of a comprehensive system of people development. For sustained effectiveness, it must be carefully integrated with the other components of that system . . .”<sup>54</sup> According to Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, mentor programmes act as a substitute to replace the lack of adult guides and role models available to young people. Using mentors within a rites programme serves to build extended relationships and removes alienation. The authors point out that it is necessary to check the “character, psychological stability and practices “ of potential adult mentors, especially if they are

not well-known to the community. This could protect young people from any possible harm.<sup>55</sup>

After selection, the next most important factor is training. Mentors need knowledge and understanding of rites of passage theory and practice. They need to identify personal issues which may assist or impede their work with adolescents as well as acquire management strategies for working with adolescents.<sup>56</sup>

## **A Proposal for a De-Labeling Programme**

A de-labelling rites of passage programme for young people at risk is proposed here and is designed to intersect with the new juvenile justice proposals. This programme was originally piloted in the form of *The Journey* and is being carried forward by organizations such as Nicro, Outward Bound, the Wilderness Leadership School and Usiko. It may be run over a period of six months to a year and young offenders may be referred by the courts, the Department of Welfare, diversion programmes and community courts. This programme involves a period of assessment and physical training, a wilderness experience, personal growth and development skills, job skills training and a period of reparation in which the offender 'repays' the victim or community by undertaking various community projects. What is proposed is a single, uniform assessment procedure for all youth in conflict with the law. This is considered to be an essential component of assessment for diversion which every young person at risk will benefit from. As far as possible, this will ensure that only appropriate youth are referred for diversion and that all young people are correctly referred and assessed.

The research conducted for this dissertation formed the basis for the structure of this programme which presents a process of de-labelling as a powerful alternative to conventional punitive methods of punishment. It has been requested that this programme be considered for inclusion in the current legislative drafting on juvenile justice.

## **Referral**

Referrals for potential programme participants are crucial to the success of any de-labelling programme. All potential referral agencies need to be made aware of this diversion option and encouraged to use this avenue. They should be confident that each young person will be carefully assessed and that diversion is not a soft option. This assessment will ensure that each young person who is referred to the programme is allocated to a diversion option fitting their offence and that restorative justice is accomplished through this process. The main agencies who would refer young people for diversion include the following:

### **Community structures**

These may include, among others, the currently piloted Family Group Conferences and Victim Offender Mediations.

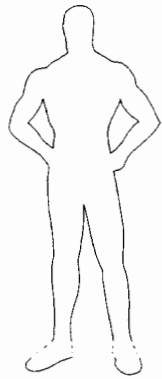
### **Welfare departments**

These departments would refer young people in their care who are identified as youth at risk for assessment. After each young person has been assessed a decision would be made as to his or her suitability for diversion. Other options would include formal trial,

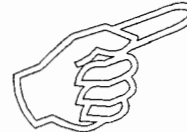
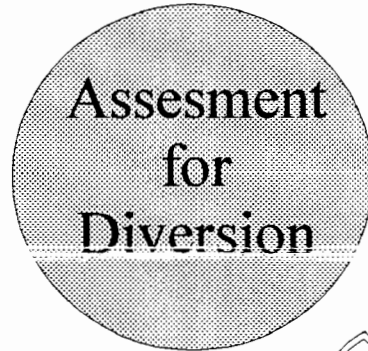
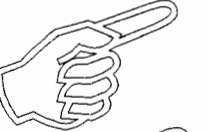
# Referral

# Assessment

# Diversion



- Family Group Conference
- Victim Offender Mediation
- Community Courts
- Courts
- Welfare
- Other



Follow-up



Rites of Passage Programme

Family/community

Other diversion

Other action

substance-abuse rehabilitation or psychological care.

## **Justice System**

Referrals for diversion would be received directly from the justice system. These young people would be assessed and allocated to the diversion programme most suited to their needs, taking into account the recommendations of the referring prosecutor or other justice worker. Such recommendations would include the minimum length of the referral programme for a particular individual, for example.

## **Assessment Procedures**

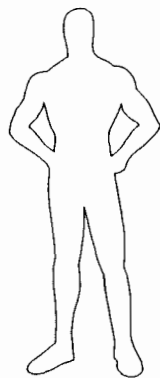
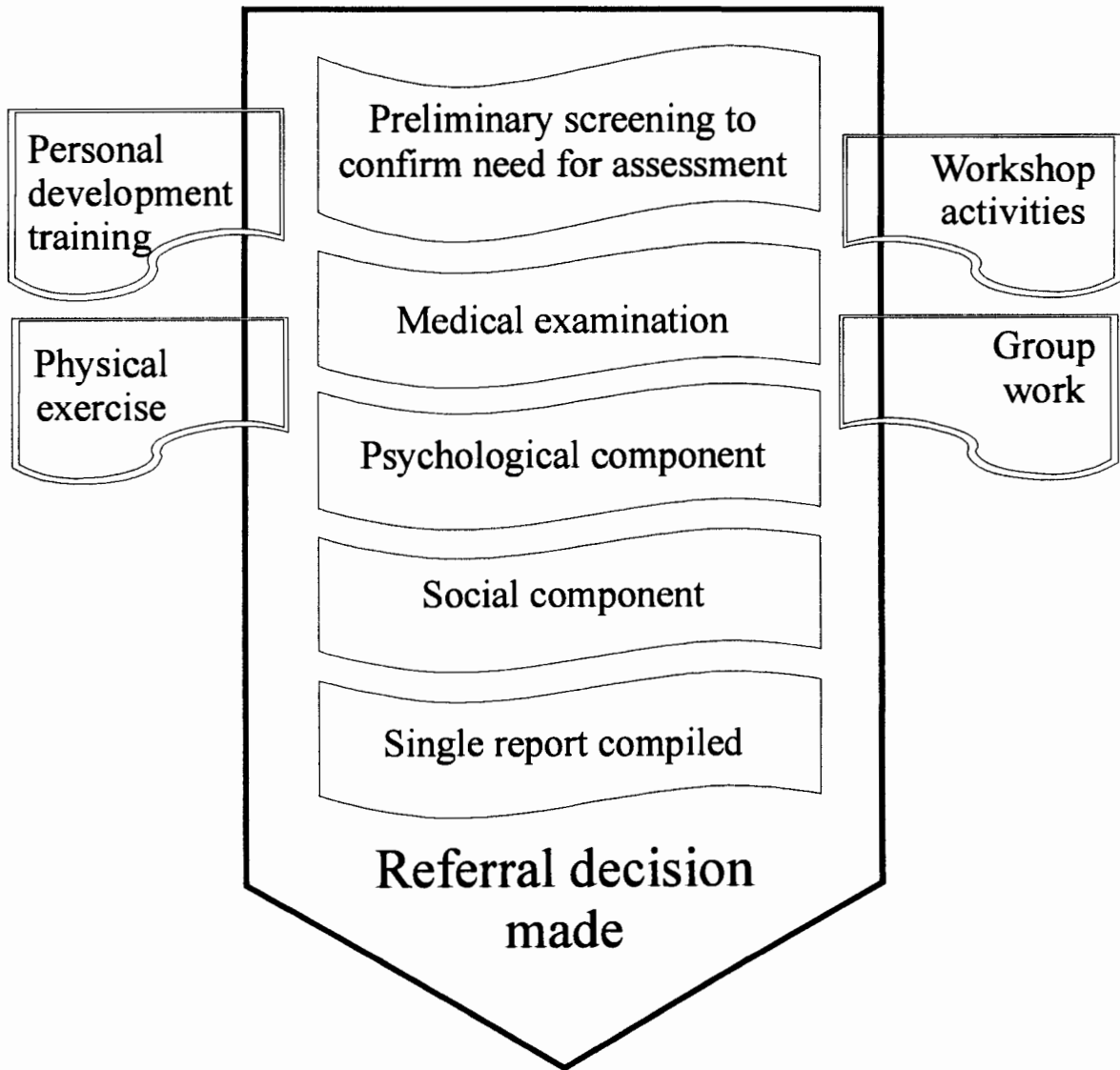
This section outlines the assessment of all young people referred for possible inclusion in diversion programmes, including the rites of passage programme. It details the necessary components of a thorough and adequate assessment, paying particular attention to any special needs. The three components consist of a social, psychological and medical assessment.

### **1. Social Assessment<sup>57</sup>**

This would best be conducted by a probation officer or other trained social worker. The essential areas to be determined include the following:

- Each young person referred would be between 14 and 18 years old on the first day of the assessment process.
  
- Each young person's sex would be recorded to ensure correct course allocation .

# Assessment



- Some separation into language groups may be necessary. Each young person's ability to speak, read and write would be determined and recorded. With South Africa's diverse language groups, the number of different languages per programme that can be tolerated is dependent on the language diversity of the course facilitators.
- Each young person's willingness to participate would need to be established (each participant would be required to sign a contract to this effect). Parents would generally be required to consent to their child's participation in a diversion programme.
- Each young person's criminal history including previous crimes committed, convictions, community service and other diversion programmes attended would need to be recorded.

## **2. Psychological Assessment**

This would best be conducted by a psychologist, psychometrist or other formally trained psychological assessor. The areas to be covered in this assessment include:

### Personality and/or mental disorders

These would need to be screened in order to assess individual suitability for the diversion programme options. A mental state examination is recommended as standard procedure.

### Intellectual functioning

A base level of measurable cognitive functioning for each diversion programme would

need to be agreed on. This would require discussion with psychological and other mental health bodies.

### Behaviour-effecting conditions

These conditions, including temporal lobe epilepsy, dyslexia and attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity) would need to be thoroughly screened for. The management of each young person and his or her suitability for diversion would depend on the results of these screenings.

### **3. Medical Assessment**

This would best be conducted by a medical doctor, trained medic, or other suitable medical worker. Aspects requiring examination include nutritional status, presence of parasites, transmittable diseases and behaviour effecting conditions more suitable to medical assessment, that is not covered under psychological assessment. An appropriate medical assessment form has been drawn up with the help of medical specialists.<sup>57</sup> Young people requiring medication would need to be identified as well as the extent, if any, of substance dependence.

### **Conditions Of Acceptance Into The Programme**

Preliminary screening of all new referrals on their arrival at the assessment centre would ensure that the appropriate young people have been referred for Physical disabilities should be checked for and special-needs youth identified. Specific diversion suitable for their physical conditions would need to be considered, for example blind, deaf and physically disabled youth.

Those youth who meet the criteria for inclusion in the rites of passage programme would join the next available programme. The remainder would be diverted to the agencies or diversion options most suited to their needs.

### **Accommodation**

The programme would accept both live-in and live-out participants, where the live-out youth would be required to attend daily. Considerations such as the young person's proximity to home in relation to the assessment area, his or her criminal history and the seriousness of his or her offence would determine which accommodation would be suitable for assessment. This would relate chiefly to their age, criminal history and details on their referral form. Any young person recognized as inappropriate for assessment through incorrect referral would be appropriately referred out of the assessment programme as soon as possible.

### **Assessment Activities**

During the assessment period the young people should be kept involved in a structured activities programme including the following:

#### Physical exercise

This would include team and individual sports and other exercise.

#### Group work

Discussion and experiential groups would deal with pertinent and age-appropriate topics.

Group problem-solving activities should offer practical alternatives to violence as a means of conflict resolution.

### Workshop activities

Craft, trade and other practical skills should be offered wherever facilities are available.

### Personal growth and development

This would include goal setting, pin-pointing milestones and assessment of progress.

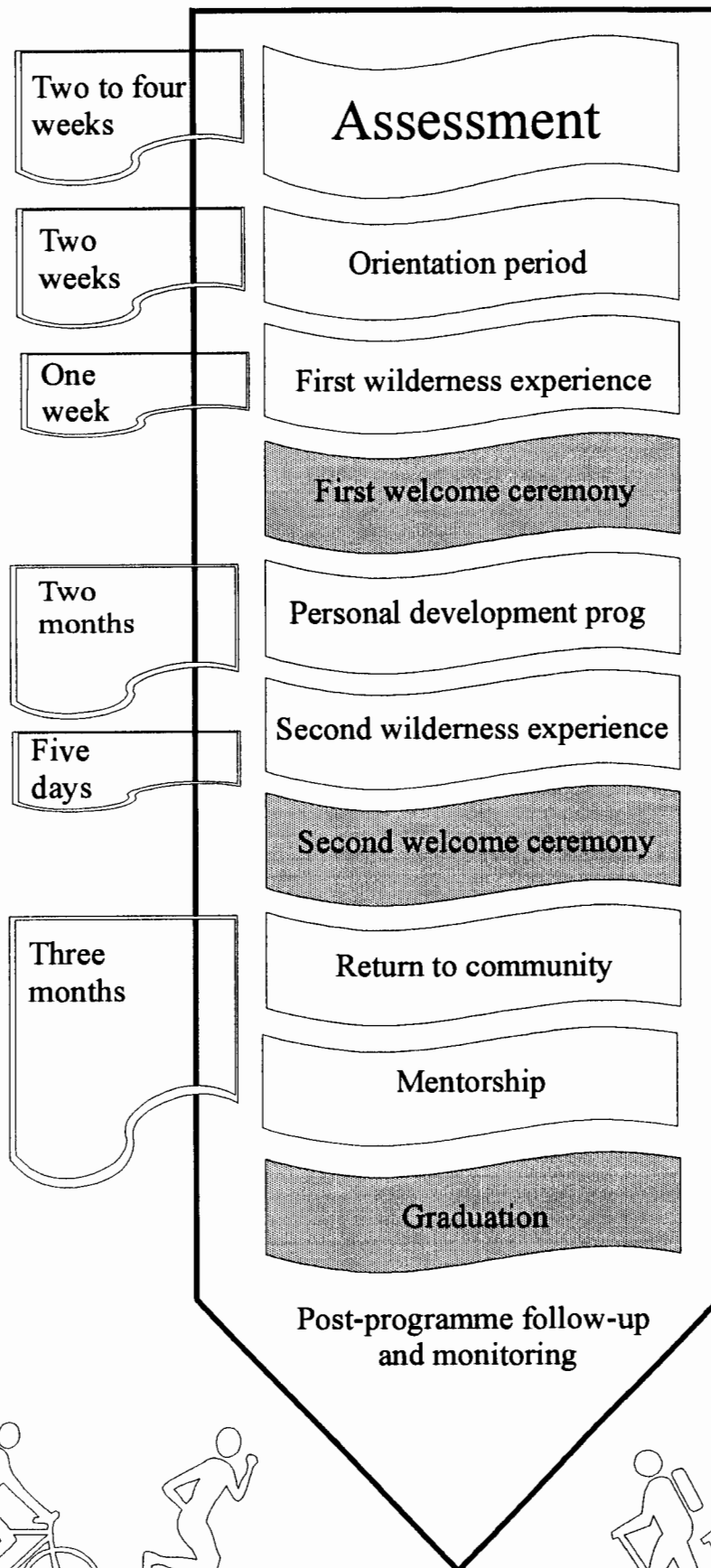
## **The Rites of Passage Programme**

This section outlines the eight components of the programme, based on relevant rites of passage principles. These are composed of the wilderness experience, two ceremonies, a personal growth and development programme, community, mentorship, graduation and follow-up. Following the one month assessment, those selected for the rites of passage programme would proceed directly to the Wilderness Section of the programme. This is in keeping with traditional rites of passage practice which begin with a sudden separation of the young person from his or her environment.

### **Wilderness Experience (2 weeks)**

The Wilderness Experience consists of seven main elements, each of which should be considered together rather than in isolation as they complement one another and provide a complete experience. These elements would begin a process of de-labelling and could be added to and refined in consultation with existing outdoor education specialists.

# Rites of Passage Programme



### Journal Time

This time would enable each young person to record their experiences and personal thoughts during the programme. It would be a guide to gauge their progress and personal growth over an extended period of time. It would also serve as a means of self-reflection, an integral part of personal growth. Facilitators could assist semi-literate or illiterate individuals to record their thoughts and experiences.

### Daily feedback time

This process would develop interpersonal communication skills and encourage each young person to share their experiences with other group members. It would provide a platform for self-expression and group awareness. This would complement the personal self-reflection of the Journal Time component.

### Survival Skills

The wilderness is an environment well suited to the learning of survival skills. These skills would encourage independence and promote self-confidence. Activities typically include hiking, orienteering, abseiling and canoeing. The activities are tough, exhausting and challenging. The participants would be taken to the very edge of their abilities and both individually and collectively challenged.

### Interpersonal Skills

These skills are considered necessary for effective teamwork. This component would further the interpersonal experience of Daily Feedback. By working together to solve presented problems each person would learn to listen to, respect and support their fellow

group member.

### Rituals

These symbolic acts would mark and give meaning to the time of transition and growth. These would be introduced in a way that would ensure cultural and age-appropriate significance for the programme participants. The effective use of these rituals would distinguish the rites of passage programme from other programmes.

### Self-awareness and self-reflection

This component would involve a solo experience of at least one day and night where the young person would be completely alone. Participants would be briefed beforehand and encouraged to record their experience and use the time to reflect on their lives. This would foster a better understanding of self and of self in relation to others. It would promote creativity, inspiration and relationship.

### Environmental Awareness

The wilderness represents a place of balance. Awareness of one's environment is an integral part of maturity. Many of the participants would have had little regard for their own environments. The awareness gained would apply not only to the wilderness environment but to any environment the young person finds himself or herself in.

### **Welcoming Ceremony**

On return from the Wilderness Experience a brief welcoming ceremony involving members of the participant's various communities and families would be conducted. The

ceremony would include the workers, facilitators and other staff involved in the programme. Each participant may feel emotionally vulnerable and the ceremony is recommended to be brief but significant. This would mark the community's involvement in the process of each young person and is in keeping with rites of passage principles. It would remind the young people of their accountability to community and of their place in such a community. The form that the ceremony would take needs further attention and discussion as it would need to be culturally and age appropriate for the specific youth group.

### **Personal Growth and Development Programme**

This programme would enhance and further the overall objective of easing the entrance of young offenders into mainstream society. A wilderness experience debriefing would provide continuity between course components and help the young people to make practical sense of what they have experienced and learned during their time in the wilderness. Communication skills together with conflict resolution training would provide each participant with tools to benefit their community and to benefit from their community. Communication skills would assist in job hunting and conflict resolution skills would help to develop problem-solving techniques. Both would allow for the development of healthy interpersonal relationships, providing a sense of community.

Ropes courses would be designed to build self esteem, encourage team work and deal constructively with fear. Job skills would be a core aspect of the personal growth component and would be emphasised. Vocational choice, hard skills training, job placement, job hunting and mentoring would be included. Goal setting would teach the

assessment, re-assessment and setting of short-term and long-term goals as well as deal constructively with failure.

Literacy and other educational training would complement vocational guidance. Support awareness would inform each young person as to his or her rights as well as the role and existence of welfare, work programmes and legal rights. Physical activities would include individual and team fitness, sports, appropriate muscle exercise and problem-solving activities.

This component would begin directly after the welcoming ceremony. It would last for four months on the one-year programme and two months on the six-month programme. It would consist of ten main elements all related to enhancing personal development, namely wilderness experience debriefing, communication skills, conflict resolution, ropes courses, job skills, goal setting, support awareness, physical activities, literacy and other educational training. Some would be run as units and others over the entire two to four month period.

#### Wilderness experience debriefing

Since many of the young people attending this programme would have come from urban and inner-city environments, the wilderness experience would need to be carefully integrated and efficiently run by trained facilitators. It cannot be assumed that the experience would be assimilated and incorporated by the youth without a directed and focused programme attending specifically to this. The experience would be profound and the full life-skills component time period would need to be used to allow for its

expression.

Aspects such as journal time would be continued into the personal growth and development programme as well as daily feedback time.

### Communication skills

These would be developed throughout the programme by encouraging participants to express their feelings and thoughts more openly and to listen respectfully to others when they speak. Various exercises would address these aspects specifically, with particular emphasis placed on story telling. Each participant would, perhaps for the first time, be able to tell his or her story, and be heard.

### Conflict resolution

Many young people have learned that violence is not only an acceptable but also effective way of addressing conflict. Alternatives to violence would be shown through role-play, experiential group work and discussion. Issues surrounding conflict and violence would be incorporated.

### Ropes courses

Ropes courses are experiential exercises that involve high and low ropes equipment. These would be set up to challenge individuals and teams on a physical, emotional and intellectual level. This would promote individual character growth, trust, interdependence and group cohesion.

### Job skills and employment opportunities

The job skills component would deal with the assessment of the skills and interests of each young person relating to employment. Vocational guidance would include an overview of work categories, the availability of jobs in each sector and the acquisition of job skills and training. The objective would be to provide each young person at risk on the programme with hard skills training that would give them access to full employment or self-employment. It would also serve to develop their self esteem. An economically active individual is deemed less likely to remain in conflict with the law. Various pilot projects with the Department of Labour have proved successful in hard-skills vocational training of young people at risk. Other organizations including NGOs could facilitate and provide basic job skills training opportunities. Such training would be continued in the community component of the programme. Employment would be offered to the best graduates on further rites of passage programmes where they may be employed and further trained as instructors or facilitators.

### Goal setting

This component would include assessing goals accomplished and setting new short-term and long-term goals. Participants would be taught to recognize milestones and issues surrounding failure and motivation.

### Literacy and other educational training

Literacy training and further basic education would be catered for. The use and benefits of education would be creatively addressed. This would be utilised to complement, but add to vocational skills and training.

### Support awareness

This element would illustrate individual rights regarding community and state support. Included here would be the police service and its role, welfare and its role, youth empowerment schemes, work programmes and community support structures.

### Physical activities

Physical exercise would be included in the daily programme routine. This would accommodate individual and team sports as well as physical problem-solving group activities other than the ropes course.

## **Second Ceremony**

This ceremony would be held six months into the programme, (five months after assessment). It would mark the successful completion of the life skills component. This time the ceremony would facilitate the welcoming of each young person back into his or her community for the next course component, the community section. This ceremony would be longer than the first and may include a visitors day where the young person may show their peers, family and significant others the programme area. This element would acknowledge the participants progress and would welcome them into the community to complete their de-labelling programme.

## **Community**

Following the second ceremony, the young people would return to their communities for the next phase of the programme. They would be required to report regularly to a police

station, probation officer or other body. Special cases such as street children, who may not have a community or a family to return to, would need to be accommodated according to their individual circumstances. A community centre or meeting area would be established where these young people may meet. This section of the course would have to be tailored according to each participant's personal circumstances, family and other support structures.

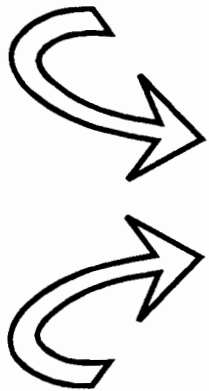
During this phase the punishment agreed to by the referring community, legal or welfare organisation - such as the family group conference - would be carried out. The community service would be supervised. Any default by a participant on his or her agreed punishment would constitute a breach of their rites of passage course agreement. This could jeopardise his or her chances of graduating successfully from the programme and would result in the young person being diverted from the programme. If it was agreed that the victim receive monetary compensation for the crime then the offender would be required to organise this during this period. This stage of the young person's punishment would need to be seen by the community and the victim to be effective and appropriate in order to be acceptable to them. It would also need to address the wrongs suffered by the victim.

### Community Center

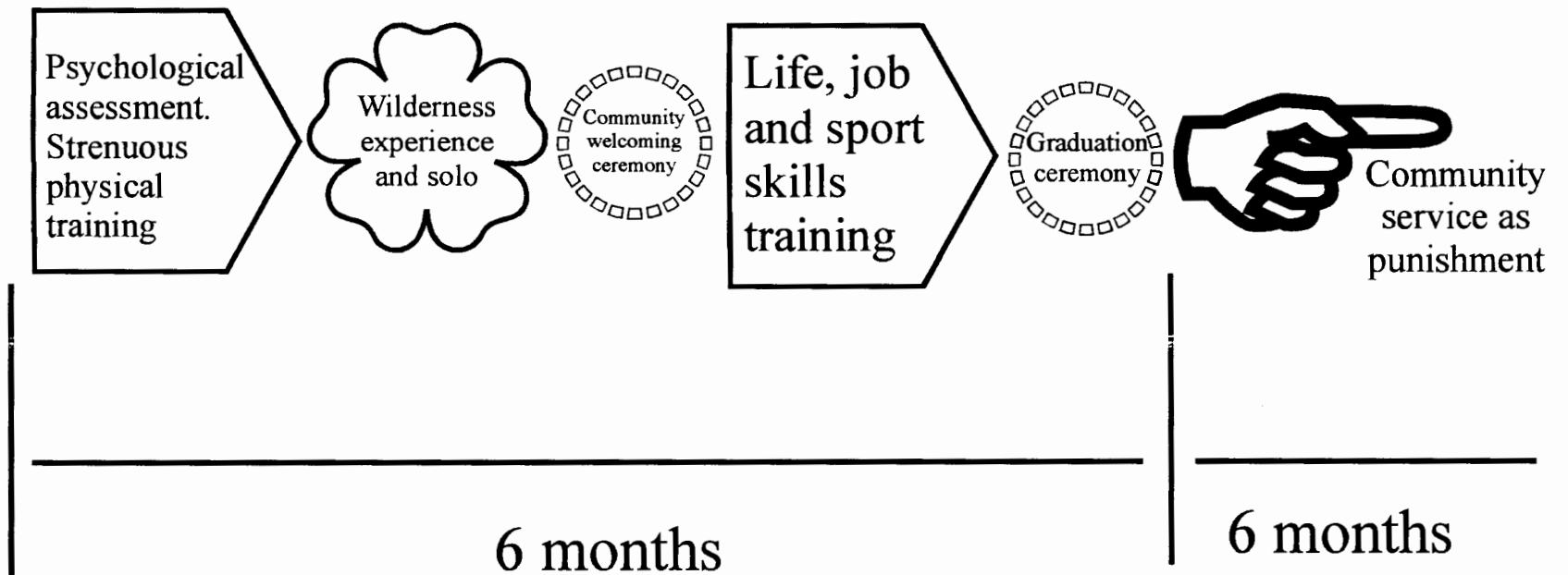
This could exist in the young person's community. Personal growth and development components would be continued during this time and should include further job skills training and community projects. These would be decided upon in consultation with the community. Furthering education is seen as a priority wherever possible. Participants

# The Journey

Family  
Group  
Conferences



Community  
Referrals?



would also be required to visit the base where they were resident for the life skills training, every four to eight weeks, to meet with friends and revise goals. Community interaction would be encouraged throughout this phase.

## **Mentorship**

Each young person in the programme would be allocated a mentor after consultation with the individual and his or her family and community. These elder men and women could be drawn from sporting fields, schools, churches, family or community structures. These adults would provide ongoing support in all aspects of the participants progress. This would include social, personal and vocational monitoring and support.

## **Graduation**

The final celebration would involve the community, peers and family. All successful participants on each programme would come together for this graduation. The nature of the proceedings and all arrangements would be planned in close collaboration with the participants to make it significant for each graduate. Congratulations and award presentation by significant figures such as sport personalities, youth leaders, popular musicians or significant peers would take place. The ceremony would include the award of track-suits, track shoes, money, mountain bikes, etc.

## **Follow Up After Programme Completion**

Mentoring would need to be encouraged to continue on a regular basis but this would not be compulsory. The young person should feel empowered to consult his or her mentor

when any guidance is sought out.

It would be vital that each young person be encouraged to continue with vocational training programmes, education and employment as well as be involved with his or her family and/or community. The best performers could become programme facilitators and instructors and all should be assessed in lieu of furthering their education. The training for programme facilitators should commence as soon as possible to keep the young people engaged. Without follow-up and successful integration of each young person into his or her community the course would not have met the goals it set out to achieve and the young people could remain at risk. It is suggested that a short wilderness trail be held for all successful graduates of the programme, six months to a year after their graduation. This would allow the participants to meet up with their friends from the programme, to assess the goals they set themselves and reset new goals for their immediate futures. An annual reunion could serve to keep the them in touch with one another and avoid any one feeling alone and unsupported.

## **Monitoring And Evaluation Of The Programme**

The programme would be closely monitored across all stages with the personal progress of each participant being recorded and assessed. A detailed monitoring and evaluation strategy would need to be devised.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter suggests that elements of rites of passage together with other physical and

intellectual challenges could be combined to form a powerful de-labelling programme. In the absence of culturally appropriate rites of passage young people often create their own rites in socially unacceptable forms which may include excessive drug use, violent conduct and even murder. Many of these unstructured rites bring young people into conflict with the law. How they are dealt with by the criminal justice system influences whether they continue to be in conflict with the law or whether they are able to make a successful transition into adulthood and move from being community destroyers to community builders.

The rites of passage programme put forward in this proposal is considered to be especially appropriate in South Africa's multi-cultural context and is able to address young people at risk in a way in which our present punishment system is unable to. An essential precursor to any de-labelling programme, however, is a competent referral procedure. Not all young people may necessarily benefit from a rites of passage programme and it is therefore essential that they are referred to a programme or support structure best suited to their individual needs and circumstances.

Note, however, that the infrastructure needed to implement a rites of passage programme is costly. However, the research undertaken for this rites of passage programme has established that a range of skills and resources (facilities and people) necessary for the successful implementation of a South African rites programme exist within many organizations and communities in South Africa. These resources will have to be mobilized by consulting widely with NGOs, CBOs, community police forums, community service and childcare organizations as well as State structures. The concept

and model of this rites of passage programme has been enthusiastically received by many players in the field of youth work, most of whom have shown a keen interest in contributing towards and participating in the process in some way.

This programme is presently being refined in ongoing consultation with experts in relevant fields. Its relevance to South African youth today makes rites of passage a programme worthy of space in the legislative drafting process. It is a sound and confident step towards restoring effective juvenile justice as well as de-labelling young people at risk.

## End notes

<sup>1</sup>Hobbs, 1992: xiii.

<sup>2</sup>1992: xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>1992: 1.

<sup>6</sup>Hobbs, 1992: 2.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Criticos, 1989: 23.

<sup>8</sup>Hobbs, 1992: 5.

<sup>9</sup>Hobbs, 1992: 180.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Here, adventure-based learning refers to activities such as rock-climbing, hiking, canoeing and river-rafting as opposed to experiential activities which do not necessarily require expensive equipment, physical exertion and the outdoors.

<sup>13</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989 :13.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989 :14.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989 :14-15.

<sup>18</sup>1989: 16.

<sup>19</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989: 16.

<sup>20</sup>1990: 28.

<sup>21</sup>1994: 203.

<sup>22</sup>1987: 305.

<sup>23</sup>Schoel *et al*,1989 :18.

<sup>24</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989 :19.

<sup>25</sup>Schoel *et al*, 1989 :19-20.

<sup>26</sup>1989: 20.

<sup>27</sup>1989: 23.

<sup>28</sup>Criticos, 1989: 138.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>1989: 139.

<sup>31</sup>Criticos, 1989: 140.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid..

<sup>33</sup>Knapp, n.d.: 1.

<sup>34</sup>Joplin quoted in Knapp, n.d.: 2.

<sup>35</sup>1989: 68.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Knapp, n.d.: 2.

<sup>38</sup>1989: 11-12.

<sup>39</sup> At the time of writing Martin was Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Competency at California State University.

<sup>40</sup> 1996: 312.

<sup>41</sup>1991: 126.

<sup>42</sup>Murray and Owen, 1991: 7.

<sup>43</sup>Daloz, 1986: 19.

<sup>44</sup>Murray and Owen, 1991: 7.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>1986: 17.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Meade, 1993: 151.

<sup>49</sup>Murray and Owen, 1991: 12.

<sup>50</sup>Murray and Owen, 1991: 43.

<sup>51</sup>Quoted in Murray and Owen, 1991: 44.

<sup>52</sup>1991: xv.

<sup>53</sup>Murray and Owen, 1991: 5.

<sup>54</sup>1991: 28.

<sup>55</sup>1992: 166.

<sup>56</sup>Warfield-Coppock and Coppock, 1992: 169.

<sup>57</sup>See Appendix 2 for social assessment form.

<sup>58</sup>See Appendix 1 for medical assessment form.

## Conclusion

A contemporary rite of passage may have to tolerate great confusion and chaos as both youth and community struggle for moments of connection and completion. Given half a chance, the youth will take their steps and trust the river of life. The bigger question may be whether a village can be created that can truly accept and receive them. If the second village acts like the first one they experienced, the youth may be more damaged, disillusioned, and alienated. Those who wish to work as mentors and elders have to keep one eye on the youth and another on conditions in the village. Both youth and community experience a reorientation when the two meet.

Meade, 1996: xxv.

Two parallel explorations have taken place in this dissertation in the form of an empirical and theoretical study in an attempt to

- understand the mechanisms which lead adolescents into socially unacceptable behaviour,
- explore the potential for using notions of de-labelling as the basis for intercepting and transforming juvenile deviance,
- explore rites of passage in the development of a programme of de-labelling, and
- design a rites of passage programme using the above understandings.

Chapter one discussed the consequences of labelling for adolescents and suggested that a process of de-labelling may be possible for intercepting and transforming deviance.

Chapter two explored rites of passage within the context of mythology and provided the groundwork for exploring notions of de-labelling further. Chapter three provided an

analysis of rites of passage using Van Gennep's theory and structure of initiation rites. Chapter four explored the relevance of this structure and theory for contemporary western adolescents using the example of the street gang. Chapter five pointed out the lack of attention generally given to female rites of passage and suggested that there is a need to consciously celebrate the feminine nature by creating feminine rituals. Chapter six presented a South African case study of a pilot rites of passage programme which in turn formed the basis for the structure of a de-labelling programme proposed in Chapter seven.

The findings suggest that many young people engage in socially unacceptable behaviour as a result of negative identity formation which may be influenced by self- and public labelling. A process of de-labelling is able to intercept and transform adolescent behaviour by promoting their positive identity development and this can best be accomplished through a rites of passage programme which offers a contained moratorial space. Such a programme, as proposed in chapter seven, provides a comprehensive, long-term and intensive de-labelling process for young people, particularly those at risk of becoming and/or remaining involved with the criminal justice system. However, the extent and permanency of transformation may be greatly influenced by the attention given to follow-up and the quality of mentoring. In turn, these will be subject to the organizational abilities of CBOs and NGOs in establishing a support network for the young people during and after the programme as well as mobilizing the community structures and human resources necessary to facilitate the process.

The empirical findings confirm the hypothesis that rites of passage programmes stand little chance of succeeding in South Africa if follow-up and mentoring are neglected. If implemented in isolation, there is a very real possibility that rites programmes would fail to achieve long-term objectives which aim to provide a pathway out of gangs, prevent recidivism and de-label. All three of these goals demand more systemic containment of young people which requires co-operation from young people and their communities. Without this co-operation, rites programmes are unlikely to achieve their potential outcomes.

Throughout this dissertation, the concept of rites of passage has been explored by bringing together perspectives from four different disciplines, namely psychological, sociological, anthropological and mytho-cosmological, in an attempt to put forward a cohesive argument which might add a richness to the field of juvenile justice. This study has shown a significant theme in all of these theories which in itself is interesting: all point to the importance and valuable function of rituals and ceremonies of initiation surrounding life crises and transitions - a notion which has always been self-evident to traditional indigenous communities which recognize the value in acknowledging, accepting and celebrating the cycles of life.

This research has provided the groundwork for future work in rites of passage in the form of programme development and implementation by exploring the value in rites of passage for juvenile justice. It must be noted, however, that rites of passage should not be exclusive to young people who commit crimes, use drugs and drop out of school, but,

ideally, should be available to *all* young people and is a process to which all young people are entitled. In the past, in western society, rites of passage have applied only to subcultures and, hence, I am arguing for a more prominent and conspicuous place for rites of passage in society. At present, no intensive and comprehensive programmes exist to contain high risk and/or gang youth. Rites of passage possess an important binding function in the face of increasing atomization and individualization in our society and need to be taken more seriously to promote more functional, as opposed to dysfunctional, young people. In this respect, rites of passage are a useful tool as both a sentencing and diversion option, but the potential for them to be limited as a peripheral luxury in the broader criminal justice system should be guarded against. Care should be taken to iron out the social and managerial factors described towards the end of chapter six, which could influence this.

Further research into rites of passage should be encouraged in order to close any gaps in this study and further integrate rites of passage into South African society. Firstly, this should include a more in-depth look at rites of passage and initiation rituals for girls in trouble with the law, whether programmes for boys and girls should be completely separate and, if not, what parts of the programme should be shared. Secondly, the issue of victims and the role they should play in the rites of passage process is one which has been given little attention, both in this study and generally. One of the primary aims of the restorative process is to address the needs of the victims as far as possible and include them in the justice process. Thirdly, a monitoring and evaluation strategy needs to be designed in order to ensure that a high standard of ethics is maintained throughout the

process and that the programme is run effectively. Fourthly, a longitudinal study should be considered to determine the success of rites of passage programmes in de-labelling young people at risk and prevent recidivism.

Although one cannot expect that rites of passage will offer solutions to all of our society's youth problems as history suggests that there are no quick-fix or permanent solutions, rites of passage can attempt to address various elements (or lack thereof) which contribute to the youth problem in the most holistic way possible. Essentially, young people need to be motivated to successfully complete the programme and they need to be made aware of the benefits of achieving adult status through positive initiation.

This dissertation has introduced rites of passage as a framework for understanding young people in conflict with the law in South Africa. It highlights the dangers of ignoring this universal practice and suggests that de-labelling programmes based on rites of passage may be used to great effect in diverting young people at risk from ongoing conflict with the law.

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# **Appendix 1**

## **Rites of Passage Programme Health Screening Protocol<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

The screening process would need to have a two level approach, firstly an assessment of the young person's general health and secondly an assessment of the young person's physical abilities. The end result should be that health problems will be detected and appropriate treatment implemented and that the young person's ability to partake in the physical activity component is confirmed.

The age and gender range of the participants is broad, screening would thus need to account for the most common health problems encountered by paediatric and adolescent age group patients. There would also be a need to develop different protocols for the male and female participants.

For the purposes of this assessment it will be assumed that the majority of participants would be male and that the majority of participants will be socially and/or financially disadvantaged. Levels of education may also be a factor to consider, the nature of the screening process and intervention should be structured so that the young person concerned would receive some health education during the consultation. A booklet of some kind may be a useful teaching aid for the participants.

<p><b>Health Screening Protocol Males: Aged 12-18</b></p>
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### **Past and Present Medical History**

Summary from case notes & review of "Clinic Cards":

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### **Past Medical History**

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr Craig Bowker of the UCT Sports Science Institute for his help in drafting this document, and to Dr Judith van Heerden of UCT's Department of Primary Health Care for her insightful comments.

Vaccination/Immunisation: Up to Date Lapsed/Partially Complete Unknown

Nutritional Status:

Meal	Frequency			
	Always	Frequently	Seldom	Never
Breakfast				
Lunch				
Supper				
Snacks				

Schooling Standard: <Std 6 Std 6 Std 7 Std 8 Std 9 Std 10 >Std 10

**Presence of Chronic Diseases/Disease Processes Affecting Schooling:**

History of Peri-natal Complications: Pregnancy Labour Post-partum Period

History of Developmental Delay: Neurological Milestones Physical Milestones

**Systematic Enquiry:**

Visual Disturbance: Spectacles/Visual Impairment

Recurrent upper respiratory infections: Otitis Media/Pharyngo-tonsillitis/Rhinitis  
Pulmonary Tuberculosis/Pneumonia, Recurrent Asthma

Recurrent Diarrhoeal Illness/Gastro-enteritis

Childhood Infectious Illnesses: Measles/Mumps/Rubella/Chicken Pox

History of Accidental or Inflicted Physical Abuse

History of Psychological Abuse or Neglect

Diabetes

Onset of Puberty

Number of Children Fathered:

Carer of Children:

**Past Hospitalisation: Surgical & Medical Admissions**

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Allergies

Habits:      Alcohol Consumption      Tobacco Consumption  
                 Other Substance Abuse:

Current Medical Complaints:

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Current Medical Treatments:

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**Health Screening Protocol  
Females: Aged 12-18**

**Past and Present Medical History**

Summary from case notes & review of "Clinic Cards":

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**Past Medical History**

Vaccination/Immunisation: Up to Date    Lapsed/Partially Complete    Unknown

Nutritional Status:

Meal	Frequency			
	Always	Frequently	Seldom	Never
Breakfast				
Lunch				
Supper				
Snacks				

Schooling Standard: <Std 6   Std 6   Std 7   Std 8   Std 9   Std 10 >Std 10

**Presence of Chronic Diseases/Disease Processes Affecting Schooling:**

History of Peri-natal Complications: Pregnancy    Labour    Post-partum Period

History of Developmental Delay:    Neurological Milestones    Physical Milestones

**Systematic Enquiry:**

Visual Disturbance: Spectacles/Visual Impairment

Recurrent upper respiratory infections: Otitis Media/Pharyngo-tonsillitis/Rhinitis  
Pulmonary Tuberculosis/Pneumonia, Recurrent Asthma

Recurrent Diarrhoeal Illness/Gastro-enteritis

Childhood Infectious Illnesses: Measles/Mumps/Rubella/Chicken Pox



**Health Screening Protocol**  
**Males: Aged 12-18**

**Medical Examination**

Age:                      Height:                      Weight:

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General:

**Head & Neck Examination:**

Vision:              Acuity (Snellen's Chart)              Fields

Ears/Nose/Throat:

Dentition:              Teeth              Gums              Mucous Membranes

Lymphadenopathy:

**Neurological Examination:**

Central Nervous System: Cranial Nerves/Spinal Nerves/Cerebellar Function

Peripheral Nervous System: Power/Tone/Reflexes: Upper Limb/Lower Limb/Trunk  
Sensation

**Cardio-Respiratory System:**

Resting Pulse  
Heart Murmurs  
Breath Sounds

**Musculoskeletal System:**

General Appearance  
Past Injuries  
Muscle Bulk  
Leg Length & Spinal Alignment

**Gastrointestinal & Urogenital Systems:**

Urine Dipstix Results: Red Blood Cells/White Blood Cells/Protein/Nitrites/Sugar  
Abdominal Masses/Swelling  
Secondary Sexual Characteristics  
Vaginal/Urethral Discharge/Other Abnormalities

**Skin and Hair:**

Parasitic/Other Skin/Hair Infestation:  
Dermatitis/Eczema/Scarring  
Wounds

**Case Summary**

**Summary of Significant Findings on Review of Medical & Social History**

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**Summary of Significant Findings from Medical Examination**

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**Recommendations**

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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifications:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Health Screening Protocol  
Females: Aged 12-18**

**Medical Examination**

Age:                      Height:                      Weight:

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General:

**Head & Neck Examination:**

Vision:              Acuity (Snellen's Chart)              Fields

Ears/Nose/Throat:

Dentition:              Teeth              Gums              Mucous Membranes

Lymphadenopathy:

**Neurological Examination:**

Central Nervous System: Cranial Nerves/Spinal Nerves/Cerebellar Function

Peripheral Nervous System: Power/Tone/Reflexes: Upper Limb/Lower Limb/Trunk  
Sensation

**Cardio-Respiratory System:**

Resting Pulse  
Heart Murmurs  
Lung Sounds

**Musculoskeletal System:**

General Appearance  
Past Injuries  
Muscle Bulk  
Leg Length & Spinal Alignment

**Gastrointestinal & Urogenital Systems:**

Urine Dipstix Results: Red Blood Cells/White Blood Cells/Protein/Nitrites/Sugar  
Abdominal Masses/Swelling  
Secondary Sexual Characteristics  
Vaginal/Urethral Discharge/Other Abnormalities

**Skin and Hair:**

Parasitic/Other Skin/Hair Infestation:  
Dermatitis/Eczema/Scarring  
Wounds

**Case Summary**

**Summary of Significant Findings on Review of Medical & Social History**

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**Summary of Significant Findings from Medical Examination**

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**Recommendations**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Qualifications: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Physical Assessment

If there are no contra-indications to participation (as determined from the medical examination) children will undergo a limited form of physical ability assessment.

#### Test One: The Six Minute Walk Test

Distance Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Stops Required: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Test Two: One Minute Abdominal Crunches

Number Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Test Three: One Minute Press-Ups

Number Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Costing of Screening

### Materials Required: (Excluding stationery)

#### A: Consumables

Urine Dipstix Tests: At "Medical Aid Rates" = R 4.40/test (Cheaper if dipstix are purchased)	R 4.40
Tongue Depressors/100	R 10.00
Batteries for Oto/Ophthalmoscope	R 15.00
Urine specimen jars/bottles	Nil

#### B: Equipment

Oto/Ophthalmoscope	R 1 000.00
Stethoscope	R 50.00
(Baumanometer) optional	R 150.00
Snellen's Chart (Visual acuity)	R 50.00
Height Meter	R 30.0
Tape measure: 1m length,	R 5.00
Tape measure: 20-25m length	R 100.00
Scale	R 100.00
Stop Watch	R 50.00
Whistle	R 20.00
Estimated Total	R 1 555.00

#### Professional Fees

Consultation @ Medical Aid Rates/Consultation: R 60.00

Note: The above rate is at 1997 Scale of benefits.

## Appendix 2

### Rites of Passage Programme Social Assessment Form

Case No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_h\_\_\_\_

#### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Confirmed By:  ID  Birth Cert  School Cert  Clinic card  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Residential Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Tel: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian's Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ (H)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ (W)

#### 2. EDUCATION

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ School Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Age Appropriate:  Y  N \_\_\_\_\_

Remedial Classes: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Elapsed Since Leaving School: \_\_\_\_\_

#### WORK HISTORY

Present employment: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Employment for current job \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills possessed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. OFFENCE

Date of Offence: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Type of Offence: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Offence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Arrest: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Damages / Extent of Injuries: \_\_\_\_\_

Charge: \_\_\_\_\_ MR No.: \_\_\_\_\_ SAP Station: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Appearance: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Court: \_\_\_\_\_

Court Case No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Needs of Offender: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

No. of Previous Offenses: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Previous Convictions: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. DIVERSION PROGRAMMES**

Previous Participation in Diversion Programmes:  Y  N

Origin of Referral:  Prosecutor  Magistrate  SAPS  School  Family  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Referral:  Sentenced  Diverted

Accepted / Rejected: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme(s) Attended:  YES  FGC  PTCS  VOM  Journey  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome:  Completed  Back to Court  Referred Elsewhere (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. HISTORY OF YOUNG PERSON**

Birth History: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Milestones (note age): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Illness, Injuries, Operations: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. HISTORY OF FAMILY**

Family Composition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

History of Family Illness: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the Family Known to Any Social Agency?  Y  N Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Do either of the parents have a criminal record? Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. QUESTIONS

### Family Background

Who would you go to if you need help / were in trouble? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Who have you gone to in the past? Give an example. \_\_\_\_\_

How did your parents feel when you got into trouble? \_\_\_\_\_

What did they do? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of rules are there at home? \_\_\_\_\_

Who makes the rules at home? \_\_\_\_\_

What happens when you break them? \_\_\_\_\_

Who makes the decisions in the family? \_\_\_\_\_

### Education

Which subjects do you do well in? \_\_\_\_\_

Which subjects do you do poorly in? \_\_\_\_\_

Which subjects do you like best? \_\_\_\_\_

Which subjects do you like least? \_\_\_\_\_

### Drug / Alcohol Habits

Do you drink alcohol?  Y  N

Do you smoke?  Cigarettes  Dagga

Do you take drugs?  Y  N Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### Peer Relations

Have you ever done something because your friends wanted you to? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Have your friends ever made you do something wrong / bad / naughty? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Do your friends get into a lot of trouble? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you belong to a gang?  Y  N

If yes, which gang? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a gang member? \_\_\_\_\_

What made you decide to join the gang? \_\_\_\_\_

**Role Models**

Who do you admire? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**Criminality**

Why did you commit the offense? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel after you committed the offence? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about prisons, the police? \_\_\_\_\_

What purpose / function do they serve? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they good or bad? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**Developmental History**

What do you do when you get very angry? \_\_\_\_\_

Speak to parents / relevant others to gain co-lateral information about significant events (positive and negative) in the young person's life from birth to present.

**Mental Health**

Speak to parents / relevant others about issues such as truancy, cruelty to animals, friendships.

**8. EVALUATION**

Behaviour During Consultation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Impressions of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Consulted with: Parent / Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_