



An Evaluation of the Role of Media in the Construction of Cultural Identities in Modern Society: A Case of a South African Film, *Inxeba (The Wound)*

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ABSTRACT Using a South African film, *Inxeba (the wound)*, this paper evaluates the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society, a case study of a South African film *Inxeba (the wound)*. The paper used qualitative methodology to evaluate the phenomenon under investigation. The Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of traditional leaders, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa Youth League, Chairperson of the Forum looking into traditional circumcision in Buffalo city Metro, Traditional Surgeon, Traditional Nurse and Inkolo Yakwantu Expert were interviewed and the film *Inxeba (wound)* was content analysed. The paper established that the film *Inxeba* has too many shortfalls when it comes to its representation of the Xhosa traditional male circumcision. Findings from the interviews revealed that the traditional leaders were unhappy with the explicit parts of the film which expose what transpires during the initiation school.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a paradigm shift from the industrial revolution to information technology, as such, the current era in human history is characterised by access to and control of information. It is a time of knowledge where the dissemination of information plays a key role in the development of the country's citizens. In this respect, Karitu (2015) highlighted that media contributes to the formation or construction of identity. This happens through media representations such as stories, plays and themes that ascribe certain characteristics to particular individuals or groups. These characteristics may help in defining or constructing certain individual or collective identities. The way people consider themselves, and see others are partly as a consequence of their interaction with and consumption of media. For instance, images in the media shape people's perception of identity, and challenge their everyday beliefs about others. Consequently, media representations organise and influence people's perceptions of other people. Perception and identity are intertwined as they are both formed through communication (Karitu 2015).

Karitu (2015) further stated that identity is a collection of social experiences that are built and

passed on through communication. Nonetheless, the process of identity formation is complex, with different cultural agencies, including the media, playing a role in its construction, communication and understanding. Wu et al. (2015) observed that human beings are not born with identity, but are actively involved in identity construction. The self-concept, which is the knowledge of who we are, combines with self-awareness to develop a cognitive representation of the self, called identity. People's source of meaning and experience on who they are, what they do, and where they come from, form part of their identity, which obviously changes as their experiences and growth in life and society changes. This is a clear show that people are influenced by both external and internal factors.

Clearly, the media plays a critical role shaping cultural identities because it portrays various issues which affect people's lives. In recent years the traditional male circumcision in South Africa sparked debates across various media platforms. Observably, the media sometimes presents information which is incomplete or twisted which can have a negative impact on cultural practises (Kao 2012).

In the same vein, Dowling (2011) highlighted that media as a result of its influence may be regarded as the main force catalysing the devel-

opment of globalizing society. The author further elaborates that there is a rapid change of human society due to the impact of the convergence of new media and globalization which directly influences the construction and development of new cultural identity. Succinctly, the author highlights that the emergence of new media and globalization do not only breaks through the limit of the traditional time and space, but also may challenge the meaning of cultural identity. Based on that, there is need to unravel the intricate relationships between new media, globalization, and cultural identity through the process of definition, interpretation, and critical analysis (Chen and Zhang 2010).

Gündüz (2017) argued that technological convergence and digitization, which permit traditional media to be carried to new types of media, have allowed audio, data and mass communication to take place in the same channel. Due to internet, mutual data communication has been made possible and this has also led to the emergence of the concept social media. Furthermore, the author postulates that, with the development of social media, circulation of information and news has taken on a system that should be considered carefully given that its speed and dimensions are quite unique (Gündüz 2017). Closely linked to the media's role in shaping identity, is its role in contributing to structuring people's way of life, thus its ability to shape culture. Ganda (2014) defined culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of a society. Culture comprises of several features in which some are implicit and others are explicit. These elements most of the time are referred to as beliefs, values, assumptions, norms, and behaviour.

Furthermore, Pineda and Whitehead (1997) argued that there is an indispensable connection between culture and media. Culture can be a stumbling block to media and information technology as some communities regard technology as a threat to their value and beliefs. In the same vein, Maghrabi and Palvia (2012) conducted a study to examine the impact of ICT on cultural change in Saudi Arabia. The researchers reviewed instances of changes in Saudi Arabia that evidenced the impact of ICT on culture, with

regard to self-orientation, reform of privacy concept, gender egalitarianism, change acceptance, relational orientation. The themes represent transformation in both cultural values and behaviour in society resulted from ICT. The researchers further allude that ICT offers opportunities for education and awareness of new issues. The intensive learning opportunities are then reflected in changes in people manner of thinking and resulted in behavioural changes. Another identified source of change resulted from the exposure to new ideas. These new ideas are then formulated and emerged as shared beliefs among a larger public. This is followed by period in which these new concepts are diffused throughout the society and assimilated into behavioural patterns. Cultural transformation can also occur as a result of the new utilization of ICT to influence cultural change. ICT can empower people to create such changes that not only impact people values and behaviour in the society, but also create new ones (Maghrabi and Palvia 2012).

McLuhan (1966/1964) viewed the media as an extension of human beings as it has increased the range and power of a human body, making the world a global village. People all the world over have become highly dependent on the media, they rely on the media for education, information and entertainment; they directly or/and indirectly rely on the media to meet certain needs and accomplish certain ambitions. As such, the media is afforded the power to set the agenda, to define reality and to shape national identities, among other things (Maghrabi and Palvia 2012). Furthermore, media discourses and narratives are created within various forms of images and texts which are intricately related to the cultural practises and perceptions of both the producers and consumers. "Encoding and decoding is involved in this process where encoding is done by producers of the messages, while decoding is conducted by the audience" (Dakroury 2014). The concepts of media and cultural identities are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

According to Karitu (2015) cultural identity refers to a sense of belonging, originated from the interaction and negotiation between the self and the affiliated group, to a community. In line with this, Dakroury (2014) asserts that there is a strong interconnection between media and cul-

ture; the understanding levels of various cultures influence the media contents, whereas media contents and platforms impact cultural identities and day-to-day practises. Media are important transmitters of cultural messages and play a prominent role in influencing culture, different messages are accepted by various media users, as a result, such messages are interpreted in a number of ways, and they are employed in many forms. It is worth noting that through its representation of culture, the media can sometimes present contradictory messages, which are more likely to inadvertently promote deviant perception to culturally valued practices. It is against this backdrop that this paper assesses how the issue of traditional circumcision is portrayed in the movie *Inxeba (The Wound)*; a South African film produced in 2017 about a closeted relationship between two Xhosa men, the movie is set in the context of *ulwaluko*, a Xhosa traditional circumcision and initiation ritual.

Objectives of the Study

The present paper is guided by the following objectives:

- To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the movie *Inxeba* and how it speaks to the issues of traditional circumcision.
- To assess the representation of the Xhosa traditional circumcision on *Inxeba* film
- To establish community members' perceptions towards the representation of culture on media platforms such as films

The Context

The paper focused on the South African population. In 2017, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimated the mid-year population at 56,52 million. Approximately fifty-one per cent (roughly 28,9 million) of the total population in South Africa is female. The provincial estimates depict that Gauteng has the largest share of the population followed by KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape. Inter-provincial as well as international migration patterns significantly influence the provincial population numbers and structures in South Africa. As of 2017, approximately 11.5 percent of South Africa's population live in Western Cape and Northern Cape

has the smallest share of the population (2.1%). Free State has the second smallest share of the South African population constituting 5.1 percent of the population. South Africa is characterised by various ethnic groups with different languages, religions, race, customs and traditions. For instance, Xhosas, Zulus, Ndebeles, Khoisans, Hindus, Muslim and Afrikaner people, among others. The most common characteristics distinguishing these various ethnic groups are ancestry, territorial possession, language, forms of dress, a sense of history and religion (Ramutsindela 1997). However the most important shared practice amongst these ethnic groups is that, they are all South African nationals who embrace the South African culture. South Africa as a multiracial democratic country embraces ethnic and cultural diversity.

The Interface between Media and Culture and Identity

A medium is a term used when there is indirect communication with other people rather than in person or by face-to-face contact. 'Media' is the plural of 'medium'. The term 'media' includes the whole range of modern communications media: television, the cinema, video, radio, photography, advertising, newspapers and magazines, recorded music, computer games and the internet (UNESCO 2003: 14). Many of these are often called 'mass' media, which implies that they reach large audiences. However, some media are only intended to reach quite small or specialised audiences, and they can be important too. Media texts are the programmes, films, images, web-sites (and so on) that are carried by these different forms of communication (Albaran 2008). Media texts often use several types of communication at once visual images (still or moving), audio (sound, music or speech) and written language. These media are all around the society and they play a significant part in people's lives. Media help people to understand the world and their place in it. This is why it is so important to have an understanding of the role of media in the construction of cultural identity. According to OMD South Africa (2016) media plays the role of collecting news and bringing it to the people. A study conducted by OMD Africa between 2007 and 2014, looking at the South

African market indicated that there has been a dramatic decline in print revenues over the past five years (from a 40% share in 2007 to 29% in 2012), and the big winners being TV and the internet. This has led to a change in how many approach news. They have adopted a more sales-orientated approach and as an old saying goes; 'bad news sells'. This then influences how stories are picked and reported. Commenting on the intensification of press competition, Conboy (2005: 14) suggested that,

"Sensationalism, special offers, campaigns, layout and aspects of writing style of the 1930s all contributed to the further development of the dynamics of New Journalism. Yet beyond competition and marketing, it was the incorporation of visual elements into popular journalism that determined the most significant changes in print journalism in that period".

Despite all the elements of competition in the industry, the media has a role of informing the society on recent developments. In line with this, Plaisance (2014: 5) argued that the media as a mirror is useful in reminding us that, rather than being invented out of thin air, media content often relates closely to real events and prevailing social trends and cultural values. In this context, however traditional circumcision in the South Africa, Eastern Cape Province has been heavily criticised, particularly on health grounds. The media has reported deaths and hospitalisation of the initiates in the Eastern Cape Province. But there could of course be some doubts whether or not the media reports are a true representation of facts about this ritual in South Africa (Mhlahlo 2009: 14). Observably, the media plays a critical role shaping cultural identities because it portrays various issues which affect people's lives. Traditional male circumcision is a cultural rite that is so dear and sacred to the Xhosa people.

At this juncture, one cannot overlook the fact that the media can play a massive role in educating people of different cultures about other people's culture. After all, the role of the media is to inform, educate and to entertain. Smith (2006: 87) argued that the way social issues and problems are framed in the media do shape the way we think and respond to it. Media transforms social problems and turns them into stories that will best sell magazines, newspapers,

television shows and movies. The most popular framing does not always lead to the best solution. These stories, and how the media reports on them, can play a major role in how the public understands social issues which in turn can influence public policy, Smith (2006: 87). Kriger and Zegeye (2001: 318) argued that South Africa needs a democratic approach which will creatively allow various cultural manifestations through free association and the deepening of social dialogue. The media can be used as a platform for such a dialogue and the print media has been used to debate sensitive issues like traditional circumcision for a number of years. However, people practising that culture do complain about the publishing of stories related to the issue. Hodkison (2011: 5) argued that the media content doesn't reflect some issues perfectly or neutrally. Media producers are highly selective with respect to what they include and they represent the elements they do include in very particular ways. They do not then offer us a mirror but a selective, manipulated set of representations (or re-presentations) of the world (Hodkison 2011: 5). The media should be a mirror of the society and should offer it an undistorted reflection of the world. Couldry et al. (2007: 26) argued that readers should research, or decide for themselves, if the information given by any form of media is trustworthy or reliable. As a matter of fact, cultural practises such as traditional male circumcision are not exempted from media influence. However it is worthy to note that sometimes media presents information which is incomplete or twisted which can have a negative impact on cultural practises.

According to Castells (1997: 6), identity is "the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning." Sealy and Singh (2010) underscored that identity provides people with means through which they answer the question: who am I? Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging or identity to a group. It is part of an individual's self-perception or self-conception and is related to ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, locality or generation or any type of social group which has its own distinctive culture (Shindler 2014). However, cultural identity is not a simple collection of thoughts, be-

liefs, traditions, languages and behaviours accumulated through time. Instead it is a cultural selection on how to respond to an outside stimulant in various time frames. Cultural identity is a work plan created by people for their future activities based on past experiences (Babran 2008). Therefore, cultural identity is simultaneously characteristic of an individual and also of the cultural identical group of members who share same cultural identity. Various modern social theories and cultural studies have investigated the phenomenon of cultural identity. In the recent decades, a new identification form has emerged which breaks down the comprehension of an individual as a lucid subject into a range of cultural identifiers. The cultural identifiers are an outcome of diverse conditions which includes location, history, gender, language, race, religious beliefs, aesthetics, and ethnicity and so on. Some critics of cultural identity argue that the preservation of cultural identity, being based upon difference, is a divisive force in society, and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship (Ahmed 2014).

For certain collective actors or individuals there may be identity plurality, but these are contradiction and stress sources in both social action and self-representation. Hence, it is difficult to define the mass media role as the most significant modern instrument for weakening or strengthening of the crisis of identity. Subsequently, making accurate and concise identity definition in the globalization and information age can be an arduous task to undertake. The debates above reveal that the definition of identity carries two components that are conflicting namely, its old elements and historical roots along with the elements of current events and the infinitive future changes that must be considered. Therefore identity has two components of individuality and collection (Babran 2008). A pertinent example is the interaction of the individual with his/her society (either the international or national society). Contextually, it becomes clear that individuals constantly receive input from the environment and at the same time possess unique characteristics, which differentiates their independence from social pluralism. Given the aforementioned definition of identity, it is evi-

dent that correlation and interaction causes alterations in the individual as well as the surrounding environment (Khaniki 2001). Therefore, this necessitates the present paper to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identity.

Films and Cultural Identity Construction

Cinema has been portraying one of the most dominant and distinguishing features of the Africa's cultures for the past sixty years. As the film industry expands, they are bringing cultural artefacts with them and at the same time portraying the local cultures in negative ways. This is highly impacting the construction of cultural identities on the continent (Cheung and Fleming 2009). This paper investigates the role of Inxeba film in constructing and maintaining the cultural identity among South Africans. In particular, this paper seeks to demonstrate how Inxeba film viewing intersects to create cultural identities. According to Tirumala (2009: 24) "in today's world of global movement and cultural hybridity, 'true "identity"' has become a fundamental and yet significant issue in one's life". Basu (2004) noted that in this globalized world, preserving and maintaining one's own culture and identity has become a great challenge. Conversely, with technological advancements like satellite TV, Internet and cell phones, diaspora communities are able to stay connected with their homeland and maintain their cultural identity. Electronic media has been the essential tool for the diaspora in re-rooting their identities (Appadurai 1996). While commenting on the influence of electronic media on the community, Appadurai (1996) argued that "because of its sheer multiplicity in which they appear (films, TV, internet and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life, electronic media provide communities with resources for self-imagining that help maintain the cultural identity" (Appadurai 1990: 4). With the increasing popularity of electronic media and the phenomenal success of the film industry in capturing audiences (Dudrah 2006), it is important to study the role of the film industry in the cultural identity construction in South Africa.

Truth and Accuracy in Reporting

Truth and accuracy is the most important aspect of journalism as it includes all other aspects of journalism ethics. A media organisation will be judged on the accuracy and reliability of its journalism, which must be well-sourced, supported by strong evidence, examined and tested, clear and unambiguous. When it comes to the case of reporting about traditional circumcision, the focus is always on death and less attention is paid on the successes, though each season has more successful cases than casualties. Reporting on this subject is reduced to a numbers game focusing on how many initiates have died during that period. This raises the question of objectivity and bias in reporting about this particular culture. Ward (2005) argued that to enhance objectivity, reports that indicate bias or are an unjustified interpretation of facts should be eliminated from news reporting. Objectivity is one of the foundations of journalism and it cannot be abandoned under any circumstances. Lichtenberg (1997) suggested that objectivity is considered as a cornerstone professional journalism in liberal democracies and most people agree with this.

In fact, objectivity in news is thought by most writers to be possible and desirable in the search for truth. Greer (1999) suggested that it is the journalist's fundamental duty to ensure that the news content is accurate and free from bias and that all sides have been reported fairly. The practice is not just ethical but it helps that particular publication to be more credible and produce news that is fair, accurate and reliable. Ward (2005) explained that journalism ethics has been providing guidelines to create flexible, objective journalism in which journalists do not only look at the newsworthiness of stories but also consider the impact of the news on the readers. This is important because the third clause of The Code of Conduct of the South African Union of journalists states that, "A journalist shall strive to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is fair and accurate, avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact and falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation," (Press Council 2016).

Striving to bring fair and accurate news should be the driving factor behind any publication's news gathering. This sometimes is hindered by the manipulation of information with the purpose of drawing attention to a particular publication on a particular day. Journalists should not fall into the trap of manipulating information improperly. To prevent this, Ferre (2009: 26) suggested that issues such as fairness, privacy and truth-telling must form part of debates in public forums, seminars and newsrooms. Ward (2005), however, explained that journalism is always an interpretation of an event in which a journalist constructs meaning out of it while separating his or her own opinion. These interpretations sometimes affect storytelling. Greer (1999: 25) suggests that, in order to maintain public trust, journalists must be wary of manipulating and being manipulated. Manipulation on its own is unethical. It becomes worse when it happens on issues generally described and accepted as sensitive to society. The present paper does not seek to stretch further the debate on true journalism but to highlight the potential harm that might be caused by the manipulation of facts in film production, particularly with regard to identity formulation and assimilation.

Inxeba (The Wound)

The South African film *Inxeba (The wound)* is a case in point in this inquiry. *Inxeba (The Wound)* is inspired by the novel 'A man who is not a man' by Thando Mgqolozana and its screenplay was co-written by Mgqolozana, Malusi Bengu and directed by John Trengrove. The film is set within the Xhosa community of rural South Africa and takes place during the period of *Ulwaluko*, an annual rite of passage for young male teens to symbolize their move into adulthood. In it, the boys are taken up to the mountains where one of the elder tribesmen circumcises them one by one, imploring them to yell out "I'm a man!" while he makes the incision. The boys then spend the next couple of weeks out there fasting and having traditional notions of masculinity drummed into them while their wounds heal. The movie is described as an intersectional story about three Xhosa men that, told in the setting of the mountains of the Eastern Cape during a period of the Xhosa male initiation, which is referred to as

ulwaluko (Dercksen 2018). Xolani, a factory worker, joins the men of his community at the annual initiation ceremony in the mountains of Eastern Cape. In addition to serving as a mentor to the boys undergoing the ceremony, in the film, Xolani looks forward to the annual tradition due to the fact that it provides him the opportunity to re-establish his sexual and romantic relationship with Vija. At the mountain, Xolani is assigned to be the mentor of Kwanda, a young man from Johannesburg, he quickly realizes that Kwanda is also gay, and Kwanda soon realizes the nature of the relationship between Vija and Xolani. Tensions soon rise between the three men (Sobczynski 2017).

Vija and Xolani had a secluded relationship but everything broke loose when Kwanda discovered about the relationship. Vija is married with children while Xolani lives alone. As the complexity of their relationship plays out, in conjunction with their roles as caregivers and Xhosa men, Xolani is challenged by the behaviour and taunts of his initiate, Kwanda, who is far more embracing of his sexual identity (Dercksen 2018). Kwanda's actions and comments during his initiation pose a disruption to the institution and a particular challenge to Xolani and Vija when he discovers their relationship. The two men caregivers or traditional nurses (Amakhankatha) in the film depict a dichotomy that was rare in the history of Xhosa culture but presenting a probable scenario of the contemporary society. Notably, on its release, movie houses, particularly in the Eastern Cape such as Rosehill cinema and Ster Kinekor in East London and Port Elizabeth, became scenes of sit-ins and public demonstrations with the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) coming out in support of the protests, saying the movie disrespected the Xhosa culture by showing sacred customs that are done in the mountains (Mabasa 2018).

The film attracted a lot of controversy and has been accused of cultural insensitivity, not only because it portrays secretive initiation rituals but because its representations are not true about Xhosa culture. However, other media covering similar topics, like Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom, have not received similar criticism, leading to accusations that complaints about the film are instead motivated by ho-

mophobia (Mabasa 2018). Before the public outcry the film was classified as 16LS by South Africa's Film and Publication Board (FPB), but was later reclassified as X18 by the FPB's Appeal Tribunal after complaints by the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa and other cultural and Christian organisations. X18 is the rating reserved for hard core pornography, although *Inxeba* contains none, and meant that distribution was limited to premises licensed to show pornography, resulting in the film's removal from all South African cinemas (Levitt 2018).

In this context, Scotton (2012) argued that the way culture is portrayed in the South African film industry is very influential in shaping attitudes and cultural identities amongst South Africans. As a cultural product and medium, film could be viewed as an important medium for meaning making. Furthermore, Scotton (2012) outlined that film and cinema are deeply imbedded in the South African culture and therefore an interesting and complex relationship subsists between film, audience and culture. According to Browne (1997: 9) film is considered as an art which is powerful and pervasive, whereas the film stars are viewed as "cultural icons". Corrigan and White (2004: 4) corroborated and defined film as an art work, "richly layered with cultural practices". Therefore it is important to understand the role of the film industry in the construction of cultural identities in the modern society.

The *Inxeba* film caused quite a stir as it taps on issues of tradition that are largely viewed as sacred and sensitive. It presented propositions that contradict with the proponents of Xhosa traditional male circumcision. The ritual is important to its custodians to a point that it is handled by men as they are a link between the living and those who have passed on to the land of ancestors. Congress for traditional leaders argue that the film - *Inxeba* shouldn't be screened because it does not give a true reflection of traditional circumcision, rather, it ridicules the sacred custom. Contralesa argues that the false representations maybe accepted as the absolute truth by those who are not part of the culture and dent a custom that is already under fire. In line with this, Smith (2006) argued that the way social issues and problems are framed in the media do shape the way we think and respond to it. Moreover,

McCombs and Reynolds (2002) highlighted the importance of the media in shaping perceptions as “one that the public’s cognition and choices depends upon”. Therefore the media to some degree is responsible for the views of the people. Bearing this in mind, it is crystal clear that the media play a very influential role in shaping the everyday experiences; hence the present paper is welcome to evaluate the role of media in construction cultural identities in the Eastern Cape Province.

Theoretical Framework

The paper used the theory of representation to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society using a South African film, *Inxeba* (the wound) as its case study. At this juncture, the authors will explain in detail the theory of representation highlighting its relevance to the present discourse on the role of media in the construction of cultural identities.

Theories of Representation

According to Karitu (2015) representation entails the production of the meaning of concepts in our minds through language. This entails that connotations about social phenomena are created from language representations. Understandably, culture and identity are formed and passed on through language. As such people who share the same culture interpret the signs of a language similarly so that they can understand and converse with each other. Under the arm of theories of representations there are three main approaches to representation of meaning, the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist approach (Shaw 2010). Constructive approach is of paramount importance to this study as it examines how identities are constructed. Further study of the constructionist approach led to the development of the semiotic and discursive approaches by scholars Ferdinand de Saussure and Michel Foucault respectively in their study of structuralism (Karitu 2015).

Foucault studied discourse as a system of representation which he argued is never one statement, one text, one action or one source but a characteristic of the knowledge that will

appear across a range of texts at a number of different institutional sites within society. If representation is characteristic of knowledge across texts, then media’s various text at any moment have discourses which are passed on to audiences. The texts are constructed with various intentions, including to educate and inform society as well as pass on the media’s agenda, which includes among others attracting and retaining audiences for ratings. Cultures also have texts that they pass on from individuals, groups and generations which then inform language, identity, behaviour, beliefs and relations therein. Individuals exhibit different conducts, those they have acquired from various experiences and institutions in the lives. Based on Foucault’s argument that representation is discourse, individuals use the texts they have acquired to guide their lives as well as communicate and influence others. Identity in societies are built and influenced around the nature of all these texts and naturally the relations there will be influenced by their representation. This explains how images and films elicit identity in contemporary society. What people see in a movie will be stored and internalised. Approaches of representation explain the transitory nature of identity and the influences of its construction (Foucault 2014). The representations that the media makes tend to shape how individuals construct, alter and adopt identities. In support to this, Karitu (2015) alludes that pressures in media have caused people to frequently examine and re-examine their different identities against the fluidity of unstable representations around them.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper used qualitative and qualitative content analysis design. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and opinions. It provides insight into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research (Bernard and Bernard 2012). Content analysis on the other hand is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). By systematically evaluating texts (for example, documents, oral communication, and graphics), quali-

tative data can be extracted. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), content analysis is a research method for studying documents and communication artefacts, which might be texts of various formats, pictures, audio or video. Social scientists use content analysis to examine patterns in communication in a replicable and systematic manner.

In this paper, the researchers start with the categorization and classification of speech, written text, interviews, images, or other forms of communication from *Inxeba* film. Bryman (2011) alluded that with the rise of common computing facilities like personal computers, computer-based methods of analysis are growing in popularity. The authors will systematically label the content of the set of texts, and then analyse patterns of content using qualitative methods to analyse meanings of content within texts. Interestingly, computers are increasingly used in content analysis to automate the labelling (or coding) of documents. Simple computational techniques can provide descriptive data such as word frequencies and document lengths. Machine learning classifiers can greatly increase the number of texts that can be labelled, but the scientific utility of doing so is a matter of debate. One of the key advantages of using content analysis to analyse social phenomena is its non-invasive nature, in contrast to simulating social experiences or collecting survey answers. That said, a content analysis of *Inxeba* film will provide an understanding on the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society.

Measures

The population for this paper was comprised of the Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of traditional leaders, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa Youth League, Chairperson of the Forum looking into traditional circumcision in Buffalo city Metro, Traditional Surgeon, Traditional Nurse and Inkolo Yakwantu Expert and a content analysis of the film *Inxeba* (wound). Considering the objectives of the study, conducting research on the entire Eastern Cape population wouldn't have been possible due to financial and time limitations. Hence for the purpose of

achieving the research objectives, the paper employed a non-probability method of sampling. This paper utilized purposive/convenience sampling which is a non-probability criterion-based technique for selecting a sample from the target population and purposively selected a sample comprising of the Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of traditional leaders, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa Youth League, Chairperson of the Forum looking into traditional circumcision in Buffalo city Metro, Traditional Surgeon, Traditional Nurse and Inkolo Yakwantu Expert and a content analysis of the film *Inxeba* (wound).

In-depth semi-structured interviews and a copy of *Inxeba* film as data collection instruments. Authors used in-depth interviews to extract information from traditional authorities. The interviewees were selected because of their knowhow of the Xhosa culture. The authors specifically selected these interviewees because it is in line with the study at hand which seeks to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society. The interview questions in the in-depth interview schedule were semi-structured so as to permit the participants to disclose their feelings, thoughts, views and perceptions on the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society. Questions in the interview schedule will be derived from the research objectives and questions. The interview guide provided guidelines for the administration of in-depth interviews with the participants. The authors recorded the interviews with consent from the participants to be transcribed later on and field notes were taken to complement the recorded data. A semi-structured interview was used as a mode of data gathering based on its flexibility and it gives the researchers a free play to explore the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society in South Africa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Respondents Views on the Role of Media in Cultural Identity Construction

It was important for the authors ascertain the views of the respondents pertaining to the

role of media in cultural identity construction. In their quest to do so, the authors posed the question: How does this role of the media manifest in the everyday lives of people? Respondents were grouped into three sets and named respondent one, respondent two and respondent three. In their response to this question, respondents were quick to point out that the all the news consumed through the media has somewhat an impact in their everyday lives. This is as seen from their respondents with respondent number one stating that:

"Whatever is reported in the media forms public discourse; therefore it affects daily lives of the people. It creates awareness and help people tread carefully as they go forward executing their duties."

The second respondent said:

"This construction manifests through Slay Queens in our daily lives. Social media influencers make sure of it."

The third respondent on the other hand said:

"It influences the everyday decisions of people about their cultures. It influences and shapes their thinking. We have seen interventions and changes in various customs through the influence of media. A good example would be that of ulwaluko."

Respondents were also asked to weigh in on whether the media can influence people's decisions in life. Thus the researchers asked: Do you think people's decisions about life can be influenced by the media? In their responses, respondents argued that the media has somewhat influence in their day to day decision making. However this influence is wielded on them unwittingly. In answering this question, the first respondent said:

"Definitely, media is pursuant in nature hence there are established complaints commissions and ombudsman to regulate what is distributed to the public. Media is powerful and should be used constructively."

The second respondent said:

"I think most certainly. We wouldn't be driving GTIs or wearing Ralph Lauren if the media didn't play an influential role. Why not stick to Markham?"

The third respondent had this to say:

"Yes. Media informs and people act on what they know from the information received from the media."

Based on the responses given by the respondents, the authors can deduce that, indeed people's decisions about life can be influenced by the media. The findings confirms the writings of Kearney and Levine (2014) who noted that the media has a direct impact on the decisions people take about their daily lives.

The authors also wanted to ascertain whether the media is responsible for reforming and shaping cultural identities. This was done with the movie *Inxeba* in mind. Thus respondents were asked: How do media reform and shape cultural identities? In asking this question, the authors wanted to establish whether or not respondents see the media as a tool or vehicle used to shape any cultural identity. In responding to this question, the first respondent was of the view that, the media plays an informative role and the general populace is responsible for decoding what they want and ignore what they do not want. Thus the respondent said:

"It informs the public on the developments that are taking place thus making people make adjustment in however form they deem fit."

The second respondent was of the view that the media has in a way posed a positive challenge on people forcing them to reevaluate their way of life. Thus the respondent had this to say:

"Through its influence the media has challenged some tribes to re-visit their customs and make some changes. It has, at the same time help them to preserve and promote their culture and language."

The third respondent on the other hand said:

"Media can reform and shape cultural identities through what they choose to expose to people as they are the gatekeepers of what people get to see. It is in a position of being able to direct people's perceptions or identities though the decision purely lies with the individual as to what they want to be."

It was evident from the respondents that they think the media is generally responsible for shaping cultural identities. The media achieve this according to respondents through deciding on what to broadcast and or publish and what not to. Thus the media shapes or decides the agenda for the general populace whose role is to consume and choose what they can identify with. This is in line with the arguments of Singh (2010) who noted that, media is now considered an

“extension of everyday life and a tool of cultural change” thus, identity formation, as a social concept, is being transformed in new and even more global ways.

The authors saw it significant to solicit the respondents’ perception on the media programs in South Africa in general. Thus they asked: How do you perceive media programs in South Africa? The first respondent expressed concern with the volume of entertainment programs over historical and educational programs. This according to the respondent creates redundancy and discourages public discourse amongst citizens. Thus the first respondent had this to say:

“There is a huge concentration of entertainment programmes more than there are historical and other educational programmes. People rely more on the news for robust and engaging topical discussions. Other normal programme seldom raises critical discourse.”

The second respondent was happy that the South African media focuses more on local content which to the respondent is a welcome call. This according to the respondent makes the community identify with respective media houses for they form part and parcel of what they consume from the media. Thus the respondent had this to say:

“Most of them focus on local content and that is good for the nation or societies as they can always relate.”

The third respondent lamented the westernization of the South African programs. According to the respondent the supposedly South African programs are Western or produced by western producers. This to the respondent is a wakeup call for the South African media houses. The respondent said:

“They’re non-existent and those that we think are South African are Western concepts bought by producers. If not so – characters and the script writing is Westernized. We have very few original programming mostly in 80’s and 90s taken from African novels.”

This paper also wanted to establish whether the current programs have in any way transformed the lives of South Africans. Hence the researchers posed the question: Could you say the current programs have transformed the livelihood of South Africans? This was important for the researchers to understand from the re-

spondents’ point of view whether the media has/ is transforming the lives of the South African citizens through the media content they air. In responding to this question the first respondent was of the view that the media reports on stories that improve the livelihood of the general populace. Thus the respondent said:

“Ooohh, maybe in the manner in which people have molded their lifestyle and on how they follow trends and their spending habits, transformation is quite relative in this case... Yes media reports on stories that help people improve their lives. I would say it does transform their way of understanding and looking at things, at this stage I am not sure if it has transform their current social standing.”

The second respondent agreed that the media has transformed the lives of south Africans however was also quick to point out the negative transformation brought by the media. Thus the respondent had this to say:

“Yes. Black South African Youth are in debt chasing the African-American dream. We are poorer because of it. But it has transformed the economy/employment because there are more production companies and TV programs aired by Multichoice.”

The third respondent on the other hand said:

“Most definitely, there is much infotainment on prime time that affords people a chance to receive information at the same time in an entertaining manner as a means of accommodating people after a long day thus, providing information to educate while providing entertainment to distress.”

The responses given by respondents reveal that the media has somewhat through their programs transformed the livelihoods of South African citizens. Thus according to respondents, the current media programs are not just entertainment nor does it provide information overload but there is a balance even with the unpaid for channels (SABC 1, 2, 3 and eNCA) as well as the paid for (DStv). This is in line with the arguments of McQuail (2013: 171) who noted that, The invention of the media has increased the scale and reach of news media, the role news media play in society and the various effects that the news media have on society.

This paper sought to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities

in modern society. Therefore in order for the authors to be able to determine whether the media plays any role in this, it was important for the researchers to ask the question: In what way do media influence cultural identity? In answering this question respondent number one said:

"Let us make an example with initiation, if it wasn't for media the public would be in the dark about the death of abakwetha during initiation. Therefore media holds government accountable and government introduces measures that will remedy the situation. Then the media again has a duty to inform the public about the measure introduced by the government such as male medical circumcision and laws that are introduced. This helps people not to break the law and also realize some of the dangers that are posed by the introduction of these measures."

The second respondent said:

"The media influence through promotion of cultural diversity by giving various tribes show slots on TV, even on radio broadcasts. This helps people relate to their own culture and language."

The third respondents said:

"Media is a culture on its own and people can associate and relate to it because it is what they are constantly exposed to."

It can be noted from the responses given above that respondents were of the view that the media is to a point responsible for influencing cultural identity through its broadcasting of various cultural stories and movies that portray different cultural settings and or beliefs. This response is consistent with the arguments of Baran (2012) who discovered that, the media transmit cultural norms and values to its audience. This is one process of socialization, which help to unify a country and community of nations. Culture is the world made meaningful; and it is socially constructed and maintained through communication.

Analysis of Respondents' Perception on Inxeba

The authors sought to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society using Inxeba film as the case study. Therefore in order for the researchers to be able to answer the research questions and come up with a valid research there was need for asking respondents their perception on the film

(Inxeba). In order for the authors to be able to come to a well-informed conclusion, the question: How does the film Inxeba (The wound) represent the Xhosa traditional circumcision, had to be asked. Respondents expressed their disappointment in the way Inxeba represents the Xhosa traditional circumcision. They saw the movie as a distortion of the actual tradition and almost everything about the movie is diluted by one or two scenes that misrepresent the whole process of ulwaluko. This is what one of the respondents said in answering the question:

"It is a distorted truth about our culture."

The second respondent concurred with the first respondent, thus the respondent said:

"It is a misrepresentation of the old sacred tradition and should be condemned in every way possible. For example people who never went to initiation are not supposed to see what happens during the initiation period."

The third respondent corroborated the disbelief of the other two respondents above by saying:

"Definitely not as I know and understand it. I do know that people think the movie is a credible and authoritative representative of the tradition which is a far cry from the truth."

The authors in this section sought to solicit the perceptions of respondents concerning the film Inxeba. This is because the film is the subject of discussion in the quest to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society. Hence the researchers asked the question: What is your perception concerning the film Inxeba (The wound)? The first respondent said:

"I believe if they wanted to make a film that celebrates that part of Xhosa culture they should have consulted with custodians of the tradition. And also, they should have shown reveals less of this sacred tradition. For example, they could have done the film without showing the location and initiates."

The second respondent said:

"There's a covert and disheartening rivalry between uXhosa men and our women. SA women, particularly amaXhosa, are curious, courageous, forward thinking and natural leaders. They have initiated and led protests for women's rights to the Union Buildings in 1956 and recently leaders of the feminist movement."

These are admirable traits that are now weaponised against Black men- sometimes with good, but often exaggerated reason. In the case of this movie Inxeba, our women are celebrating because it's another jab to the Black man and not about human rights within the context of Xhosa culture. None of the real pressing social issues are discussed in the movie (assuming that's the movie plot)."

The third respondent said:

"The film touched on what is usually swept under carpet by the Xhosa tribe in the name of tradition/custom. The only concern from the Xhosa nation was the secrecy of the custom itself and denial in the fact that homosexuality."

It was evident that, respondent one and two were of the opinion that the movie is an onslaught of the Xhosa culture. It does not depict the real story of what happens during the initiation school. However respondent three had a different view, the respondent was of the view that the movie is an expose of what happens and leads to the deaths of initiates.

It is noteworthy that this paper sought to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society using Inxeba (the wound) film as its case study. Therefore in order for the authors to be able to do this, the question: Are you satisfied with the way Xhosa traditional male circumcision is represented in the Inxeba had to be posed to the respondents. This question would enable the researchers to derive concrete findings, reach the right conclusion and prescribe well informed recommendations. In responding to the question above, the first respondent was not satisfied at all with the way the movie Inxeba represents Xhosa traditional male circumcision. Thus the respondent said:

"Not at all."

The second respondent concurred with the first in expressing the unsatisfactory manner in which the movie portrays Xhosa traditional male circumcision. Thus, the second respondent said:

"No! He should have said in the movie: 'Hi guys I did this' and not 'this is what Xhosa men do.'"

However the third respondent expressed different views from the other two. According to the respondent the movie opened up eyes of

those who are ignorant of some of the happenings within the Xhosa setup. The third respondent said:

"Having followed and understanding the film storyline, I am satisfied with how the film makers told the story. I picked up our minds and forced us to confront some issues which were long ignored by us Xhosa people."

The authors wanted to understand whether respondents thought the way Inxeba represents the Xhosa traditional male circumcision would trigger some consideration amongst the Xhosa nation. Hence posing the question: Do you think the way Inxeba movie represent traditional male circumcision can result in new cultural identity among Xhosa people? In responding to this question, two of the respondents had the same view that the movie will have an impact on the traditional male circumcision of the Xhosa people if nothing is done to correct the wrongs that take place during ulwaluko. The first respondent had a different view from the other two; the respondent was of the view that there is nothing that the movie will change. The respondent said:

"Not at all, because it is misleading and a misrepresentation, it can affect people's perception of the culture especially outsiders. However, the custodians and the Xhosa people have been doing the tradition for a number of years I doubt a simple movie like Inxeba might affect them."

The second respondent was of the view that the movie will impact on the Xhosa tradition if they don't take heed of the shortcomings of the tradition. Thus the respondent said:

"Definitely it will if we do not do something to fix the issues plighting the tradition."

The third respondent concurred with the second respondent, the respondent was of the view that the way Inxeba represents the Xhosa traditional male circumcision will result in people thinking twice before undergoing this practice of right to passage from boyhood to manhood. Thus the respondent said:

"Definitely, the film going forward will force the Xhosa nation to think outside the box. Even confront some old stereotypes surrounding the custom."

The authors also wanted to know the views of the respondents on the representation of circumcision to the public. This to the researchers

will assist in answering the research question and validate this research. Thus in order for the researchers to understand the way traditional circumcision is perceived or represented to the public the question: How do you view the representation of circumcision in public sphere was asked to the respondents.

The first respondent said:

"Media, especially the news report on what's there on the public domain. Traditional leaders need to do more to preserve our culture and our tradition. However, media has a duty to show less graphic visuals on public domain as well."

The second respondent said:

"There are still many stereotypes about circumcision, stigmatization and denial especially amongst Xhosa people. It is why there is then uproar when such films are made, because people do not want to face reality of changing times, circumstances and world at large."

The third respondent said:

"It's not good at the moment but I think it's good that we're talking about it so we can right our wrongs. This is the only way to purge toxins within the tradition."

It was clear that respondents as shown by their responses above had different views on the representation of circumcision in the public sphere. It can however be seen from their responses that there is somewhat agreement that somethings needs to be shown so that they can be dealt with.

Content Analysis of *Inxeba* the Movie

This section will assist the authors answer the question: How does the *Inxeba* represent the Xhosa traditional circumcision? It is noteworthy that, the movie *Inxeba* depicts *ulwaluko*, a rite of passage for boys to become men, which is a tradition that not only amours Xhosa males with a sense of duty and responsibility, but bonds together the youth, who are future fathers and elders of the community. It is to these men that authority and power over the family will be handed over. And so these lessons are considered to be revered, and only for Xhosa men who go to the mountains and brave the elements. *Inxeba* follows Xolani, an out-of-work factory worker who joins the men of his commu-

nity in the Eastern Cape as they journey to the mountains to initiate a group of boys into manhood. A young city teenager who is also an initiate discovers Xolani's secret homosexuality, while he tries to hide it to the rest of the group. Identity is a prominent theme explored by the film as characters attempt to reconcile how they see and feel about themselves with the demands that family and community have over them.

As the movie plays, it depicts a correct set up where circumcision is conducted, a secluded area away from houses, people and close to the river. This shows that media reports or depicts how the Xhosa traditional circumcision is performed. It can be said that here the media correctly depicts the cultural identities in modern society through *Inxeba*. It can however be seen that as the movie progresses, it goes on to misrepresent the Xhosa male traditional circumcision. In its representation of the Xhosa male traditional circumcision, the movie reduces the role of a traditional nurse to be that of a man who can force homosexuality out of an initiate, one who can through bullying the initiate change him to be straight. This representation is seen when the movie shows Xolani who is a traditional nurse (Ikhankatha) and Khwalo, Kwanda's father who is one of the initiate's conversation telling Xolani to be hard on Kwanda. This is seen when the movie is at 3 minutes 25 seconds to 3 minutes 46 seconds. The movie goes on to depict women as weak and to be blamed for their children's sexuality. This is seen when Khwalo, Kwanda's father blames his wife for the son's homosexuality.

The movie goes on to show events that contradicts the Xhosa custom. This is seen when the movie is at 3 minutes 56 seconds when medical male circumcision is introduced as an option over traditional circumcision and the suggestion here is that medical circumcision is a choice women are likely to make for their sons. The movie depicts another part where the movie wrongfully portrays initiates as gays in initiation schools. In real Xhosa traditional circumcision school this is something that does not happen. In actual fact no one is allowed to have sexual contact during the period of *ulwaluko*. Moreover, caregivers at initiation schools would never allow sexual incidents to take place. As the movie is at 4 minutes 17seconds, it portrays

homosexuality as a rich man's syndrome or something that is a result of peer pressure. This is seen when Kwanda the son of Khwalo a rich man is the only gay initiate and is proud that they are rich and he can chose his own sexual orientation.

It is noteworthy that, in as much as the movie misrepresents the Xhosa traditional circumcision in some parts, there are parts where it correctly reflect the real Xhosa practice as is done during the initiation period. The movie at 4 minutes 47 seconds shows us (ixhego) the old men addresses *abakwetha* (initiates), *ingcibi* (traditional surgeon), *amanqalakathi* (messengers) and *amakankatha* (nurse/caregivers) before the initiation is started. This is a true reflection of what transpired during the Xhosa traditional circumcision. Hence one can say, the media in this scenario constructs the traditional identity correctly.

As the movie progresses it can be seen that there is distortion of what actually transpires during initiation school. At 5 minutes into the movie, the tone used when addressing the initiates and how they are handled depicts bullying. This is not how things are handled; initiates are in real circumstances addressed with respect since they have already passed the phase of being boys. More so there are teachings that do not encourage bullying in reality. The movie can also be viewed as an onslaught on the Xhosa culture where we see at 5 minutes 41 seconds, the initiate is beaten with a stick while waiting for the traditional surgeon. This is not the actual practice and it can be said the media is not presenting a true reflection on the construction of cultural identities. Once more, from 5 minutes 50 seconds to 7 minutes into the movie we see aggressiveness of the surgeon, the use of abusive language and depiction of explicit content of how the sacred ritual is performed. Here it can be concluded that the media has gone above board in its presentation and construction of cultural identities. Furthermore these explicit scenes contradict how this culture should be kept secret considering the age restrictions.

In as much as the media through the movie does not correctly reflect the true construction of cultural identities in modern society, there are instances where we see the correct reflection on cultural identity. The true construction of cultural identity is seen in the movie when the mov-

ie is at 5 minutes 53 seconds. Here, we see the correct representation of the Xhosa culture by the media when the traditional operation by the *ingcibi* is performed and the boy is instructed to say "ndiyindoda" (I am a man) and the *ingcibi* responds "uyiyo indoda" (you are a man). At this stage of the movie we see the correct presentation by media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society. The presentation by media through this movie is in line with the writings of Meel (2005: 58) on the Xhosa practice of the rite to passage. Thus Meel (2005: 58) noted that, immediately after the traditional operation by the *ingcibi*, the boy is instructed to say "ndiyindoda" (I am a man) and the *ingcibi* responds "uyiyo indoda" (you are a man). After the boy graduates to *ubudoda* (manhood) he is given a new name, which symbolises the beginning of a new life and his incorporation into a new society: adulthood with all its privileges and responsibilities.

The movie at 7 minutes 20 seconds goes on to show viewers the inside of the initiate house. Here we see how the film depicts images on how an initiate wound is dressed and sleeps that too trespasses on issues of secrecy. This shows that the movie once more goes too deep in its quest to represent and construct cultural identities. The movie goes on to show images of torture and bullying which is not part of the custom. To add on to that, exposing of the materials that was used before to cover the wound at 8 minutes 40 seconds is also a cause for concern. The media shows something that is never known to even those who are not taking part let alone to the general populace. The negative portrayal on the construction of cultural identities continues and is seen at 9 minutes 47 seconds where dagga use is introduced as a medicine for killing pain when in fact the use of drugs is prohibited in initiation schools. The traditional nurse is the perpetrator something that contradicts the practice of the Xhosa traditional male circumcision.

The movie goes on at 13 minutes to depict a theme of homosexuality. The homosexuality involves the traditional nurses Xolani and Vija while both men have wives. This is taboo as far as the custom is concerned. Traditional nurses are the ones who are at the forefront as far as teaching initiates how to behave in a manly manner. At 17 minutes 40 seconds the movie shows

scenes of an initiate in agony while being dressed. Language that is supposed to be known by a person who's an initiate is mentioned there (umgqutso {pus}, isiko {the wound}). Again that exposes secret information which is against the custom. Boys and even women who have never undergone initiation aren't supposed to know about how things run up there. This goes on to 19 minutes in the movie where the initiate is dressing himself here the graphic and the language used makes it worse. Questions like: Iyaluma (is it sore?) Iyakrweqa, uyaybona? Iyadinanisa (it's remodeling, can you see it? It's healing.) The film goes further to depict a scene at 22 minutes something that looks like the Umojiso ceremony. Here, the slaughtering of a goat and what is preceded by that is not representative of the ceremony. In actual fact, the ceremony signifies a new start. It is at this stage that the initiate recovers, when he finally gets to eat food with vitamins which will assist the body to fight the bacteria which will delay the healing process. At the ceremony a goat or a sheep is slaughtered and the initiate is allowed to eat meat. The initiates are still expected to observe certain taboos even after this ceremony.

It is noteworthy that the movie goes on to wrongfully depict the construction of cultural identities in modern society. This is as seen through the drinking of alcohol by elderly man and singing is done in a disorderly manner that could be categorized as boyish. At 24 minutes 40 seconds elderly men make fun of an initiate and that doesn't happen in real life. They go as far as calling him "kwe'dini" a word that comes from nkwenkwe ndini which means 'you boy'. The movie goes further to negatively represent the Xhosa culture at 25 minutes 15 seconds where Kwanda one of the initiates addresses the elderly men and traditional nurses using a language that is deemed disrespectful. The movie goes on to negatively show the practices done during the initiation school. This is as seen by the portrayal of the fight between the initiate (Kwanda) and Vija the traditional nurse which is a misrepresentation of culture especially as it happens before the father of the initiate and other men. It can be noted that in as much as the movie can be seen as depicting the negative aspects of what transpires during the Xhosa traditional male circumcision there are some factu-

al scenes. This is as seen when the movie is at 27 minutes 20 seconds where there is story telling around the fire. This is a beautiful scene which brings the origins or the myth around Xhosa male traditional circumcision. Though the movie depicts positive representation of the Xhosa culture, negative representations outweighs them. This can be seen at 29 minutes where Kwanda starts suspecting a relationship between the two traditional nurses. This as mentioned before, sexual practice is not performed during the initiation time more especially by the nurses responsible for handling the initiates. Negativity goes on to a point at 29 minutes 37 seconds where we see another secret being revealed on the issues of water therapy. Also at 31 minutes 30 seconds sex scene is also a cause for concern as it depicts two traditional nurses performing oral sex, something that is not practiced during initiation time.

The movie at 36 minutes depicts the provocation of Kwanda by other initiates due to his sexual orientation. In reality Xhosa tradition does not select who undergoes initiation based on sexual orientation but this is regarded as a rite of passage from boys to men and the only determining factor of when to undergo circumcision is age (18). The movie goes on to show at 39 minutes 40 seconds the altercation between Kwanda the initiate and Xolani the traditional nurse on the issue of homosexuality. Further bringing the idea of what it means to be a man to the fore. The film progresses at 40 minutes where we see Kwanda urging the traditional nurse to come out and declare that they are gay. The film at 48 minutes presents an initiate being forced to speak on what it means and their journey to manhood but Kwanda refuses. Elders take offense and link it to his father's decision to leave the village and abandon the customs of his people. The conversation is in the presence of boys something that's questionable and does not happen in the real Xhosa traditional male circumcision setup. The film goes on with the negative representation of the Xhosa culture, thus at 51 minutes 40 seconds, the initiates show each other that they have healed. At this point we see one of the initiates attacking Kwanda because of his sexual orientation. This contradicts lessons taught there that include tolerance. The scene goes on to 52 minutes where initiates in-

sult each other and bring their fathers into the conversation. Then at 53 minutes 20 seconds the scene depicts issues of homosexuals polluting the traditional circumcision custom.

As the film progresses we see at 57 minutes scene where a traditional nurse is involved in theft of livestock and forces an initiate to slaughter it. This is against the custom as is discussed in chapter two on how a traditional nurse is selected. Thus the traditional nurses are people who have received training and both should be known by the Department of Health.

The film goes on with its negativity on the presentation of the Xhosa culture. This is seen at 1 hour where the scene depicts the day that's before the sending off ceremony initiates involved in heavy drinking. In the real Xhosa traditional circumcision school, that defeats the purpose of the traditional circumcision school which is to teach boys how to handle themselves. This is further shown by Kwanda's drunken behavior which sees him dirty dancing in front of fellow initiates and trying to kiss them. Further in the film at 1 hour 3 minutes Kwanda tries to convince Xolani to come out again and insults him calling him a foolish gay. In the actual Xhosa traditional circumcision, an initiate doesn't talk like that to his traditional nurse. This goes on and at 1 hour 4 minutes other initiates confront Xolani who is the traditional nurse on accusations that he is sleeping with Kwanda who is his initiate. Vija who is the other traditional nurse intervenes and beats the initiate who was leading this allegation. The confrontation and the assault are not allowed in the real Xhosa traditional male circumcision setup.

The film progresses to depict the negative deeds of the Xhosa people, thus at 1 hour 8 minutes Kwanda finds Vija and Xolani sleeping together something that would forever dent their image as traditional nurses if it were to reach the elders. Vija runs after him in an attempt to kill him. This as seen in chapter two on the selection of a traditional nurse is not how traditional nurses handle initiates neither do they engage in sexual practices. The film continues at 1 hour 11 minutes to depict an onslaught of the Xhosa culture where the elders check to see boys if they are healed. This ceremony is sacred and is never shown nor does it go as is depicted in the movie. Once again we see at 1 hour 11 minutes

where one of the traditional nurses cannot account on the whereabouts of the initiate Kwanda. This is never the case and no initiate can run away nor disappear unknowingly during initiation. Towards its end at 1 hour 12 minutes, the film shows us the elderly giving words of counsel to the initiates as they graduate to manhood. This is the true reflection of what transpires however the expose is not supposed to happen for these things are supposed to be known by men who have gone through traditional circumcision not boys and even women. At the end of the film at 1 hour 18 minutes Xolani the traditional nurse murders his initiate who caught him sleeping with another traditional nurse Vija. He does this to protect their reputation. This on one hand can be seen as a way of showing the general populace the causes of initiates' deaths during initiation school. However in real Xhosa traditional circumcision school this will never happen. There is no way the initiate can with the help of a nurse run away from the initiation school moreover the coming out stage is one of the interesting stages for the initiates and there is no way one would agree to run away.

CONCLUSION

It was evident in this paper that, the film is almost exclusively based on a Xhosa initiation school and the goings on among the attendees of the school, namely the initiates and their nurses or caregivers (amakhakatha). Initiation and circumcision (ulwaluko) was central to the Xhosa people and their very existence. The practice is a rite of passage to manhood and fatherhood. Initiation is strongly believed to be sacred not only by the amaXhosa but by the majority of African people in South Africa and other African countries. The paper also uncovered that, sexual intercourse was a taboo subject in the context of initiation and anyone assigned to looking after initiates is prohibited from engaging in sexual conduct. This brings us to the conclusion that for the Xhosa people, secrecy is sacrosanct and deeply entrenched in them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper focused on traditional leaders based in the Eastern Cape and Inxeba film as it

sought to evaluate the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society on how media shaped the perceptions of the public on the issue of traditional circumcision. Future research should focus the role of media in the construction of cultural identities in modern society comparing of two provinces and include the general populace. Thus, in future one could expand the study and look at two provinces. The study could also look at how radio, TV and electronic media cover stories on traditional circumcision and the impact they have in the lives of the general public as a result of their coverage. More over traditional leaders must been consulted on the production of films or movies that talks about any cultural practices.

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