# From Boys to Men: Exploring Black Masculinity Ideologies about Women in South Africa

Benathi Phalezweni (PHLBEN004)
Supervisor: Dr Amanda Manqoyi-Ouamba

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Department of Social Work and Social Development
Faculty of Humanities
University of Cape Town
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University of Cape Town

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NAME**: Benathi Phalezweni**

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Masculinity is not a fixed identity but a socially constructed and culturally specific set of expectations about how men should behave. Among Xhosa men, the traditional rite of passage into manhood known as *ulwaluko* plays a key role in socialising boys into culturally sanctioned forms of manhood. This rite often reinforces notions of toughness, self-reliance, and leadership, while discouraging emotional vulnerability. Over time, these ideologies shape how men relate to others, particularly women, and can contribute to controlling or coercive behaviours within intimate relationships. While not inherently harmful, such expectations can entrench power imbalances and contribute to conditions in which gender inequality becomes normalised. South Africa offers a powerful case study of how entrenched gender norms and patriarchal masculinities translate into widespread harm against women, where women are raped every 12 minutes and murdered every three hours often by their intimate partner. These norms are especially visible within Black communities, and it is from this observation that the researcher sought to investigate the ideologies of Black masculinity from the perspective of Xhosa men in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, focusing on how these beliefs influence men's attitudes and behaviours toward women.

**Methods:** This study explores how masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men in the Eastern Cape influence their attitudes and behaviours toward women. Using an exploratory qualitative design, focus group interviews were conducted with 22 Xhosa men recruited from faith-based and community organisations addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Data were analysed using both **thematic analysis** and **critical discourse analysis** to identify key narratives around masculinity, gender roles, and relational dynamics.

**Findings:** Findings reveal that culturally embedded masculinity ideals—especially those shaped through *ulwaluko*—reinforce beliefs in male dominance and female inferiority. These norms legitimise emotional coercion, sexual manipulation, and violence as expressions of authority, sustaining gender inequality and contributing to South Africa's ongoing GBV crisis.

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This work is not mine alone- it is the product of love, sacrifice, prayer and unwavering belief.

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# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the problem statement, outlines the research questions and objectives, clarifies key concepts used in the study, and addresses the ethical considerations observed during the investigation.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Black masculinity ideologies remain under-examined in the South African context, particularly from the perspectives of Xhosa men in the Eastern Cape. These ideologies are not monolithic but are deeply shaped by cultural, historical, and intergenerational teachings that define manhood through traits such as emotional suppression, dominance, and authority. One such site of gender socialisation is the cultural rite of *ulwaluko*, which marks the transition from boyhood to manhood. This practice, while celebrated as a rite of maturity, also transmits values that often elevate masculine power while relegating women to roles of subservience and domesticity (Morrell, 2000; Hunter, 2005). While these ideologies are not inherently violent, they shape male socialisation in ways that reinforce gender hierarchies and entitlements.

This study is driven by a desire to understand how boys—once nurtured and dependent on women—come to internalise ideologies that position women as inferior. It investigates how masculine ideals are constructed and expressed in post-initiation life, and how these belief systems influence interpersonal gender dynamics. While the study acknowledges gender-based violence (GBV) as a critical issue in South Africa, it is not the primary focus. Rather, GBV is understood as a consequence of these deeply embedded masculinities. The aim is to explore masculinity as a cultural and ideological framework, and to examine how its transmission may shape men's attitudes toward women, both within and beyond intimate settings.

The Eastern Cape, home to a significant portion of the Xhosa population, offers a critical site for examining how Black masculinity ideologies are socialised and performed. Nationally, the province has long ranked among those with the highest rates of intimate partner violence and femicide (Pueong & Tsawe, 2024), and recent statistics show over 10,516 rapes and 14,401

assaults against female victims reported in a single quarter (SAPS, 2023). This data, while not the central focus of the study, underscores the urgency of investigating how gender ideologies may influence male behaviour in everyday life. Yet existing research tends to focus either on the public health consequences of GBV or on the symbolism of cultural rites in isolation. For example, Vincent (2008) explores *ulwaluko* as a mechanism for producing normative masculinity, while Langa (2012) and Ratele (2016) examine urban masculinities and violence from psycho-social perspectives. However, few studies centre rural or peri-urban Xhosa men's narratives about how masculine values are formed post-initiation, and how these belief systems shape their attitudes towards women. This study aims to fill that gap by focusing not just on cultural rituals, but on the lived ideologies that emerge from, and extend beyond, traditional rites of passage. It treats the Eastern Cape not as a site of cultural pathology, but as a case study through which to explore the entanglement of tradition, socialisation, and gender inequality.

This distinction is important: the aim is not to research GBV directly, but to explore the masculine ideologies that underpin attitudes and behaviours which contribute to and sustain it. In doing so, the study responds to scholarly calls (Ratele, 2016; Connell, 2020; Langa, 2012) for more culturally grounded, decolonial understandings of how masculinities are taught, enacted, and challenged. It also contributes to a wider recognition that harmful masculinities do not emerge in isolation—they are cultivated through shared beliefs, rites, and institutions that often remain unexamined.

By foregrounding Xhosa men's voices, this study hopes to deepen understanding of how masculinity ideologies are formed and sustained—and in doing so, inform interventions that move beyond punitive GBV frameworks to culturally informed, preventative ones rooted in reflection, education, and transformation.

## 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the construction of Black masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men in South Africa, focusing on how these beliefs shape men's attitudes and behaviours toward women. Set within the cultural context of rites of passage such as *ulwaluko*, the study centres the lived experiences of Xhosa men to better understand how masculine ideals are taught, internalised, and reproduced. While gender-based violence (GBV) is not the main focus, it is treated as a consequence of these entrenched patriarchal ideologies—highlighting why a deeper investigation into cultural and social constructions of masculinity is urgently needed.

The need for this study emerges from a gap in existing literature, which has often prioritised public health responses to GBV or symbolic readings of traditional rituals, without critically exploring how Black masculinity ideologies operate at the intersection of culture, socialisation, and power. By foregrounding men's own perspectives, the research expands South African masculinity studies and offers a culturally nuanced contribution that centres indigenous epistemologies, particularly within the Eastern Cape.

The findings hold significance for several sectors. At a policy level, the research can inform the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), providing insights into how cultural beliefs influence behaviour and how they might be transformed. It also supports the development of culturally relevant interventions aimed at promoting healthier masculinities, such as Sonke Gender Justice's *One Man Can* campaign, the *Men Against Violence* programme, and the Department of Basic Education's Life Orientation (LO) curriculum. These interventions can be strengthened by incorporating reflection on masculinity as a cultural construct, enabling boys and young men to challenge harmful gender norms from an early age.

At a community level, the study encourages dialogue between initiation schools, traditional leaders, educators, and civil society to co-create strategies that preserve cultural identity while reforming patriarchal values that legitimise gender inequality. The findings support the creation of safe spaces—such as workshops, peer mentoring groups, and culturally grounded counselling services—where men can reflect on inherited beliefs and explore alternative masculinities rooted in respect, care, and equity.

Finally, the study provides a conceptual and empirical foundation for future research into how masculinity ideologies are performed across other cultural and racial contexts in South Africa. By situating Xhosa men's voices at the centre, the research contributes to ongoing efforts to decolonise gender studies and promote transformative social change at both grassroots and institutional levels.

## 1.4 RESEARCH TOPIC

From Boys to Men: Exploring Black Masculinity Ideologies about Women in South Africa.

## 1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are Black men's perceptions of women in South Africa?
- What are masculinity ideologies taught to boys when they transition to manhood among
  Black men?
- How do these ideologies shape and influence Black men's current relationships with women?

## 1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are to:

- To understand Black men's perceptions of women in South Africa.
- To ascertain the masculinity ideologies taught to boys when they transition to manhood among Black men.
- To find out how these ideologies shape and influence Black men's relationships with women currently.

## 1.7 MAIN ASSUMPTIONS/ HYPOTHESIS

The researcher assumed that Black men who have gone through the rite of passage to manhood would be open to providing valuable insights into masculinity ideologies and attitudes taught when transitioning from boyhood to manhood, and how these influences could shape their relationships and views on women.

## 1.8 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

**Black:** In this study, Black refers to the racial classification of African people, which was based on both colonial and apartheid-era racial categorisations (Carrim, 1998).

**Nguni:** Nguni refers to a group of southern Bantu peoples, including the amaXhosa, amaZulu, and amaNdebele. (Erk, 2021). This study targeted the amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape, where the majority of the Nguni subgroup resides (Bank, 2002).

**Manhood:** Manhood in this study, symbolises a personal transformation and social responsibility attained through a traditional initiation or rite of passage into adulthood (Brown, 2015, Allen et al., 1990).

**Boyhood:** In this study, boyhood is defined as a developmental stage marked by irresponsibility, childlike behaviour, and malleability, where individuals are still forming their identities and are highly susceptible to external influences and societal norms (Connell, 1998, Erikson, 1968).This phase is critical for the construction of masculinity ideologies, as boys balance emerging personal autonomy with pressures to conform to established gender roles (Kimmel, 2008).

**Masculinity:** Masculinity refers to the cultural construction of gender identity and the portrayal of men (Hearn, 1996)

**Ideologies:** Ideology encompasses individuals' beliefs and perspectives shaping their interpretation of surroundings, serving as a mechanism for shaping attitudes and behaviours (Rohan and Zanna, 2001)

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is an essential ethical principle ensuring participants are fully informed about a study's purpose, procedures, risks, and their rights before agreeing to take part (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In this study, participants were provided with detailed information through a consent form in both Xhosa and English, alongside a pre-data collection briefing that clarified their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time without consequences. This process fostered trust, ensured voluntary participation, and upheld ethical standards. See Appendix B for the consent form.

### 1.9.2 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Voluntary participation, as defined by Rubin and Babbie (2017, p. 85), involves the unforced decision-making process regarding involvement in research and an understanding of its potential consequences. This study ensured voluntary participation by providing participants with the freedom to decide whether to take part, free from coercion or external pressure, in line with ethical research standards. Participants were provided with all necessary information during the informed consent session to ensure their decision to participate voluntarily, and free from undue influence. They were also clearly informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, upholding ethical research standards and autonomy.

### 1.9.3 PRIVACY

Privacy refers to the physical setting in which data is collected, ensuring that participants feel secure, and their personal information remains protected (Morse, 2016). According to De Vos et al. (2011), The venue for data collection was arranged to allow participants to engage in the study with the confidence that their private information was not going to be exposed or leaked. The venue where the focus group interviews took place was only accessible to the researcher, and participants. Participants were also briefed not to bring others, and any accompanying individuals were accommodated separately to maintain a secure and respectful environment for open discussions.

### 1.9.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality can be viewed as an extension of privacy, encompassing agreements between individuals that limit access to private information (De Vos et al., 2011). It refers to the management and protection of sensitive information obtained during the research process, ensuring that participants' personal data remains secure and inaccessible to unauthorised individuals (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Confidentiality was ensured by securely storing physical data in a lockable cupboard and anonymising digital files, with access restricted to the researcher. Participants were informed of these measures during the consent process, assured their information would remain protected, and reminded to maintain group confidentiality during discussions.

### 1.9.5 ANONYMITY

Anonymity in research refers to the assurance that the identities of participants cannot be traced or identified from the data collected (De Vos et al., 2011). It involves removing any identifying information that could potentially link responses to individual participants, thereby protecting their privacy and encouraging honest and open participation (Morse, 2016). Anonymity was ensured by assigning participants unique codes for data records, securely storing identifying information separately, and using pseudonyms when reporting findings to omit identifiable details. Data was anonymised, and participants were informed of these measures during the consent process, fostering a secure environment for sharing sensitive experiences.

### 1.9.6 AVOIDANCE OF HARM

Non-maleficence, the ethical principle of doing no harm, requires that researchers avoid causing any emotional, physical, or psychological harm to study participants (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011) The primary risk anticipated in this study was emotional or psychological distress due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. To mitigate this, participants were informed of potential harms, ground rules for respectful dialogue were established, and a psychologist was on standby to provide immediate support if needed. The therapeutic services were also made available to participants after the completion of the data collection, should a need arise.

### 1.9.7 AVOIDING DECEPTION

Avoidance of deception is an ethical obligation to prevent misleading participants or misrepresenting the study's facts (Padgett, 2016, p.79) . In this study, the researcher ensured no deception was used, maintaining research integrity. The true objectives and nature of the research were clearly communicated during the informed consent process, enabling participants to make informed decisions. Voluntary participation was ensured by avoiding incentives and coercion while maintaining transparency, which fostered trust and upheld ethical integrity (Rubin and Babbie, 2016).

### 1.9.8 COOPERATIONS WITH SPONSORS

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), cooperation with sponsors refers to the collaboration between researchers and funding bodies, organisations, or other entities that provide financial or logistical support for a study. This study was conducted independently, without financial or logistical support from external sponsors, funding bodies, or organisations. The researcher collaborated with community and faith-based organisations to recruit participants and secure culturally appropriate venues for focus group discussions. These partnerships enhanced participant accessibility, fostered trust, and supported the ethical integrity of the research.

### 1.9.9 ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

According to Babbie and Mouton (Babbie and Mouton, 2001), analysis and reporting require objective data interpretation and ethical communication of findings, ensuring accuracy, transparency, and respect for participants' confidentiality and perspectives. The analysis and reporting phases adhered to ethical standards, ensuring accuracy, objectivity, and respect for participants’ confidentiality and well-being. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis model

based on Tesch's eight-step coding process (1990 as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2013). Data interpretations were grounded in participants' words, cross-verified, and free from misrepresentation or manipulation with the help of reflective practise under the supervisor's guidance.

## 1.10 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter provided a comprehensive foundation for the study, including the problem statement, rationale, objectives, key terms, and ethical considerations. This section serves as a roadmap for the forthcoming exploration.

## 1.11 OVERVIEW AND STRCUTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is organised into five chapters, each addressing critical components of the research on masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men in South Africa.

**REPORT CHAPTERS:**

**Chapter One:** Outlines the research topic, objectives, and interdisciplinary significance, situates the study within its societal context, presents key questions, defines its scope, clarifies concepts, and addresses ethical considerations.

**Chapter Two:** Offers a comprehensive review of existing literature to deepen the understanding of masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men. This chapter will also discuss theoretical frameworks and policies and legislation that could benefit from the investigation.

**Chapter Three:** Outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical procedures implemented to ensure the study's rigour and validity.

**Chapter Four:** Provides the demographic profile of the participants and the research findings.

**Chapter Five:** Provides a summary of the major findings of the study and offers recommendations for policymakers.

# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature on masculinity ideologies, relevant theoretical frameworks and policy considerations. It critically reviews how these ideologies are constructed within cultural and social contexts, especially among Xhosa men, and how they shape gender relations. The chapter further highlights literature gaps this study addresses, particularly the internalisation and post-initiation expressions of Black masculinity in peri-urban communities.

## 2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.2.1 CULTURAL CONTEXT OF XHOSA MASCULINITY

The cultural fabric of the Xhosa people is deeply rooted in traditions, rituals, and communal philosophies that guide identity, social structure, and gender relations. At the heart of Xhosa masculinity lies the initiation ritual of *ulwaluko*, a practice not only of physical transformation but also of ideological and social indoctrination. This section situates masculinity within a distinctly Xhosa cultural context, in contrast to broader theories explored later. Sipungu (2022) highlights that *ulwaluko* is a critical site for the performance and internalisation of manhood, where boys are taught what it means to be a 'real man'—a role embedded with authority, emotional restraint, and control. These rituals are both symbolic and functional, shaping men's social roles, expectations, and the broader patriarchal logic within Xhosa society.

As Sipungu (2022) explains, embodiment is key to understanding Xhosa masculinity. The process of becoming a man is marked not just by age or experience, but by an embodied transformation—ritualised pain, seclusion, and the re-socialisation into male-dominated hierarchies. Masculinity is constructed through physical, emotional, and social instruction in these spaces, where deviation from prescribed norms is discouraged. These cultural institutions therefore play a fundamental role in legitimising gendered power relations and social hierarchies. Importantly, they also frame masculinity as something earned and performed, sustained by communal validation and generational continuity.

Chiweshe (2018) expands this understanding by noting that Black South African masculinities are not only shaped within ritual spaces but are continuously performed in everyday life through expectations of control, provision, and heterosexual dominance. These performances are sustained by both rural and urban socio-cultural institutions, including family, church, and peer networks, which reinforce normative behaviours linked to respectability, toughness, and control. In the Xhosa context, these dynamics are further complicated by the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, which have intersected with traditional systems to produce a distinct post-apartheid masculinity.

Andipatin and Laher (2017) add that *ulwaluko* functions not merely as a rite of passage but as a key mechanism for constructing masculinity, where the initiate's worth is measured through endurance of pain, loyalty to cultural prescriptions, and adherence to strict gender roles. These initiation schools convey messages about what is expected of a man, including the responsibility to lead, protect, and dominate. The role of the community in validating these norms ensures their reinforcement across generations. Moreover, the ritual secludes the initiate from female influence, constructing womanhood as something that lies outside of male identity formation and, therefore, something to be managed, protected, or controlled.

### 2.2.2 UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITY

Building on the culturally grounded understanding of Xhosa masculinity outlined above, this section explores broader conceptualisations of masculinity as developed in academic literature. Masculinity, as a concept, is central to understanding gender dynamics and the perpetuation of gender-based violence (GBV). It is shaped by various factors, including class, race, ethnicity, and cultural context (Langa, 2012). Scholars have argued for a more nuanced understanding of masculinity through the lens of "masculinities," acknowledging its diverse forms across contexts and historical periods (Frosh et al., 2017; Connell, 2000). Connell's (2000) concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity that not only reinforces gender hierarchies but also sets societal expectations for male behaviour. However, this dominant masculinity is not monolithic, and Morrell (2001) suggests that in South Africa, multiple masculinities exist, influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and historical factors.

This broader view complements the preceding discussion of Xhosa masculinity by recognising that while cultural practices like *ulwaluko* serve as pivotal identity-shaping mechanisms, they operate within an evolving socio-political landscape where competing masculinities are

constantly negotiated. Understanding these shifts is essential for locating Xhosa masculinity ideologies within larger patterns of social reproduction, resistance, and change.

### 2.2.3 UNDERSTANDING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, introduced by Connell (2000) is a pivotal framework for understanding gender dynamics. Originally emerging from studies on social inequality in Australian high schools, it refers to the culturally dominant form of masculinity that reinforces male authority and gender hierarchies (Langa, 2012, Connell, 2000). This framework has since g3ained prominence in understanding men's roles in labour politics and its association with social inequalities and political participation (Connell, 2020). Researchers use it to explore how certain masculine ideals perpetuate social inequalities, particularly in relation to violence against women.

Rooted in Antonio Gramsci's ideas on hegemony (Langa, 2012), Connell (2000) expanded the term to include structural and ideological domination, focusing on class power dynamics (Giddens, 1994). Connell (2020) defines hegemonic masculinity as a system of gender-related behaviours that legitimises patriarchy and maintains the superior status of men while subordinating women. This framework underpins gender-based violence, with studies, such as Pelowich et al. (2024) link rigid adherence to masculine roles with higher rates of intimate partner violence in South African townships; this is further underscored by the stark statistic that every 12 minutes, a woman is raped, and approximately 116 rapes occur per day (Action Society, 2024).Furthermore, Venkatesh, Botha, and Morrell (2015) demonstrate that challenging hegemonic masculinity through interventions can reduce violence against women.

Violent masculinity, as described by Ratele (2016), reflects hegemonic masculinity rooted in Black masculinity ideology, emphasising aggression, control, and dominance. This is shaped by the historical oppression of Black people in South Africa under apartheid, intersecting with race, gender, and class systems to perpetuate gender-based violence (Crenshaw, 2013). This violent masculinity aligns with Connell's (2020) definition by reinforcing male dominance and female subordination. Langa (2012) notes that hegemonic masculinity often portrays men as strong, assertive, and resilient, which can normalise violent behaviour as a means to maintain dominance.

Integrating Morrell's (2001) nuanced classifications with Connell (2020), (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, Kimmel et al., 2004) and Frosh et al.'s (2017) broader theories, this study acknowledges the complexity of masculinity. These frameworks illustrate how violent masculinities perpetuate gender inequalities and violence, particularly within specific cultural and socio-economic contexts. Societal stereotypes link hegemonic masculinity with traits such as financial stability, the ability to face challenges, and entitlement to multiple sexual partners (Connell, 2020, Langa, 2012, Niehaus, 2005)This dominant form of masculinity often objectifies women and positions men in competition over sexual access to women (Connell, 2020).

Hegemonic masculinity upholds the notion of gender as fixed and unchangeable, disregarding feminist perspectives that emphasise the social construction of gender dynamics Teflon (Brittan, 1989). It rationalises patriarchy and the subjugation of women by portraying them as inherent societal norms (Langa, 2012). Aligned with this concept, the research explores how Black masculinity manifests among Xhosa men, examining their transition from boyhood to manhood and challenging hegemonic masculinity. It aims to offer a nuanced understanding of Black masculinity to mitigate the impact of 'violent masculinity' on women (Donaldson, 1993).

### 2.2.4 MASCULINITY IDEOLOGIES IN RELATION TO WOMEN

While traditional masculinity research often centres on male-to-male dynamics—competition, honour, and dominance—this study instead focuses on how masculinity ideologies construct and maintain the subordination of women. In patriarchal contexts such as Xhosa society, masculinity is not only defined in opposition to femininity but also enacted through the symbolic and material domination of women. Women are consistently positioned as inferior because they are excluded from culturally sanctioned masculine markers such as public authority, control, and physical autonomy. Even when women demonstrate traits associated with strength or resilience, such expressions are only legitimised when confined to domestic or supportive roles. For instance, women may be expected to carry heavy three-legged cast-iron stoves or work *eziko* (at the hearth), yet this strength is not valorised—it is domesticated and rendered invisible within a patriarchal order that limits their power. As Penxa-Matholeni (2016) notes, spaces like the hearth are deeply gendered and serve to entrench women's roles as supporters within male-headed households. Connell (2000) and Ratele (2016) similarly assert

that hegemonic masculinity relies on the subordination of women, whether through overt control or benevolent paternalism. These ideologies are reinforced in everyday expectations of obedience, emotional labour, and domestic responsibility. Within traditional teachings and initiation rites, women are not positioned as equals but as enablers of male identity, further entrenching gender hierarchies (Sipungu, 2022; Manganye & Pokwana, 2023; Chiweshe, 2018; Andipatin & Laher, 2017). This sub-section addresses a critical gap in literature by analysing how masculinities are constructed through the systematic devaluation of women and the implications this holds for interpersonal gender dynamics.

### 2.2.5 RITES OF PASSAGE TO MANHOOD IN BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE

Rites of passage to manhood are cultural ceremonies within Black South African societies, marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood and instilling cultural values, social responsibilities, and gender norms (Maseko, 1998). These ceremonies vary across different ethnic groups, each embodying traditions and societal expectations. Among these, the Xhosa *ulwaluko* stands out as a rite of passage that encompasses the cultural and social transformation of young men into responsible adults (Nkomo, 2003). Similarly, in other Nguni cultures, for instance, the Zulu *amadlozi* rites, the focus is on spiritual guidance and the affirmation of one's place within the ancestral lineage, reinforcing communal solidarity and leadership (Nkosi, 2010). These ceremonies emphasise the connection between the living and the ancestors, instilling a sense of duty and respect for cultural traditions (Ohaja and Anyim, 2021). In contrast, the Pedi *mokorotlo* revolves around symbolic rituals that mark the shift to manhood, including the teaching of social norms and responsibilities, thus cultivating a sense of identity and belonging (Nkomo, 2003).

The Sotho *bokaba* rites, Tswana l*etloso* rites, and Shona *nhava* rites similarly centre on community engagement and the transfer of traditional wisdom, preparing the youth for leadership and societal roles. Sotho *bokaba* emphasises training initiates to become guardians of the community (Maseko, 1998), while Tswana *letloso* focuses on resilience, leadership, and social structure (Nkosi, 2010). The Shona *nhava* rites stress moral and ethical instruction, instilling integrity, courage, and respect for women (Moseley, 1997). *Ulwaluko* serves as an initiation process for Xhosa boys, equipping them to be protectors and contributors (Maseko,

1998). The process involves seclusion, physical circumcision, and guidance from older men on their future roles, fostering communal harmony (Nkosi, 2010; Moseley, 1997).

Through its demands, *ulwaluko* aims to reshape boys—viewed as immature—into men of honour, resilience, and accountability (Nkomo, 2003). This means that discarding traits associated with youth prepares them to uphold community structures and preserve social cohesion among AmaXhosa (Mdokwana, 2024). Yet, as Manganye and Pokwana (2023) argue, the secrecy surrounding *ulwaluko* sidelines women, limiting their participation in logistical functions. Efforts to include women, such as the 2016 proposal by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, encountered pushback from male leaders, who considered such changes invasive (Commission for Gender Equality, 2017). Consequently, this exclusion underlines patriarchal norms, diminishing women's voices and affirming men as custodians of cultural authority.

Connell's (2020, 2005, 2000) lens of hegemonic masculinity elucidates how practice like *ulwaluko* bolster gender roles in Black South African contexts. Defined as behaviours sustaining patriarchy and male dominance, such norms correlate with gender-based violence (Jewkes, Morrell and Dunkle, 2010). Ratele's (2016) notion of violent masculinity and Langa's (2012) portrayal of dominant men underscore how *ulwaluko* strengthens these stereotypes, sidelining women and fostering harmful gender relations. However, masculinity is moulded by variables like upbringing, education, geography, and socialisation, which can produce constructive or destructive masculinity. Urbanisation and exposure to heterogeneous cultures may erode rigid traditions and encourage balanced gender relations (Smith et al., 1995). By investigating these interdependencies, this research explores how customary rites, and contemporary influences collectively shape masculinity among Xhosa men.

While existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding hegemonic masculinity, Black masculinities, and rites of passage such as *ulwaluko*, few studies critically explore how these ideologies are internalised and expressed by men in post-initiation adulthood—particularly within rural or peri-urban Xhosa communities. Much of the scholarship either generalises masculinity across racial or cultural lines or focuses primarily on young boys or adolescents. Furthermore, the intersection between traditional masculinity rites and gender-based violence remains under-theorised, with limited research drawing on both psychoanalytic theory and discourse analysis to examine this link. This study addresses this gap

by investigating how Black masculinity ideologies—shaped through *ulwaluko* and everyday socialisation—inform Xhosa men's perceptions of and behaviours toward women. In doing so, it contributes to current debates by offering a culturally grounded, theoretically layered account of masculinity and power in the context of contemporary South Africa.

## 2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.3.1 Multicultural Masculinity

Multicultural masculinity recognises that masculinity is not a uniform construct but is shaped by diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts (Crenshaw, 2021, Connell, 2020). Grounded in cultural relativism, it acknowledges that expressions of masculinity are culturally contingent and context-dependent, varying across societies; for example, the Xhosa *ulwaluko* initiation emphasises leadership and resilience (Mdokwana, 2024), while Western urban masculinity often prioritises professional success and family balance (Bozani, 2020). The intersectional approach further explores how race, gender, and class intersect with masculinity to shape diverse identities (Crenshaw, 2021). Black masculinity in South Africa, for instance, reflects the legacy of apartheid and socioeconomic exclusion, contrasting with middle-class masculinity shaped by global influences and privilege (Manganye and Pokwana, 2023). This interplay between cultural relativism and intersectionality reveals how masculinity is constantly negotiated through localised cultural traditions and broader social forces, offering a nuanced framework to understand the complexity of male identities in an evolving world.

Multicultural masculinity challenges conventional stereotypes by embracing diverse expressions of masculinity across cultures and promoting inclusivity. It emphasises the importance of cultural competence in understanding masculine identities and considers the impact of globalisation on local masculinity concepts, often leading to hybrid expressions. By recognising the fluidity of gender identities, this framework facilitates the evolution of masculine expressions and critiques rigid constructs of masculinity over time (Kimmel, 2005, Butler, 1990). Additionally, it aligns with discussions on social justice and gender equality by advocating for inclusivity and the dismantling of oppressive structures (Hooks, 2004). This theoretical framework is absolutely essential in understanding the multi-faceted nature of the traditional rite of passage of *ulwaluko*, which is pivotal in marking the transition from boyhood to manhood for Xhosa men. Multicultural masculinity provides a comprehensive foundation for exploring how *ulwaluko* influences the internalised versions of masculinity, shaping how men perceive and

interact with women. By integrating these theoretical elements, multicultural masculinity offers a robust lens through which to analyse the cultural and social dynamics inherent in the *ulwaluko* ceremony.

This study adopted Thompson et al.'s (1992) Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS) to measure Black masculinity ideologies. Grounded in the multicultural masculinity framework, the MMIS examines how masculinity is perceived and internalised, capturing both positive and negative aspects influenced by cultural and social contexts. Key dimensions include traditional masculinity associated with dominance and toughness. In contrast, modern masculinity is built on emotional expressiveness and gender equality. Multicultural integration, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of the coexistence of diverse cultural influences. For this study, dimensions addressing traditional masculinity and multicultural integration were prioritized to align with the South African context. Please see Appendix B for the Multicultural Masculinity Scale used in this study.

### 2.3.2 Psychoanalytic Theory

In addition to the multicultural masculinity framework, this study employs Psychoanalytic Theory as a complementary theoretical lens to deepen the understanding of the psychological processes underlying Black masculinity ideologies. Psychoanalytic Theory was pioneered by Sigmund Freud and further elaborated by subsequent theorists (Jung, 2024, Adler, 2024, Maree, 2022). It explores the interaction between conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche by unveiling hidden motivations, conflicts, and desires that shape an individual's thoughts and actions (Frosh, 1999).

It is important to clarify that employing Psychoanalytic Theory does not involve "psychoanalysing" or "pathologising" the research participants. Rather, it is aimed at understanding the psychic processes involved in navigating conflicting versions of masculinity (Langa, 2012). This framework operates on several key assumptions that provide insight into human behaviour and personality. Unconscious processes suggest that individuals are shaped by hidden thoughts, feelings, and desires that influence their behaviour and self-perception (Freud and Bonaparte, 1954). It also emphasises psychic conflicts arising from the interplay of the id, ego, and superego, which shape identity and actions by mediating between desires, morality, and reality (De Masi, 2023). Additionally, repression and projection highlight how repressed emotions and

desires manifest as defence mechanisms, such as attributing one's feelings to others, significantly impacting relationships and self-concept (Ellman, 2020).

By utilising Psychoanalytic Theory, this study aims to uncover the latent beliefs and societal norms acquired during the transition from boyhood to manhood through the *ulwaluko* ceremony. This theoretical perspective enables the exploration of deep-seated thoughts and perceptions about South African women that are influenced by Black masculinity ideologies. For instance, the emphasis on leadership and authority within *ulwaluko* may unconsciously reinforce patriarchal views and attitudes towards women, as suggested by Freud and Bonaparte (1954). Integrating Psychoanalytic Theory with multicultural masculinity framework allows for a more nuanced analysis of how traditional rites of passage such as *ulwalukho* shape cultural and social aspects of masculinity as well as the psychological underpinnings that influence male behaviour and gender relations. This dual-framework approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in the formation and expression of masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men in South Africa. To facilitate this analysis, the study employs qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, to explore the unconscious motivations and conflicts that arise from the *ulwaluko* experience. This approach complements the quantitative measurements obtained from the MMIS, offering a holistic view of masculinity ideologies and their impact on gender dynamics.

## 2.4 POLICY AND LEGISLATION

South Africa has made several legislative and strategic efforts to address gender-based violence (GBV), recognising it as a systemic issue deeply interwoven with cultural, social, and economic dynamics. This section introduces three critical frameworks—The Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998, The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF)—and outlines their relevance to this study. These policies are examined in relation to the construction and perpetuation of Black masculinity ideologies, particularly among Xhosa men, and how such ideologies influence attitudes and behaviours toward women. By integrating policy review with cultural insight, this study aims to foreground both the legal and societal dimensions of GBV in South Africa.

### 2.4.1 The Domestic Act No. 116 of 1998

The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 is a cornerstone of South Africa's legal framework aimed at combating domestic violence (Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998, 1998: chap.

1).Enacted to protect individuals from abuse within the domestic sphere, the Act provides comprehensive measures for prevention, protection, and legal recourse for victims (Republic of South Africa, 1998**).** It defines domestic violence, establishes procedures for obtaining protection orders, and mandates the involvement of law enforcement and the judiciary in addressing incidents of abuse (Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998, 1998: chap. 1). Additionally, the Act emphasises support services for victims, including counselling and rehabilitation programmes, thereby addressing both immediate safety concerns and long-term recovery needs (Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998, 1998: chap. 1).

However, the Act's primary focus on post-incident protection reveals a notable gap in its engagement with preventive strategies—particularly those that address the cultural and ideological roots of male violence. This is especially relevant in communities where gender roles are reinforced through rites such as *ulwaluko*. Within such contexts, the Act's reactive orientation does little to challenge the socialisation of young men into hegemonic and often harmful masculinities. This study bridges that gap by exploring how cultural ideologies are internalised and reproduced, offering insights that can inform the development of more proactive, culturally sensitive policy approaches.

### 2.4.2 The National Development Plan 2030

The National Development Plan 2030 envisions a society free from poverty and inequality, where gender equity and safety are integral to national well-being (National Planning Commission, 2012). It frames GBV as a barrier to both individual security and national development. The NSP-GBVF (2019) builds on this by providing a coordinated multi-sectoral strategy that includes justice, health, education, and traditional institutions in the effort to combat GBV.

While both frameworks promote preventative action and social norm transformation, they often fall short of addressing the specific ways in which masculinity ideologies—particularly those nurtured in cultural rites like *ulwaluko*—contribute to GBV. The NSP-GBVF highlights the importance of dismantling patriarchal beliefs, but there is limited engagement with how these beliefs are produced and legitimised within cultural systems. The current study addresses this by exploring how such ideologies are constructed, sustained, and potentially challenged.

Importantly, the integration of these three frameworks—the Domestic Violence Act, the NDP, and the NSP-GBVF—can yield a more comprehensive approach to GBV. The Domestic Violence Act provides crucial legal protections; the NDP outlines developmental aspirations that hinge on social equity; and the NSP-GBVF operationalises these goals through sectoral collaboration. Together, they offer an opportunity to transition from reactive to proactive measures—targeting not just outcomes of GBV, but its ideological and cultural roots.

By situating this study within these overlapping policy contexts, it becomes clear that effective GBV prevention requires more than legal reform. It necessitates a cultural reckoning with how masculinities are taught, performed, and policed—particularly in highly traditional contexts. This study thus contributes to an emerging policy discourse that recognises the importance of engaging men and boys in reshaping gender norms and building a safer, more respectful society for all.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In summary, this research chapter reviewed pertinent literature, outlined theoretical frameworks, and discussed potential policy implications, laying the groundwork for the investigation.

# CHAPTER THREE
# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, target population, sampling technique, data analysis, limitations, and author reflexivity.

## 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory research design. An exploratory qualitative approach is well-suited to research areas where limited empirical knowledge exists, or where dominant frameworks have failed to adequately capture lived realities (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is particularly appropriate for research that seeks to explore nuanced socio-cultural dynamics, as in the case of this study, which examines how rites of passage—particularly *ulwaluko*—construct and sustain masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men, and how these ideologies influence gendered attitudes and behaviours. While gender-based violence is not the primary focus, it is examined as a consequence of these belief systems. This design enabled the researcher to trace emerging patterns and thematic relationships that help illuminate the lived realities behind these ideologies.

The open-ended nature of qualitative research afforded the flexibility to investigate this topic from an insider perspective, allowing for a rich and layered exploration of context-specific cultural dynamics (Tracy, 2020). As a Black Xhosa woman, the researcher's insider positionality was central to the authenticity of the study, enabling a deeper engagement with cultural nuances and enhancing the trust-building process with participants. This positionality was not only a strength but a vital methodological consideration that supported participants' openness and allowed for more textured, honest insights.

Focus groups and reflective engagement with participant narratives allowed for detailed insights into how masculine socialisation is shaped not only through tradition but also through everyday lived experiences. This approach facilitated a more holistic understanding of the ideologies under study and helped bridge cultural interpretation with academic inquiry—an outcome less likely in more structured or quantitative designs.

## 3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

### 3.3.1 Study population

The study population refers to the entire group of individuals meeting the research criteria, sharing characteristics such as age, race, gender, or community traits (Rubin and Babbie, 2007; Babbie and Mouton, 2001). For this study, the population comprised Black Xhosa males in the Eastern Cape, specifically in East London—a region known for its deep-rooted Xhosa traditions and a high prevalence of gender-based violence (Jewkes et al., 2010).

Participants were selected using the following inclusion criteria:

1. Cultural affiliation to the Xhosa tribe,
2. Having undergone the traditional *ulwaluko* rite of passage, and
3. Being 18 years or older at the time of participation.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Individuals who had not undergone *ulwaluko*.
- Individuals under the age of 18.
- Individuals not identifying as Xhosa or not residing in East London or surrounding Eastern Cape areas.

*Ulwaluko*, a circumcision ceremony marking the transition from boyhood to manhood, instils values such as leadership, discipline, and accountability while reinforcing patriarchal norms (Nkosi, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010). The Xhosa people are one of South Africa's largest ethnic groups, possessing a rich cultural heritage marked by distinct traditions, social structures, and gender roles that construct masculinity (Ratele, 2016). This study examined how traditional practices like *ulwaluko* intersect with contemporary societal changes to influence perceptions and behaviours related to gender-based violence (GBV). Unlike previous studies (Nkosi, 2013), this research did not impose a minimum period post-initiation, allowing for both immediate and long-term perspectives to compare enduring and evolving Black Xhosa masculinity ideologies over time

### 3.3.2 Sampling technique

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique**,** a method often used in qualitative research to select participants based on specific characteristics rather than random selection (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).Purposive sampling was utilised to target Xhosa men who had undergone the traditional *ulwaluko* rite of passage, focusing on their experiences and the construction of masculinity ideologies and perceptions of women (Patton, 2014).To address cultural gatekeeping and the sensitive nature of the topic, snowball sampling was incorporated, allowing initial participants to refer others meeting the research criteria (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This approach leveraged trust within the community, enhancing access to a traditionally hard-to-reach population and providing richer, more authentic data.

Ethical safeguards, including adherence to the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act**,** ensured that referrers obtained informed consent before sharing potential participants' details, maintaining confidentiality and respect. A purposive sample of 22 participants, recruited through local community and faith-based organisations, provided diverse perspectives. This sample size, deemed appropriate for a master's level study by the Department of Social Work and Social Development at the University of Cape Town, enabled an in-depth exploration of the research topic while maintaining the study's integrity.

### 3.3.3 Sampling procedure

This study employed purposive sampling to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria. A total of 33 Xhosa men initially expressed interest in participating. However, the final sample comprised 22 participants. Eleven participants were excluded for various reasons. Five of the men had not yet undergone *ulwaluko* as they were not of age, making them ineligible. Four participants, after discussing the study with the researcher, expressed that they could not share information about the practice of *ulwaluko* as they felt it would violate cultural protocols. Two participants were unavailable on the scheduled data collection day.

Participants were drawn from East London in the Eastern Cape. To maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of participants—particularly due to the specificity of the organisations and communities involved—no further location details are disclosed. This is in line with the ethical commitment to ensure anonymity and minimise any risk of participant identification.

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Humanities Faculty at the University of Cape Town. Please see Appendix A on page 66 for the ethical clearance certificate.

## 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

### 3.4.1 Data collection method

The data for this study were collected through focus group discussions, a method well-suited for exploring culturally embedded ideologies and capturing the interactive construction of meaning among participants. Initially, three focus groups were planned, but this changed due to concerns about the potential silencing of younger men. Of the 22 eligible participants, only four were aged 18–25, and it was anticipated that dividing them into a separate group might hinder the richness of the discussion or isolate their perspectives. Conversely, placing them in a group with older men posed a risk of their voices being overshadowed. To maintain ethical sensitivity and ensure balanced participation, the researcher opted for two focus groups instead.

Additionally, the shift to two groups was informed by logistical constraints. Participants were giving of their own time and used personal means of transportation to attend the sessions. Their availability across dates and times varied significantly, and arranging a third session became impractical. The researcher thus adapted to these realities and worked within the time and access that participants were able to offer. Each group comprised 11 participants, split evenly to promote dynamic yet manageable discussions. This structure ensured a diversity of experiences and viewpoints could be shared and explored in depth, while still maintaining cohesion and flow.

The focus groups were conducted in English, which was also the language used in the consent forms. Participants were explicitly informed that they were welcome to respond in any language they felt most comfortable using, including isiXhosa. This openness fostered a safe and inclusive environment, allowing for more nuanced expression, particularly when discussing culturally sensitive themes. The sessions were held in a neutral and accessible community venue in East London. With participants' informed consent, all discussions were audio recorded, and the researcher kept detailed field notes to document not only verbal responses but also non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and emerging themes. This layered approach ensured a rich, contextually grounded dataset that reflected both spoken and embodied expressions of masculinity ideologies.

Participant recruitment occurred through purposive and snowball sampling. Flyers were distributed at various community-based organisations where the researcher had pre-existing relationships. Interested individuals were invited to send a "please call me" message to indicate interest in the study. The researcher then followed up via phone to provide more details, conduct eligibility screening, and schedule participation. In line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), individuals who wished to refer others were advised to first obtain the person's consent before sharing their details. This ensured ethical compliance, confidentiality, and voluntary participation throughout the recruitment process.

### 3.4.2 Data collection instrument

This study adopted a semi-structured interview schedule as its primary data collection method, a well-established qualitative approach that allows for flexibility while enabling in-depth exploration of participant experiences (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The questions were open-ended to encourage rich discussion and personal reflection, ensuring that participants could express themselves in culturally grounded and discursive ways. The interview guide was conceptually informed by the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS), which offers a culturally responsive framework for understanding masculinity across dimensions such as emotional expression, social roles, sexuality, and leadership (Thompson et al., 2003). While the MMIS was not used as a formal measurement tool, its core constructs were adapted to suit the study's qualitative focus. Themes from the MMIS were used to frame key discussion areas—for instance, prompts like *"What does it mean to be a man in your community?"* and *"How were you taught to treat women after initiation?"* were derived from the ideological domains covered in the MMIS. This allowed the study to explore masculinity constructs in a way that was both theoretically grounded and culturally relevant.

Additionally, the interview schedule was shaped by principles from Psychoanalytic Theory, particularly as articulated by Frosh (1999). This theoretical lens informed the design of prompts aimed at probing emotional repression, unconscious gender beliefs, and formative childhood socialisation. These layers of inquiry allowed the research to engage more deeply with the internal contradictions and emotional tensions embedded in participants' constructions of masculinity. The outcome of using this instrument was the emergence of ideologically dominant themes—such as male emotional control, hierarchical gender beliefs, and the privileging of male authority in domestic spaces. These findings reflected the broader

ideological currents identified in the MMIS framework and supported the study's exploration of how masculinity is taught, internalised, and enacted among Xhosa men.

### 3.4.3 Data collection tool

In this study, focus group interviews were recorded with participants' permission using a venue-based sound system with three microphones—one for the facilitator and two for participants—ensuring high-quality audio saved directly to the researcher's flash drive. Audio recording is widely supported in qualitative research as it enhances accuracy, preserves discussion flow, and allows for detailed analysis of language and tone (Patton, 2014). This setup enabled the researcher to remain fully engaged with the discussion and cultural dynamics rather than being preoccupied with manual transcription. In addition to recordings, detailed field notes were kept throughout the sessions to track non-verbal cues, group interactions, and emerging themes. Field notes are recognised as an essential supplement in qualitative work, helping researchers reflect on context, verify interpretations, and retain insights that may not be captured in transcripts alone (Saldaña, 2016). Combining these two methods provided a strong foundation for robust and reflective analysis, ensuring both verbal and contextual elements were captured and revisited during coding.

## 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

### 3.5.1 Discursive analysis

Discursive analysis was used to examine how Xhosa men construct masculinity ideologies, emphasising their implications for gender-based violence. Drawing on Fairclough's (2013) Critical Discourse Analysis, the researcher began with detailed textual analysis to explore how masculinity was framed through particular phrases, silences, and narratives. This was followed by analysis of discourse practice, which revealed how participants' constructions were shaped by broader cultural and social contexts, including rites such as *ulwaluko*.

Foucault's (1972) theory of discourse and power was incorporated to deepen the analysis of how these ideologies function as mechanisms of control. Foucault argues that power operates not only through institutions, but through the internalisation of norms that regulate behaviour. In this study, masculinity ideologies emerged as disciplinary frameworks that encouraged emotional suppression, dominance, and heteronormativity—traits sustained by cultural rituals and peer reinforcement. Participants' narratives reflected how men come to police their own

and others' behaviour, thereby reproducing hegemonic gender norms without overt coercion. This reveals how masculinity operates as a discourse of power, shaping what is seen as "normal" male behaviour and justifying control over women.

To supplement this, the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS) (Thompson et al., 1992) was employed to capture both progressive and traditional dimensions of Black masculinity within the Xhosa context. By integrating these analytical tools, the study offers a nuanced account of how discourse and power interact to reinforce gender hierarchies and enable the persistence of gender-based violence.

### 3.5.2 Thematic analysis:

According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), thematic analysis is an effective qualitative method for identifying, organising, and interpreting patterns within textual data, especially when aiming to understand how meaning is constructed through language. In this study, thematic analysis was chosen for its ability to impose structure and coherence onto complex qualitative responses, aligning with the study's aim to explore underlying ideologies. Focus group transcripts from two sessions with 22 participants discussing Black masculinity ideologies and perceptions of women were analysed using Tesch's (1990) eight-step coding process, which provided a systematic framework for identifying and categorising emerging themes. This approach supported a deep and iterative reading of the data, revealing the discursive foundations of how masculinity is performed, justified, and challenged within the cultural context.

**Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data**

In the first step, the researcher thoroughly read through both focus group transcripts to identify overarching narratives and contextual understandings (Clarke and Braun, 2013). This initial immersion helped reveal early ideas and impressions from participants' discussions (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

**Step 2: Generating Initial Codes**

In the second step, the researcher analysed the first session's narratives without a predefined structure, enabling an unbiased exploration (Clarke and Braun, 2013). This involved examining the data for underlying meanings and thematic cues that would guide subsequent coding (Boyatzis, 1998).

**Step 3: Clustering Topics**

In the third step, the researcher compiled narratives from both sessions, grouping similar topics under major themes, unique topics, and outliers to organise the data into manageable segments for deeper analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

**Step 4: Developing Codes**

In the fourth step, the researcher refined clustered topics into concise codes, attaching them to relevant segments of the text and employing colour coding to maintain an organised overview of thematic relationships (Clarke and Braun, 2013, Boyatzis, 1998).

**Step 5: Categorising Codes**

In the fifth step, the researcher refined the codes into descriptive categories, synthesising language and grouping related categories to streamline the coding framework and distil core thematic insights (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

**Step 6: Finalising Major Themes**

In the sixth step, the researcher consolidated categories and subcategories from both sessions, finalising the major themes that accurately represented the data( Clarke and Braun, 2013). This process also involved alphabetising codes for an orderly analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

**Step 7: Organising the Data Material**

In the seventh step, the researcher arranged the data under each category, creating new folders for themes, categories, and subcategories to consolidate all related material for focused analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013, Boyatzis, 1998).

**Step 8: Final Narrative Analysis**

In the final step, the researcher conducted a comprehensive narrative analysis, synthesising data across all categories and themes to form a coherent understanding of Black masculinity ideologies (Boyatzis, 1998). Although Tesch (1990, as cited in Clarke and Braun, 2013) recommends recording new codes at this stage, no additional codes were required for this study.

## 3.6 DATA VERIFICATION

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for trustworthiness in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria ensure the authenticity, applicability, reliability, and objectivity of qualitative findings, and were implemented in this study to ensure research rigour.

Credibility ensures confidence in the findings' truth, reflecting participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved by building trust with participants, clarifying the

study's purpose, and conducting an information session. Focus group discussions were recorded with consent, and transcriptions were reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy. Direct quotes were included to preserve participant authenticity (Patton, 2014)

Transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved through purposive sampling, which included participants from diverse backgrounds and contexts. Two focus groups were utilised in this study for their capacity to generate diverse viewpoints through social interaction, which enriches contextual understanding—an approach supported by Creswell (2014), who notes their usefulness in exploring complex social phenomena.

Dependability emphasises the reliability of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was ensured by maintaining a thorough audit trail, documenting recruitment, focus group protocols, and data analysis procedures. Regular consultations with a supervisor helped refine methods and ensure alignment with the research objectives (Enworo, 2023, Morse, 2016).

Confirmability ensures that findings reflect participants' experiences, not researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflexive journal was kept to document biases, and peer reviews helped ensure that interpretations aligned with participants' perspectives. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic model, with triangulation used to validate findings by comparing focus group data with observations from the information session (Enworo, 2023). By applying these strategies, the researcher ensured its findings were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable, providing a robust understanding of Xhosa masculinity ideologies and their impact on gender perceptions.

### 3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study faced several limitations that influenced the scope and depth of the findings. The limited participation of recently initiated men restricted fresh insights into the transition from boyhood to manhood but was mitigated by the valuable contributions of older participants, which enriched the understanding of experiences across age groups. Focusing exclusively on East London, a single urban area within the diverse Eastern Cape province, meant the findings may not fully capture the nuanced masculinity ideologies shaped by differing socioeconomic and cultural contexts in regions like Umtata and Lusikisiki. Strict cultural gatekeeping and some participants' hesitancy to discuss sensitive topics limited access to certain practice, while the researcher's outsider positionality occasionally hindered open dialogue. Despite these

challenges, the data collected was sufficient to illuminate key aspects of Xhosa masculinity ideologies, emphasising the importance of more inclusive methodologies in future studies.

### 3.8 REFLEXIVITY

To mitigate biases, I engaged in continuous self-reflection, acknowledging and addressing my personal assumptions that could potentially influence data interpretation (Finlay and Gough, 2008). Maintaining a reflexive journal was central to this process, as it allowed me to document my thoughts on interactions with participants and my reactions to the data, ensuring heightened awareness of potential biases. I also employed triangulation by integrating multiple data sources and methods, such as focus group discussions, observations, and culturally relevant texts, to cross-verify findings and enhance their credibility (Lincoln, 1985).

My motivation for conducting this research was rooted in a deep concern about the oversimplified portrayal of Xhosa men as inherently violent—a narrative often reduced to cultural or traditional causation. While acknowledging the presence of violence within the group, I was troubled by its frequent attribution to misunderstood or misrepresented cultural practice, often framed against Western norms. This study allowed me to critically examine the historical context of violence experienced by Xhosa people and how these experiences intersect with culture, tradition, and socialisation processes in shaping masculinity and interactions with women.

As a Xhosa woman, I approached this research from an insider's perspective, striving to explore these issues without problematising culture indiscriminately. Instead, I aimed to scrutinise the broader socialisation processes and life conditions that shape norms, behaviours, and perceptions of masculinity. Reflexivity was integral to this approach, requiring me to assess how my identity and personal experiences influenced the research process. Recognising the sensitivity of Black masculinity as a topic, I sought to foster an environment of trust and openness, ensuring that participants could share their perspectives candidly. This reflexive and empathetic approach enabled me to capture a richer understanding of how Xhosa men conceptualise masculinity and their relationships with women, moving beyond simplistic narratives.

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined how the research was conducted. A qualitative exploratory design was utilised to delve into Black masculinity ideologies among Xhosa men who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data was collected using focused groups, and data was analysed using discursive and thematic methods. Measures to ensure credibility in findings, alongside limitations and researchers' reflexivity were covered.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses findings from focus groups involving 22 Xhosa men in East London, Eastern Cape. It explores their perceptions of women, the masculinity ideologies they learned during manhood rites, and how these beliefs influence their current relationships. The chapter begins with a demographic overview of the participants, presents the analytical framework, and then examines the main themes emerging from their discussions.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

| PSEUDONYM | AGE | RELATIONSHIP STATUS | RACE | TRIBE | PLACE OF RESIDENCE | OCCUPATION | TRADITIONALLY INITIATION/ YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 1 | 19 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Student | 2023 |
| Participant 2 | 19 | Dating | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Student | 2023 |
| Participant 3 | 19 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Student | 2023 |
| Participant 4 | 20 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Waitress | 2022 |
| Participant 5 | 23 | Engaged | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Sales | 2019 |
| Participant 6 | 29 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Accountant | ,2013 |

| Participant 7 | 39 | Divorced | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Accountant | 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 8 | 32 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Unemployed | 2010 |
| Participant 9 | 35 | Dating | Black | Xhosa | Township | Self-employed | 2006 |
| Participant 10 | 38 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Township | Uber Driver | 2004 |
| Participant 11 | 39 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Township | Working in retail | 2003 |
| Participant 12 | 42 | Divorced | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Government work | 2000 |
| Participant 13 | 47 | Divorced | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Government work | 1995 |
| Participant 14 | 50 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Township | Teacher | 1992 |
| Participant 15 | 55 | Single | Black | Xhosa | CBD | Teacher | 1987 |
| Participant 16 | 58 | Married | Black | Xhosa | CBD | Lecturer | 1984 |
| Participant 17 | 60 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Dr | 1962 |
| Participant 18 | 64 | Divorced | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Nurse | 1978 |
| Participant 19 | 65 | Widowed | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Self-employed | 1977 |
| Participant 20 | 68 | Single | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Self-employed | 1974 |
| Participant 21 | 70 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Retired | 1972 |
| Participant 22 | 70 | Married | Black | Xhosa | Suburb | Retired | 1972 |

Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of 22 study participants. All are male, Black, and Xhosa, aged between 19 and 70. They have varied relationship statuses (4 divorced, 7 single, 7 married, 1 widowed, and 2 dating) and reside in three areas: 3 in the CBD, 4 in townships, and 15 in

suburbs. Their occupations include 3 students, 2 accountants, 2 teachers, 2 government workers, 2 self-employed, 2 retired, plus a waitress, sales representative, Uber driver, retail worker, lecturer, doctor, nurse, and 1 unemployed. All were traditionally initiated between 1972 and 2023.

### 4.3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 2: Framework of analysis

| MAIN THEMES | CATEGORIES | SUB-CATEGORIES |
|---|---|---|
| Xhosa men's perceptions of women in South Africa | • Women as homemakers | • Women are expected to support and nurture |
| | • Normalised gender inequality | • Women are seen as inferior |
| | | • Normalised infidelity |
| Masculinity ideologies taught to boys when they transition to manhood among Black men | • Defining features of a boy from a man | • Having not gone through the cultural initiation |
| | | • Excusable naïve behaviours |
| | | • Transitory readiness for manhood |
| | • Defining features of a man from a boy | • Physical strength |
| | | • Suppressing emotional vulnerability |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Provider role |
| | | • Protector role |
| | • Transitioning process | • Educational process |
| | • Cultural and societal expectations | • Sexual prowess |
| | | • Asserting dominance in their intimate relationships |
| The influence of Black masculinity ideologies in relationships with women | • Sex is used to dominate women | • Women are viewed as sexual objects |
| | • Women are to be tamed | • Violence as a tool to set women straight |
| | • Control and violence in relationships | • Manifestation of control and anger |

Table 2 above presents the framework for analysis, including the main themes, categories, and sub-categories derived from the interviews. The following section will present a comprehensive overview of the findings.

### 4.3.1 Xhosa men's perceptions of women in South Africa

When participants were asked about their perceptions of women in South Africa, two key topics were identified in the discussions as 1) women as homemakers; and 2) normalised gender inequality.

#### 4.3.1.1 Women as homemakers

##### 4.3.1.1.1 Women are expected to support and nurture

In examining the participants' perceptions of women, a recurrent theme is the role of women as primary homemakers and supporters within the household. This view is deeply embedded in the cultural and societal framework of the Xhosa community, where women are traditionally expected to take on nurturing roles and manage domestic responsibilities.

> *We were raised to understand that umntu wasifazani* [a women] *ngumama wekhaya* [women of the household]*, my mother took care of us as children, she did the cooking, she did the cleaning. When it came to homework or documentation related to us that needs to be filled out nguye* [it was her ] *who did all of that. I rarely saw my dad in the capacity of someone who can do everyday things in the house. Growing up the most I saw of my dad in the kitchen he would be pouring himself water or juice. He was the one who always fetched me from school and when he came back, he went about his affairs and business. I remember growing up and thinking to myself this would be something I never do because it was clear my father never wanted a wife, he wanted a slave.* (Participant 4, male, 29, Suburb,)
> *I would say, my view is that women are caregivers, they are just naturally better at nurturing and creating a comfortable home and environment. For example there are certain things in our house that my wife just excels at that I do not think I never can or maybe I do not even possess the skill. My wife will know exactly what marks are on our babies' body, what he ate for breakfast, what he ate for lunch. She can even tell when he is about to get sick or when his temperature has changed. She knows the exact amount of slices in the bread how long oil will last like for me as a man those are things I just do not know how to do and futhi I never received training into doing because I never observed those or ways in which our father was involved in our home in fact it was a common thing to be told to leave the kitchen because we will become gossipers like women.* (Participant 11,male,39, Township,)

The narratives reveal that Xhosa men perceive women primarily as homemakers, caregivers, and nurturers—roles shaped by the socialisation of both boys and girls from an early age . This process of socialisation is not passive; it is actively reinforced as boys grow into men. Boys observe the roles their fathers assume within their homes and internalise cultural sayings, such as *"indawo yomfazi iseziko*" ("A woman's place is in the kitchen"). These observations and

teachings shape their perceptions of women and solidify romanticised expectations of the roles their significant others should fulfil. By the time they enter relationships and marriages, these men carry with them ingrained beliefs about women's place in the household, perpetuating traditional gender norms. The persistence of mid-20th century ideology in the 21st century despite socio-political and economic advances points to the power of the psychosis in its ability to consciously and unconsciously learn and replicate what it considers to be a norm (Freud and Bonaparte, 1954).

Interestingly, men in these narratives often claim a lack of capacity or propensity to perform basic household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or childcare. This feigned ignorance suggests that these responsibilities are somehow beyond their ability to learn, despite them being fundamental survival skills. By presenting these tasks as outside their scope, men avoid participating in domestic work, further reinforcing the notion that such duties are the sole responsibility of women. This avoidance is often accompanied by a stance of idolising and praising their wives for their domestic contributions, framing them as superhuman or extraordinary. However, this admiration is couched in a culture that absolves men of the responsibility to contribute equally as homemakers and carers within their homes. This process is bolstered by cultural attitudes, where time spent in the kitchen becomes synonymous with gossip, discouraging boys from engaging in household duties and reinforcing their belief that their role lies outside domestic spaces. Eagly (1987) argues that these gendered divisions of labour are not biologically determined but are instead a reflection of societal structures that assign caregiving roles to women. What emerges from these narratives is the clear indication that these divisions of labour are not natural but are deeply rooted in societal structures that perpetuate and normalise patriarchal norms. This construct justifies male authority and control within households, creating conditions where gender-based violence can flourish. This construct justifies male authority and control within households, creating conditions where gender-based violence can flourish (Hooks, 2004).

#### 4.3.1.2 Normalised gender inequality

##### 4.3.1.2.1 Women are seen as inferior

Another point that came up in the discussion around the perceptions of Xhosa men about women is the issue of gender inequality. Many of the participants say these gender inequalities manifest in viewing women as inferior and men as inherently leaders within a household.

*Yazi wena Benathi ubudoda* [you know Benathi being a man] *is directly linked to indlela* [the way] *that you can control izinto, umzekelo siyesithi indoda* [things, for example, if a man] *who cannot handle iaffairs zomzi wayo okanye enganamzi oryti ayondoda apheleleyo* [of his home/house or who doesn't have a good home/house is not a complete/full man]. *Control kengoku* [does not necessarily] *not only have to do with maybe into enje ngefinances* [with something like finances] *it also has to do with managing abantu* [people] *who are a part of your home. Umzekelo thina sifundiswe ukuba ukoluka kwethu* [ An example, we are taught that through our initiation] *we are leaders and men and that we should take charge in whatever environment or space we are in. lanto ke xa ikhule nayo awucingi uthi xa utshata ngoku [*you grow up with that thinking and when you get married you don't think now*] all of a sudden uvele uthi [*that you must] *surrender your control. As a result, when I looked for a wife, I looked for someone who would give me room and space to be a leader, one who is submissive akwazi ukumamela indoda yakhe* [who knows how to listen to her man].(Participant 19, male, 65,Suburb)

*Mna I will speak ngereality yamu[my reality] of growing up in violent home, wayethi xa umama angavumelani notata kuxoxwa kuthethwa abethe[when mom did not agree with my father's view, she hit him]. Simple as that to the point whereas I grew older I observed umama being someone who speaks less and less ade athi[she would even say] when I ask for something buza pha kutata wakho[ask your dad].This made me understand ukuba tata[that dad] is the deciding vote in our home. Futhi the family knew ukuba[that] we were living in an abusive household, but my father was given the legitimacy of dealing with his house and his affairs as he sees fit. My mother was just taught and told ukuba makabekezele[that she must endure] and she must protect the affairs of her household. Her side if the family found out even about the abuse after my father passed on., Ndabona a different[ I saw a different] side of umama mhla[when my dad died] kwasweleka utata*.(Participant 22, male, 70,Suburb)

The narratives from the participants in this study reveal a deeply ingrained perception among Xhosa men that women are inherently inferior to men. This belief is reinforced through cultural teachings and societal norms that emphasise male authority and control within the household. From an early age, the participants were taught that women cannot tell them what to do in their homes and that they must be and are leaders of their family unit. This early socialisation reinforces the idea that men hold a superior position within the family structure. Men hold the power to define and dictate the structure of their homes and use any means necessary to maintain it, even violence. The role and legitimacy is perceived inherently to have the responsibility to check and discipline anyone who falls out of line including their wives. A woman's inferiority is kept in check through violence, as such she immediately becomes submissive.

A more perverse picture is painted by these narratives of the responsibility the women have to protect the family unit. If one divulges the abuse taking place, they are seen as betraying the family. Therefore, they suffer in silence out of loyalty, becoming totally invisible. Even family members become perpetrators when the abuse is spoken about women are told they must endure and persevere. The narratives indicate that the under-reporting of GBV is intrinsically tied to the dual silencing of both victims and perpetrators, as conformity to traditional gender norms prevents open dialogue and reinforces subservient roles for women. Women remain silent because they are conditioned to prioritise familial loyalty and protect the family unit's reputation, even at the cost of their own safety. This enforced silence perpetuates cycles of violence, as perpetrators are shielded from accountability, and victims are left without recourse. As Jessica Murray (2017) observes, the elision of women's narratives and experiences is deeply rooted in gendered power structures, which systematically shame and silence women. This dynamic underscores how the cultural acceptance of silence becomes a mechanism for maintaining the status quo of gendered violence and inequality. Women only become removed and liberated from this bondage when their oppressor passes away; as long as he is alive, the woman remains invisible and inferior. These accounts align with Hooks' (2004) observation that patriarchal systems are perpetuated by cultural narratives and familial expectations, effectively rendering women's subordination 'natural.' As a result, any move toward egalitarian attitudes is impeded, thereby sustaining oppressive societal norms.

#### 4.3.1.2.2 Normalised infidelity

The last topic that also came up on the perceptions of women is normalised infidelity, as many of the participants believe that women who have multiple sexual partners are frowned upon. Whereas men who also have various partners, are normalised and accepted within the community and the family.

> *Kwilali yethu sakhula sino-k [In our village we grew up with multiple girlfriends] we knew that one man had multiple partners, so the general perceptions that we internalised was that women are easy wethu[hey] you believe kulonto umnike lento ayifunayo umfumane ngoba kulula ukumbanxa[you give them what they want, and you get them because they are easy to fool*]. (Participant 12, male, 42,Suburb)
>
> *Tshini yinyani ke le ithethwa yilendoda[my goodness this man is speaking the truth]. Thina sikhule uyazi kwalapha elalini futhi apha kufutshane nekhaya lakho utata waye nemizi emininz[We grew up with our dad having multiple homes, these homes weren't even far from our home as his familyi. Ufumanise ukuba utata*

> *utshathile kodwa unomnye umzi futhi uzele kulamzi abe engatshathanga[ You realise dad has another home, but he is only married to your mom and not married to the other lady, and he has kids with that lady]. Futhi abantwana balamzi umama wamu ebazi besiza ekhaya namu ndisiya kokwabo[ my mom knew the other woman's kids and they were welcome in our home].*
> (Participant 16, male, 60,CBD )

Gauging from the narratives, it is clear that the normalisation of gender inequality also manifests in the normalisation of infidelity, where women who have multiple partners are frowned upon and labelled as loose. In contrast, their male counterparts are seen as exercising acceptable behaviour, synonymous with their manhood. From a young age, boys observe their fathers, and uncles having small houses where children are even born out of these relationships, forcing wives to accept the children of these other women as their own. This can be seen as a system of socialisation in normalising this behaviour that it is fine for a man to have multiple partners without facing any ridicule from society and family. Unfortunately, it is not so accepting of women who behave in this manner, hence the derogative labelling as 'loose' to strip them of their dignity. Such perceptions can be argued to perpetuate gender-based violence as women's bodies are policed and held to a higher scrutiny as opposed to that of men. Thakur et al. (2024) reinforces this, highlighting how patriarchal societies systematically shame women for deviating from rigid expectations of modesty and chastity while excusing or even celebrating similar behaviours among men. In this way, the normalisation of male infidelity and the policing of women's sexuality create a cycle where women are controlled, silenced, and often subjected to violence ( Thakur et al., 2024)

The modern-day dynamic of small houses is reflected in the "blesser" and "blessee" relationships, where older, financially stable men provide material goods or financial support in exchange for companionship or sexual favours from younger women. These relationships, like the participants' experiences, demonstrate how economic power becomes a tool for control, perpetuating the commodification of women's bodies. Psychoanalytic analysis reveals how unconscious acceptance of gender hierarchies enables these exploitative arrangements, embedding them as normative. Empirical evidence links these relationships to heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), exposing women to trauma, and abuse (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021). These risks underscore the destructive impact of patriarchal ideologies that legitimise control and exploitation under the guise of economic and social power.

Lastly, the narratives reveal that the process of *ulwalukho* plays a critical role in socialising men to legitimise their promiscuity. As part of their transition into manhood, initiates are often encouraged to engage in sexual relationships, reinforcing the notion that male sexual freedom is a marker of status and identity (Morrel, 2001). This process embeds patriarchal norms deeply into the construction of masculinity, framing dominance and sexual entitlement as intrinsic qualities of Psychoanalytic Theory highlights how such cultural practice unconsciously shape men's perceptions of themselves and their relationships. In this thought process, men internalise these behaviours as natural and justified, failing to see fault or harm in their actions, (Freud and Bonaparte 1954). These narratives reveal how society not only normalises male promiscuity but also sustains broader patriarchal systems, ultimately inhibiting the development of equitable gender relations.

### 4.3.2 Masculinity ideologies taught to boys when they transition to manhood among Black men

When asked about their experiences of transitioning from boyhood to manhood as well as ideologies taught during this transitioning period, four main topics emerged from the discussions: 1) defining features of a boy from a man, 2) defining features of a man from a boy, 3) transitioning process, and 4) cultural or societal expectation.

#### 4.3.2.1 Defining features of a boy from a man

##### 4.3.2.1.1 Having not gone through the cultural initiation

One of the defining features that sets apart a boy from a man according to the participants is evidence of having gone through the cultural initiation, which is called *ulwalukho* ,which involves the removing of the foreskin and the seclusion to the mountain/bush.

> *We would always joke around at school and say, Ey my man you still have your foreskin, you're a little boy, little ngwana [child] let the big boys talk. In this context, the big boys would be the ones we know who have gone to the bush we attend their ceremony and even have visual evidence after changing from different sporting events that not their foreskin has been removed, they are no longer boys.* (Participants 1, male, 19, Suburb)

> *I just want to add also that a boy is someone who has not been circumcised and initiated properly in the Xhosa way. Anything outside of the proper way yokwaluswa lwakwa[of being circumcised the way of] Xhosa means that you are still a boy. Does not matter what age you are, yes, we as men are not all there at the bush with you but even the ceremony when you return home from ulwalukho is evidence of a change that has*

*happened. Without the evidence of this your transition is illegitimate*. (Participant 16, male,58, CBD)

In Xhosa culture, the transition from boyhood to manhood is affirmed through a deeply rooted rite of passage, which entails a ceremonial physical transformation and a secluded period of reflection in the wilderness. Consequently, anyone who deviates from this practise is not accepted. Participants revealed that those who have not been initiated in the proper Xhosa traditional manner are regarded as boys, regardless of age. According to Mhlahlo (2009, p.99) such individuals are often referred to as "half-men," reinforcing a cultural hierarchy where manhood is legitimised solely through initiation. The rigid boundaries established by Mhlahlo (2009) emphasise a singular cultural pathway to manhood, often marginalising alternative masculine identities (Connell, 2020, Crenshaw, 2013). While medical circumcision may serve practical purposes, it does not confer manhood, as it deviates from the traditional Xhosa way. Those who go through this route face being alienated and emasculated. Tshilongo (2023) notes that these men, unable to challenge their peers, redirect frustrations towards women to reinforce control and conform to societal ideals of masculinity.

#### 4.3.2.1.2 Excusable naïve behaviours

Another topic that came up in the discussion regarding the distinguishing features of boyhood from manhood are naïve behaviours exhibited by boys. Many of the participants say that boys who have not undergone often exhibit behaviours perceived as immature or lacking social sophistication. These behaviours are considered excusable within the cultural context because such behaviour is expected of boys.

> *It is a perception that the behaviours of a boy at a certain age are going to be fallible until you go through the rite of passage until you are fixed. The dominant perception is that boys are fallible until they go through a rite of passage where they are corrected. Which is not realistic because sometimes it is too late to correct behaviours. amaXhosa believe that you are born fallible, and initiation corrects your behaviour and then you are a man.* (Participant 12, male, 42, Suburb)

> *Boyhood is a character, kwisintu kukho uhlobo olulindelekileyo nolwamkelekileyo ukuba wenza ngalo [according to the culture, there are ways that are expected one to behave]this is excusable because you are expected to behave in such a manner because you are a boy. You can also find that one goes through transition and becomes a man, but you find they behaved better as a boy than a man. Meaning a boy is a character and so what is a man is also to be a character.* (Participants 13, male, 47, Suburb)

According to the narratives, it appears that certain behaviours are excusable within the developmental stage of a boy; however, when one becomes a man, these behaviours are expected to be corrected . This belief positions as not only a physical rite of passage but also as a corrective mechanism, marking a transition to manhood where mistakes are no longer acceptable. Another thing the narratives reveal is that manhood is defined by a distinct character, and so too is boyhood. However, in some instances there is no guarantee that *ulwalukho* will result in a change in character because some are beyond repair.

**4.3.2.1.3 Transitory readiness for manhood**

The final subcategory distinguishing boys from men focuses on transitory readiness for manhood. This readiness goes beyond age, or the completion of physical rites and it involves characteristics that vary from character development, social behaviour, and the capacity to uphold cultural and communal values.

> *One thing that differentiates a boy from a man is the stage he is in, remember the practise of becoming a man kwaXhosa is not only about the individual as in the boy that must be made into a man it is also dependent on how those who have walked the road of manhood before you view you. It is through their eyes that they view or see the characteristics that signal that you are ready to be made into a man, are you a responsible young boy, are you taking care of those around you do you understand that at a certain time to be home in order to maintain and take care of the safety of your home as a young boy. These are things we see as older men and we say no this boy is a man he must be made into one.* (Participant 14, male, 50, Township)

> *.. As a boy grows kutshintsha izinto apha kuye azinze[he changes internally and he becomes settled] he comes to worry about his home "ubuhtlanti buriyti na"[he becomes concerned about the kraal and livestock]as his concerns grow, and he changes to be worried not only about himself but what is going on around him. As he is seen by other older [amaxhego]men that he is changing and thinking beyond himself, they then call him a man because of the characteristics he is displaying; he is then deemed* ready *for circumcision. Amaxhego azothi ngezimbo abazibona bathi uyindoda ngoku ufuna ukoluswa[ Old men will say by your mannerisms you are now a man you can be initiated ], in other words lento yokususwa kwento yangaphambili [circumcision] was a sign uphawu oluthi [a sign ]we have seen you have grown up and changed*. (Participant 20, male, 68, Suburb)

The narratives reveal that transitioning is about development; where observations of elders are made through identifying markers such as change in character, social and familial responsibility, social awareness and selflessness. This transition reflects a move away from the excusable naïve behaviour associated with boyhood, where mistakes and immaturity are

expected and accepted, to a state of responsibility and accountability. Unfortunately, these markers do not guarantee that one would be an upstanding man in society, as one participant mentioned a lack of proper evaluative structures, unregulated behaviour that is taught in these schools of initiation and the insufficiency of the time period to correct ones' behaviour. This can be seen in the following narrative:

> *.... We then say we will circumcise you because you are now showing characteristics to be a man. According to me a boy is an elemental stage to becoming a man. Until you show that at the stage of being a boy you are ready to be a man. Until older men see you are ready to be circumcised. Xhosa people say based on your behaviour we are ready to initiate you, yet you come back worse than what you were sent. This shows that initiation is not a school that can change who you are, that is to change your character. This means that there is a need to change or come up with new ways to define what is to be a boy and build up boys in that manner and not wait for 3 weeks to correct bad behaviour and then expect he will be changed either within this 3 week or at his celebration to come out of the bush. Xhosa culture has no proper value base upon which young men are taught to be proper upstanding men. Instead, they are sent off with unregulated, corrected behaviour to be taught to be men by men who have not verified okanye bavavanywe ukuba [or they are tested] they can produce good men.*
> (Participant 21, male,70, Suburb)

What this narrative highlights is that readiness for manhood requires more than the symbolic act of initiation but rather intentional mentorship and structured guidance to instil the values and responsibilities expected of men. Without this foundation, the symbolic power of risks being undermined, as boys may transition into manhood without the maturity to fulfil its obligations. This is a unique finding because it calls for a revisitation of what *ulwaluko* embodies and represents, particularly as a rite of passage to reshape boys into men of honour, resilience, and accountability (Nkomo, 2003)

#### 4.3.2.2 Defining features of a man from a boy

Participants described physical strength, emotional stoicism, and the roles of provider and protector as defining a man, aligning with the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS). These characteristics mirror both Xhosa and wider global ideals of masculinity, emphasising economic responsibility and discouraging emotional vulnerability (Mfecane, 2016, 2020). The convergence between local and global standards underscores how cultural and societal expectations reinforce rigid frameworks of manhood.

#### 4.3.2.2.1 Physical strength

Physical strength emerges as a defining feature of what it is to be a man. According to participants this strength is not just about brute force but encompasses labour-intensive roles and symbolic cultural markers reinforcing traditional gendered responsibilities.

> *Mna Benathi sikhulele kwizindlu esizentabeni[We were raised in houses on the mountains], as inkwenkwe[ as a boy] you knew you had to be up and take the cows out of the kraal. Uhambe uyotheza, uqokelele inkuni[ fetch wood from the forest]. Yonke lonto idinga amandla[All that needs power]. Yilento kuthwa kwaXhosa qina ubeyindoda indoda mayibenamandla[ that is why it is said a Xhosa man is only a man when he has strength].* (Participant 10, male, 38, Township)

> *Mna ndikhulele emthatha kwindowo engeyodolophu, emthatha ke[I grew up in Umthatha in the rural areas] we farm, you work gruelling hours, and you are up early working your family's livestock. You know from a young age your responsibility is the outside of your home. You put your strength and care into making sure it is well kept. You cannot be a man or young boy in your home okwaqiba imfuyo yakoweni izula zule[and livestock wonders around]. Our father made it very clear futhi [again] my sisters will work inside the house akhonto abayifunayo phandle ekuncediseni mna ukusenga inkomo,nokutheza nokutyisa ihagu.[sister have no business in working outside, milking cows,collecting firewood and feeding the pigs]* (Participant 14, male 50, Township)

> *Ubudoda bufuna umntu onamandla okwaziyo ukunyamezela, soze ubeyindoda kanti uzophinda ubelibhetyebhetye lendoda[manliness needs someone with strength to endure you cannot be a weak man]. Xa kufuneka kuphakanyiswe izinto yiza namandla[ when heavy things need to be lifted]. Futhi amandla [having strength] start from when you are a boy, uzokweluswa njani ungenawo amandla ungakwazi ukunyamezela into ezibuhlungu [ how will you be circumcised without strength to endure painful things].* (Participant 17, male 60, Suburb)

The narratives emphasise that in Xhosa culture, physical strength is not only a defining feature of masculinity but also the key marker that differentiates a man from a boy. Strength transcends functional necessity, becoming a deeply ingrained cultural ideal that embodies maturity, authority, and resilience. Participants' accounts consistently highlighted the expectation that a man must embody absolute strength, with the statement, *"A Xhosa man is only a man when he has strength,"* reflecting a deeply held cultural belief. This underscores how masculinity is inherently tied to power, endurance, and the ability to perform physically demanding work. Strength, as expressed in these narratives, represents not only the physical capacity for labour but also a symbolic ideal that defines the essence of manhood in Xhosa culture. This concurs

with Connells (2005) framework of Multicultural Masculinity that some cultures do emphasis and legitimise strength as a marker of masculinity.

From the behaviours and practice described by participants, it can be asserted that boys are socialised into ideals of strength from an early age through labour-intensive, gender-specific responsibilities such as herding livestock, collecting firewood, and maintaining family assets. This strict division of labour enforces traditional gender roles by assigning boys to demanding outdoor tasks while confining girls to domestic duties. Strength seems to be a dominant marker of masculinity within the African context. For instance, a study on Xhosa households in Langa demonstrated herding livestock, collecting firewood, and maintaining family assets serves as rites of passage for boys, reinforcing masculine identity as well as delineating the transition from boyhood to manhood (Booi, 2021). Similarly, McLean and Inhorn (2018) note that masculinity in Sierra Leone is intricately tied to cultural and structural expectations, where physical strength and breadwinning roles define masculine identity, echoing the emphasis on strength as a key marker of manhood across different African contexts.

#### 4.3.2.2.2 Suppressing emotional vulnerability

Another defining feature that sets a man apart from a boy is the ability to suppress emotional vulnerability. Many of the participants believe that suppression of emotions, particularly avoiding crying, is the standard of masculine identity. Moreover, it emerges as a learned behaviour that is culturally taught and upheld as a standard of what manhood is.

> *Tjooo ndikhumbula* [*I remember] I got tackled heavy kwiruggah* [rugby] *immediately on impact. The immediate reaction was a few tears escaping. Kodwa* [but] *another mate of mine patted me on the back and said "indoda ayikhali Dlamini" [a man doesn't cry Dlamini] to this day I seldom allow myself to cry. Even when I was circumcised not a single tear escaped my eyes in those environments you cannot show weakness.* (Participant 2, male,19, Suburb)

> *Zange ndambona utata elila [I have never seen my father cry] as a result as indoda* [a man] *there is not a single day where I allowed myself to cry it's only upon being married to my wife did I discover that emotions are a healthy thing to have and express. I cried when my daughter was born, and it felt like such an alien feeling like why ziphuma kumu inyembezi*[why are tears coming out my eyes] *ngoba*[because] *it was never normalised kuthi into yendoda okanye yenkwenkwe* elilayo [to us a man/ boy crying]. *Ude uve umntu ebetha usana lwakhe esithi uyiboy njani elilayo* [ someone will even discipline a young boy and ask them why they are crying]. (Participant 22, male, 70, Suburb)

Participants' responses highlight a cultural expectation within Xhosa masculinity to suppress emotional vulnerability, with the act of crying as synonymous to weakness. The phrase *indoda ayikhali* encapsulates the societal belief that manhood is equated with emotional control. This expectation creates a rigid hierarchy that valorises men who conform to ideals of stoicism and resilience while stigmatising those who express vulnerability. This is seen even from earlier stages where boys are socialised into understanding that emotions are not something to be expressed. To some extent even in their adulthood it still feels strange when they catch themselves expressing such emotions because it is something foreign to them.

The suppression of emotional expression aligns with hegemonic masculinity, which prioritises traits such as stoicism and resilience as central to manhood (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In the framework of Multicultural Masculinity, this cultural norm reflects a localised articulation of a broader global expectation for men to suppress emotions (Connell, 2020). For instance, Gross and Levenson (1997) highlight how repressed emotions can manifest as anger and aggression when socially acceptable outlets for emotional expression are unavailable.

Within the South African context, research by Morrell et al. (2012) and Jewkes et al. (2015) demonstrates a link between traditional masculine norms, emotional suppression, and gender-based violence (GBV). Men who internalise these norms often feel entitled to control their partners, using violence as a means to assert authority when they perceive their dominance to be challenged. From a psychoanalytic perspective, repressed emotions can result in psychological conflict that becomes projected outward (Freud and Bonaparte 1954) . Freud and Bonaparte (1954) argue that men who internalise societal expectations of strength and stoicism may unconsciously displace their emotional pain onto others, particularly women, who are culturally perceived as more emotionally vulnerable. This dynamic helps explain cycles of abuse and violence in intimate relationships, illustrating how culturally sanctioned emotional suppression reinforces harmful patterns of behaviour.

#### 4.3.2.2.3 Provider role

When asked about what it means to be a man, the role of a provider emerges as defining characteristic of what it is to be a man within Xhosa culture. Participants highlighted that while boys may rely on others for their needs, a man is recognised by his ability to provide materially for his family and fulfil financial responsibilities. This distinction underscores the cultural

expectation that manhood is tied to economic capability and responsibility. Unlike boys, who are not expected to shoulder such burdens, men are culturally obligated to assume the role of providers, reinforcing their status as mature, responsible figures within the family and community.

> *As mates we always joke that a man is someone who can turn a dollar into a million, a man is nothing without money. These huns[women] out here man they want the roses, the dates, the designer. It's tough for a young man. I do not even think I can find a nice girl at the age I am at I have to wait for them to get tired of the streets and want stability which will probably be something I can afford not the lavish life* (Participant 1, male, 19, Suburb)

> *Eyy, mani it is clear in this day and age that as a man you are nothing without money and being able to provide a soft life for your significant other. Siphila* [we live] *in an age of indoda[a man] must, so you really come to feel as a man you amount to nothing Without money. A woman will even reject you if she feels the amount of money you earn cannot change her lifestyle and you ask yourself where her money is.* (Participant 8, male, 32, Suburb)

> *A man is a man through his ability to provide, that is why wena[ you]Benathi kwaXhosa kuzothiwa indoda ziinkomo zayo, ithi lonto* [a man’s worth is in his wealth/livestock] *a man’s wealth is not only a social determinant but it also a determinant of whether or not he can support and build a family of his own. In fact, ukulobola kwendonda* [a man paying a dowry] *is based on this premise. A man taking a wife and going to the girl's family to pay for lobola is evidence to the girl's family that he can take care of their daughter and give her a good life. That is why thina [ we – meaning men] when we were raised and xa siyalwa emveni kokoluswa we are told that uyindoda ngoku [you are a man now] you must work hard uzimele, ubenekhaya [stand on your own and have your own home/house]. As you transition from boy to man it's drilled into your head that you are supposed to be a responsible person and reason/think responsibly and ultimately get yourself to a certain wealth range. Umzekelo ndathi ndisitsho ekhaya ndifuna ukutshata The first thing was not where is the girl let us meet her, it was have you prepared the money.* (Participant 19, male, 65, Suburb)

It is clear from these narratives that in Xhosa culture, being a provider is not merely a role, but a social obligation deeply tied to a man’s identity and worth. A man’s ability to provide for his family is seen as the ultimate expression of his maturity, responsibility, and capability. Whether or not a man can fulfil this role and prove his worth is rooted in his economic ability—his capability, as defined in this context, is measured by his access to money. The value of a Xhosa man is intrinsically linked to his ability to provide, to the extent that in contemporary society, the phrase “*indoda must”* has emerged. This is exactly what we see in the above narratives. This expression is often followed by expectations such as taking his woman on dates, paying for maintenance, or even giving her an allowance. These modern dynamics reflect and reinforce

the long-standing cultural association between manhood and economic responsibility. When a man cannot provide, he often experiences a loss of value within the household, as his inability to meet these expectations challenges his identity and perceived worth as a man. Jewkes et al., (2015) link economic pressure and the perceived inability to fulfil traditional masculine roles with increased gender-based violence. The following narrative captures the feelings of emasculation within a relationship where a man cannot provide:

> *...When my wife became the breadwinner in our home and for a time I was not working we depended more on her salary her mannerism changed suddenly the way she spoke to me was demeaning and in my own household I felt my legitimacy as a man dimmish, some decisions she would even make without consulting me. There were many occasions where I had to walk away from her cause I promised myself I would never raise a hand to a woman* (Participant 11, male , 39, Township*)*

It is clear from the narratives that financial provision is often central to the recognition of manhood and fatherhood, with practices such as *intlawulo* (payment of damages) serving as a gateway to legitimising a man's role within the family and community (Samukimba, 2020). However, this marker of being a provider does not always hold true, as there are many fatherless children within Xhosa communities, despite their fathers being financially capable of providing for them (Samukimba, 2020). However, the disconnect between financial provision and genuine responsibility exposes the limitations of equating manhood solely with monetary capacity. While money is culturally framed as the starting point of what it means to be a man, its absence of emotional and social accountability disqualifies the responsibility which is synonymous to being a provider.

#### 4.3.2.2.4 Protector role

The last sub-category under the defining features of a man from a boy is the ability to protect. According to participants, this role is intrinsically linked to the expectations of physical strength.

> *At home I am the oldest yabo [you see] and kengoku [now] that comes with a lot of responsibility first as a first born second the fact that ndiyintsika yekhaya lamu [I am the pillar of my family]. Whenever my dad would go away from as early as I can remember even before ndoluswe [initiated] he would always say to me my boy I am leaving you ke as indoda [man] in my place. Keep your sisters and your mom safe, no one can come into this house and do whatever he wants because you are here.* (Participant 2, male, 19, Suburb)

> *Indoda* [a man] *cannot be weak and must have solutions to the problems of the home. I would add on to those earlier statements and say a man is someone who protects what is his, not only that, but he is solution based and must be able to spot issues or challenges that come up before they come. As a man you plan for the unexpected.* (Participant 6, male, 29, Suburb)

> *Mna ndathatha nto enye kutata ngoba zonke ezinye inzinto ndabona ukuba [I took one thing from my dad as I saw all other things] they will not work for me. Wathi kumu umfazi ungaze ulale naye kukho into emhluphayo[he said to me never go to bed when your wife is troubled by something]. It is your responsibility to protect the peace in your home. As a result, in my old age is a principle I never forgot. This practice even spilled over to my kids if something is wrong my kids know to come to me and daddy will fix it. Lo uyintombi* [my daughter] *was buying a car. I was her first call as she knows her father will protect her and help her make the best decision.* (Participant 21, male,70, Suburb)

Participants' responses indicate that a man, in his capacity as a protector, is responsible for safeguarding those around him—physically, emotionally, and psychologically. This role is described as learned behaviour, shaped by a psychological process in which boys consciously mimic protective actions that they are taught. Over time, this conscious imitation transitions into an internalised understanding, evolving from the belief that a dad is someone who protects to a man is someone who protects as they grow into adulthood. Psychoanalytic Theory (Frosh, 1999) highlights how societal expectations are internalised into the subconscious, forming the foundation of masculine identity. In the current study it shows that the observed and internalised teachings form a foundation under which the role of protector then becomes synonymous to masculine identity.

A man is described as someone who safeguards his loved ones by fostering peace and stability, particularly within the sanctity of marriage. While marriage is explicitly referenced in the narratives, it is reasonable to infer that this responsibility applies broadly to a man's relationships. Whether with a partner, family, or community, a man's role as a protector demands capability, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. This aligns with Masculine Capital (O. de Visser et al., 2022) which posits that culturally valued traits—such as being a protector and problem-solver—enhance a man's social legitimacy and status.

#### 4.3.2.3 Transitioning process

The transition from boyhood to manhood in Xhosa culture is marked by a series of culturally embedded teachings, rites of passage, and social expectations that instil specific masculinity

ideologies in boys. These ideologies form the foundation of what it means to be a man within the cultural framework, encompassing roles, responsibilities, and behaviours that align with broader societal norms. According to the participants, this process is passed on through educational practices.

#### 4.3.2.3.1 Educational process

A key theme emerging from the narratives is the role of education in defining what it means to be a man. Participants consistently emphasised that manhood is not an inherent state but a learned process, requiring guidance and mentorship. This educational journey involves deliberate teaching, correction, and discipline to shape boys into upstanding men who can fulfil their societal roles and responsibilities.

> *The general consensus is that a boy cannot just become a man, he needs to be taught to be a man. The rite of passage in the past used to be a longer period wherein the wisest men among those who exist were taken to stay and spend time with these boys and teach them to become upstanding men in society.* (Participant 10, male, 38, Township)

> *This means that a boy ngumfana osakhulayo, osafundayo,osaqeqeshwayo osanqadwayo oya exesheni apha azakuzinza abonakale ngezimbo ukuba uyindoda [a boy is someone who is still growing, learning, and being guided until he is ready to become a man].* (Participant 20, male,68,Suburb)

The narratives highlight that a defining feature of manhood within Xhosa culture is a man's openness and malleability to education. Participants described how manhood is not an innate state but one achieved through a deliberate process of learning and internalisation. Xhosa culture is deeply rooted in educational practices that reinforce masculinity ideologies, imparted through formal rites of passage and formal mentorship. This process shapes boys' understanding of what it means to be a man and serves as the foundation for intergenerational transmission of cultural values and masculine ideals. Participants revealed that older men play a central role in guiding boys through this process, teaching values, skills, and responsibilities that align with cultural ideals of masculinity (Nkosi, 2010; Moseley, 1997).

#### 4.3.2.4 Cultural and societal expectations

The last topic that was dominant in the discussions about experiences and ideologies that are taught to men when transitioning relates to cultural and societal expectations. Many participants

describe sexual prowess and dominance in intimate relationships as key markers of masculinity.

#### 4.3.2.4.1 Sexual prowess

According to the participants, manhood is deeply intertwined with cultural expectations and societal norms celebrating sexual prowess in men as a marker of masculinity.

> *Ndiyabona amadoda ayayibaleka lendawo yolwalukho nokuyalwa [I see men avoiding the space of initiation and the associated teachings], kodwa abanye bethu saxelelwa ukuba emva kwelithuba kuzonyazeleke silale nomntu esingamthandi ukwenza ukuzicleaner [ some of us were advised that once the initiation period was over, we needed to sleep with someone we didn't love as a way to cleanse ourselves.]. Lonto yadenza ndacinga ukuba[this made me think] women are good to use for sex until you find one that you love and then you settle down with her [ this was further driven by omalume [uncles] who would say things like "uyindoda ngoku kufuneka utye" [you are a man now, you must eat], "indoda enomntu oyi-one usemncinci zange ndayiva" [a man with only one partner is too young; I've never heard of it]. This felt like an easy pass to do whatever I wanted with women sexually.* (Participant 6, male, 29, Suburb)

> *Kwilali yethu sakhula sino-k we knew that one man had multiple partners, [In our village, we grew up knowing that one man had multiple partners], so the general perceptions that we internalised was that women are easy wethu [so the general perception we internalised was that women are easy, my brother], you believe kulonto umnike lonto ayifunayo umfumane [you believe that if you give her what she wants, you'll get her]. Ngoba ulula umbanxe uthi nguye yedwa [Because she's easy, you just tell her she's the only one]. Ndizoyiva edolophini into yecheating ndaxakwa [ urban cheating baffled me.], kuba kaloku mna ndazi ukuba uyamfuna umntu awuyekiswa ngomnye onaye [ I believed that if you really wanted someone, you wouldn't be held back by their current relationship.]* (Participant 15, male, 55, CBD)

The participants' narratives underscore how cultural and societal expectations in Xhosa masculinity place sexual prowess at the core of transitioning from boyhood to manhood. This process is shaped by teachings and norms passed down through male elders, emphasising sexual conquest with multiple partners as a marker of maturity and manhood. These teachings perpetuate the belief that masculinity is tied to dominance over women and the assertion of sexual authority, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies that position men as dominant agents and women as subordinate objects. Traits such as control, virility, and dominance are institutionalised through initiation rites and intergenerational mentorship. Hegemonic Masculinity Theory provides insight into how these ideals are socially exalted, sustaining gendered power imbalances and framing manhood around dominance and sexual entitlement

(Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). For instance, the use of the cleansing where initiates sleep with women whom they are not attracted to or not in love with is a weapon in itself, that is used to dominate women and discard them when men reach their sexual gratification. Such ideologies are especially harmful given the high rate of HIV infections in the country. A study in the *Journal of the International AIDS Society* highlights that men with multiple sexual partners are at significantly higher risk of contracting HIV, with younger men aged 18-19 particularly vulnerable (Sullivan et al., 2020). This underscores how cultural norms that glorify promiscuity not only perpetuate risky behaviours but also play a critical role in exacerbating the HIV epidemic in South Africa (Sullivan et al., 2020).

#### 4.3.2.4.2 Assert dominance in their intimate relationships

Another issue which participants revealed during the discussions is the control and dominance in intimate relationships. According to the participants, authority in decision-making, sexual entitlement, and the assertion of power over partners are perceived as key markers of masculinity. These expectations are deeply rooted in cultural practices and intergenerational teachings, shaping men's behaviour and reinforcing traditional power hierarchies within relationships.

> *Siyafundiswa ukuba soze uxelelwe ngumfazi[we are taught you will not be told by a woman ] what and how things must be done in your home. You are taught as a man that you are the leader. Even growing up my siblings would be reprimanded and told they cannot just speak to me any how I am to be a man ubhuti wabo mabalungise ukuhla[their brother(elder) is here they must conduct themselves with understanding thi]* (Participant 20, male,20, Suburb)

> *Indoda mayibenemali futhi ibestrongo, ndiyithethiswa lento ngoba kwamu kukho inxaki yokuba ufunamnisa mna nomfazi asamkeli mali ifanayo [A man must be strong and have money I say this because in my home there is an issue of my wife and I not earning the same amount of money]. Ngexesha endandisamekela imali encinici kwakunzima nokuba ndibenelizwe lokuthetha waqala ngondihlonipha kodwa ekuhambeni kwexehsa ufumanisa ukuba umntu uyazibuza ukuba into ethile izawungenzekhi njani ngoba kaloku imali sinayo njena [When I earned little, my wife gradually lost respect for me, my voice faded at home, and she made decisions alone as the breadwinner.]. Kwanzima noba uhayi avakhale ngoba kaloku yenziwa nguye [She ignored refusal and reason]. Kodwa nalapho [even then] I had to remind her and put her in her place that I am the man here. If I say no it is a no and it's not negotiable irrespective of how much she is earning. Phofu unqanda umntu aphume ngaphaya [You refuse someone, and they drift away, provoking you with their attitude.] and you think pick up your keys and walk away ngoba [because] you do not want to find yourself raising your hands ngoba umntu akeva ngedlebe [Because they refuse to listen]* (Participant 10, male, 38, Township)

Gauging from the tone of the narratives, it is clear that the process of socialisation is instrumental in instilling the masculine ideology of authority over women/female counterparts from an early age. From the teachings they get to understand that fear must be exerted in order to gain control and dominance over women/female counterparts. To such an extent that when a man fails to provide which is a marker of their masculinity that automatically threatens their position within the family unit. For instance, when a woman earns more money than their partner, their voices become dominant in the decision-making process therefore making their men/male counterparts feel emasculated. It also appears that using violence in such instances is justified as a measure to put women or remind them of their place. However, there are instances where men are morally conflicted to resort to violence by choosing alternative measures to de-escalate the tension. The behaviour noted aligns with how Sipungu (2023) and Dlamini (2020) articulate the internal conflict that happens when men feel threatened as dominant figures in a relationship, when their roles are challenged by women. For instance, how internal struggles with cultural expectations influence men's behaviours, often lead to moments of self-regulation that counteract dominant masculine ideals (Sipungu, 2023; Dlamini, 2020). Structural pressures such as unemployment or societal marginalisation, exacerbate tensions pushing men to navigate between control and restraint (Qambela, 2022). This shows that even with such toxic ideologies of masculinity that men have a sense of agency to control and practise restraint over their emotions.

### 4.3.3 The influence of Black masculinity ideologies in relationships with women

According to Perales et al., (2023), Black masculinity, patriarchal norms and intergenerational teachings shape men's perceptions of women, emphasising male authority, autonomy, and entitlement. Such ideologies normalise dominance, influencing how men behave in intimate relationships and thereby affecting equity and relationship quality (Farias et al., 2023). Three topics that emerged from the discussions are 1) using sex to dominate women; 2) viewing women as entities that must be tamed; and 3) control and violence in relationships.

#### 4.3.3.1 Sex is used to dominate women

##### 4.3.3.1.1 Women are viewed as sexual objects

In the narratives, the weaponizing of sex emerges as a mechanism for asserting dominance within intimate relationships, transforming what could be a reciprocal connection into a vehicle for power and control. In this dynamic, male authority is reinforced while women's agency is diminished. Consequently, intimacy shifts from a mutually satisfying exchange to a transactional interaction, perpetuating unequal power relations between partners.

> *I remember the time my wife was being brought to our home traditionally, usually there is the ceremony that happens before a woman is given her new name. Generally, it is in front of family and friends that you as the couple are spoken to about the dos and don'ts of marriage. I came to realise in this process which we call ukuyalwa[ to be taught] that it is not only men who assert ideas of masculinity which are brought down from generation to generation but women also, I remember my aunt saying to my wife she is now a married women that means that she belongs to me, her mind, her body everything. She must feed me as her man, and she cannot cease to do her wifely duties just because she is mad or is tired. Her body, after all, belongs to me.* (Participant 10, 38, male, Township)

> *Ndiyabona amadoda ayayibaleka lendawo yolwalukho nokuyalwa kodwa abanye bethu saxelelwa ukuba emva kwelithuba kuzonyanzeleka silale nomntu esingamthandi ukwenzela ukuzicleaner[I see the men are running away from this part of being told we need to sleep with other women are circumcision to cleanse ourselves]...This felt like an easy pass to do whatever I wanted with women sexually.* (Participant 13, male, 47, Suburb)

The narratives reveal that patriarchal norms within Xhosa masculinity is deeply entrenched, perpetuated through cultural rites, socialisation practices, and community reinforcement. Participants highlighted how both men and women play active roles in upholding these ideals, with male elders often transmitting values of dominance and authority, while women sometimes reinforce these norms by policing the behaviour of younger women. This dual participation sustains a cultural framework where male dominance and female submission are normalised, shaping men's identities around notions of control, sexual entitlement, and authority within relationships. For instance, within the intimate relationship of a husband and wife the women's body is viewed as a property that belongs to their husband. To such an extent that women's agency becomes null and void in negotiation of sexual interaction in the marriage because men feel entitled to women's bodies because they are paid for through *lobola* (dowry).

This objectification of women's bodies as objects of sexual gratification for men begins during their transition process into manhood, where young initiates are encouraged to cleanse themselves using sex. The intergenerational teachings serve as a critical mechanism for maintaining these patriarchal masculinities, with elders imparting lessons that prioritise aggressive heterosexuality and the control of women's bodies (Ratele, 2016; Morrel, 2001). Psychoanalytic Theory provides insight into how these ideologies become unconsciously internalised, shaping men's attitudes and actions without requiring any reinforcement (Frosh, 1999). For instance, the narratives show how early socialisation shapes and informs behaviour later into their relationships with their partners. This shows that sex becomes a tool to dominate women. If we look at the rape culture in the country, where 1 in 5 women is raped and every 12 minutes a woman is raped averaging approximately 116 rapes per day (Action Society, 2024) — it reveals how deep-rooted this ideology of viewing women as objects of sexual gratification to men. Although not representative of all Black South African men, these findings reveal a pronounced link between patriarchal masculine ideologies and heightened gender-based violence.

#### 4.3.3.2 Women are to be tamed

##### 4.3.3.2.1 Violence as a tool to set women straight

The participants' accounts reveal that violence is often legitimised within Black masculinity ideologies as a means to set women straight or maintain control in intimate relationships. This belief frames physical aggression as a corrective tool, normalising domination and reinforcing unequal gender dynamics. Such ideologies shape relationships by positioning violence as both a marker of masculine authority and a mechanism for enforcing traditional gender roles.

> *If you want to determine whether or not I am a violent person or make part of the problem of violence among Xhosa men, you have got to understand that I grew up in a space where I asked my dad why are you hitting mom, he said you have to hit a woman for her to be right.* (Participant 10, male, 38, Township)

> Unfortunately, this thing of women being beaten *is a tale that is old as time, umalume [my uncle] who raised me used to get drunk and beat his wife for absolutely anything. He would beat her if he came home and she did not want to pleasure him, he would beat her if he came home, and she never got up to prepare his food for him or serve him when he got back from the tavern. As such seeing this violence made me into a violent man, I remember I lost a very important relationship in my life because despite*

> *my being raised in a victim and perpetrator context and how that traumatised me, I also became an aggressor.* (Participant 12, male, 42, Suburb)

The narratives reveal how early exposure to violence within familial settings shapes the ways Black Xhosa men perceive and enact masculinity in their relationships. These accounts illustrate that violence is not merely an isolated behaviour but often emerges as a learned practice rooted in cultural and domestic environments. Witnessing fathers and male figures use violence to assert authority instils in young boys the belief that control and dominance over women are central to their roles as men. This normalisation of violence, coupled with the absence of critical interventions to challenge these behaviours, perpetuates cycles of aggression within intimate relationships. Psychoanalytic Theory offers a lens through which this dynamic can be understood, particularly through the concept of identification with the aggressor (Frosh, 1999). Children, confronted with dominant authority figures, internalise their behaviours and values as part of their ego-ideals, absorbing these lessons unconsciously as a framework for navigating relationships (Frosh, 1999).

Participants describe how violence becomes a template for relational dynamics, where aggression is framed as a corrective measure to enforce compliance and maintain male authority (Frosh, 1999). These behaviours align with empirical findings, such as those from the Optimus Study on Child Abuse, Violence, and Neglect in South Africa**,** which found that many children exposed to violence develop behavioural issues, including aggression, as they grow older (Mesthrie, 2024). Similarly, a study on South African preschoolers revealed that 83% had been exposed to violence, with strong links to internalising and externalising behavioural problems (Tsunga et al., 2024). Within the narratives, men acknowledge how witnessing violence in childhood left lasting psychological scars while simultaneously influencing their own use of violence in adulthood. This repetition compulsion, a psychoanalytic concept, reflects how early relational traumas resurface as destructive patterns in later life, reinforcing cycles of dominance and submission within intimate relationships.

These accounts underscore the profound impact of intergenerational violence on shaping Black Xhosa masculinity. Witnessing aggression directed at women, often for minor or arbitrary reasons, normalises the association between masculinity and control through physical force. This dynamic perpetuates patterns where men default to violence when their authority is perceived to be challenged, further entrenching harmful relational dynamics. By framing

violence as both a learned behaviour and a cultural expectation, the narratives reveal how deeply ingrained these ideologies are, influencing not only individual actions but also the broader societal structures that validate male dominance. In this context, violence becomes a culturally legitimised tool for navigating relational power imbalances, illustrating the enduring impact of patriarchal norms on Black Xhosa men's identities and relationships.

#### 4.3.3.3 Justification of Violence in Relationships

##### 4.3.3.3.1 Women are provokers

The last topic that came up in the discussion is around justification of violence in relationships as stemming from being provoked. Many participants confirmed that many instances where they had to resort to violence was because their women pushed them to do it.

> *One thing about women is that they are provokers, you find that sometimes in a lot of situations, a man is pushed to respond in a certain manner. Do not get me wrong I do not condone violence, but women will provoke you to.Umfumanise [*you realise] *that lomntu* [this person] *that you are married to has one eye inside the affairs in the house and another in societal expectations of what a man should and should not do for you. Your wife/ women/ girl knows your pocket kodwa,* [but] *they have expectations that nawe [you too] you must buy them this and that.When you do not bayaku-actela* [they are acting] *and yet they themselves do not have the financial capacity to get these things. You just see yourself in every encounter getting pushed and pushed until you burst and have to walk away before you make a mistake.* (Participant 14, male, 50, Township)

> *Mna [for me] it's a bit of a touchy one lento apha kumu ngoba [ this thing to me because] I did not just become a violent person. Mna I was in a situation where I found that my first wife cheated on me. I saw myself raising my hand to her. I couldn't understand how as her man I provided every single thin, hustled for those I could nto afford. Even there she pushed m]. Ngoku [now] after all of that uphinda wenza into enje [ she does something like this]. I saw myself endiqhubela ebubini* [ she pushed me to the brink ] (Participant 16,male,58,CBD)

It is clear from the narratives that there is a lack of accountability when healthy conflict resolution skills are lacking, one feels justified resorting to violence. For instance, it appears that financial issues or infidelity are triggers or provocation of the violence in intimate relationships. Moreover, societal expectations that are placed on men become like a burden for them to financially perform above average in intimate relationships. This automatically puts pressure on men where they are in a constant feeling of inadequacy and when their partner seems to undermine their efforts, and this manifests itself in violence. A study by Jewkes et al., (2015) confirms that patriarchal norms, when coupled with systemic gender inequalities,

amplify the likelihood of violence as a means of resolving conflicts, particularly when male authority is perceived to be under threat. Psychoanalytic Theory offers a lens to understand this dynamic, where early relational experiences instil an association between being questioned and a challenge to authority (Frosh, 1999). Ultimately, these findings show that anger and violence within Xhosa masculinity are not mere lapses in self-control but rather manifestations of a pervasive cultural logic. Despite the introduction of alternative perspectives, it is unsurprising that control and anger persist across generations because dominance and authority are culturally upheld as vital benchmarks of manhood.

For instance, Mfecane (2016) argues that *ubudoda* legitimises the sense of authority and control men feel they should have in their intimate relationships. Sipungu (2023) expands on this point by showing how *ulwaluko* initiation practices sustain rigid masculine norms by positioning men as providers and protectors whose authority is not to be questioned. Women's autonomy, consequently, is often viewed as a direct threat to masculine identity, disrupting the deeply ingrained belief that equates masculinity with dominance. This perspective coincides with Ratele's (2016) analysis, which demonstrates how patriarchal norms and traditional masculinity jointly resist challenges to male authority. Therefore, the justification of women as provokers of violence becomes a systemic means to curtail women's autonomy and reaffirms the violence in intimate relationships.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the main conclusions drawn from the findings, linking them to the study's objectives. It also offers recommendations for policymakers, government, and social institutions, followed by a final summary.

## 5.2 CONCLUSIONS

### 5.2.1 To understand Black men's perceptions of women in South Africa.

Participants' narratives reveal that Black Xhosa men in South Africa are socialised from childhood to perceive women as inherently subservient, primarily as homemakers, caregivers, and nurturers. Early observations of paternal roles and cultural maxims, such as "*indawo yomfazi iseiziko"*, instil expectations that women must maintain domestic order. This socialisation reinforces gender inequality, with women deemed inferior and responsible for preserving family honour by remaining silent about abuse. Male promiscuity is normalised, while women are harshly stigmatised for any deviation from modesty. Moreover, modern dynamics, including 'blesser–blessee' relationships, further exploit women's vulnerability. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that these ingrained ideologies operate unconsciously, shaping intimate relationships through a framework of domination and control. As a result, violence and the suppression of female agency become natural extensions of these early-learned norms, perpetuating structural inequality and sustaining a patriarchal order that marginalises women throughout their lives. This pervasive conditioning powerfully dictates everyday domestic interactions and underpins the systemic perpetuation of gender inequality in both private and public spheres.

### 5.2.2 To ascertain the masculinity ideologies taught to boys when they transition to manhood among Black men.

Participants' narratives demonstrate that the rite of *ulwalukho* is pivotal in sculpting Black Xhosa boys' transition to manhood, instilling rigid masculinity ideologies. This ritual reorients boys from affectionate sons into men who view themselves as authoritative figures, conditioned to embody strength, stoicism, and self-reliance. The socialisation process emphasises that

endurance and the suppression of emotional vulnerability are indispensable traits, with elder mentors reinforcing lessons in leadership and provision while stigmatising any display of vulnerability. Such early inculcation embeds a framework of dominance and control within the community, where masculine authority becomes synonymous with power over others. Consequently, these ingrained values not only delineate acceptable male conduct but also predispose men to justify the use of violence as a means of asserting control. This propensity for violence, rooted in early socialisation, underpins broader patterns of gender-based violence in intimate relationships and within the community at large.

### 5.2.3 To find out how these ideologies shape and influence Black men's relationships with women currently.

The findings reveal that Black Xhosa men internalise masculine ideologies during their transition to manhood, moulding their intimate relations. Sexual encounters become instruments of domination, reducing women to objects to be tamed. Violence is routinely employed to "set women straight" and enforce male authority, ensuring female subservience. Men's perception of women as subordinates facilitates gender-based violence by legitimising the use of violence to maintain control and preserve patriarchal dominance. Cultural practices, such as *ukuyalwa komfazi emzini*, further entrench these norms by instructing newly married women to accept abuse, thereby reinforcing male control. Psychoanalytic theory reveals that these ideologies operate at an unconscious level, and couched in cultural tradition, they sanction violent behaviour as a natural extension of patriarchal power. Jewkes et al. (2015) show that such constructions correlate with heightened GBV risks, while the unconscious internalisation of these norms cements structural inequality and embeds violence as a normative mechanism in the regulation of gender relations.

## 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.3.1 Recommendation for Traditional Leaders

Findings reveal that Black Xhosa men internalise harmful masculinity ideologies during their transition to manhood, which they continue to perpetuate through rites of passage and cultural practices. These ideologies foster dominance, control, and restrict female autonomy, embedding structural inequalities into relationships and society. The study also highlights that women, through the policing of other women’s behaviour, play a role in upholding and

reinforcing these patriarchal norms. This underscores the deeply ingrained nature of gendered socialisation, shaping the mindsets of both boys and girls in ways that sustain harmful practices.

Traditional leaders are urged to critically address this socialisation by initiating reforms that challenge entrenched gender norms. This could include reviewing and modifying practices that perpetuate patriarchal values, such as *ukuyalwa komfazi emzini*, to encourage mutual respect and equality in relationships. Additionally, alternative cleansing rituals for young men after their time in the mountain could be promoted, ones that do not hinge on the objectification of women's bodies. By fostering inclusive community dialogues and implementing these changes, traditional leaders can play a transformative role in fostering equality and breaking cycles of patriarchal dominance.

### 5.3.2 Proposed Collaboration Between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education

Findings reveal that Black Xhosa men often internalise harmful masculinities during their transition to manhood, tying their identity and self-worth to dominance and control in relationships. These ideologies, reinforced from an early age, perpetuate harmful behaviours and justify violence against women by framing them as "provokers." Addressing these deep-seated norms requires a collaborative effort between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education to implement comprehensive, multi-sectoral interventions.

Schools play a critical role in this process by embedding gender sensitivity and equality education into their curricula. Teachers should be trained to challenge stereotypes, promote mutual respect, and facilitate discussions on healthy, equitable relationships. At the same time, the Department of Social Development can implement community-based programmes that encourage men to reflect on patriarchal norms, question internalised beliefs, and adopt non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Counselling services and peer-led mentorship programmes could provide boys and young men with opportunities to explore healthier, more respectful expressions of masculinity.

Parental engagement is also vital. Programmes could equip parents to reinforce lessons on gender equality at home and model equitable behaviours. Additionally, collaboration with cultural and traditional leaders can help reinterpret harmful practices, preserving cultural

significance while promoting respect and equality. By fostering cooperation between schools, families, and communities, this joint initiative has the potential to dismantle entrenched gender norms, reduce violence, and cultivate a culture of mutual respect and equity.

### 5.3.3 Recommendation for Organisations Combating Gender-Based Violence

The research reveals that culturally ingrained perceptions of women as submissive or promiscuous normalise having multiple sexual partners and using violence for control. Organisations combating gender-based violence (GBV) must address these deep-seated beliefs and promote alternative, non-aggressive masculinities. Effective strategies include conducting community workshops and dialogue sessions to encourage men to critically assess their views on masculinity, power, and sexuality. Providing group counselling, safe discussion spaces, and mentorship programmes can foster empathetic and respectful relationships with women. Additionally, partnering with local cultural figures, religious leaders, and influencers can amplify these efforts, supporting a shift towards more egalitarian gender relations and transforming societal attitudes towards women in the long term.

### 5.3.4 Recommendation for Future Research

While this study sheds light on the cultural ideologies shaping Black men's relationships with women, further research is necessary to explore how these beliefs evolve and interact with socio-economic changes. Future studies should examine the effectiveness of targeted interventions such as revised initiation curricula, school-based gender sensitivity programmes, and community dialogues in shifting masculine norms. Longitudinal research tracking changes in attitudes and behaviours over time could identify the most effective strategies for reducing patriarchal ideologies and mitigating gender-based violence. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural contexts and intersectional factors like class, religion, or sexuality would enhance understanding of how to challenge oppressive gender norms in various South African communities. Such research would provide a comprehensive view of the internal struggles men face in reconciling traditional teachings with modern values, informing more effective approaches to promote gender equality and reduce violence.

## 5.4 SUMMARY

The chapter began with a summary of the main findings aligned with the research objectives, highlighting Black men's perceptions of women, masculinity ideologies during the transition to manhood, and their influence on current relationships. It then presented recommendations to address the problematic norms identified. These included engaging traditional leaders to revise initiation curricula and eliminate harmful teachings, urging the Department of Social Development to implement community-based interventions challenging patriarchal values, encouraging schools to integrate gender-sensitivity training, and guiding organisations combating gender-based violence to develop programmes promoting respectful, egalitarian masculinities. By synthesising findings with practical measures, the chapter not only highlighted concerns but also provided a roadmap for cultural, institutional, and educational reforms aimed at fostering healthier, more equitable relationships.

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES


Taryn Powell
Administrative Assistant

University of Cape Town
515, Level 5 Leslie Social Building
Upper Campus, Rondebosch 7700
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 3483
E-mail: taryn.powell@uct.ac.za
Web: socialdevelopment.uct.ac.za


16 April 2024

*Student*: **Benathi Phalezweni (PHLBEN004)**

*Supervisor:* **Mrs Amanda Manqoyi-Ouamba**

*Outcome*: **ACCEPTED**

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance was given by an Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your study, ***From Boys to Men: Exploring Black Masculinity Ideologies about Women in South Africa.*** The reference number is SWK-REC-2024-SR009.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely
Dr Shanaaz Hoosain
Senior Lecturer
Chair: Ethics Review Committee

*UCT Vision 2030 • Unleash human potential for a fair and just society •*

**APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM**

Faculty of Humanities

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR KEY INFORMANTS

**Name of researcher**:

Benathi Phalezweni

**DETAILS OF RESEARCHER:**

I am a master's student at the University of Cape Town conducting this study as part of the requirements for my academic advancement at the master's level.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** BSocSC, BSocSC, (Hons) MSC Candidate

**SUPERVISOR:** Mrs. Amanda Manqoyi – Ouamba

Amanda.manqoyi-ouamba@uct.ac.za

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

**CELL:** 068 410 5446

**EMAIL:** Benathi.phaleweni@gmail.com

**Title of research project**:

From Boys to Men: Exploring Black Masculinity ideologies about South African Women

**Study Objectives:**

- To understand Black men's perceptions of women in South Africa.
- To ascertain if the transition process from boy to man shaped and influenced Black men's views or perceptions about women.

- To find out how these perceptions shape and influence Black men's relationships with women currently.

By filling out this questionnaire / answering the questions put to me:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following: - *(tick as appropriate)*

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| My name may be used in the published research | | |
| My personal details (e.g. age, occupation, position) may be included in the published research | | |
| My responses can only be used in a way that I cannot be personally identifiable | | |

- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I understand that this research might be published in a research journal or book. In the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

**Name of Participant**
*(or Guardian if participant is under 18)* : ________________________________

**Signature of Participant**
*(or Guardian if participant is under 18)* : ________________________________

**Date** : ________________________________

| The researcher must supply you with an ***Information sheet*** which provides his / her contact details, outlines the nature of the research and how the information will be used and explains what your participation in the research involves (e.g. how long it will take, participants' roles and rights (including the right to skip questions or withdraw without penalty at any time), any anticipated risks/benefits which may arise as a result of participating, any costs or payment involved (even if none, these should be stated)) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Has this been provided? | **Yes** | | **No** | |
| Have your received verbal confirmation/explanations where needed? | **Yes** | | **No** | |

**APPENDIX C: MULTICULTURAL MASCULINITY IDEOLOGY SCALE (MMIS)**

Table 3: Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale

| Item No. | MASCULINITY IDEOLOGIES ITEM | DETAILED STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | Emotional Expression | Men should not cry even when something really bad happens. |
| 02 | | Expressing emotions is a sign of weakness for men. |
| 03 | Normative Sexual and Social Behaviours | A man should prove his masculinity by having multiple sexual partners. |
| 04 | | Men should be tough and aggressive. |
| 05 | | A guy should not show affection to those he loves. |
| 06 | | In a relationship, guys should have sexual intercourse as often as possible. |
| 07 | Self-Confidence and Achievement | Men should be confident in everything they do. |
| 08 | | A man's success is measured by his ability to achieve and compete. |
| 09 | | Even if a guy is not rich, he should try to look that way. |
| 10 | | The best way for a guy to take care of his family is to have the most amount of money. |
| 11 | Role Expectations | Providing for his family should be a man’s main goal in life. |
| 12 | | Men should always be the primary decision-makers in the household. |
| 13 | Leadership and Authority | A real man should always be the leader in his group of friends. |
| 14 | | Men are naturally suited to be leaders and authority figures. |
| 15 | Physical Appearance and Body Image | Real men should have a strong, muscular build. |
| 16 | | Men should be concerned with maintaining a fit and attractive appearance. |
| 17 | Health and Vulnerability | Men should not admit when they feel physically weak or sick. |

| 18 | | Men should handle their problems without seeking help. |
|---|---|---|
| 19 | Cultural Pride and Heritage | Men should uphold and respect the traditions of their ancestors. |
| 20 | | Cultural heritage is an important aspect of a man's identity. |
| 21 | Adaptability to Change | Men should easily adapt to both traditional and modern gender roles. |
| 22 | | Flexibility in gender roles is a sign of strength in men. |

**Appendix D: Interview guide**

**Demographic Questions:**

1. Age
2. Educational Background
3. Employment Status
4. Marital Status
5. Number of Children

**Objective 1: To Understand Black Men's Perceptions of Women in South Africa**

1. **Opening Thoughts:**
   - What words or phrases come to mind when you think about women?
2. **Influence of Societal and Cultural Factors:**
   - How do societal and cultural factors influence your perceptions of women?
3. **Personal Experiences:**
   - Can you share any personal experiences that have shaped your views on women?

**Objective 2: To Ascertain if the Transition Process from Boy to Man Shaped and Influenced Black Men's Views or Perceptions About Women**
**A. General Understanding of Manhood and Transition**

1. What is a boy?
2. What is a man?
3. In your community or upbringing, what are some of the qualities or characteristics that people associate with being a man?
4. Can you recall how boys are taught, either directly or indirectly, about what it means to become a man?
5. Were there any specific ceremonies, traditions, or moments that you felt played a role in shaping your understanding of manhood?

**B. Multicultural Masculinity Scale (MMIS) Indicators**

**MMIS-Related:**

If you were to start the sentence "A man is," what would follow that statement? What is the first thought that comes to mind?

- (Probe further into this as this is where your answers of what constitutes a man come from, such as intergenerational patterns or the unconscious internalisation of what a man should or shouldn't be.)

**Follow-up to MMIS Indicators :**

Some men believe they must maintain control or dominance in their relationships. How would you describe what "control" looks like in such contexts?

If you think back to advice or lessons you've heard from elders or peers, how were men encouraged to respond if they felt their authority was challenged?

Have you observed any situations where men use anger, intimidation, or even violence to resolve conflicts with women? Where do you believe these responses are learned?

**Objective 3: To Explore the Influence of Community, Family, and Elders on Perceptions of Manhood and Relationships with Women**

Who, in your experience, plays a significant role in passing on these lessons about manhood?

Do you think these teachings have changed over time, or do they remain consistent across generations?

What impact do you believe these messages have on younger boys who are still forming their ideas about manhood and relationships?

**Objective 4: To Investigate Perceptions of Women and Their Influence on Relationships**

Can you describe any challenges or positive experiences in your current relationships that may be influenced by your views on women?

Thinking about the ways men talk about women, what sort of messages did you grow up hearing about a woman's role or place?

What is your personal view of women? Would you say you arrived at this view through personal or societal influences?

In the ways you have articulated your perceptions of women, can you share your ideas of how these might influence or even the ways in which your own perceptions of women have personally influenced the way you behave in your intimate relationships?

**Additional information to capture :**
**To Reflect on the Possibility of Change in Perceptions and Relationships**

Have you ever questioned or reconsidered any of the lessons you were taught about being a man? If so, what prompted you to do that?

In your view, is there any space or opportunity within your community for men to talk openly and possibly challenge some of these long-held beliefs about manhood and women?

Do you have any thoughts on what might help future generations of men form healthier, more respectful relationships with women?