RITES OF PASSAGE AND MANHOOD: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF COLOURED ADOLESCENT BOYS FROM SOUTH AFRICA IN 'THE BOYS TO MEN: RITES OF PASSAGE PROGRAMME'

by

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Date: November 2025

DECLARATION

I declare that "Rites of passage and manhood: A phenomenological study exploring the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys from South Africa in 'the Boys to Men rites of passage programme'" is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Student number: 14429055

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Date: November 2025

DEDICATION

To Muhammad Uwais, Humairah, and the many struggling youth on the Cape Flats, this is for you.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of Coloured youth boys from South Africa, who participated in a rite of passage programme, specifically the 'Boys to Men' rites of passage [ROP] programme. The impact of this experience was captured, to understand how it influenced their sense of identity, their attitudes towards risky behaviour, and their role in community. Rites of passage programmes have been observed to have a positive impact on the lives of at-risk youth from marginalised communities, which motivated the current study. The study was qualitative, using an interpretivist paradigm, and a phenomenological research design. Five participants of the programme were interviewed, using semi-structured interview approach. The data was analysed, through the interpretive phenomenological analysis technique, which revealed the following themes: Self-mastery, rewriting the narrative, initiating connection and catalyst for change. In this study, I capture the hope of participants, as they strove to rise above their challenges.

KEYWORDS

at-risk

Coloured adolescence

Adjustment

Rites of Passage

Identity development

Role in community

Self-mastery

Sense of self

Relationships

South Africa

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FTP	–	Future time perspectives
IPA	–	Interpretive phenomenological analysis
ROP	–	Rites of passage
ROPES	–	Rites of passage experiences
RPP	–	Ritual process paradigm
U.S	–	United States

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In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful, peace and salutation be on prophet Muhammad. I write this, starting with a reflection on the prophetic words, “Whoever has not thanked people, has not thanked God.”

In this spirit, I start with the acknowledgement of my parents, who have raised me, and instilled within me an appreciation for the persuit of knowledge. To my mother, who has nurtured me with her love, and urged me towards continuous striving for excellence. My father, I thank you for teaching me the importance of pursuing an education, as well as investing time and effort, to ensure that I receive the best opportunities to achieve this.

To my teachers involved in my schooling, from primary till tertiary, I thank you for never giving up on me, and for planting the seeds, watering, and watching it grow. Today, I enjoy the fruits of your investment. It is my hope that I, too, will be able to play a role in shaping the future of young people, in the way that you have shaped mine. A special mention to my supervisor, Dr Errolyn Gordon, who encouraged me to continue with this study, at moments when I felt like giving up. To Mr. Kruger, who guided me towards researching this topic, thank you for showing the way, and for allowing me to engage with such meaningful work.

To the particpants, and in general, the young men of the Cape flats, who are beacons of hope, and examples of reaching beyond your immediate circumstances. I see you, and thank you for being a source of inspiration for this work. Your valuable insight and experiences will help researchers develop interventions that will change the tracjectory of at-risk youth, not just on the Cape Flats, but across South Africa, especially those originating from challenging backgrounds, similar to yours.

To my son and daughter, Muhammad Uwais and Humairah, the joy that you have brought into my life, has been the spark and the light at the end of this long journey. All my toil is to lay a foundation for you, and it is my prayer that this sacrifice will serve as a springboard towards ensuring a better future for both of you. Seeing you smile, lightened a heavy load, hearing you laugh, served as reminder that there is more to life, and sharing the journey with you, has been one of my most proudest achievements.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce my research on the experiences of Coloured boys in the 'Boys to Men: Rites of Passage' programme [ROP]. Subsequently, I highlighted the background of this study, which aid in its contextualization. The rationale is elucidated, followed by the aims, objectives, and research questions. Finally, I conclude the introduction with an outline of the chapters that are presented in my study.

1.2. Background

The suicide of the famous South African musician, Riky Rick, in 2022, has attracted attention to mental health within the male population, raising the question of how a materially successful man could still decide to take his own life (Mkhize, 2022). The findings of a study, conducted in 20 countries, has revealed that simply being male, acts as a predictor for premature death (Farrel & Gray, 2018). The challenge of masculinity and mental health is not only evident among adult males, instead, a growing trend of risky behaviour within young adolescent boys has emerged (Tat & Dayıoğlu, 2021). For instance, in Farrel and Gray (2018), they report that boys, between the ages of 10 and 14 years, have committed suicide at twice the rate of females of the same age, and boys aged 15 to 19 years, four times the rate of females of the same age. Although these statistics are from the United States of America, they are a cause for concern, and creates the impression that a distinct problem exists. A significant point that was raised by Farrel and Gray (2018), in their book entitled, *The Boy Crisis*, is the negative impact of father deprivation on young adolescent boys. Consequently, due to the impact of father-deprived parenthood, many boys do not have a constant positive male figure to usher and guide them into becoming well-adjusted men (Tat & Dayıoğlu, 2021).

A growing number of male-deprived homes has been observed in many countries such as America, Russia, Seychelles, Brazil, Grenada and South Africa (Freeks, 2017). According to Freeks (2017), 48% of fathers in South Africa were categorised as being absent in 2011, which potentially meant that nearly half of the father population, at that time, were not actively

involved in their children's lives. Moreover, as highlighted in another report, 2,13 million children in South Africa are fatherless, (Freeks, 2017; Zuliani et al., 2024). In addition, 9 million children are raised without fathers, implying that father figures are not actively involved in their children's upbringing (Freeks, 2017). However, absent fathers are not the only challenge that men face in South Africa, as mental health issues within the male South African communities are intensifying (Bantjies & Mapalang, 2021). In South Africa, men are four times more likely than women to die by suicide (Bantjies & Mapalang, 2021). These authors argue that a great contributor to this phenomenon is the attitudes and identities of males towards their ideas of masculinity and male machismo (Bantjies & Mapalang, 2021). Notions of Coloured masculine identity and manhood will be explored in this study.

In South Africa, 'Coloured' is a historically and socially defined population category, originating in colonial and apartheid-era classifications, and often associated with diverse and mixed ancestries including Khoe, San, African, Asian, and European lineages; however, it represents a heterogeneous and culturally varied group rather than a single unified ethnic identity (Adhikari, 2005). Erasmus (2001) argues against the notion of Coloured identity simply being a mixed identity of White and Black races. Instead, she argues that the identity has undergone a process of creolization, incorporating elements of various cultures and experiences, birthing new, but real identities that are shared among Coloured people. Coloured identity, however, is questioned, as some argue that a Coloured identity does not exist, and holding on to this identity simply affirms the labels from the past Apartheid regime (Erasmus, 2001). It is under these circumstances that many individuals, who identify as Coloured, experience a sense of confusion, abandonment, and neglect (Erasmus, 2001). This stems from the fact that some view Coloured identity as a pseudo identity, and labelling Coloured people simply as illegitimate children of White and Black people, without culture and traditions (Erasmus, 2001). Additionally, Coloured people feel abandoned, and not recognised within the new South Africa, holding an 'in-between' space, while a growing middle class of Black South Africans is forming, and White South Africans still maintaining their upper-class economic status (Baron, 2022; Erasmus, 2001). The deprivation of economic opportunity has resulted in some Coloured men resorting to illegal activities, to ensure the survival of themselves and their households. Within many Coloured homes, men are still the breadwinners, and providing for one's family is considered a feature of manhood for them (Mthembu, 2015).

It is important to note that there is a distinction between individuals making the decision to identify themselves as coloured, and others simply being labelled as such (Gordon, 2025). The

origin of the term is hugely problematic as it attempted to homogenise a group of people who have heterogeneous backgrounds and cultures. Furthermore, the Apartheid government also developed racial categories, placed them within separate geographical spaces, as a way of maintaining racial segregation and preferential treatment (Erasmus, 2017). Therefore, continuing with the utilization of this term to refer to a people can be construed as highly problematic for some, whereas others may feel more comfortable with doing so (Gordon, 2025). Some reject the Coloured identity vehemently by noting "God made me a man, the National Party made me a Coloured man" (Adhikari, 2010, p.163). This helps with understanding the extent that some may have a problem with claiming this identity. However, as the researcher, I identify culturally with being coloured and I understand that this may be different for others.

The meaning of masculinity in the minds of some Coloured men, in certain communities, may involve elements of risk-taking (Mthembu, 2015). The mindset of these individuals suggest that there self-worth is strongly connected to being able to prove one's manhood, that is, through brave spectacles, oftentimes of an illegal nature (Mthembu, 2015). Considering the troubled history that Coloured people have had with the law, oftentimes being the victims of the law, from a deeper psychological lens, breaking the law could be seen as a protest against the injustice that they experienced in the past, that is, through breaking the law, they could be seeking justice (Krahn, 2025). I highlight this, to also demonstrate that there could be many factors influencing perceptions of manhood for some Coloured men, including deep psychological factors.

Characteristics, such as stoicism and strength have been listed in attempting to define what masculinity could mean for some Coloured men, with great emphasis on being self-reliant, not showing any signs of weakness, or failing to perform under pressure also being noted (Mthembu, 2015). In addition, the negative role modelling of abusive fathers in some instances has proliferated toxic ideas of masculinity in the community and contributed to the perpetuation of many social ills associated with Coloured men (Mthembu, 2015). Unhealthy ideas of Coloured masculinity has been suggested to contribute to certain social ills such as the abuse of Methamphetamine, neglect of families, gender-based violence, and violent behaviour, which is widespread within certain Coloured communities (Meade et al., 2012). There are many other factors that contribute to the proliferation of social ills within Coloured communities, such as socio-economic factors, unresolved intergenerational trauma, individual and familial (Mohajana, 2013; DeCarlo Santiago et al., 2011). Consequently, while being exposed to these behaviours and ideas that circulate within the community, young adolescent boys start to

emulate them, thereby, continuing the vicious cycle (Mthembu, 2015). Therefore, Ratele (2013) argues for a critical reflection on traditional masculinities, which includes other non-typical patriarchal forms of masculinities.

Similar to some Coloured adult males, there are Coloured boys who face unique challenges with risky behaviours, due to their economic positionality, and the resulting powerlessness, which accompanies their context, resorting to risky behaviour to counter these psychological inflictions has become a form of coping (Anderson, 2010). A possible reason for the widespread of violence and substance abuse found within some Coloured boys is the negative impact of historic realities such as the Group Areas Act, Apartheid spatial planning and the resulting lack of opportunity that came as a result of these events. (Cochrane & Chellan, 2017; Basterfield et al., 2014). Therefore, according to these studies, a portion of Coloured adults and adolescents struggle with a wide range of social ills including aggression and substance abuse. Attempts at understanding the reasons and motivation for the manifestation of these social ills are noted in the above discussion; however, it does not answer questions related to the impact that the lack of guidance has on Coloured youth. Therefore, in this current study, I aim to explore the impact of rites of passage on Coloured youth.

1.3. Rationale for the study

In this current study, I explore the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys in a Rites of Passage [ROP] programme. ROP programmes focus on cultivating the strengths of youth, especially those who originate from marginalised communities. These programmes comprise many elements, for example, "community involvement, positive role models, collective instruction, cultural and personal identity development, high expectations, safe and supportive environment, and an emphasis on purpose and achievement." (West-Olatunji et al., 2008, p. 136). The central principle of the ROP programmes is that boys do not become men by simply reaching the age of adulthood; instead, they only attain manhood when they develop the necessary skills and qualities, which will allow them to become beneficial members of the community (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). Therefore, in my study, the influence and experiences of Coloured adolescent boys involved in ROP programmes are explored, specifically the Boys to Men: ROP programmes.

According to Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton (2018), rites of passage programmes have been considered a potential intervention, as they address many of the causal factors for at-risk behaviour in the lives of Coloured adolescent boys. Ultimately, I anticipate that by observing their experiences, potential solutions for the multi-faceted problem of at-risk behaviour for this group could potentially be identified. Developing interventions for at-risk Coloured boys, could also contribute to a safer society, and guide young boys to reach their full potential. In addition, this intervention addresses the challenge of fatherlessness, by introducing positive male role models, who set an example, and encourage the boys to strive for excellence. Finally, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will guide future intervention programmes, by providing a detailed account of the experiences of Coloured youth in the Rites of Passage programmes, to inform interventions.

1.4. Research aims

- To explore the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys from South Africa in the Boys to Men Rites of Passage programme.
- To explore the effect of ROP programmes on Coloured adolescent boys' sense of identity.

1.5. Research questions

- What are the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys in the ROP programmes?
- What effect do the ROP programmes have on Coloured adolescent boys' sense of identity?
- How do ROP programmes impact Coloured adolescent boys' perception of risky behaviour?
- How has the ROP programme influenced Coloured adolescent boys' relationships with others?
- How has the ROP programme influenced Coloured adolescent boys' engagement in school?
- How has the ROP programme influenced Coloured adolescent boys' attitudes towards the community?

1.6. Objectives

- To understand the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys in the ROP programmes;
- To explore the effect of ROP programmes on Coloured adolescent boys' sense of identity;
- To understand the effect of ROP programmes on Coloured adolescent boys' perceptions of risky behaviours:
- To describe the effect of ROP programmes on Coloured adolescent boys' engagement in school.
- To understand the effect of ROP programmes on Coloured adolescent boys' attitudes towards the community.

1.7. Chapter outline

Chapter 1: includes a background to this current study, underlining the motivation to conduct it. In addition, the rationale, aims, questions and objectives of the study are presented, as well as a delineation of the chapter outline of the study.

Chapter 2: contains the literature review, which includes important discussions about the rites of passage, as well as studies related to the research questions, with special emphasis on aspects related to at-risk youth and challenges experienced by Coloured youth from South Africa. Additionally, the inconsistencies in the literature are outlined, which further orients and motivates the need for this current study.

Chapter 3: encompasses the research paradigm, aspects related to sampling, data collection techniques, the approach towards data analysis, as well as ethical considerations, which are important for this study. The chapter is concluded with the reflexivity of the researcher.

Chapter 4: In this chapter, the findings of the research are presented, which yielded four superordinate themes, as well as their nine subsequent sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis, using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analyses [IPA]. The IPA describes four steps that are used to analyse the data, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: comprises the discussion that follows the findings, incorporating literature that concurs, or opposes said findings. The superordinate and subthemes, presented in chapter 4, are discussed in detail.

Chapter 6: contains the conclusion, where the main aspect of the study is summarised, the limitations, as well as contributions to new knowledge are highlighted, and recommendations are made.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter served as an introduction and background to this current study. The rationale, aims, research questions, as well as objectives are presented, along with a chapter outline for the study. In the following chapter, the literature review is conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is focused on providing a wider context for the understanding of ROP programmes, as well as their impact on their participants, exploring various international and local studies, which capture the experiences of these participants, during their participation in their programmes. Literature related to the research questions, described in the introduction, are provided, thereby situating the current research within the context of studies set in current times, as well as the past. Therefore, this chapter commences by highlighting the definition of Rites of Passage, coupled with a delineation of the theoretical framework. Subsequently, the impact of ROP programmes in different contexts throughout the world are discussed, followed by the involvement of the youth and community.

In addition, the review continues with a discussion of aspects related to youth identity and its development, as well as risky behaviour and interpersonal relationships in youth. The chapter is concluded with a presentation of literature related to youth in school, and the challenges that they experience.

2.2. Rites of passage: Definitions and Theoretical foundations

2.2.1. Conceptual framework

Before addressing what Rites of Passage programmes achieve, it is important to understand, and clearly define the Rites of Passage concept. Van Gennep (1960) is widely regarded as the pioneering figure, who shaped and helped to define the concept of the Rites of Passage. In his work, *Les Rites de Passage*, he provides an explanation for the Rites of Passage process, noting that it involves rites which recognises and accompanies changes from one state to another. Rites of passage can be seen when individuals in society transition from one social standing to another, and there are specific rituals that is shared amongst this society to recognise this transition (Van Gennep, 1960). In

addition, it involves engaging in rituals, which alludes to behaviour that bears religious significance (Van Gennep, 1960). Sociologist, Emile Durkheim (2016), recognises the religious value of rites of passage, noting that they imbue a sacredness on things and objects. Additionally, Eliade (1985) describes the First Nation people's notions rites of passage, as ceremonial events that move from chaos into creation. These understandings promote the idea that the rites of passage were implemented fundamentally, to shape and transform the worldview of participants, thereby preparing and ushering them into their new status.

Sylvia (2022, p. 22) defines rites of passage as follows, "Rites of passage rituals are a thought to be a fundamental part of human experience and range from the structurally complex and challenging to the most ordinary of gestures transforming them into symbolic expressions, their meaning often reinforced through repetition and patterning". This definition suggests that rites may take on simplistic, or greater elaborate forms; however, the importance of the rites is that they promote a symbolic meaning for the individual experiencing them. Additionally, rites of passage are acknowledged to form part of various religions around the world, and is observed in smaller societies, as well larger (Forth, 2018). They are concerned with rituals that mark a transitioning of individuals to different social statuses, generally higher ones. Modern manifestations of rites of passage may include graduation ceremonies, where undergraduates are promoted to graduates (Forth, 2018). In the South African context we also see initiation ceremonies amongst various tribes, which I will discuss in greater detail during the literature review section.

Rites of passage programmes are aimed at providing an environment, in which young adolescents may explore and cultivate their sense of identity (Hargrove, 1997; Kingsman, 2021). They provide individuals a space to find motivation, as well as a compass for life, especially those from environments where exposure to risky behaviour is commonplace. The hope that these intervention have is to prevent risky behaviour from developing (Emery, 2012). However, despite Rites of Passage programmes forming part of many ancient societies, they differ in their messages and processes (Van Gennep, 1960). Similarly, ROP programmes have divergent goals, and many participants have reported diverse experiences, when participating in these programmes (Jennings, 2011).

2.2.2. Foundational theories

Van Gennep (1960) adds that Rites of Passage process involves three distinct stages, namely, the separation, margin or liminal, and aggregation stages, with each stage incorporating unique characteristics and processes. During the separation phase, the individual no longer holds the same status in the society as previously, literally separating from the village, or his/her previous identity. In the case of Rites of Passage programmes, participants separate from their 'boy identity'. In the second phase, the initiate has an ambiguous identity, sharing a liminal identity that imbues features and characteristics of his/her past and future identities (Dunham et al., 1986). Finally, the initiate is reincorporated into society in the final phase, holding a new status, accompanied by different rules and expectations, which are dissimilar from their previously held statuses.

Similarly, when a boy transitions to manhood, his status is associated with changes in the rules and expectations. Each initiate undertakes a ritual process during the rites of passage programme. Consequently, by completing this ritual process, their statuses and responsibilities are elevated, accompanied by privileges, as a fully realised men (Dunham et al., 1986).

Rites of Passage programmes differ from each other; however, they share common stages that are noted in Van Gennep's (1960) definition. Additionally, many ROP programmes are aimed at youth, to cultivate their talents, and encourage them to actualise into the individuals that they have the potential to become (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). ROP programmes all strive to teach young boys duties and responsibilities that accompany manhood, which helps with shaping and informing their identities (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). In addition, ROP programmes help their participants to identify their role and place in the community, which cultivates a purpose for which they could strive towards (West-Olatunji et al., 2008).

Drawing from the work of Van Gennep, Joseph Campbell's model of the hero's journey (Sonnenburg, & Runco, 2017) represents an extension of the core themes, described by Van Gennep (1960). Campbell's model was developed from his study of mythology, leading him to coin the term, *monomyth*, which refers to the progress stages of the hero's journey (Sonnenburg & Runco, 2017). In essence, the hero's journey involves a three-

stage process, with many substages in between. The three main stages include departure, initiation, and the return (Dooley-Feldman, 2016). Within the three main stages are a further 17 substages, which are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

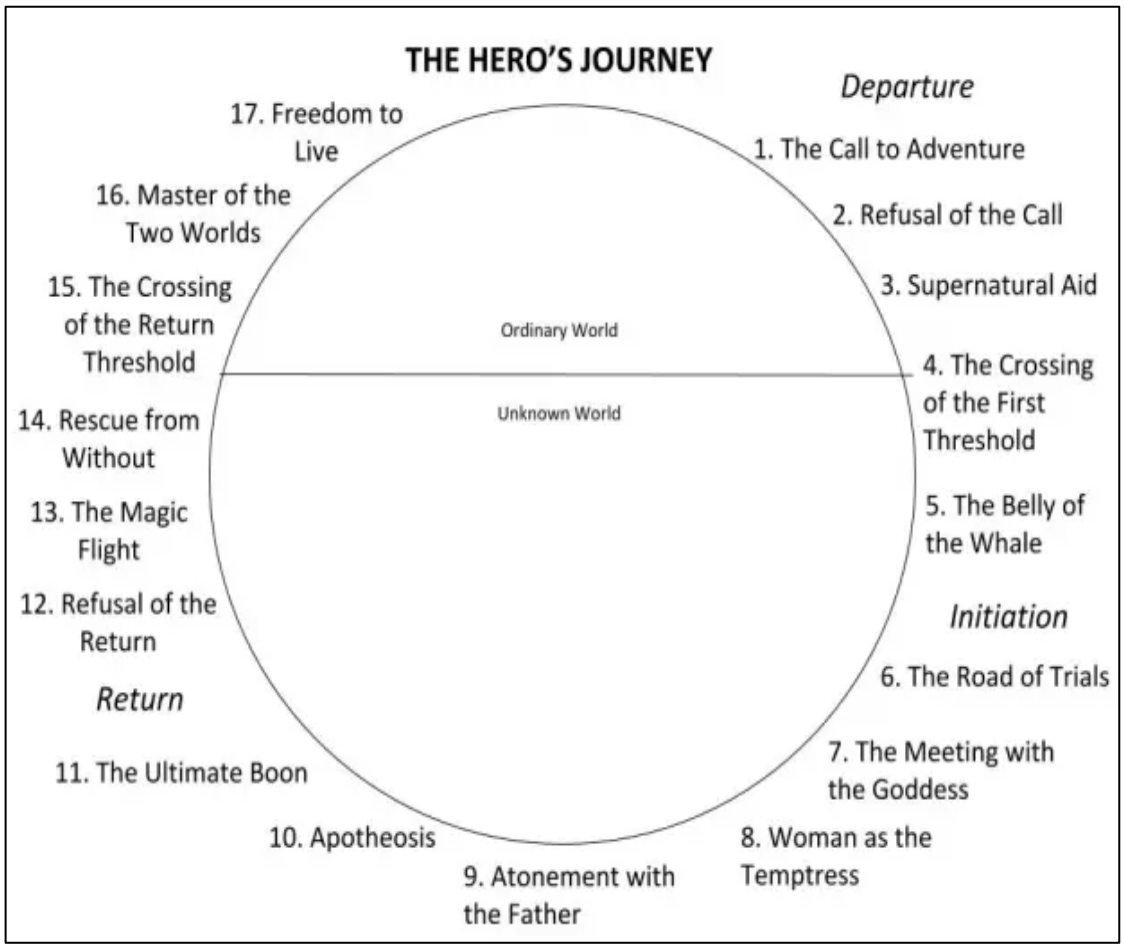


Figure 2.1. The hero's journey

Ultimately, following from the foundational models that were outlined by Van Gennep (1960) and Campbell (Sonnenburg, & Runco, 2017), an updated model, referred to as the Ritual Process Paradigm [RPP], was developed by Dunham et al. (1986). Within the RPP, a four-phase, 14-step model is identified, which accounts for the transition in identity. In addition, the model includes ideas of separation, transition, and incorporation; however, it provides important details that help with the delineation of the theory (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003), depicted in Table 2.1.

This paradigm helps with the plotting of the process that individuals undertake, when completing their initiation ceremony, from onset to conclusion. It helps the reader map

the journey that the participants have travelled, while it also assisted me with the framing of the questions, which were put to the participants during the interviews.

Table 2.1: Ritual Process Paradigm

	Step	Generic Name	Equivalent or Related concepts
I Preparation	1	old support group	
	2	old identity	old role, old self, old identity, old habit
	3	old identity completion	low activation; consonance; confirmation; positive reinforcement
II Separation	4	new environmental demands	high activation; dissonance; destabilization; new social pressures
	5	liminality	marginal or uncertain status; cognitive dissonance
	6	activation	fear; anxiety
	7	agony	depression; preoccupation; crisis
III Transition	8	numinosity	awe; respect; fear of God; openness to unknown or growth; tolerance; humility; "going to seek one's fate"
	9	accommodation	cognitive closure; paradigm shift
	10	ecstacy	elation, celebration
IV Reincorporation	11	transcendence	enter new moral order; name change or Baptism or religious confirmation; intending of new cognitive form
	12	new identity	new role; habit; new self
	13	new support group	new models; bonding
	14	identity reinforcement	moderating of activation; assimilation; consonance; restabilization

(Dunham et al., 1986)

2.2.3. Cultural significance

The role of rites of passage differs across cultures; however, they share many themes throughout the world. A point of contrast is noted between the more traditionally-based rites of passage, versus modern-day rites of passage, with the latter being more focused on promoting individuation and autonomy (Weichold et al., 2023). The Boys to Men

ROP, therefore, was designed to help boys transition into responsible adults, and plays a mentoring role in their lives, especially for boys without a father figure (Boys to Men Mentoring Cape Town, n.d.). Its stated mission is to equip teenage boys with the necessary emotional skills to foster resiliency and promote mental health (Boys to Men Mentoring Cape Town, n.d.). In a more traditional setting, the underlying message will relate to the role played in promoting and upholding society. For this reason, traditional rites of passage may incorporate themes focused on reproductive knowledge, roles between genders, and ancient knowledge, related to the specific culture (Weichold et al., 2023). In both traditional and modern-day rites of passage, rituals are used to help with the transitioning; however, the purpose and desired result of the rites of passage differ (Weichold et al., 2023).

In addition, the duration of ROP programmes will differ between traditional and modern settings. In a modern setting, rites of passage is carried over a longer period, usually throughout adolescence; whereas, in traditional settings, it may last a few days, to weeks, and in some instances up to a year (Weichold et al., 2023). In modern times, it may be staggered through a series of events, which could include passing a driving licence, completing high school, or entering university, which frequently are disregarded by some (Weichold et al., 2023). This contrasts with a traditional setting, where puberty indicators usually determine a readiness for adulthood, which explains why traditional rites of passage focus on topics related to fertility, sexuality, and responsibility (Weichold et al., 2023). Understanding the nuances of traditional versus modern-day rites of passage is important, as youth still experience rites of passage; however, events that inform these rites are different from the ones of the past.

2.3. Rites of Passage: Measuring the impact in different contexts

2.3.1. International context

As highlighted above, ROP programmes form part of many cultures across the world, and the way these programmes are conducted and designed, impacts different aspects of participants' lives. In the United States of America [USA], ROP programme interventions that aimed to enhance and impact on the participants' academic performance, yielded positive influence, improving areas such as school attendance, submission of classwork, and academic results (Ford-Little, 2006; West-Olatunji et al.,

2008). This was achieved by focusing ROP programmes on the participants' sense of self, to impact positively on their academic performance. Additionally, ROP programmes that were attended by African American youth, have demonstrated that the participants have a greater sense of resilience, family involvement, and community participation (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). These programmes include African American youth, as it targeted *at-risk youth*, which, predominately, are African American youth from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds in the USA (Carswell et al., 2009).

A longitudinal study, conducted by Floyd (2011), with African American participants, to evaluate the impact of the Beaux Affair Rites of Passage Mentoring Program, revealed a positive influence on the completion of high school. In addition, it assisted participants in making career choices, as well as improving their roles as mentors, fathers, and husbands. However, an over-usage of African American youth for intervention studies, perpetuate negative stereotypes of this demographic, which should also be noted (Teasley et al., 2017).

In Australia, a quantitative study measuring the impact of rites of passage programmes on the relationship between father and son, revealed evidence of improving these relationships (Jennings, 2011). The study measured participants' and non-participants' father-son relationships, and yielded quantitatively significant results, with ROP participants exhibiting a significantly better relationship with their fathers, in comparison with non-participant group. The age group of sons, who participated in the study, ranged between 15 and 17 years. Additionally, the participant group claimed to feel a greater sense of maturity, and stated that, because of the ROP intervention, they feel much "older" (Jennings, 2011, p. 78). Another study, conducted in Australia, reported some of the experiences of the participants involved in the ROP programme, called "The Rite Journey". One of the participants' experiences and reflections was particularly interesting when he disclosed:

> "It has started to give me more confidence. I have learnt that to be confident in myself is very important, and I think my confidence has grown. I have been more open with myself. I have dealt with things that I usually don't. It has been a very good learning curve. I've found out that some things aren't so scary. I have learnt that being in my own company is not so bad. The camp

> helped me not to be so reliant on my parents. Rock and Water taught me to have self-control. Rock and Water made me more positive about the way I go about life. I have changed in the way that I deal with things, and I think more about things before I do them."

(Lines & Gallasch, 2009, p. 86).

Similarly, research conducted by Smith (2011) in New Zealand, involving teachers, as well as students in a Rite of Passage programme, with the teachers facilitating, and the students participating in the ROP intervention, highlighted significant positive aspects of their ROP experience. The participants were in Year 10 of Secondary school (grade 9 equivalent in South African schooling system), and the programme was conducted across a one-year period, with various rites organised throughout the year (Smith, 2011). The goal was to facilitate the transitioning of the boys to responsible men, equipping them with tools to manage daily challenges (Smith, 2011). At the end of the intervention, the researchers gathered the experiences from both the students and the teachers, observing clearly that the relationship between the students and teachers had improved significantly (Smith, 2011). In addition, from their response, it was evident that the ROP programme had helped the teachers, as well as the students to become more caring individuals. The students were more considerate in their interaction with others, and the teachers felt a greater sense of personal responsibility for the students, stressing the importance of role modelling (Smith, 2011).

This sense of strengthening and deepening of relationships between older and younger generations, with youth becoming receptive to the wisdom from their elders, and the older generation feeling a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of the youth, has been a common theme. ROP programmes were used as an important tool to facilitate this phenomenon (Jennings, 2011; Smith, 2011). This is further corroborated in a study that explored the Jewish tradition of Bar Mitzvahs, emphasising that, in Jewish culture, this is regarded as an important ROP ceremony for adolescent boys (Bronner, 2008). Bar Mitzvah rites of passages have themes that focus on resolving conflicts between fathers and their sons, thereby creating a deeper and more meaningful relationship between the two generations (Bronner, 2008).

In the Rediscovering ROP programme, this inter-generational connection is extended to include the ancient ancestral practices from the First Nations in America (Lertzman, 2002). Participants in this ROP programme, who were often Native Americans, reported having a stronger connection with, and care for, Mother Earth, appreciating nature, with a greater willingness to spend time in the wilderness, after participating in the Rediscovering ROP programme (Lertzman, 2002). However, valid criticism is levelled at the programme, and by extension, all ROP programmes. Critics suggest that culture appropriation and misrepresentation of cultures, from which the rites are borrowed, should be cautioned against, especially when there is no long standing connection between the rite that is practised and the participant (Lertzman, 2022; Stephanson, 2003).

Finally, in England, the ROP programme, Mantra, had participants from Black, as well as White working-class backgrounds participate in the programme, to ensure that their participation would facilitate a diversion from risky behaviour, and guide them to more positive behaviour (Majors & Dewar, 2002). Pre- and post-measurement tools, measuring the efficacy of the programme, revealed that the ROP programme was able to impact the development of a positive self-esteem and resiliency, which in turn allowed for the participants to make better decisions, which affected their lives (Major & Dewar, 2002).

By evaluating the international studies discussed above, it is understood that participants in ROP programmes enjoy various benefits, which include improvements in academic performance, interpersonal relationships, sense of self and community, resilience, as well as connection to Earth and their ancestors. However, caution should be taken, when borrowing from cultures, to avoid cultural appropriation and/or misrepresentation.

Social media has also been a space where some adolescents are exploring and negotiating transitions in their identity (de Jager, 2018; Agai, 2022). Online spaces have replaced formal ritual spaces where traditional rites of passage process would take place and new online rituals are partaken in to manage social transition and identity formation (de Jager, 2018; Agai, 2022). Therefore it is important to look at how other non-traditional rites of passage is being navigated and aiding in the process of transition in the modern era. The ownership of guns for some White Afrikaner's, although not entirely related to rites of passage, represents a symbol of masculinity and maturity (Morrell, 2001). This may also

be an important rite for some young Afrikaner men that allows them to enjoy a new social status (Morell, 2001). I was unable to find literature on gun ownership as a rites of passage, however, this may be another example of non-traditional forms of rites of passage in the modern era that could be studied.

2.3.2. African context

Rites of passage in Africa is experienced and expressed differently throughout the continent; however some similarities remain, despite the variations (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016). In Africa there are different rites to celebrate various aspects related to an individual's life, for instance, rites related to pregnancy, birth, naming, and puberty (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016). Puberty rites play the role of changing the status of individuals, from passive involvement in community to active involvement. This also introduces youth, who are transitioning into adults, to their roles and duties that they will assume, as they become contributing members of society. Therefore, through rites of passages, individuals will also learn about sex, taking care of their family, marriage, as well as other duties that will uphold and strengthen their community (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016).

Traditional ROP practices are being lost, for example, many prefer to undergo circumcision at an earlier age, and through modern medical practices, which have prevented circumcision related injuries, but have also prevented individuals from attaining traditional knowledge and wisdom (Nwadiokwa et al., 2016). Additionally, the influence of Christian missionaries and government has contributed to the discouragement of these traditional ROP practices, and instead, they encourage individuals to attend hospitals, as a more hygienic and safer option (Nwadiokwa et al., 2016). However, despite traditional ROP practices not being commonplace, Churches have adopted and initiated ROP programmes, to ensure that young adolescents are guided into adulthood. This is evident in the Rites of Passage Experiences (ROPES) programme that is facilitated by a Church in Nairobi, Kenya (Karianjahi, 2015). The ROPES programme was initiated in 1997, and by the year 2010, had over 3000 adolescents participating in the programme, which alludes to the great need and success of ROP programmes (Karianjahi, 2015). It has been reported in anecdotal reports and case studies that the programme is effective in strengthening youth's perception of responsibility towards community, enhancing their self-identity, as well as cultivating an ability to make positive life choices (Karianjahi, 2015).

In Senegal, the Diola, an ethnic group in the South, uses sports as a ROP practice, to initiate adolescents in the spiritual path and traditions of their community (Baum, 2017). The community attends traditional wrestling matches, and participates in specific rites, to ensure that the wrestlers are protected from spiritual attacks, as well as ensure victory (Baum, 2017). When the youth attend these matches, they are socialised into the traditional practices of their communities, and thereby initiated, as they are also requested to participate in the rites accompanying the wrestling match (Baum, 2017).

In Zimbabwe, the traditional ROP practice Ngoma, male circumcision allows the initiate to enjoy many benefits over those of uninitiated males (Mapindani, 2018). These include a greater social acceptance, the ability to gain access to certain societal positions, and the ability to enjoy the role of fatherhood, as individuals are taught these aspects of life through the ROP initiation (Mapindani, 2018).

From these studies the role of ROP, within the African context, fulfils several roles that are important for the healthy functioning of the participant within society, and serves as a vehicle to impart valuable knowledge. ROP experiences from both African, as well as Western countries, attempt to provide participants with valuable skills and knowledge that will allow them to contribute to their societies.

2.3.2.1. The importance of Rites of passage within the African context

Rites of passage fulfil a role in the process of becoming a person in the African framework. Therefore, appreciating this role is a testimony that becoming a person is perceived developmentally. To be considered a person is a process of *becoming*, and by enduring the various rites of passage, an individual is elevated to a new status with a stronger sense of cultural identity (De Craemer, 1987; Mann-McFarlane, 2020). The role that rites fulfil in the *becoming* of a person is highlighted by Klaasen (2017, p. 34) as "integral to African personhood is the rites of passage that everyone, or in some cases groups, must go through. These rites of passage are another example of the dynamic nature of African living; Africans are constantly developing and growing through the rites that are performed". Therefore, from an African perspective, rites of passage facilitate and fulfil a fundamental role in becoming a person.

Rites of passage traditions and practices have waned over time, with many African cultures only maintaining the practice of circumcision for young adolescent males, as well as females (Nwadiokwu et al., 2016). Circumcision rites in African cultures fulfil a symbolic role of separating the young adults from their childhood, and ushering them into the responsibility of adult life. The pain that they experience through the ceremony, is an introduction to the pain and difficulty, which they are likely to encounter in adulthood; therefore, through this experience, they are encouraged to endure the pain with bravery. Those who can undergo the surgery without expressing their pain, are often praised and celebrated in the community. In many African cultures, after the ceremony is completed, a party and feast ensue, to celebrate the achievements of the initiated individuals, as they step into their new role and identity in the community (Nwadiokwa et al., 2016).

Therefore, Rites of Passage ceremonies fulfil a fundamental role in shaping the personhood of the African person, and introduces important concepts that would assist them in navigating the challenges of life.

2.3.3. South African context

South Africa shares the rite of circumcision that is commonly associated with other traditional African rites of passage practices (Mthembu, N., 2015). The practice is prevalent in many of the South African tribes, including the Zulu, amaXhosa, and Sotho; however, each tribe has their unique traditions associated with the rite. For example, the Xhosa and Sotho tribes observe their ceremony for approximately a month, whereas other tribes will have various durations of time for an initiate to complete his/her process of transition (Mthembu, N., 2015).

In the Free State, Basotho boys are initiated by attending the Lebollo initiation programme, where they are taught important skills of survival, including how to make tools for farming, spears for hunting, as well as using tools and mud to build homes (Monyela, 2017). In addition, the boys who participate are taught the medicinal aspects of plant medicines to cure diseases, leadership skills, and physical training, to ensure that they can protect themselves (Monyela, 2017). One of the boys who attended and completed this initiation programme reported feeling a greater sense of responsibility

towards his duties at home, emphasising that he is no longer a boy, but instead, a man (Monyela, 2017).

The findings of a study, conducted by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2020), measuring the impact of traditional rites of passage from four African countries, including South Africa, revealed that all the ROP programmes included an element of sex education instruction. However, caution was observed by the researcher, who expressed concerns about the quality of sex education on offer (UNFPA, 2020). In addition, the study noted that, for young adolescent males, the ROP programme was particularly positive, as it cultivated a sense of identity in their youth, and elevated their social status in society (UNFPA, 2020).

Besides traditional ROP programmes, non-traditional ROP programmes have also been conducted in South Africa. One such study, involving participants engaging in a wilderness rite of passage programme, was observed to positively influence the emotional development of the participants, and noted to be particularly impactful on youth who were considered at-risk (Bosch & Oswald, 2010). Additionally, another non-traditional ROP programme, which was conducted in the Stellenbosch area of the Western Cape, included 21 boys who participated in the programme. The programme was initiated due to concerns about the increase in gang-related activities, as well as drugs and alcohol abuse in the area. Feedback about the programme was provided by the participants, key informants, and mentors. The mentors confirmed that the boys, who had participated in the programme displayed improvement in areas of interpersonal relationships, with less involvement in risky activities, and motivation to improve their lives (Knoetze, 2003).

South African traditional rites of passage ceremonies share features similar to other African countries, for instance, imbuing valuable knowledge and skills, aimed at equipping the initiate for life after transitioning into adulthood. In addition, non-traditional rites of passage programmes have noted positive influences on the lives of boys from adverse background, especially those who are at-risk.

2.3.4. Coloured context

An African proverb states, “The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth” (Sendrey, 2019). The embracing of the village is symbolic of the need of young adolescent boys to be acknowledged, guided, and admired by the men of the village, as Robert Bly, in *Iron John: A book about men*, notes that it is only other men who can initiate men (Bly, 2015). Additionally, Moore and Gillette (1990) makes a poignant point about uninitiated men, as well as the societies in which these uninitiated men find themselves, highlighting that a proliferation of Boy psychology occurs, instead of Man psychology. Boy psychology is characterised by childish tendencies, abuse of power, and destructive patterns of behaviour, whereas the mature Man psychology finds healthy and creative ways of finding solutions to his problems (Moore & Gillette, 1990).

Within Coloured communities, this connection between adult male figures guiding youth to adulthood is severed, especially considering the high rates of male imprisonment, gangsterism, divorce, and absent fathers (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1997; Patel & Mavungu, 2016). Therefore, with no male figures around to initiate the Coloured adolescent boys into adulthood, they remain uninitiated, and have taken it upon themselves to be initiated, forming the highly ritualized gangster organisations that are found in many Coloured communities across the Western Cape (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1997; Tewolde, 2025). However, it is argued that gangs are ritualized, and mimic the three stages associated with the rites of passage, as stipulated by Van Gennep (1960), namely, separation, liminality, and reintegration (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1997). Therefore, participation in gang activity is not only seen as a desire to participate in criminal activity, instead, it serves a deeper need, a psychological and emotional need to be seen, guided, and understood, frequently meeting the hierarchical needs to see humans actualize (Sharkey et al., 2011). The environments that gangs offer Coloured youth are often fertile grounds to nurture and attain notions of manhood, which are proliferated within some parts of Coloured community.

Within some Coloured communities, certain hegemonic notions of manhood are widespread, oftentimes being influenced by global and local influences (Cooper, 2009). The pull of gangs is that these hegemonic notions are actualized by seasoned members within the gang organisations (Cooper, 2009; Jensen, 2009). Notions of manhood that

exist within some Coloured boy's minds are those of the powerful business executive, who enjoys a degree of power, admiration, and influence (Pinnock, 2016). The business executives whom many Coloured boys have access to, are not the ones that are found in the boardroom of established corporate businesses, instead, they are ones who are found on the street, running illicit organisations (Cooper, 2009). The perceived success of these criminal businessmen incites the minds of many youth within the community, and lays a blueprint for success, which unfortunately, ensures the perpetuation of criminal activity (Petrus, 2023). Related to hegemonic notions of manhood, is the idea of being a hero, and outfoxing opponents, to gain the upper hand and engaging in risky behaviours (Cooper, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2020). Additionally, the notion of being 'gevaarlik' (dangerous), represents an idea of manhood in the minds of certain Coloured boys (Cooper, 2009). The term is used to describe feats achieved by individuals, and is used glowingly to describe an admirable trait of another person; however, underlying the terminology is the notion of being feared and revered (Cooper, 2009).

Unhealthy notions of Coloured masculinity perpetuate the idea that it is characterised by violence and aggression (Chen et al., 2020; Petrus & Uwah, 2022). According to this perception, an important quality that defines manhood is, being able to stand one's ground and not appear weak. These notions, which are commonly perpetuated with representations of Coloured masculinity, are given a name, and termed, 'bruin-ou masculinity', brown man masculinity, in English (Chen et al., 2020).

'Bruin-ou' (Brown man) masculinity is characterised by participation in gangsterism, gun violence, and substance abuse, as a mechanism to prove an individual's status as a man (Chen et al., 2020). The role that the oppressive system of Apartheid had on the development of this phenomenon is often ignored. During the era of Apartheid, to combat the government, the oppressed civilians had to resort to illegal means, to achieve their objectives, as any form of resistance to the government was, in essence, considered illegal (Chen et al., 2020; Krahn, 2025).

Another important concept that connects the phenomenon of 'bruin-ou' (brown man) masculinity and Apartheid, is the notion of 'amper baas', which is directly translated as 'almost boss'. This notion positions Coloured individuals in the race hierarchy, as one that approximates to Whiteness, but not quite there yet, and therefore, still short of the

mark (Chen et al., 2020). In a sense, it mocks the existence of Coloured people's, and calls into question the impact that notions like 'amper baas' have had on the esteem of individuals, who identify with these descriptions. The position of 'almost boss', however, had its benefits under the Apartheid era, as Coloured men in the workplace enjoyed preferential treatment by White employers, over their Black counterparts (Chen et al., 2020; Adhikari, 2006).

Coloured masculinities were also defined by their work industry. Coloured men enjoyed artisanal skilled labour, with many being employed in the wielding and construction fields (Trotter, 2009). Being skilled labourers represented a proud hallmark within Coloured men's identity (Chen et al., 2020). However, with time, the participation of skilled artisan-Coloured men has waned, which has also seen a spike in Coloured men resorting to crime, to care for themselves and their families (Chen et al., 2020). The drop in the skilled labourer industry for Coloured men was due to changes in government policies, which strove to redress the economic legacy of the previous Apartheid era, as well as the lack of growth in the South African economy, forcing labour companies to close (Chen et al., 2020; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). It is important to note that the Apartheid economic policies favoured Coloured people, as a tactic to divide and conquer (Chen et al., 2020, Seekings, 2008).

Therefore, understanding the development of notions of manhood that has become widespread in many Coloured communities, has a nexus of influences, which influences its direction. Additionally, this process of defining manhood is a dynamic, not static process, which suggests a potential for new definitions of manhood to be forged within the minds of Coloured youth (Chen et al, 2020).

After defining and discussing the concept of the rites of passage, I will now explore adolescents within community, as well as the diverse factors that impact on their lived experiences. Rites of Passage, as discussed above, informs my study, as it helped me understand the historical significance of this phenomenon, as well as shed light on how it is practiced across the world. In the following sections, I explore this phenomenon within a South African context, specifically with Coloured youth from lower economic statuses.

2.4. Adolescent boys within the community

2.4.1. The role of cultural and community-based interventions in shaping adolescent experiences

Addressing challenges experienced by at-risk youth in urban areas has been the focus of studies for many years. One of the intervention strategies that has proven to be effective is community-based intervention (Nickel & Von dem Knesebeck, 2020; Schensul, 1998). Community-based interventions focus on incorporating various stakeholders in the process of addressing a problem (Nickel & Von dem Knesebeck, 2020). An example of this may be the high rate of criminal activity, or risky sexual behaviour, among teenagers from a community. The community-based intervention approach may involve teachers, parents, peers, or community-based leaders, in an intervention strategy; however, instead of relying on the intervention of a single person, as in the case of individual-based interventions, the various stakeholders are involved in the process (Nickel & Von dem Knesebeck, 2020; Schensul, 1998). Several models of community-based interventions exist; however, one of the principles they share is that feedback from a variety of stakeholders helps to shape the intervention strategies in real time. Essentially, stakeholders are usually individuals with whom the targeted intervention group interacts daily in some capacity (Nickel & Von dem Knesebeck, 2020; Schensul, 1998).

One example is a community-based well-being programme that was implemented in Delft, Cape Town, an underprivileged location, notorious for being a high-risk area. Delft was identified as one of the ten most dangerous areas in South Africa (Van Schalkwyk, 2022). This well-being programme, which drew from positive psychology principles, was initiated in 2009. By 2019, due to the success of the programme, it had expanded to most of the 23 schools in the area. The programme comprised various components that were managed by various stakeholders in the community, who would target particular groups. For example, the Kings Club would target adolescent boys, while the Mothers' Club would focus on aspects related to the strengthening of families. Similarly, the Stars Club would focus on female adolescents, as well as aspects related to positive womanhood, while the Maths Club would focus on strengthening capacity in mathematics. In this approach, many other clubs would be headed by a variety of individuals from the community, and generally, through the feedback of the community, amendments would be made to the programme. The positive impact of the well-being programme was experienced throughout the community, despite the ongoing challenges

and growing problems related to criminal activity and gangsterism. This suggests that community-based interventions have a role to play in addressing the various challenges that are currently being experienced in high-risk areas (Van Schalkwyk, 2022).

2.4.2. Challenges unique to Coloured adolescents

The population in South Africa's high-risk areas, occupied mostly by Black and Coloured people, experience many challenges; however, within some Coloured communities, a few unique challenges negatively affect its residents, especially the youth. Within some Coloured communities, the problem of crime is rife, with the highest murder rate per population recorded, coupled with high rates of home invasions (Leggett, 2004; Viltoft, 2020). The perception of crime being widespread within the community is further supported by the higher rate of incarceration per race, with the Coloured inmate population recorded at 18.2 % of the total inmate population (Makou, 2022). However, this is not the highest population race in the prison system, as Black South Africans are recorded at 79% of the total inmate population. Coloured individuals, therefore, are the second largest group in the prison system. Considering that Coloured people represent 8.5 % of South Africa's general population, the stats suggest that the rate of incarceration is more than double the general population rate (Leggett, 2004; Makou, 2022).

Many factors may be affecting this higher rate, including the inability to afford legal fees, as instead, Coloured defendants may have to rely on state attorneys to represent them (Leggett,2004). Additionally, overcrowded prisons, coupled with substance abuse and gangsterism within the prison system, prevent proper rehabilitation, and ultimately, contribute to a revolving door of inmates (Leggett, 2004). Many Coloured people also suffer from high rates of unemployment, which fuels the need for criminal activity, to sustain themselves and their families (Viltoft, 2020). Due to the limited employment opportunities, many Coloured people from lower socioeconomic conditions tend to stay in their family home for longer periods, contributing to confined spaces. Zhou et al. (2022), noted that poor housing conditions impacted negatively on the mental health well-being of adolescents, whereas Nkosi et al. (2019), found that crowded living spaces were associated with a number of physical illnesses. The problem of housing conditions is compounded by the fact that property sizes within the Cape flats area, are modest, with little room for expansion (Govender et al., 2010; Leggett, 2004). Consequently, Coloured youth are on the streets, where they are exposed to group norms that differ from norms

within their family homes. When street norms become more important than family home norms, it provides the fertile grounds for gangs to form (Leggett, 2004).

According to Leggett (2004) many Coloured people are noted to remain in their communities of origin, which was also suggested to be a contributing factor in the development of gangs. A reason for this could be as Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo (2021) notes that gangs develop a strong territorial identity and would often resort to the use of force in order to maintain control. From this perspective, it could be argued that Coloured communities are stable; however, this sense of stability, despite its positive connotations, also contributes to the desire to protect their space (Leggett, 2004). With employment opportunities being scarce, individuals resort to drugs trafficking, and will defend their operation from any outside competitor (Viltoft, 2020). The impact of this leads to wars between gangs, as drug merchants seek turf to expand their territory (Viltoft, 2020).

The fight for space in Coloured communities is a historical phenomenon, as all Black people, were robbed of their land. The injustice of colonial missionaries, coupled with the Apartheid Group Areas Act, saw people of Colour being moved to the outskirts of the city, far from economic opportunities, to less developed parts of the city, such as the Cape Flats, Khayelitsha, Langa, Rylands, and Athlone (Turok et al., 2021). Spaces of opportunity and beauty were reserved for Whites, whereas people of colour were confined to spaces of hopelessness (Turok et al., 2021).

Coloured communities are plagued by high rates of substance dependence, especially alcohol usage (Williams, 2016). The Western Cape, especially, is notorious for its high usage of alcohol, and despite the traditional ‘dop’ system being outlawed and no longer predominant as part of the remuneration for farm workers, its legacy still lives on (Gossage et al, 2014). May et al. (2019), highlights that despite the ‘dop’ system being outlawed it still influenced alcohol usage trends within farming communities. However, current socioeconomic condition has been suggested to have maintained continued dependency (May et al., 2019). The high rates of Fetal alcohol syndrome that still affects the Western Cape could be seen as the long lasting legacy of the ‘dop’system as it shaped alcohol usage before and after it being outlawed (May et al., 2019). In these types of

environments, many Coloured youth are raised, which lead to the development of social norms, and may help with understanding the perpetuation of these problems.

The above sections provide insight into some of the experiences of Coloured youth in their communities. This allowed me to have some idea of what participants may be experiencing and allowed me to compare experiences in relation to research, from both similarities and differences. I now discuss identity and identity formation for youth.

2.4.3. Coloured adolescent boys' sense of identity

2.4.3.1. Identity formation in adolescence

Coming from high-risk areas, Coloured youth may have developed an identity, or resonate with features of identity that are characterised by bravado; however, before discussing Coloured youth's notion of identity, it is important to highlight theories of identity development. Erik Erikson proposed eight stages of psychosocial development, each stage presenting a psychological conflict that requires the individual to resolve, in order to progress in their personality development (Bishop, 2013; Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2013). The conflict that emerges is triggered by physical, sexual development, and changes within the social context (Bishop, 2013). The stages are ordered as follows: trust vs. mistrust (0-1 year); autonomy vs. doubt (1- 3 years); initiative vs. guilt (3-6 years); industry vs. inferiority (6-11 years); identity vs. role confusion (adolescence); intimacy vs. isolation (young adulthood); generativity vs. self-absorption (middle adulthood), and integrity vs. despair (older adulthood) (Bishop, 2013; Kosslyn & Rosernberg, 2013), as depicted in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Erikson's Psychosocial Stages

Erikson's Psychosocial Stages			
Stage	**Basic Conflict**	**Virtue**	**Description**
Infancy 0–1 year	Trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Trust (or mistrust) that basic needs, such as nourishment and affection, will be met
Early childhood 1–3 years	Autonomy vs. shame/doubt	Will	Develop a sense of independence in many tasks
Play age 3–6 years	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Take initiative on some activities—may develop guilt when unsuccessful or boundaries overstepped
School age 7–11 years	Industry vs. inferiority	Competence	Develop self-confidence in abilities when competent or sense of inferiority when not
Adolescence 12–18 years	Identity vs. confusion	Fidelity	Experiment with and develop identity and roles
Early adulthood 19–29 years	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love	Establish intimacy and relationships with others
Middle age 30–64 years	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Contribute to society and be part of a family
Old age 65 onward	Integrity vs. despair	Wisdom	Assess and make sense of life and meaning of contributions

(Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2013)

For this current study, Erickson's stage of *identity versus role confusion* will be of importance, as the conflict that the adolescent participants will experience during this stage. According to Erickson, during this stage, individuals are striving to establish their sense of self, and gain acceptance from others. Failure to establish this identity leads to a fragmented sense of self, and will result in the individual feeling confusion and rejection (Bishop, 2013). Therefore, during this phase, adolescents will explore and take risks, to test the boundaries of their desired identities, with the anticipation that a firm sense of self will be forged through this exploration.

Additionally, during this phase, adolescents learn the values and rules of the community in which they live, thereby learning acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (Bishop, 2013). This frequently implies that conflict will exist between what the individual wants to do, and what society expects from them; therefore, part of resolving this psychological dynamic is to arrive to some balance, allowing for the expression of guidance from society, as well as individual expressions (Bishop, 2013).

2.4.3.2. The influence of cultural traditions and communal practices on identity formation among youth

Erikson identified the importance of adolescence, as the period during which the crises of identity versus role confusion is resolved; however, in the process of resolving this crisis, the role of cultural traditions and practices is important (Bishop, 2013). Individuals, who have experienced historical trauma, have inevitably experienced challenges, especially health-related complications, as well as challenges related to identity formation and cultural identification (Berman et al., 2020). This has been amplified in the experiences of indigenous people and other ethnic minorities, who were victims of this perpetration (Wexler, 2009). Historical trauma refers to the accumulation of stress, bereavement, discrimination, and racial prejudice that has been internalised by the victims, and which is frequently institutionalised (Wexler, 2009).

One of the paths towards the development of identity in youth, is through the process of cultural identification. Cultural identification has been observed to facilitate in answering questions related to: “Who am I?”; “What is my role in society?”; “Where do I come from and my destination”; which are all important questions, the answers to which shape the identity of the individual (Wexler, 2009).

Cultural identification refers to the recognition of an individual’s cultural values, norms, traditions, beliefs, practices, and heritage, as well as understanding the extent to which it is reflected in the individual (Wexler, 2009).

Within the cultural context of many Coloured people, there are copious, whether in the space of food (for example, boboetie, koe’siester, trifle, boeber, pickled fish and hot cross buns, Gatsby, etc.), language (Kaaps) cultural games (for example, drie stokkies, kennetjie, drie blikkies), or festivities (for example, Matric ball, 21st birthday celebration, Klopse carnival, Labarang, ou Chrismas aand) (Le Cordeur, 2016; Hendricks, 2016; Palmer. 2016). These represent some markers with which individuals decide to identify. It is important to note that all these markers may not be unique to coloured people, nor may all coloured people self-identify with these practices, however, that they exist, and many individuals who consider themselves coloured identify with these markers (Le Cordeur, 2016; Hendricks, 2016; Palmer. 2016). Additionally, cultural identification is developed through two dimensions,

namely, exploration and commitment (Wexler, 2009). The former being the effort that the individual employs to understand his/her culture, and the latter being the strength of the individual's affiliation to said culture (Wexler, 2009). Through cultural identification, individuals may develop resilience, as they can make meaning of their experience, and locate it within the landscape of their cultural heritage, especially indigenous and other ethnic minority groups, who have experienced historical trauma (Wexler, 2009).

Finally, another contributing factor that aids the process of cultural identification, is understanding the shared history of the culture. This allows individuals to map their placement in the world, through understanding where they come from, where they are, and a projection of where they need to go (Wexler, 2009). Therefore, cultural identification plays an important role in the development of identity.

2.4.3.3. Self-concept in rites of passage

In light of the discussion above, cultural identification contributes to the development of identity; however, rites of passage also facilitate this development (Venable, 1997). Rites of passage ceremonies provide the initiates with answers that help them to understand who they are, as well as their purpose (Venable, 1997). Rites of passage serve as markers, which creates an awareness in individuals that they are changing and growing. The ceremonies are symbolic manifestations of this change that is happening within the status of the individual (Venable, 1997). In addition, when individuals complete their rites of passage programmes, they return to society and are acknowledged and celebrated, which elicits a sense of belonging. Through these experiences, the individual's identity is shaped, formed, and consolidated (Venable, 1997).

Understanding identity and the aspects that influence this process is important for my study, as the participants are traversing a phase in their lives, during which their new identity is being shaped. I was interested in observing how participants would resolve the crisis of their identity, as boys, transitioning into their new identity as men. Therefore, in my study, I provide further insight into the role that rites of passage play in the shaping of identity for at-risk youth.

2.5. Understanding risky behaviour

In the previous section, the aspects related to the development of identity within adolescents were discussed; however, another important topic related to youth development, is risky behaviour in adolescence, the contributing factors of which are discussed subsequently.

2.5.1. Individual risk factors

The individual risk factors that contribute to youth offending behaviour could be observed from various angles. One such angle involves the experience of victimisation (Mohajana, 2013). When at-risk youth endure any form of victimisation, whether through personal experience, or merely witnessing a violation that resulted in emotional turmoil, it could serve as an individual risk factor (Yoder et al, 2019). Through the experience of victimisation, the individual may resort to similar behaviour, a view that is expounded by the Theory of Social Learning, asserting that-risky behaviour is a learnt behaviour (Pickens et al., 2016). Social Learning Theory posits that individuals learn by observing the behaviours of others around them (Brady, 2017). In addition, they emulate the behaviours that they observe, especially when those behaviours are rewarded, instead of punished (Brady, 2017). Victimisation may occur during childhood or adolescence, which may result in revenge-seeking behaviour; however, to cope with feelings of emotional turmoil, many youth may resort to the use of substances, which has also been observed to be an individual risk factor (Mohajana, 2013; Yoder et al, 2019). Substance abuse has been linked to aggressive and violent behaviour, which leads to conflict with the law. To maintain their habit, individuals may resort to criminal activity (Mohajana, 2013).

Another individual risk factor for risky behaviour is masculinity. Males are greater perpetrators of violence, whereas females have typically been reported to be on the receiving end of violence (Mohajana, 2013). In Cape Town, many youth are exposed to violence and criminality through men, and through the Differential Association Theory, it is understood that the youth are socialised into violent behaviour, by learning behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs from older men (Mohajana, 2013).

2.5.2. The family

The familial context serves as the first place where individuals learn behaviour, and may also contribute to risky behaviour. This has been observed in the case of the family system that promotes depraved values, instead of virtuous values. The promotion of virtuous values elicits a sense of control, which prevents individuals from engaging in risky behaviours (Mohajana, 2013). Families with a history of law-breaking, as well as substance abuse, could also serve as risk factors for risky behaviour in youth. Parents are role models for their children, and when the examples being set are related to criminality, children internalise this observed behaviour (Mohajana, 2013). In addition, children, who experience neglect within the family system, are also at-risk for risky behaviour. Parenting that is characterised by the lack of monitoring, warmth, and responsiveness, places children at-risk (Bartol & Bartol, 2009). Children from low-income households were also considered at-risk, as due to their need to survive, low-income family members would often resort to criminal activity to survive (Mohajana, 2013).

2.5.3. School factors

Poor performance at school, coupled with the lack of interest and academic achievement, is a risk factor that contributes to risky behaviour. When performing poorly, individuals fail to receive positive reinforcement, nor do they feel incentivised to do well at school (Mohajana, 2013).

2.5.4. Peer factors

Another factor that impacts risky behaviour in youth, relates to their peer group. When individuals associate with friends, who display antisocial tendencies, a negative influence on their own behaviour inevitably ensues. These individuals experience negative peer pressure that results in them engaging in risky behaviour (Mohajana, 2013).

2.5.5. Community factors

Underdeveloped and impoverished communities, with poor dwelling arrangements, have been identified as a risk factor for risky behaviour in youth (Mohajana, 2013; Nkosi et al., 2019). Poor housing and the lack of infrastructural development, serves as a catalyst for criminality, causing many to steal from the existing infrastructure, to ensure that their dwellings are made liveable. Additionally, communities with heightened levels of social

disorganisation, coupled with a pursuit of money, often precipitate criminal activity (Bartol & Bartol, 2009).

2.5.6. Race, gender, and age

The discourse on gender and risk has been discussed previously, with masculinity being a risk factor for offending behaviour (Mohajana, 2013). Regarding racial indicators, it is important to note that many variables impact the spread of criminal activity among the various racial groups, with many of the risk factors, discussed in the above sections, being observed in communities populated by Black and Coloured youth. This may help to explain why the rate of criminality remains higher in these two racial demographics, compared to their White counterparts, who live in well-resourced communities. Finally, individuals within the adolescent age range, have been observed to display higher rates of offending behaviour. This trend may vary across culture and place, however, adolescence has been associated with elevated rates of offending behaviour globally (Holtzhausen, 2012; Young, 2025).

2.6. Preventative interventions

Some of the risk factors associated with risky behaviour were discussed, and subsequently, I will discuss the role of structured programmes in reducing risky behaviours and promoting healthy decision-making. Consequently, some protective factors, findings of intervention programmes, as well as behavioural change models that have generated a positive impact, are presented in the following sections.

2.6.1. Protective factor 1: Understanding gender variances

Mohajana (2013) noted the role that gender played in understanding risk factors, and suggested that being male was associated with higher rates of offending behaviour. Yi Siyan et al. (2010), found that focusing on a reduction of peer delinquency; whereas for females, improvement in family relations and support has been observed to have a positive impact on the reduction of risky sexual behaviour and substance abuse. This may suggest that intervention strategies to address risky behaviour for the different genders may require different focus areas.

2.6.2. Protective factor 2: A focus on emotional competence and skills

Another competency to enhance protective factors and reduce risky behaviour within youth is the development of emotional intelligence (Rivers et al., 2013). In their study, conducted among undergraduate students from a Northeastern University in the USA. Comparing which is more impactful, self-esteem or emotional intelligence, to risky behaviour, the latter was observed to be significant (Rivers et al., 2013). Therefore, a focus on developing emotionally intelligent young people may serve as a preventative to later at-risk behaviour.

2.6.3. Characteristics of effective preventative interventions

Intervention programmes can take on many forms; however, there are certain characteristics that effective preventative interventions possess. Firstly, effective programmes have a narrow focus on reducing risky behaviour. They incorporate social learning theories as a foundation to develop their programme (Kirby et al., 1994). These include social cognitive theory, social influence theory, cognitive behaviour theory, and social inoculation theory (Kirby et al., 1994). Effective preventative programmes would relay accurate information regarding risk, and demonstrate methods of avoiding risk, through personalised experiential activities. Discussion surrounding social media and social pressure is another feature of programmes, aimed at reducing risky behaviour. In addition, a promotion of healthy core values is emphasised in effective programmes, to develop healthier group norms (Kirby et al., 1994). Finally, effective programmes incorporate the use of peer leaders, or testimonials, and are focused on improving communication and negotiating skills (Kirby et al., 1994).

2.6.4. Intervention programme 1: School-based interventions

School-based interventions have been observed to have a positive impact on the reduction of risky behaviour in youth (Hale et al., 2014; Daniels et al., 2024). With school-based interventions that were focused on enhancing basic life skills, including problem-solving skills, personalised feedback, personal decision making, and stress management, a reduction in the usage of illicit substances was observed (Hale et al., 2014, Daniels et al., 2024).

2.6.5. Intervention programme 2: Family-based interventions

Family-based interventions that were aimed at addressing interpersonal communication competency among family members, has been observed to reduce risk-taking behaviour in youth (Hale et al., 2014; Van Ryzin et al., 2016). These interventions incorporated parenting-child communication skills, homework tasks that required parental participation, and home visits, which led to an improvement in the interpersonal relations of family members. Additionally, this was coupled with information booklets and further training (Hale et al., 2014; Van Ryzin et al., 2016).

2.6.6. Intervention programme 3: Community-based interventions

Intervention programmes that included the incorporation of various stakeholders in the community, also revealed a positive outcome in the reduction of risky behaviour in youth (Hale et al., 2014).

2.6.7. Intervention programme 4: Web-based interventions

A web-based intervention involved Asian girls, aged 11-14 years, as well as their mothers, who had access to a computer. The intervention was designed to reduce substance abuse, through the enhancement of relationships between girls and their mothers. The participants engaged in a nine-session web-based substance use prevention programme. The results revealed that it was effective in the reduction of alcohol usage, binge drinking, and tobacco usage (Hale et al., 2014). Furthermore, other studies suggest that online web-based intervention programmes have the potential to reduce risky behaviours (Champion et al., 2023; Do Amaral e Melo et al., 2024)

2.6.8. Behavioural change models

In the previous discussion, social learning theories were mentioned as a feature of effective preventative intervention. Other theoretical models help with the understanding of rites of passage and their impact. These include, the Attachment Theory of Bowlby and Ainsworth (Fletcher & Gallichan, 2016). The Attachment Theory posits that the extent to which infants can attach to their caregiver, creates an internal sense of security, which helps with emotional regulation and the management of relationships (Bassey et al., 2024). According to the theory, people experience various transitional stages from

infancy, as part of their development. Depending on the strength of their attachment to their caregivers, infants can navigate these transitional stages effectively. Infants with secure attachments, who develop an attachment style that results from a warm and functioning relationship with a caregiver, have been observed to obtain greater success at managing transitional stages, as well as maintain better emotional regulation, and better relationships. Additionally, according to the theory, this is maintained throughout their lives (Bassey et al., 2024).

The view that early attachment experiences are maintained throughout an individual's life, represents the prototypical view on attachment; however, some have argued against this view (Pinquart et al., 2013; Zayas et al., 2011). Some suggest that attachment security can be impacted by both time and social risk factors, such as divorce and child maltreatment. Over time, attachment has been observed to vary, whereas experiences, such as divorce, have been revealed to change attachments from secure to insecure (Pinquart et al., 2013). Therefore, a debate interrogates whether attachments are maintained throughout an individual's life; however, the researcher is of the opinion that attachments are mostly stable, although they do have the capacity to shift, when either a traumatic event occurs, or a loss of a previous attachment figure is incurred.

Attachment Theory promotes an understanding of the impact that a certain attachment style has on the individual's capacity to navigate transitions successfully; and therefore, rites of passage. By extending this theory, it could be hypothesised that individuals with an insecure attachment style, may experience difficulties with the anxieties that accompany the liminal space of rites of passage. Therefore, understanding early relational experiences of individuals who are transitioning, will be vital. Additionally, understanding how rites of passage facilitate the process of behavioural change, could be observed in the functions that rites maintain in the process of transitions (See Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Behavioural change & Rites of passage

Structure:	**Function:**
1. Preservation of the temporal life course sequence disruption of an established sequence connected with mental crisis, psychopathology, life misfortunes. 2. Liminality: deconstruction, integration, transformation (between dying of the old and the birth of the new structure). 3. Performativity clearly defined sequentially of events, multimodal dramatism of the ritual.	1. Maintenance of equilibrium in the face of changes 2. Convergence of the opposites: individual and social, biological and cultural, comprising of the conflictual tendencies within oneself. 3. Regulation and creation: accommodating both elements of arising anxiety and ways of overcoming it.

(Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018)

Transitional phases, such as adolescence to adulthood, starting a new job, or being diagnosed with a long-term illness, can be disruptive and anxiety-provoking for many individuals living through the experience. Rites of passage allow individuals to acknowledge that they are moving through a transitional phase, which promotes a sense of equilibrium, while experiencing change. The rite of passage ameliorates the experience of transition and the disruptions that result. It is a model that structurally resolves the problems of disrupted life experiences (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018).

Rituals that are symbolic of the liminal phase allow individuals to experience the acknowledgement of the ways of old, with simultaneously ushering in the new role. Therefore, rituals associated with this phase help in the shaping of identity and behaviours that confirm this new identity. Disruptions that accompany transitional stages of individuals' lives are captured in the rites, symbolically, through incorporating aspects related to the tension, which accompanies this change in their lives (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018).

Finally, rites of passage have a performative element, as individuals learn from others, who have moved through this transitional phase, learning and incorporating new behaviours that facilitate their acceptance (Grabowski et al., 2019. This can be observed in many traditional rites of passage experiences, which accompany family members, who participate in the rites towards the end. This multimodal interaction matrix initiates the individual in his/her new sense of self and place in society. The performative aspect of the rite also requests that the individual develops ways of emotional regulation, as the rites of passage are accompanied by ambiguity and tension. Therefore, through the rites of passage, interpersonal relations are formed that lead to a new sense of self. In addition, the process of emotional regulation is developed as individuals complete the rite (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018).

Reflecting on risky behaviour and youth is important for this current study, as the researcher explored the impact that the Boys to Men ROP programme had on the participants' perception of risky behaviour. Therefore, understanding the nuances of risky behaviour, such as the risk and protective factors, is important for the researcher, as well as the reader, to make meaning of the data collected from the participants, regarding this aspect of their lives.

2.7. Relationships with others & youth

2.7.1. Interpersonal relationships in adolescence

The importance of relationships, as well as feelings of connectedness within relationships, is crucial for youth development and resilience. Feelings of connectedness are of particular importance for at-risk youth in urban areas, as they include feelings of connectedness to parents, school, community, and peers. The extent of connectedness in these areas have been observed to positively impact the emotional, behavioural, and adaptive functioning of youth (Foster et al., 2017).

2.7.1.1. Parental connectedness

Of the four relationships, the extent of connectedness to parents is the most important (Foster et al., 2017). Youth, who reported higher levels of connectedness with parents, were observed to display lower levels of depression, conduct problems, and self-harming tendencies, as well as higher levels of self-esteem, and

more adapted use of their free time (Foster et al., 2017). The challenge that affects the parental relationship of youth from high-risk areas, is that the relationship may be strained due to stress, safety, and economic opportunity, which impacts parents' capacity to supervise, show warmth, and guide their children (Gershoff et al., 2014). Therefore, developing interventions that enhance the feelings of connectedness between youth and parental figures, is of great importance for the development of resilience.

2.7.1.2. School-based connectedness

Another important relationship that fulfils a positive role in adjustment of at-risk youth, is their connectedness to school (Foster et al., 2017). When they are strongly connected to their school, youth report lower levels of social anxiety and sexual activity (Foster et al., 2017). Feelings of connectedness are experienced by youth, who attend schools that are well resourced, which places those, who attend schools from economically challenging areas, at-risk. However, according to Foster et al. (2017), being well-resourced is not as important as having good relationships between teachers and students.

2.7.1.3. Community connectedness

Non-parental adult connectedness is important for the development of resilience within youth (Ahrens et al., 2011). Community connectedness has also been observed to contribute to a reduction in anxiety; however, it was also been associated with elevated levels of sexual activity in youth (Foster et al., 2011).

2.7.1.4. Peer connectedness

Peer connectedness was posited as having a lesser impact on youth adjustment (Foster et al., 2011). These authors suggest that the influence of peer connectedness on emotion, behaviour, and adjustment of youth, is negligible (Foster et al., 2011). According to Merritt and Snyder (2015), a strong link exists between peer connectedness, and adjustment and well-being. However, from the perspective of Foster et al. (2011), peer connectedness had no impact on adjustment, instead it was observed to have the least impact, compared to the previously stated areas of connectedness. Importantly, as both studies involved children, who had

experienced physical abuse, and struggled with the cultivations of relationships with peers (Foster et al., 2011; Merritt & Snyder, 2015).

2.7.2. Community-building through ROP

Having discussed the impact that feelings of connectedness have on at-risk youth, Ikoku (2024) adds that participation in rites of passage also promotes intergenerational bonding and resilience of community. By participating in rites of passage programmes, a transmission of cultural values occurs, which strengthens the participants' sense of identity and communal support. The transmission of knowledge further entrenches familial bonds, and deepens collective identity (Ikoku, 2024).

2.7.3. Mentorship and role models: The role of mentors in shaping positive relationships

The importance of feelings of connectedness among at-risk youth has been discussed, and the positive impact of social connections outside of the familial has been highlighted (Laursen & Hartl, 2013). One type of relationship, outside of family connections, which has been observed to positively impact youth development, is mentoring (DuBois et al., 2011). Mentoring refers to the relationship between a youth and an older non-parental figure, who plays a supportive and caring role (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Mentoring is primarily divided into two types, namely formal and informal mentoring, with the former involving a mentor from a programme being assigned to an individual, while the latter occurs outside of programme involvement, and is more spontaneous. Community-based mentoring is a formal, time-limited mentoring programme, where mentors and mentees meet on agreed-upon dates, times, and locations (DuBois et al., 2011). Community-based mentoring programmes have been observed to reduce risky behaviour, as well as improve emotional, psychological, and academic performance in youth (DuBois et al., 2011). However, the challenge of community-based mentorship is the fact that it is time-limited, and studies have revealed a weakening effect on outcomes, after mentees graduate (Herrera et al., 2011). Therefore, to combat this, efforts to create longer positive effects of mentorship, have sought to focus on improving relationships outside of the dyadic mentor/mentee relationship.

According to Austin et al. (2020), depending on the relationship type that existed between mentor and mentee during the intervention, impacted their capacity to improve the

relationship outside of the dyad. Three types of relationships between mentor and mentee have been observed to impact the capacity to improve relationships beyond the dyad. These profiles are: the 'Status Quo'; the 'Connector-Mediators'; and the 'Close Connectors' (Austin et al., 2020). 'Status Quo' mentors displayed low to moderate levels of closeness, connecting, and mediating; 'Connector-Mediators' demonstrated moderate levels of connecting, closeness, and mediating, while 'Close Connectors' mentors exhibited moderate to high levels of closeness, connecting and mediating within the lives of mentees (Austin et al., 2020). Mentees, who were mentored by the 'Status Quo' profile, displayed no changes in connection outcomes, while those mentored by the 'Connector-Mediators' type, demonstrated an increase in extracurricular activities and no other connecting outcomes. The profile that demonstrated the highest connecting outcomes was the 'Close Connectors'. Individual mentored by this profile mentor exhibited an improvement in parent-child relationships, more help seeking behaviour, as well as an inclination towards increased participation in extracurricular activities (Austin et al., 2020). Therefore, depending on the type of relationship that mentors enjoyed with mentees, those who exhibited greater closeness and mediation in their relationship, had greater connection outcomes that extended beyond the dyadic relationship (Austin et al., 2020).

2.8. Influence of ROP Programmes on School Engagement

2.8.1. Youth engagement in education**:** Factors affecting school participation and success among marginalised youth in South Africa

South Africa is a developing country where many social challenges impact learners, especially those from lower socioeconomic communities. Education has been identified as a force to change the destiny of many disadvantaged people, as the country strives towards redressing the legacy of Apartheid and inequality. Ensuring that children succeed at school, it is important to understand the factors that impact school performance, which is discussed in the following section.

2.8.1.1. Poverty

One of the primary factors that impacts learners' capacity to attain academic success is the extent of poverty that they experience. Learners from poorer economic backgrounds tend to struggle in the school setting, with many displaying

offending behaviour that prevents their ability to adjust (Banerjee, 2016). This is further corroborated by schools located in affluent areas, where students' academic achievements remain higher than those from disadvantaged areas (Lee & Madyun, 2009).

2.8.1.2. School dropouts

Another factor that impacts school performance and completion for marginalised youth, is the high rate of school dropouts in South Africa. High rates of dropout are not unique to South Africa, as they have been observed in other developing countries as well. In South Africa, higher rates of dropout have been observed among individuals within the age category of 14-18 years (Weybright et al., 2017). Some of the reasons cited by these individuals were financial challenges, a desire to find employment, poor academic performance, and pregnancy, in the case of females (Weybright et al., 2017).

2.8.1.3. Teenage pregnancy

According to Shefer et al. (2012), lower levels of poverty could be regarded as a contributory factor for teenage pregnancy, as well as poor academic performance. Due to prevailing social norms, teenage mothers tend to drop out of school, and consequently, fail to complete their schooling; however, those who do stay, tend to perform poorly (Shefer et al., 2012).

2.8.1.4. School violence

School violence affects primary, as well as secondary school learners in South Africa. According to Hendricks and Tanga (2019), physical and psychological abuse impact the academic performance of learners, as well as dropout levels. These authors add that learners who are victims of bullying, often suffer emotionally, which impacts their ability to focus on their schoolwork, and ultimately results in poor performance.

2.8.1.5. Suicide

The effects of bullying on any learner's academic performance have been documented; however, another consequence of bullying, has been the resultant

suicide attempts of the victims. In addition, poor academic performance has also been reported as a risk factor for suicide (Sorberg Wallin et al., 2018).

2.8.1.6. Family characteristics

The home environment, as well as familial context have been observed to affect the learner's capacity to complete schooling. Factors within the home environment, such as attitudes towards school, stress levels within the family, economic status, parental style, and divorce, are family factors that impact students' academic performance (Al Husaini & Shukor, 2022). These risk factors were discussed above, as the majority of the participants in this current study were exposed to these challenges.

2.9. Educational outcomes of ROP programmes: links between intervention programmes and improved academic motivation or performance

Some of the risk factors that affect the school performance and completion of youth from marginalised communities have been discussed. Intervention programmes for students were observed to increase engagement, a positive learning attitude, and participation in extracurricular activities (Austin, 2022). Students at schools, who participated in intervention programmes, displayed higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Additionally, these schools reported lower levels of indiscipline and violence among at-risk students, contributing to a greater harmonious environment (Austin, 2022).

Interventions at schools resulted in students having a better understanding of future career paths, as well as the avenues required to attain their future occupations (Austin, 2022). Therefore, from this current study, the hypothesis is that intervention at the school level has the potential to positively impact the lives of at-risk youth, and fulfils a major role in their completion of school.

2.10. Resilience and self-efficacy: How ROP programmes build resilience and influence attitudes toward education

Intervention programmes are effective in fulfilling a role in the education pursuits of at-risk youth. One of the intervention programmes that has been observed to impact youth resilience, and influence attitude towards education, has been the rites of passage programmes (Rodriguez, 2010). In Rites of Passage programmes within a school setting, the students, who participated

in the programme, experienced a greater sense of belonging (Dukes, 2018). The sense of belonging is important, as attitudes towards school fulfil a role in academic success (Foster et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that when rites of passage require learners to be removed from the school setting, it could harm their academic performance, as observed with rites of passage programmes in Southern and Eastern Africa (Schroeder et al., 2022). Therefore, rites of passage programmes should not disrupt learner participation within the normal school time frame. Holiday and weekend programmes would be ideal times to implement programmes for school-going participants.

Finally, the impact of rites of passage on ethnic identity and behaviour within the classroom, was explored through another study. The findings of the study revealed that culturally based rites of passage programmes have a positive impact on adolescents' sense of ethnic identity, attitude towards school, and behaviour in the classroom (Rodriguez, 2010). Therefore, it is evident that rites of passage programmes increase the participants' attitudes towards school and fulfil a role in the successful completion of their education. In this current study, the researcher aims to determine the influence that the Boys to Men ROP programme has had on the participants' attitude towards school, as well as whether a shift occurred for them.

2.11. Gaps in the literature

To date, only one study has explored the impact of the rites of passage on at-risk Coloured youth, which evaluates the impact of ROP on their relationships and risky behaviour (Knoetze, 2003). In addition, the study was conducted in 2003, in Stellenbosch, Cape Town, and not within the Cape Flats area, from which the participants of this current study originated. Therefore, this current study is aimed at providing insight into the impact of ROP on Coloured youth from a different part of Cape Town, to determine any similarities or differences, as well as whether any changes had occurred since 2003. Finally, in addition to the implications of ROP on relationships, as well as attitudes towards risky behaviour, this current study is also aimed at addressing other research questions, namely, to provide insight into aspects of identity, community involvement, their experiences in the ROP, and attitudes towards school. Therefore, in addition to providing updated literature on the impact of rites of passage on at-risk Coloured youth, the researcher also explores the experiences of Coloured youth.

2.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has presented and delineated the literature surrounding research questions related to this current study. The discussion was initiated by the definition of rites of passage, coupled with the foundational theoretical underpinning of the phenomenon. The researcher continued by presenting studies that were conducted in various contexts, from international, continental, and finally, national sources. Consequently, it contextualises this current study, and orients it within the landscape of existing findings.

Subsequently, the researcher embarked on understanding aspects related to the research questions, which included discussions surrounding identity, youth involvement in community, school, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes towards risky behaviour. Further discussions focused on findings related to vulnerable youth groups. After presenting the literature review, it became clear that a study of this nature was essential, with a broader focus on issues that were not addressed in past studies, especially addressing at-risk youth, who identified as Coloured.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology employed to acquire data, analyse, and report on my findings. The research paradigm is discussed, followed by research design, and aspects related to sampling. Subsequently, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined, followed by the data collection method, research procedure, and storage. Thereafter, the data analysis approach is presented, coupled with a detailed outline of the approach. Finally, the chapter is concluded with a discussion on trustworthiness, the ethical considerations that may apply to the study, and a section on the reflexivity of the researcher.

3.2. Research paradigm

In my study I utilised the qualitative approach, as the qualitative approach is appropriate to capture the meaning and understanding of participants (Maxwell, 2008). In addition, qualitative research strives to understand the context of participants involved in the study, which concurs with the aims of this current study. The qualitative approach is also appropriate because, according to Ronald et al. (2007), qualitative research strives to uncover rich human experiences, and consequently explores, in-depth, the understanding of these stories.

In addition I decided to draw from the interpretivist paradigm, which perceives reality as a social construct that is aimed at understanding the innumerable meanings that people attribute to their experiences and social environment (Betram & Christiansen, 2014). A paradigm refers to the worldview of the researcher, as well as how s/he defines reality, specifically, their beliefs about the world and how it functions (Betram & Christiansen, 2014). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a paradigm represents researchers' ontology (their sense of reality) and epistemology (how they come to understand their world and the sources of knowledge). Therefore, the research paradigm helped guide the type of research that was conducted, as well as what questions I aimed to answer.

There are three main research paradigms, namely, the positivist, interpretivist, and critical paradigms (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). As highlighted earlier, I chose the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is an approach and understanding of how research should be conducted, and what research can answer. For interpretivists, the researchers' aim is not to predict and control; instead, the researcher aims to gain a deeper, more meaningful understanding of, as well as describe, the experiences of the individuals being studied (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Interpretivists maintain this approach because they understand that no one reality applies to all individuals; instead, individuals have their own unique experiences that inform their specific realities. This makes the interpretivist paradigm unique, as there will always be new understandings to gain from research, due to a plethora of realities to explore (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Therefore, the basic tenet is that the more researchers can understand, the more they could assist individuals, and create a greater variety in the solutions that they design.

The interpretivist paradigm provided a framework for my research and I felt that it is a good fit, as the questions that |I aimed to explore, involved gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants, as well as the impact that the ROP programme has had on their lives. Additionally, through this paradigm, I was guided by the responses of the participants, instead of the influence of personal biases, which potentially allowed for a truer reflection of the experiences of the participants. Finally, with the interpretivist approach, I was grounded in the understanding that participants live in their reality, and their realities initiate unique potentialities, as well as possible solutions, which could contribute richly to the literature and future interventions. Therefore I felt that, by embracing this paradigm, the highest quality of research could be conducted, to provide meaningful insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

3.3. Research design

The research design I utilised for my research, is the phenomenological type. This approach is designed to understand the lived experiences of the participants, regarding a phenomenon that they had encountered, or endured (Qutoshi, 2018). In my study, the phenomenon I explored is rites of passage and the experiences of participants in it. The advantage of the phenomenological research design is that it allows the collection of rich descriptive data, which enables the voices of the participants to be heard, and not be overwhelmed by the subjective

biases of the researcher (Qutoshi, 2018). Therefore, the phenomenological research design facilitates in understanding the true nature of the world, instead of a means of controlling and reducing it into preconceived notions, essentially, allowing the realities of the participants to be heard (Vagle, 2018).

However, phenomenological research is criticised, especially the concept of epoché, commonly referred to as 'bracketing', which implies that the researchers need to disregard their own experiences, and examine the data from a fresh angle, to ensure that no biases exist; however, detractors of this approach question whether this is possible in the first place (Creswell et al, 2007). Despite this criticism being levelled at the phenomenological design, I still felt that this design aligned well with the research aims and objectives, and therefore was the appropriate one. In addition, according to Qutoshi (2008), the phenomenological design is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which I used as a framework for my study, and therefore, I remained consistent.

3.4. Study setting, study population, sampling, and sample size

The research population, from which the participants for this current study was selected, are individuals, who had participated in the *Boys to Men Rites of Passage programme*. This programme is associated with the *Mankind Project*; however, the difference being that the Boys to Men programme targets youth, whereas the *Mankind Project* programme focusses on adults. The Boys to Men ROP is aimed at interacting with youth, especially those without a supportive father figure, and develops skills within participants, to cope with life, and adjust to adulthood, as responsible men (Boys to Men Mentoring Cape Town, n.d.). The aim of the Mankind Project is to develop mature masculinity, by cultivating characteristics, such as accountability, compassion, and integrity, as well as harnessing connection with personal emotions, through initiation by other men (ManKind Project South Africa [The], n.d.).

Besides the criterion of participation in the ROP programme, the sample of participants had to self-identify as Coloured individuals. In addition, due to my location, the participants were selected from the Cape Town branch, which was convenient and easily accessible for the participants, as well as myself.

The sampling strategy, employed in my study was purposive sampling (Coyne, 1997; Golzar et al., 2022). Individuals were selected, based on their potential to add valuable information to

the research study; therefore, the participants were matched to the inclusion and exclusion criteria before being recruited (Coyne, 1997). Cohen et al. (2017) emphasises that qualitative research sampling is focused on a best fit model, instead of a size model, with the most important source of concern being, the quality of information that could be derived from the sample.

According to Kumar et al. (2020), experts suggest that, in phenomenological studies, the range of participants should be between three and ten participants. Therefore, for this current research project, I considered this suggestion, and selected within this range, by recruiting five participants. Additionally, I considered the principle of data saturation to guide the process of participant selection. Data saturation refers to a point during data collection, when no new information is forthcoming from the participants, and instead recurring and repetitive information is communicated; at this point, data saturation has been reached (Kumar et al., 2020).

3.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

As part of the research methodological protocols, to ensure that the highest quality of data is acquired, I considered the inclusion, as well as the exclusion criteria for participant selection. The inclusion criteria include the key characteristics that the population should possess, to be included in the research project. The inclusion and exclusion criteria, therefore, act as a filter, to ensure that only those matching the requirements and aims of the study are included (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Exclusion criteria refer to those in the population, who do not meet the research inclusion criteria; however, they also possess further characteristics that may compromise the research (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). For this current study, the inclusion criteria were as follows:

- The participants must have experienced the phenomenon, namely, *the Boys to Men* rites of passage programme;
- They had to self- identify as Coloured;
- They had to be adolescents, which, traditionally was considered to be between the ages of 10-19, however, recent literature has suggested an increased understanding of adolescence to fall within the range of 10-24 years old (Sawyer et al., 2018; Lancet Commission, 2025). This understanding has been consistent with more recent

understanding of brain, biological development and slower social role transitions (Sawyer et al., 2018; Lancet Commission, 2025). For my research study, I decided to go with this understanding, and therefore also considered participants between the ages of 10-24.

The above inclusion criteria are relatively broad, which allowed the researcher to include a wide range of participants, who had experienced the *Boys to Men* ROP programme. However, this was further narrowed through the exclusion criteria, which included the following:

- Prospective participants, who were substance abusers were excluded, as this may have impacted the ability to ensure the validity of the research. This applied to the period of data collection particularly;
- Prospective participants, who were not able to commit to the period, during which the interviews would be conducted, were excluded, as the researcher may have to conduct multiple interviews; therefore, the participants would be required to be available throughout the interviews and data gathering period;
- Prospective participants, who did not self-identify as Coloured, were excluded;
- Prospective participants, who were younger than 10, and older than 24, were excluded;
- Prospective participants, who never attended the Boys to Men ROP were also excluded.

By using the above inclusion, as well as exclusion criteria I was able to select participants that could contribute to meaningful and insightful research that aligns with the aims of my study.

3.6. Recruitment process & storage

Before the recruitment process commenced, I first applied to Unisa's higher ethics committee for the research proposal to be accepted. Subsequently, I contacted members from the Mankind project, as well as the Boys to Men programme, to inform them about my research, and the purpose thereof, followed by a request for permission to recruit individuals, who had participated in their programme. Thereafter to be interviewed for my research study. I was provided the contact details of one of the key facilitators of the Boys to Men programme who works closely with boys that completed the programme. This facilitator was also the participant's teacher at the high school that they were attending. This made it easier for me to liaise and communicate with all stakeholders. A list of participants was provided by the

facilitator who have completed the programme, after which I matched them to my inclusion and exclusion criteria. The participants who matched this criteria where contacted and consent, coupled with approval from both participants and guardians were ascertained. Next, I arranged a convenient date for the interviews that suited both myself and the participants. Due to the participants attending the same high school, I chose the high school as a venue to conduct the interviews, after receiving permission from the school principal. The school principal allocated a private room where I was able to conduct my interviews in complete privacy. As highlighted above, the number of participants were five in total, and data saturation was considered. Data analysis was conducted immediately after the transcriptions, while the participants' contact details were kept available, in case clarification was required. However, due to the rich and clear responses from participants, this was not required.

Finally, the data from the interviews were recorded, using the recording function on the researcher's cell phone. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transferred to the researcher's password-protected laptop hard drive. Once the interviews were secured, the researcher commenced the transcription process with all the recordings of the interviews and data analysis processes. After submission and completion of my research, the data, both audio and transcripts, will be put in safekeeping for a period of ten years, after which it will be appraise for further retention.

3.7. Data collection

The data collection method employed in this current study involved semi-structured interviews, deemed an appropriate method, as the research was aimed at exploring the participants' experiences of the ROP programme. Additionally, I decided to employ the semi-structured approach, as it not only provided the interviews with some questions to orient the process, but also enabled myself and interviewee to explore further, thereby uncovering deeper and more meaningful insight into the participants' experiences (Groenland & Dana, 2019). The interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face, on a one-on-one basis, and scheduled for 30- to 60-minute slots, with English being the primary language used. In addition, the interviews were conducted on the school premises, where the participants of the rites of passage programme attended. I sought prior permission before accessing these interview sites from the school's principal.

3.8. Data analysis

Once the interviews were completed, I used the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach [IPA] as the data analysis procedure. In the IPA approach, the researcher attempts to make sense of the individuals' experiences of the phenomenon that they have encountered, namely, in my study, the *Boys to Men* ROP programme (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Wagner et al., 2012). Additionally, the IPA process is twofold; firstly, the participants share their experiences and attempt to make sense of their experiences, while the second part of the process allows the researcher to make sense of the experiences of the participants (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Therefore, by allowing the active participation of the participants, as well as the researcher, a more meaningful and deeper analysis of the data would result (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). In IPA, the importance of analysing the transcripts of the participants, through the lens of discovering aspects related to the psychology of the individual, is emphasised, and, consequently, IPA is concerned about the meaning that participant's association with the phenomenon (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Smith and Shinebourne (2012) suggest a four-step process to conduct IPA:

1. Searching for themes in the first case;
2. Connecting the themes;
3. Continuing the analysis with other cases; and
4. Writing Up.

3.8.1. Searching for themes in the first case

During this stage, I read through the transcripts and made notes in the right margin of the transcript, noting any interesting or significant aspects of their responses. I also ensured that the transcript was read and reread, to become familiar with its content. As I was reading through the transcript, a few points, as well as summaries were made, while attempting to make an initial interpretation of the data. By reading and commenting on the transcript, I observed nuances, contradictions, and certain repetitive utterances from the participants, which was the first phase of my analysis.

For example, during the analysis process, the sub-theme of emotional regulation skills was observed from various participants; however, they would reflect on diverse emotions

related to a similar experience. This provided me with insight into the wide range of emotions that their ROP experience was able to illicit, as well as how the experiences differed from each other. Some participants were able to identify the dangers of suppressing emotions, while others reflected on the aspect of relief, in relation to emotional expression. This reflects the nuances that were observed by me, while analysing the transcripts of the participants.

I followed this procedure for the entire first transcript, and once completed, I returned to the beginning, and began to identify theme titles from the initial analysis. This process of searching for, and identifying themes, was continued throughout the entire transcript, thereby, completing the two-stage process of the first phase (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

3.8.2. Connecting the themes

The following stage involved the process of examining the themes that had been noted in the previous process, and subsequently, forming connections between the emerging themes. Initially, the themes were ordered chronologically, as they appeared through the analysis of the transcript; however, during this phase, themes were paired, due to the mutual connection they revealed, consequently relying on my capacity to make sense of the themes, and allowing for their interpretation. This was effected to ensure that no duplication occurred.

As I formed the emerging themes, and allotted them to their shared groups, constant checks were conducted to determine whether the themes matched the responses of the participants in the transcripts. This process of comparing my interpretation to the responses of the participants, allowed for a greater level of veracity, and ensured that I did not misinterpret, or misrepresent, the primary text of the participants. During this phase I endeavoured to, in an orderly and coherent manner, construct a table consisting of clusters of themes that had emerged. Subsequently, the cluster of themes was added to a superordinate theme, with each theme containing an identifier related to the evidence of that theme within the transcript (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

3.8.3. Continuing the analysis with other cases

In the IPA approach, the importance of moving on to another case only once the first participant’s transcript has been completely analysed, is emphasised. This was followed

by the researcher, either using the themes revealed from the first transcript, to guide the analysis of the succeeding participant, or starting anew completely with the subsequent participants, allowing for new, or similar themes to emerge. In this current study, I chose the latter approach, as it was advocated for novice researchers (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). When all the transcripts had been analysed, a table of new superordinate themes was constructed. It should be noted that the themes that were selected were not chosen solely due to the rate of appearance; instead, themes were chosen because of the richness and value that they added to my study.

The theoretical framework that has informed this current study also helped me to make sense of participants' experiences and aided with the development of a framework for the superordinate themes. As discussed in the literature review, the theoretical framework underpinning this study draws from Van Gennep's (1960) definition for rites of passage, as well as Joseph Campbell's concepts of the hero's journey (Sonnenburg & Runco, 2017). Both ideas convey a three-step process, for Van Gennep (1960) the rites of passage participants go through separation, initiation/liminal and reincorporation, while Joseph Campbell's hero's journey involves a process of departure, initiation and return (Sonnenburg & Runco, 2017). Therefore, combining both may appear in the following manner:

1. Separation/Departure;
2. Initiation/liminal; and
3. Reincorporation/Return.

The underlying processes for both the hero's journey and rites of passage journeys are similar; however, the hero's journey further delineates subplots that converge on the main pathway, as illustrated above. For this current study, four main superordinate themes were identified from the participants, namely:

1. Self-Mastery,
2. Rewriting the narrative,
3. Initiating Connections, and
4. Catalyst for change.

With the theoretical framework in mind, I was able to identify a pattern within the superordinate themes that provided further credence to the trustworthiness of the themes. The superordinate themes could fit within the theoretical framework model. Through the lens of the theoretical framework, the superordinate themes could make sense, which is illustrated as follows:

Table 3.1: Theoretical framework and matching superordinate themes

Theoretical framework concept	Matching superordinate theme
1. Separation/Departure	Self-Mastery
2. Initiations/Liminal space	Rewriting the narrative
3. Reintegration/ Return	Initiating connections & catalyst for change

1. **Separation/ Departure (Self-Mastery)**

   The superordinate theme of Self-Mastery could be explained through the first step of the rites of passage and hero's journey. The participants are beckoned to embark on the journey of self-mastery, as they are transitioning into a new status; however, to attain their new self, it is necessary for them to *depart* from the status quo and *separate* from their usual surrounding.

2. **Initiation (Rewriting the narrative)**

   During the liminal stage that accompanies initiation, the participants are confronted with the challenge of solving the crises of merging their old self with their new self. Ultimately, through resolving this crisis, they are redefining their sense of self, and r*ewriting their own narrative*, shaping a sense of identity, in proximity to their true self.

3. **Reincorporation/ Return (Initiating connections and catalyst for change).**

   The process of reincorporation requires a coming together and sharing with others. Towards the end of their reflections on their experiences, this process can be observed in the responses of the participants. Consequently, the superordinate theme of initiating connection is identified at this stage. It follows that, after the participants are able to develop their new sense of self, they can *initiate connections*, based on their true self, thereby reincorporating themselves. Buoyed

up by this achievement, they can return to their communities, with the aim of being a *catalyst for change.*

In this way, a golden thread between the identified superordinate themes and theoretical framework, converges. By understanding the theoretical framework, I was able to map the experiences of the participants, which facilitated an easier pathway to identify the major themes of their experiences.

3.8.4. Writing up

This is the final stage of the analysis process, in which I wrote up and reported on the meanings that arose from the themes of the participants' experiences. During this phase, I elaborated on the analysis of the data, as well as the themes, and commented on the nuances observed. Subsequently, I presented the findings in the results section, presenting the superordinate themes, and discussing the implications of the results, separately. As an alternative, I could have decided to present the results, as well as the discussion in a single place, commenting on the superordinate themes that arose from the data set, however, felt that it would make for an easier read to separate the two (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

3.9. Ensuring rigor

For qualitative research to be rigorous, it needs to consider factors that may impact its trustworthiness. Therefore, I strove to prevent negative influences on my research, by ensuring that factors related to trustworthiness are not compromised. The following four factors were considered to ensure the trustworthiness of my research:

1. Credibility;
2. Transferability;
3. Dependability; and
4. Confirmability.

(Amankwaa, 2016)

These factors are addressed in more detail hereunder:

3.9.1. Credibility

The credibility of qualitative research is important, as it establishes that the findings of the research is considered trustworthy (Amankwaa, 2016). The procedures that I adopted to ensure credibility are numerous, including the consideration of triangulation, checking in with members, a constant engagement with, and observation of, the research (Amankwaa, 2016). For my study, I relied on member checking to ensure the credibility of the research. During the interview period, I checked in to clarify the responses of the participants, in order to confirm the accuracy, as well as that I was capturing their true experiences. Additionally, I constantly engaged with the study, observing and noting the differences in the experiences of the participants. Ensuring credibility was foremost in achieving trustworthiness, which I strove to ensure by observing the procedures highlighted above.

3.9.2. Transferability

This process involves ensuring that the findings could be generalized, not only to one context, but other contexts as well (Amankwaa, 2016). One of the ways of achieving transferability, utilized in my study, is referred to as thick description. I provided the reader with a detail account of the research context, as well as background information regarding participant. This process motivated the researcher to provide detailed descriptions of the process followed, which facilitated an evaluation of its applicability to different contexts. I attempted to provide the reader with copious information, thereby telling the participants' stories, to create an accurate picture of the research. Additionally, I made use of reflective journals to capture personal details and feelings of the research that may not have been clear from the words of the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). For my study I utilised direct quotations from participants, thereby allowing their own voices to be heard, and described the contexts of participants, which will allow the reader to perceive the applicability of the data.

3.9.3. Confirmability

Confirmability encompasses the extent to which the data from the research is representative of the participants' responses, and not influenced by the biases of the researcher (Amankwaa, 2016). To ensure confirmability, I implemented four procedures,

namely, audit trail, confirmability audit, reflexivity, and triangulation. During the audit trail procedure, I demonstrated, step-by-step, the process that unfolded from the commencement of the research project, until its conclusion. I retain records that account for the development my research, as well as the reporting of the findings from the data (Amankwaa, 2016).

Regarding triangulation, this refers to the process of utilizing various sources of data, to enhance the understanding of phenomenon under scrutiny (Amankwaa, 2016). Consequently, it aids the research to amass rich meaning. In addition, Amankwaa (2016) highlights four types of triangulations, namely, source triangulation, methods triangulation, analyst triangulation, and theory triangulation. For my study, data triangulation may have been limited, as I mainly relied on one source of data, namely the participants, I was able to interview participants who participated in the programme at different periods of time. Furthermore, in relation to the data analyses and presentation of themes, my supervisor was able to provide input, which facilitated in the trustworthiness of my findings.

For reflexivity, I followed two processes; firstly, I utilised a reflexive journal throughout the process of conducting the research. This journal contains my reflections on the research process, and demonstrates the thinking for the choices I made. Additionally, reflections were conducted after each interview with a participant. Finally, I also reported on how personal beliefs, values, and biases may have influenced the research process (Amankwaa, 2016).

3.9.4. Dependability

The final procedure that I utilized to ensure trustworthiness was dependability, to demonstrate that the findings of this current research could be repeated (Amankwaa, 2016). In addition, the technique used was inquiry audits, specifically, allowing my supervisor to interrogate my findings. Finally, by following these procedures, I ensured that the research findings were consistent with the raw data, provided by the participants.

3.10. Ethical considerations

Many factors can impact the quality and trustworthiness of the research, these include factors that violate the ethical codes, which are aimed at protecting the various stakeholders involved

in the research process (Wagner et al., 2012). Therefore, I adhered to some important ethical considerations throughout my research process. These included issues related to "gatekeeping, preventing harm, reciprocity, deception, power and social justice, informed consent, and anonymity and confidentiality" (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 64). It is important to highlight that, prior to the commencement of the data collection process, ethics clearance was obtained from the Unisa Research Ethics Committee (REC).

3.10.1. Gatekeeping

Gatekeepers refer to those individuals, who fulfil an important role of facilitating entry into a community, organisation, or programme, for the researcher (Wagner et al., 2012). These could be individuals, such as Imams, Priests, community leaders, supervisors, and essentially, any individual, who plays a linking role between the researcher and the participants (Wagner et al., 2012). Throughout my research, I remained cognisant of maintaining a good rapport with these individuals.

For my study, some of the important gatekeepers were the Mankind project, the guardians of the participants, as well as the authorities of the Boys to Men programme. Therefore, before approaching prospective participants for this current research project, I contacted these stakeholders and sought permission to conduct the research (See appendix F). Additionally, whilst contacting these individuals, I explained the purpose of the research in writing and allowed for any questions to be answered about the research.

3.10.2. Preventing harm

Another important ethical consideration that I included in the ethical protocol, while conducting the research, was preventing harm. In research, preventing harm refers not only to the physical sense of the word, but also the emotional and psychological sense of harm, which should be prevented (Wagner et al., 2012). Therefore, to ensure this, I first clarified that the participants could decide at any time to withdraw from the interviews, should they feel uncomfortable. Secondly, I highlighted that they would not be forced to disclose anything that they felt uncomfortable about. Thirdly, any information in the research that could potentially lead to physical, emotional, or mental harm, such as disclosing the exact locations of participants, was excluded. Finally, the researcher pledged not to harm the participants physically, or emotionally (See appendices B, C and D).

In case of emotional harm, elicited by any aspect related to the research, I assured the participants that they would receive support, through counselling, as well as other emotional support.

3.10.3. Reciprocity

The process of reciprocity involves the researcher expressing appreciation for the time and effort of the participants during the research period (Wagner et al., 2012). This can be expressed in various forms, such as, paying the participants for their time, sharing the results of the findings with the participants, or gift giving (Wagner et al., 2012). Caution should be exercised, especially when remunerating participants financially, as this could bias the data, and skew the results, as a participant from a lower socioeconomic background, may comply solely for the reward. Therefore, I reciprocated and showed my appreciation for the time and efforts of the participants, by purchasing a meal, which was shared with the participants. Ultimately, I will also share the findings with the participants, as further remuneration for their time.

3.10.4. Deception

I ensured that no deception occurred in any manner, by behaving honestly and truthfully with the participants from the inception. I initiated this process of non-deceit by explaining and relating the exact purpose of the study, as well as under which conditions the research would be conducted. In addition, I answered all the questions posed by the participants, before commencing with the interview process (Wagner et al., 2012).

3.10.5. Power and social justice

During the entire development of this current research, I remained sensitive and cognisant of the power dynamics in the relationships, and paid close attention to being just and fair, when addressing any aspects related to the research. I did not coerce the participants to share information that they were uncomfortable with, emphasising it with all the participants, and requesting that they be truthful in return, thereby making them aware of their power in the research relationship (Wagner et al., 2012). Additionally, it is important to note that I am a MA student and a clinical psychologist in training, which could also be viewed as a power dynamic; however, to ensure that this dynamic did not influence the participant's perception and responses, it was simply stated that I am a student, and interested in learning from their experiences. This ensured that the

participants did not feel undermined, but confident that they had valuable knowledge to contribute.

Similarly, I strove to emphasise the importance of honesty with all the stakeholders involved in the project, including the gatekeepers and guardians of the participants. Therefore, before commencing the interaction with the participants, I sought written consent from their guardians, as the participants were adolescents, and most likely under the care/supervision of their parents.

Important to note, that despite participants having completed the Boys to Men rites of passage programme, they were not forced by the organization to participate in the research. I explained to them that their involvement was entirely on a volunteer basis and that they would be exercising their free will by participating in the study. I also made it known to them that the information that they are sharing will be confidential and none of their personal identification information will be made accessible to the reader. I hoped that through this information, participants would be willing to be more transparent and open to sharing their true experiences. However, I do feel that an extra layer of anonymity may have given participants greater agency and willingness for transparency. This may come by means of conducting anonymous surveys with participants who have completed the ROP programme. A rebuttal to this may be that I would not have been able to get the depth of information if it were not for the personal touch that comes with conducting in person interviews. Yet, I feel that conducting an anonymous survey about participants experiences will be of value for future studies.

3.10.6. Informed consent

Before conducting the interviews, and during the first encounter with the participants, their written assent and consent were sought from them, as well as their guardians to participate in the research project. Additionally, this process continued throughout the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Wagner et al., 2012). Along the consent and assent form, important information was included that helped the participant to decide whether they would like to participate in the research, or not. These included:

- The purpose and aim of the research;
- Their right to terminate their participation at any time;
- That they were participating in this research voluntarily;

- The length of the research project;
- What the researcher expects of them;
- The risks and beneficial factors that relate to them;
- How their information would be protected;
- Explanation of confidentiality and anonymity; and
- Contact information of the researcher, should they have any follow-up questions.

(Wagner et al., 2012)

3.10.7. Anonymity and confidentiality

For the protection of the participants, the researcher considered both anonymity, as well as confidentiality. Anonymity refers to the researcher taking steps to remove or conceal any identifying information that will allow the reader to recognise participants (Wagner et al., 2012; Kaiser, 2009). For my study, this was not completely attainable, as the researcher, I knew the identity of participants and had access to personal information. However, in my reporting, I strove to ensure that the reader does not have access to these details. Confidentiality implies that the researcher collects information from them, and protects the information from unauthorised disclosure (Wagner et al., 2012).

By having these protocols in place, I ensured an extra layer of protection for the participants, and contributed to ethical research. Ultimately, pseudonyms and broader geographical locations were used to describe the identifying information of participants, thereby not allowing the reader the ability to identify participants.

3.11. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is part of the qualitative process, during which I reflect on my own values and assumptions, as well as the impact that it may have had on the research process. The researchers' positionalities influence the manner in which they interpret and create meaning of the data (Palaganas, 2017). In the following paragraphs, I reflect on my positionality:

When reflecting on my research process, I feel that conducting this research, and coming from a background like the participants, made it easy to relate to them. This may have contributed to building rapport with the participants, but it may have

contributed to how I interpreted the data. I also wonder, were I to be another race or gender, what would the participants have revealed? Would they have been open to sharing and becoming vulnerable with, say, a black or white researcher? I also question whether, because of this degree of relatability, whether the participants may have felt a need to over report only on the positive aspects of their experiences, as I found that few highlighted negative aspects.

This may have been an assumption of mine that I must challenge, as I expected more reporting of negative aspects related to their experiences; however, this was minimal. Therefore, I wondered what would have been revealed if a layer of anonymity had been provided, say through an anonymous survey. Therefore, my future study may look at adopting this data collection methodology.

I was quite impacted by the participants reflecting on their experiences of repairing relationships, which was an experience that I could relate to. In my life's journey I experienced severed relationships with close family members that is still in the process of being repaired. In addition, there were various other experiences reported that were relatable, which made me question the extent of the proximity between myself and the participants' experiences. I would reflect on these similarities and feelings with my supervisor and colleagues, which helped with the processing of the experience, but also facilitated the separation of my own experiences, and the experiences of the participants.

It is also important to note that as a Clinical Psychologist in training, I have been trained to elicit deeper and more personal reflections with clients. I wonder whether some of the content of the interviews came from this training. I found myself at times wanting more reflection, and I question whether my interview style and probing elicited more information, perhaps information that participants were not comfortable sharing. Therefore, I would have liked to check in more with participants, whether they were comfortable with sharing to the extent that they did.

Throughout the research process, I found myself wanting the participants to succeed in their endeavours, which may speak to the emotional investment that was

created during the time of interviewing them. I wonder whether this also impacted how I viewed the data, and influenced the selection of themes.

I feel that I could have reflected more deeply on some of the content that participants were sharing, which may have facilitated the extraction of better themes. Reflecting on the participants experiences, within my own therapy, as well as how I could relate to them, would have revealed more about myself and about the research I am embarking on. Therefore, I feel that this was a missed opportunity, which I will consider for future research endeavours.

3.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher outlined and discussed, in detail, matters related to the research methodology. The research paradigm and design were discussed, and aspects related to sampling were identified. Additionally, the data collection approach, data collection tool, research procedure, and data storage were presented. Finally, the chapter was concluded by discussing the data analysis approach, coupled with ethical considerations, and a section on the reflexivity of the researcher, while engaging with the content of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present my findings of the audio-recorded interview transcripts, by presenting the analysis of the five participants' responses. Firstly, I highlight the main superordinate theme, and subsequently, discuss the subordinate themes that support the main theme. However, before presenting the themes, a short summary of the analysis is provided, as well as the steps involved that led to the development of the superordinate and sub-themes.

For my study, I opted to utilize interpretive phenomenological analysis [IPA], which allowed for the unearthing of rich information about the experiences of participants, in relation to the rites of passage phenomenon. It also allowed for the dual participation of the participants and the researcher, as the former shared their experiences, and the latter made sense of their experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). IPA, as discussed in the methodology chapter, involves a four-step process, which will only be named, as the reader could refer to the methodology chapter, for a more detailed description.

The four steps include: firstly, searching for themes, secondly, connecting the themes; thirdly, continuing the analysis with other cases; and finally, the researcher begins the write up process. Through IPA the following four superordinate themes were identified: 1) Self-mastery; 2) Rewriting the narrative; 3) Initiating connection; and 4) Catalyst for change. Each of the above superordinate themes is supported by sub-themes, which are accompanied by direct quotes from the participants, using their pseudonyms, and discussed.

The discussion focuses on the meaning of these themes, as well as the impact that they have had on the participants' experiences. In this chapter, I provide the reader with a glimpse into the lives of the participants and reveal how their rites of passage experiences shaped their lives.

In the following table, I provide an outline of the findings:

Table 4.1: Findings

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Participant Quotes
1. Self-Mastery	1.1. Internal locus of control	"The I. You must, you must never speak about We or us, you must always speak about yourself ", "Because you can't blame other people for what you do" - **Lyle**
	1.2. Emotional regulation and skills	"And it is, it is not always a bad thing to be open (emotionally). And not everyone is going to judge you when you are open," "But it was also an emotional shift from where I used to be before" - **Jordan**
	1.3. True self	"The mask that you create represents the image that you show to people, the thing that you are hiding behind," "once you break the mask that is when you know that you, it is like believing in yourself" - **Saif**
	1.4. Healing	"I know what you are going through, and I feel the pain that you are going through now, but I am going to send something in the future for me and for you. In the future, there is always light at the end of the tunnel" - **Lyle**
2. Rewriting the Narrative	2.1. Processing experience	"They put the blanket around me, two people. They kept it, and I was supposed to break through to get to my father. And as I am shouting, he is not listening to me. And I am shouting, I am screaming, tears in my eyes. His not turning around. I am shouting to my mother, nobody is turning around, I must break through all that pain and the anger, to get through to them" - **Lyle**
	2.2. Attitudes towards school	"Yes, I was not in a very focused mindset regarding schoolwork (prior to the camp)" - **Shaun**
3. Initiating Connections	3.1. Repairing relationship with parental figures	"Like that neglect of not having a fatherly figure around. And that affected me. And yeah, I think it also just gave me an awareness that I also maybe he's trying and I'm not letting him in and that when I started letting him in more that's when I saw how much effort he was trying to make and try to be there for me, you know. So that is, yes, I have been in a pretty good space" - **Mike**
	3.2. Expanding social support network	"Yes, huge change, and there was also a change in my behaviour. It also helped me overcome my fear of talking to people and connecting with them" - **Jordan**
4. Catalyst for Change	4.1. Seeking growth	"Then after that camp, I started going for counselling, the camp motivated my willingness to go for counselling and I thought that the school has a counsellor, so I should make use of it. I was never interested in counselling, but I decided to try it out and went, and it helped a lot" - **Saif**

4.2. Superordinate theme 1: Self-Mastery

The first superordinate theme, identified through the analysis, was that of self-mastery. In this current study, self-mastery is viewed as an evaluative stance, and a commitment towards improving an aspect related to oneself (Wall, 2021). By participating in the rites of passage, the participants were able to access elements of self-mastery. This major theme contains four further sub-themes, namely, internal locus of control, emotional regulation and skills, true self, and healing.

4.2.1. Subordinate theme 1.1: Internal locus of control

This refers to the tendency to be intrinsically motivated, with the capacity for personal responsibility (Kovach, 2018). Multiple participants demonstrated an internal locus of control in how they believed that they were in control of their behaviour, as well as the outcomes, brought on by how they conducted themselves. The following participant, Lyle is currently in Grade 10, living with his grandmother and sister. His parents are divorced, and he has a distant relationship with his father; however, recently their relationship has improved. He has hopes of completing Grade 12, making a success of his life, and contributing to his community. He stated:

> *"The I. You must, you must never speak about we or us, you must always speak about yourself … Because you can't blame other people for what you do,"* **(Lyle)**

In the above excerpt, Lyle highlighted the importance of taking responsibility for the direction of his life. He acknowledged that others were not to blame for his decisions and understood that he had autonomy and control. He reframed his experiences, thereby not allowing external factors to influence him, which is powerful, and demonstrated the growth that he was able to achieve through his experience. This shift in framing, provided the impression of him moving away from a scarcity mindset, which afflicts many young at-risk adolescents, to one that embodied agency. This sense of responsibility was also identified by Saif. He completed Grade 12 in 2024, has hopes of starting college, and enjoys outdoor activities in nature. He completed the Boys to Men ROP in 2022. He noted the following:

> *"Yeah. I used to think it was cool. Everyone would laugh, but when you get caught, where is everybody, you are alone. You'll sit alone."* **(Saif)**

Here, he acknowledged that, when he faced challenges, he usually faced them alone, without the help of those he wanted to impress. This recognition of facing challenges alone, contributed to his awareness that ownership of his decisions, was within his control, highlighting the importance of not letting others cloud his decision-making. Like the previous two participants, Shaun's excerpts, captured the importance of personal responsibility. Shaun, is a grade 10 pupil, and an avid football player. He attended the Boys to Men ROP in 2022. Prior to the programme, he had a troubled history of fighting; however, was able to turn a new leaf after the ROP. He now viewed himself as a leader and trendsetter. He mentioned:

> "I've learned that I'm my own person, so I must make my own decisions and that stuff. So, I can't go after friends and all that." **(Shaun)**

Like other participants, Shaun acknowledged that he should take ownership of his decision-making, and that, ultimately, he was in control. The message that he was conveying, was especially concerning negative influences on decision-making. Generally, adolescents are influenced by their friends; however, in his case, he understood that his process of making a decision, was of utmost importance. His strong sense of personal resolve and control was demonstrated and corroborated by him, noting:

> "Yes, and what my friends do, I don't have to do. Not to fit in."

Finally, Mike, who completed the ROP programme in 2017, and matriculated in 2018, also contributed to this current study. He is currently involved in sound engineering and works in stage production. He also plays the role of a mentor for children in his community. He continued the message of accountability, and taking control, when he highlighted:

> "Also just taking ownership of and taking accountability of what you have done and what you, every action that you do and decision that was, yeah." **(Mike)**

Taking ownership for their actions, was one of the important lessons that Mike and the other participants learnt through their rites of passage experience. It empowered them and provided them with a sense of authority over their own lives and their destiny. They displayed an internal locus of control, as manifested in the form of taking responsibility

over decision making and accountability. This presented a shift in how they perceived themselves. They understood that the extent to which external factors could control their decision-making, depended on how much they allowed it to influence them.

4.2.2. Sub-theme 1.2: Emotional regulation and skills

Equipped with a sense of internal locus of control, the participants also displayed a capacity for emotional regulation and skills. Jordan, a grade 11 student, completed the ROP programme in 2024. He enjoys helping his grandmother to distribute soup during the winter seasons. He reported having a challenge with the sharing of emotions; however, he was able to overcome this challenge during his completion of the programme. He highlights:

> "And it's, it's not always a bad thing to be open [emotionally]. And not everyone is going to judge you when you're open", "But it was also an emotional shift from where I used to be before", "But when I opened, it lifted me". **(Jordan)**

The impact of being able to share his emotions provided a sense of relief for him. He expressed a sense of liberation that comes with being emotionally congruent and acknowledging his emotional positionality. Within this extract, Jordan also conveyed the difficulty that accompanies vulnerability. He was confronted with the dilemma of suffering in silence, or experiencing relief and support, thereby becoming vulnerable. He courageously chose the latter, which demonstrates the emotional majority that he was able to acquire through his rites of passage experience.

This courage was also demonstrated by Lyle, noting:

> "Because all the feelings you bottled up, you must speak the feelings out. You must speak to people you trust, and things you do, and trust people." **(Lyle)**

Here, he displayed insight into the dangers of suppressing his emotions, which demonstrated emotional intelligence that he was cultivating. However, he did not stop at this juncture, as he took it to a higher level, where he identified the skills required to

prevent suppressing his emotions, which he identified as, speaking to people, whom he could trust. Corroborating this sense of relief that Jordan identified, Saif mentions:

> "The camp, it opens you up. Okay. You become, like make your shoulders lighter." **(Jordan)**

The sense of catharsis that comes with being able to express their emotions opened a new world for the participants, and provided them with relief. This experience allowed Saif to understand that there are healthy avenues that he could explore to experience emotional relief. Similar to the others, Mike highlighted:

> "I would say, because I'm a person who doesn't like speaking about how I feel about things. On that camp you had, not forced, but they made it open so that everyone is open, and I was a bit uncomfortable with it in the beginning, but as we went on, I felt more open to it." **(Mike)**

Like the fellow participants, the idea of speaking about his emotions was initially discomforting; however, through the environment that was created, he realised that he was willing to express deep-held feelings. This demonstrates the importance and influence of the social environment that is created on the behaviour of youth. Therefore, depending on the nature of these environments, it could either have a positive or negative impact on the individual.

4.2.3. Sub-theme 1.3: True self

As part of their self-mastery journey that was explored through their rites of passage experience, reflections from the participants suggest that they were able to cultivate a sense of identity that was based on their true self. Lyle reported the following:

> "We went the Friday, came back the Sunday, but the first day we came there, our lesson was about the mask that we were wearing and stuff, and then they told us that we must draw a mask, like what we wear, on, like, what I wear." **(Lyle)**

Here, Lyle highlighted an important lesson that he learnt during his rite of passage experience, namely, people frequently wear masks to disguise themselves. The figurative

mask exercise helped the participants to confront aspects of themselves that they may have hidden from others, but also themselves. Lyle added:

> "So, I'm going to say, because I wear the mask of the joker. It was like in the past; I burnt that mask out. So, I, drew the mask of the joker because I like to make people happy, but I know I'm not happy myself." **(Lyle)**

The mask that Lyle was hiding behind was that of the Joker, making everyone smile, while being psychologically wounded. He gained the insight that he was being pretentious and not true to himself, which demonstrated the insight that he had gained from this experience. Additionally, he noted:

> "I can make you happy maybe, but deep down I'm broken. I don't know how to fix myself. So, I learned that before I make other people happy, I need to be happy myself." **(Lyle)**

The insight that Lyle could demonstrate was rooted in being true to himself, and shining light on the areas of his traumatic past that he would rather have forgotten; however, to progress, he needed to be true to himself. Saif, having experienced the same exercise, noted:

> "Once you break the mask, that's when you know that you, it's almost like believing in yourself." **(Saif)**

He identified that, for him, part of wearing the mask, and being his pseudo self, was a result of him not trusting himself. The responses of the participants suggest that they were wearing masks for various reasons. Some, as in the case of Lyle, was to hide their pain, whereas in the case of Saif, it was to hide their distrust of themselves, and the lack of confidence. Knowing that they were wearing a mask was important; however, understanding their reasons for wearing a mask could reveal deeper-rooted causes that may require healing. Jordan noted the following, regarding the rites of passage experience:

> "Before the camp, I always looked down on myself. I never really said much about myself. But during the camp, I started to reflect more on myself, and it felt like I was called to be myself. After the camp, it felt as if I were formed and was happy." **(Jordan)**

For Jordan, his experience during camp, allowed him to engage in the task of introspection and self-questioning, which beckoned him towards a shaping of his sense of self, ultimately resulting in a sense of happiness, as he came to know himself. This provided insight into the process of forming identity in youth, specifically, it is preceded by a series of introspective questions that, when answered, leads to a sense of self. After this process, Jordan was confidently able to answer questions related to his identity:

> "I'm a respectful young man. I always greet others with a smile now. I never used to do that before. I rarely use to greet." **(Jordan)**

The confidence of his answer revealed that he identified strongly with this value, as he had internalised it, and it had shaped how he sees himself. Similarly, to other participants, Mike suggested the impact of the rites of passage on his sense of self:

> "Um, the one thing I can say I learned was to be truly true to myself and like, open and yeah, sometimes a lot of stuff as boys that we deal with, you don't really deal with, and you just build up and build up and that you end up doing things that you can't explain why you're doing it, but it's because of past trauma that you may have gone through and you didn't deal with." **(Mike)**

He highlighted that he was able to be true to himself, which required a sense of openness, and an acknowledgement of past traumas. As Lyle was able to identify that internal pain and suffering prevented him from manifesting a true self, Mike understood that unresolved trauma prevented him from being *his* true self. Through their experiences on the programme, they were able to harness a sense of identity, based on their true self.

4.2.4. Sub-theme 1.4: Healing

The participants of the ROP programme demonstrated that they were able to cultivate a sense of internal locus of control, emotional regulation and skills, as well as develop a true self. Additionally, in the process of self-mastery, they also experienced a form of healing. This was achieved by reflecting on painful memories associated with their lives and acknowledging this pain. The participants would also play the role of mentors to their past selves, and act as a source of comfort. One of the exercises that Lyle experienced, allowed him to encounter his younger self, at a time when he was suffering, and reassure his younger self, allowing for some healing of this past trauma:

> "The most lesson that stood out to me was when we were able, to meet our spiritual animal and our younger self." **(Lyle)**

Reflecting on this experience, he noted:

> "Because what's the thing he's going through, what you are going through, like, as a younger self, and you must speak to him. Tell him that everything is going to be okay, you're going to change something in the future for him." **(Lyle)**

Revealing some of his early childhood experiences, Lyle mentioned:

> "When I was younger, I went through a lot of stuff because my mom was on drugs, my father was on drugs. I had to look after my little brother. And, I had two brothers at the time when I was younger. I'm the oldest. Because my sister was still in my mother's stomach and was still using drugs. I had trouble in primary school. Like, people would call me names. Tell me I'm fat and all that stuff. For me, I didn't take it as personal as that, because I know God created no one ugly. Because if you're mocking me, you're mocking the one who made me, the creator. I was bullied a lot of times, but sometimes I was also the bully. Because I didn't want people to hurt me, mostly, and I hurt other people. Then I told my younger self. I know what you're going through, and I feel the pain that you're going through now, but I'm going to send something in the future for me and for you. In the future, there is always light at the end of the tunnel." **(Lyle)**

In a very touching manner, Lyle spoke to his younger self, acknowledging the pain. He recalled the painful memories, which allowed him to access the feelings he was experiencing at the time. He then provided hope to his younger self, but also to his current self, by stating that circumstances will improve, and he will control his outcomes. Lyle healed from his past trauma, through self-acknowledgement and hope.

Mike recalls the pain of being unloved by his father while growing up, and how the programme facilitated the healing of this pain:

> "Yeah, that you were, you were loved. That was one of the main messages. Because yeah, I think many of us, we didn't have that. And they are, like personally, my own life, I didn't have like a fatherly figure growing up much. So, it was something that I didn't know was a problem. Until I thought about it and was like, okay. That was kind of a problem. Just tough. Cause you know, you're around other men and you're not used to other men telling you how much they love you and care about you. It's kind of tough to hear that." **(Mike)**

Hearing those words from other men was tough, as it was an unusual experience for him, considering that his father never expressed these feelings towards him. However, hearing them expressed by other men, allowed him to experience something that was missing from his early childhood, and repair some of these early wounds. Therefore, through the rites of passage experience, some participants revealed that they were able to heal deeply traumatised wounds that were experienced in their past.

4.3. Superordinate Theme 2: Rewriting the narrative

The participants in the ROP programme demonstrated that they were able to attain a sense of mastery through their experiences. In addition to developing this capacity, they also demonstrated a learning capacity, thereby allowing them to rewrite their narratives. This was achieved through a two-fold process. Firstly, the programme facilitated the processing of past experiences, in a creative way, which demonstrates the creative approach that is required to initiate transformative change. Secondly, through the rewriting of their narratives, a ripple effect on their attitudes towards school and learning was realised.

4.3.1. Subordinate theme 2.1: Processing experiences

As revealed previously, the activities and exercises evoked a range of feelings within the participants. In addition, the approach of the activities had a lasting impact, as the participants were able to recall the feelings and messages that were communicated. This provided insight into how information is transferred, which results in self-knowledge, and ultimately results in transformation. Exercises frequently adopted a symbolic form and used metaphor, as a way of evoking powerful emotions and deeply held memories. Saif noted the following about exercises that he experienced:

> "Honestly, the last lesson, which is called The Waterfall. The Waterfall it is a concept that I really like. Everyone was excited. They said, yes, wow. It's time for The Waterfall. It's time for The Waterfall. Yeah. Alright. I felt strange. They were talking about the Waterfall, but I didn't see no water here. So, the last day came, everyone was in a circle, and now you had to stand in the middle, and you had to try to breakthrough. They put two people in front of you and two beside you. So, two beside you, or your problems, I mean, the two in the middle is your problems and the two on the side are your dreams and goals that you set out and want to be one day. Now, first, you must face your problems. So, children, they try to push, but almost like something is holding me back. Now, like as they push through, they, I would say, they help you fight things. Say, you lost a loved one, and you're always focused on your lost loved one, because you never had the opportunity to say goodbye. Then how they try, they help you with that. Alright, yes. It was funny at beginning. People laughed at first. But when they saw how it played out, most of them cried. It was just, the Waterfall concept hits deep" **(Saif)**

This demonstrates the deep impact that this activity had on him, as he was able to access thoughts and feelings that were beyond the surface level. The symbolic message is to enable the participants to identify the things that are holding them back, to move past, and experience the freedom, as well as beauty of the Waterfall. This metaphorical activity represented an opportunity for the participants to confront influences, frequently unacknowledged challenges that prevent them from progressing towards the achievement of their goals. Lyle, reflecting on his Waterfall experience, mentioned the following:

> "So, the imaginary Waterfall, but first, we were all excited. Because, Uncle Johnnie told us, we were going to go to Waterfall. We were going to go to Waterfall together. And we all went, no shirts, shorts, and a towel. And we went outside and stuff. But then they called us again up and told us it was an imaginary Waterfall. Then, they took half of the group, and half of the group. Like, I was distanced from my daddy. In that period, I was distance from my daddy and my mommy was also gone. Like, they send her away. Then they asked us. To choose a role, one of the leaders must say who can be my daddy, like in the role. And then he was like, standing with his back towards me. I

> had to choose someone who could be the role of my mom, who was standing with her back towards me and further. Then they kept the blanket against me, it's almost like the wall, it kept me away from them. They put the blanket around me, two people. They kept it, and I was supposed to break through to get to my father. And as I'm shouting, he's not listening to me. And I'm shouting, I'm screaming, tears in my eyes. His not turning around. I'm shouting to my mother, nobody is turning around, I must break through all that pain and the anger, to get through to them. And that was the part that it really does make me better." **(Lyle)**
>
> "The most lesson that stood out to me was when we were able, um, to meet our spiritual animal and our younger self. Uncle Johnnie, he was playing music there, like a tone, and we must lay one hand in the sky, one foot in the sky, like not up, but your knee up in the sky. And you must think about you in this place, like it's a river, with a lot of grass, and you come by this cave on this boat, and you see a younger self coming running to you, and he's coming crying, and you're like, because that's the things he's going through, that you went through like, as a younger self, and you must speak to him, and then he ran, then he ran back home, and then you must just think about one animal, and I thought about a horse. My horse was like, he was calm, he had harmony in him, so Uncle Johnnie gave him a name for me, Harmonious horse. Because he was calm, and then every time we were done doing something, he would go again to us, the younger self, and speak to him again. And tell him that everything is going to be okay, you're going to change something in the future for him**." (Lyle)**

Through the metaphor of this exercise, Lyle was able to access painful memories and experiences that prevented him from progressing in his life. Here, he was able to play out the experience of not being heard and seen by his parents. He felt exposed and was fearful. By acknowledging these experiences, he was able to initiate the healing process.

Another aspect of symbolism and metaphor was accessed through the utilization of storytelling, which was a feature of the rites of passage experience. Lyle noted:

> "Uncle Johnnie told us a story on, on Jack and the magic beans. At night Uncle Johnnie. Now, it just shows, everyone is different when we came there. Now Jack and the Magic beans show. When his mom sent him to sell the cow, they had nothing there. They had nothing to eat. He goes sell the cow for beans. And from that bean, there came golden eggs, chickens, everything. And that shows that you, you think it's worth more. But it's, worth more than you think, than you think it was." **(Lyle)**

In this story, a change in fortune was communicated, arising from difficult circumstances, which inspired hope within Lyle. As much as the story was fictional, it demonstrated a reality that Lyle was exposed to daily, namely, a reality of poverty. This story planted a seed in his mind that, like Jack, his fortunes could take a turn for the better. In addition, as mentioned previously, the positive impact of the mask exercise on various participants, cultivated an identity, based on their true selves. Therefore, from the participant's experiences, metaphor and symbolism became powerful vehicles of learning, ushering insight into past experiences, and lessons that became internalised.

4.3.2. Subordinate theme 2.2: Attitudes towards school

Part of changing their narratives lies in the changes that the participants were able to make in their attitudes towards school. One of the significant changes that the rites of passage programme was able to facilitate, was a more positive attitude towards school. This represents a significant shift for the participants, as their attitudes towards school were not positive before the programme. Jordan explained:

> "School is something I need to focus on. It's not just about friends anymore; school is an opportunity that helps shape your future." **(Jordan)**

Jordan realises the value that school presents to him, namely, an opportunity to impact his future. When asked whether his attitude towards school changed, in comparison to his previous views, he noted:

> "Yes, a lot." **(Jordan)**

Similarly, Shaun, highlighting his prior attitude towards school, said:

> "Yes, I was not in a very focused mindset regarding schoolwork." **(Shaun)**

He recognised that he was not as focused on school, and that the rite of passage helped him to recognise its importance. The realisation from both Shaun and Jordan demonstrates the level of maturity and responsibility they were able to develop, after their experiences in the programme. This again hints at their internal locus of control that was discussed previously. Mike highlights the motivation that he was able to acquire:

> "I mean, I was a bit more focused and more driven. I was the prefect, head boy at that time. That was one of my goals that I had, but yeah, that didn't happen. But I was still involved with the sound during assemblies. Yeah, I felt like I was more driven. I think that was the key point to where I am now, because it drove me, and it's still like a drive to want more and to work harder on whatever I want in my life." **(Mike)**

Mike became more focused and motivated to progress in his schooling, which ultimately resulted in him achieving his current position in life. In addition, he still feels motivated, with a drive to succeed, which again highlights the long-lasting impact that his rites of passage experience have had. Lyle, who failed the previous year and is currently repeating his Grade 10, highlighted his motivation for change:

> "When I started now again Grade 10, I came to school in a way that I'm not going to come here to play, you understand? I could have been done with school next year. I could have been Grade 12. I'm coming to school now to work, to do my work first. First work then your friends. Like I told myself now." **(Lyle)**

He highlighted a change in attitude, as previously, he prioritised his friends over his schoolwork; however, currently, he had learnt to prioritise. He was motivated to do well at school, despite experiencing the setback of failing an academic year. This demonstrates his resilience, which he was able to harness.

Saif, having completed his Matric the previous year, mentioned the impact that his rites of passage experience had had on his attitude towards school, when he stated the following:

> "There was actually a big change. I used to get into a lot of trouble, I used to sell stuff from the school, like, yes, I never smoked it but sell it on the school and influence other people try this, try that." **(Saif)**

Saif was able to make significant changes to his risky behaviour, which prevented him from engaging in problematic behaviour, which facilitated the completion of his schooling. Therefore, through their rites of passage experience, the participants were able to experience significant shifts concerning their attitudes towards schooling, resulting in improved performance outcomes, and the motivation to succeed at school. The growth that they were able to achieve through their rites of passage, may have served as a blueprint for the potential that they possess, which may have been a source for the changes in their attitudes towards school and learning.

4.4. Superordinate theme 3: Initiating connections

Thus far participants in the rites of passage programme were able to experience positive changes that initiated healing, self-mastery, and changes in attitudes towards school. However, the positive changes did not cease at this point, they extended to other areas of their lives. One of those areas included their interpersonal relationships. The participants were able to experience a sense of connection, on multiple levels, not only with themselves, but also with others. The fruits of these connections resulted in their repairing of relationships with parental figures and expanding their social circles.

4.4.1. Subordinate theme 3.1: Repairing relationships with parental figures

Through their personal growth and healing, the participants reflected on their relationships, and on returning from the rites of passage programme, they started repairing these relationships, especially with their parental figures. Mike highlighted that, despite not having his father present in his life, through conversations and experiences in the programme, he was able to initiate a relationship with his father:

> "So, eventually I made, so my dad was not always around, he did not live with us, and I didn't much care. After the camp, I've made it more of an effort to like to see him on the regular and we started having a relationship and I think now we're in a good, a very good space where we phone each other,

> we message each other, and he's also trying, I can see he's trying to be more involved." **(Mike)**

> "I think it also just gave me an awareness that also maybe he's trying and I'm not letting him in, and that when I started letting him in more, that's when I saw how much effort he was trying to make and try to be there for me, you know. So that's, yeah, I've been in a pretty good space." **(Mike)**

Here Mike reflected on the changes that the rites of passage experience enabled, especially regarding his relationship with his father. After the camp, he initiated this contact, which led to a breakthrough in their relationship. Earlier, Mike highlighted the impact of hearing other men acknowledge him with love, which may have contributed to his healing from past feelings of resentment towards his father. This healing process may have facilitated his choice to make contact and repair the relationship further. He added:

> "Yeah, I think that was one of the things that I spoke about. Like that neglect of not having a fatherly figure around. And that affected me. And yeah, I think it also just gave me an awareness that I also maybe he's trying and I'm not letting him in and that when I started the letting him in more that's when I saw how much effort he was trying to make and try to be there for me, you know. So that's, yeah, I've been in a pretty good space." **(Mike)**

For Mike, the efforts of his father may have been a blind spot for him; however, through reflection, he gained insight and was able to acknowledge the efforts of his father. This would not have been achieved, if these discussions had not been initiated, and during the rites of passage programme, the platform was provided to discuss these issues. Perhaps, being in an environment, where other healthy male role model figures were present, shed light on the importance of male figures in the lives of young men. Therefore, the rites of passage programme inspired Mike and other participants, by extension, to reflect on their relationships with their fathers.

Shaun highlighted the impact that the programme has had on his relationship with his mother:

> "They said they're very proud of me. Um, all that. That I must keep it up. I must leave that. That anger and that. Um, that for once I focus on my goals.

> Um, that I have that potential. I was shocked because my mom never told me that. Only in primary school, but that's when I did well in my grades. And my mom would tell me that, but not when I'm fighting and that." **(Shaun)**

Shaun noted the shock that he had experienced, when he heard the acknowledgement from his mother, which was meaningful and important for him to hear. Words of affirmation and recognition were important to Shaun; it was a feature of his relationship with his mother that was missing for many years. Similarly, Jordan noted an improvement in the relationship with his mother:

> "Mostly my mommy. Because I never used to speak about my things, my problems, and so on, but now I always talk to her and share what I can and what I feel comfortable sharing." **(Jordan)**

Jordan was comfortable with the idea of sharing and being open with his mother, which has allowed them to draw closer, and enhanced their relationship. Lyle reported the following improvement in his relationship with his father:

> "My father's relationship is better because he's visiting us now. He bought him a taxi. And he's working, like, a contract, but he's working, like, to drive people around Waterfront and stuff. And then when works near to us, he visits us." **(Lyle)**

Lyle noted that, since the programme, his relationship with his father had improved, with them spending more time together. He further reflected on things that he enjoyed doing with his father:

> "It was a bit cool because I could just sit in the van with him, and we could talk. Now the end of the month, his going to come to me because he's not getting money on my birthday. So, the end of the month, his going to come to me. Maybe, buy me a pair of takkies." **(Lyle)**

When probing further into the things that they would talk about, he mentioned:

> "Man to man conversations with my daddy." **(Lyle)**

Having a father figure in his life was vital for Lyle, as he could have meaningful conversations with his father that helped him to navigate his life. By having this relationship, he was also allowing himself to be mentored by his father. These types of conversations may not have been present previously; however, as Lyle was transitioning into adulthood, he could now foster this relationship. Saif perceived a drastic change in the attitudes of both his parents towards him, while his feelings towards them also changed:

> "But, yes, I have forgiven them. And I started afresh. Started anew. For the person that I am now." **(Saif)**

He was able to forgive them and start the relationship afresh, which was important for him to initiate the relationship. As a result of this shift, he observed the following:

> "The attention was not like it was before. They see you for who you are now. They never acknowledged the good, they always saw my flaws and failures. So now they really see you for what you have now. We were never seen when we were young." **(Saif)**

There was anguish in Saif's voice, as he reflected on not being seen as a child. Perhaps he had to forgive them for this transgression, to have a relationship with them. However, like Shaun, the impact of being seen and acknowledged filled them with joy. Therefore, through the development that the participants were able to experience during their rites of passage experience, they were able to make shifts in their parental relationships, which ultimately resulted in the repairing and strengthening of these relationships. In some cases, it resulted in the forging and mending of relationships that were broken.

4.4.2. Subordinate theme 3.2: Expanding social support networks

Beyond repairing relationships between themselves and their parents, the participants reported new forms of connections, resulting in an expansion of their social support networks. Saif, highlighting the change in his interpersonal relationships, noted:

> "I felt changed myself. This boy came up to ask for help, normally, I would have said no, what are you, you can do it yourself. But when this boy came to me, he asked me for help, and I went to help him. Like, and then, when I

> helped him, I felt good. I felt like, I would say, I did something good for today." **(Saif)**

Here, he noted a change in values, where he wanted to help others. Through this selfless act, he was able to initiate an experience of connecting to others, which made him feel good about himself. He expands to say:

> "Because me, back then, it was like every man for himself. You must do what you must do, don't bother me, like if you asked me for help, I would immediately say no don't even look at me, but afterwards, I started helping people." **(Saif)**

Before the rites of passage experience, he strove to live a life of independence, devoid of connection with others; however, after the programme, he realised the importance of others, and being *part of a tribe*. The willingness to experience a sense of connection extended beyond interpersonal relations, and for Saif, also resulted in a connection to nature:

> "Um, so the person I am know, I'm very open to new ideas. I've tried and experienced new things. At that time, I was still living in a bubble. I would stay in Larkwood, then go to school and that was it. I never went anywhere else. Um. But after the camp, I decided I am going to start changing this. Then I started going out, not like parties and stuff, but to beaches. I have been all around Cape Town, since I left the camp." **(Saif)**

He lived a life of isolation; however, he was able to experience the impact of connection, which allowed him to feel a sense of joy. Jordan noted his experience of meeting new people:

> "I was nervous because I wasn't around people I knew, and it was just strange meeting new people." **(Jordan)**

However, learning an important lesson through the programme, he mentioned:

> "What I learned is that you can always make new friends, even though you've never seen them before or interacted with them before. And it's, it's not

> always a bad thing to be open. And not everyone is going to judge you when you're open." **(Jordan)**

Jordan was able to overcome a fear of socialising and learnt that it was possible to trust others. This provided a new experience for him, where he realised that he could lean on others, and develop relationships that could add value to his life. Lyle reflected on a relationship that he was able to initiate during his rites of passage experience:

> "Yes, because there were children in the camp. They are bullies and there was just, almost like, not just bullies, but there were some bullies there. That I can see, they look aggressive and stuff. But when we sat down, and we talked deeply. I saw them cry. I also cried. There was one boy who always said that to me. His name was Zack. He wasn't a bully, he was bullied. Since his mother died, they bullied him. I felt his pain because he doesn't look like someone who went through that stuff. He looked like someone who grew up in a good home and stuff. But if you hear his background, you will see. That's why I was close to him on that camp. I was sitting with him. I was matching my story and his story. I was seeing if it can connect or something. We were talking about each other's background and our mothers and stuff. And where we came from." **(Lyle)**

The connection through empathy paved the way for Lyle to develop a new relationship, where he could relate to the experience of others. This was an important interpersonal skill to learn, specifically, the capacity to hold and empathise. The lesson that he learnt in the programme would continue to serve as a foundation for the development and harnessing of new and old relationships. Shaun was able to feel a sense of connection to the community, through participation in communal activities, such as soccer:

> "Yes, I play soccer in the community. In a Sunday league competition. This is my third year. The community can see that I have changed." **(Shaun)**

> "The community can see that I have changed. I feel very, I think, great. Because now people can really see what type of person I am." **(Shaun)**

Being acknowledged by the community, elicited a sense of pride in Shaun, and may have served as a motivation for him to continue playing soccer, as this was his third year of engagement in the communal activity. The participants in this current study were able to form connections with other individuals, by becoming mentors to them, as in the case of Mike:

> "I mean, I feel like, I'm a good role model for kids coming up now, because, yeah, I feel like I've achieved many things that I never thought I would achieve and people around me never thought I would achieve. And, yeah, I've been involved in church, my church, and helping the kids there. I think there's like two kids from my church that now works with us as juniors. They still learning, so Yeah, it feels like, it's like proud of it because these kids have seen what I've done and they would like to do the same for themselves, so yeah." **(Mike)**

Mike was able to become a positive role model for other kids from his area, and by connecting to communal institutions, he was able to initiate relationships with others, as well as fulfil a mentorship role. Through his rite of passage experience, he realised the importance of giving back to the community, which demonstrates the value of being selfless, which Mike and others learnt, while undertaking their rites of passage. Therefore, through the programme, the participants were not only enabled to repair their relationships with their parents, but also enabled to extend relationships with others, their community, and in one example, connecting with nature.

4.5. Superordinate theme 4: Catalyst for change

At present, the transformative impact that the participants, who had traversed their rites of passage journey, were able to make, was evident. Their experience initiated a healing experience, which paved the way for them to change their narratives, and facilitate the experience of connection. The foundation that was laid through these experiences allowed them to build towards their future, and as discussed in this section, seek growth opportunities.

4.5.1. Subordinate theme 4.1: Seeking growth

When the participants completed their rites of passage programme, they felt inspired to continue their journeys towards successful lives, on their return home. In the case of Saif, his experience of the programme resulted in him seeking further healing opportunities, as he noted:

> "Then after that camp, I started going for counselling, the camp motivated my willingness to go for counselling, and I thought that the school has a counsellor, so I should make use of it. I was never interested in counselling, but I decided to try it out and went, and it helped a lot." **(Saif)**

He acknowledged that he needed additional help with healing from past traumatic experiences, which resulted in him seeking out opportunities for further development. As was observed in the experiences of other participants, Saif was able to take responsibility for his life, which was an important lesson for him to learn, and preceded his desire to seek growth opportunities. This was echoed by another two participants, who communicated their desire to participate in the rites of passage programme for a second time. At the end of the interview, they expressed this desire by mentioning that the researcher should convey their request to the organisers:

> "Um, I just want to know, if we go on a camp again, like, um, Uncle Johnnie is going to let Mr. Haasen know?" **(Lyle)**

Here, Lyle conveys that he would like to participate in the programme again, if afforded the opportunity to do so. However, later, Lyle mentioned:

> "I'm going to be a journeyman. I'm going to be one of the journeymen."

Becoming a journeyman refers to a level above that of novice participants, and here Lyle expresses his desire to continue the journey of development and self-discovery within the Boys to Men rites of passage programme. Similarly, Jordan expressed this desire at the end of the interview:

> "Is there any chance maybe I can go again on the camp?"

This indicates his willingness to continue his personal development and growth.

Therefore, with most of the participants, the programme was able to ignite a spark, which served as a catalyst for positive change, and directed them towards a future of growth and further personal development.

4.6. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, a detailed analysis of the participants' responses was presented, from which four major superordinate themes emerged, namely, *self-mastery*, *rewriting the narrative*, *initiating connections*, and *catalyst for change*. These superordinate themes were supported by sub-themes, which were accompanied by direct quotes of the participants. The quotes were discussed throughout the findings section, providing insight into the lived experiences of the participants, comparing their experiences to each other, as well as highlighting similarities and differences.

From the analysis, it became clear that through the participants' experience of the rite of passage programme, they were able to heal from painful past experiences. In addition, they were able to develop skills to help them to manage their emotions. Their experiences resulted in changes in their attitudes towards school, improvement in interpersonal relationships, and a sense of connection with themselves and others. These experiences, ultimately, laid the foundation for the participants to develop a positive orientation towards their future, which guided them towards improving their lives. In the following chapter, the researcher integrates the findings and contextualises it within the existing literature. Additionally, the researcher showcases research that corroborates the findings of this current study, and in other cases, highlights opposing findings, anticipating that it will lead to a nuanced understanding of the topic under study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

My study aimed at understanding the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys in the Boys to Men rites of passage programme. I sought to understand the impact that rites of passage had had on their lives, specifically understanding the extent to which it impacted their attitudes towards risky behaviour, their community involvement, their roles within the family system, attitudes towards school, and ultimately, the lessons that they had learnt from their experience. The study was a qualitative one, utilising the interpretive phenomenological analysis approach towards the data that were collected. Through the analysis of the data, four major themes emerged:

1) Self-Mastery,
2) Rewriting the narrative,
3) Initiating connections, and
4) Catalyst for change.

These major themes were further supported by sub-themes, which provided insight into the experience of the participants in their rites of passage programme. In this section, I first discuss the major themes, and their contribution to knowledge, highlighting new findings, and revealing how the findings support the existing literature, and in some cases, enhances an understanding of the topic under scrutiny. I then highlight the relationship between the major themes and their contribution to a particular outcome. Finally, the discussion section is concluded with an integration of themes.

5.2. Superordinate theme 1: Self-mastery

One of the major themes that participants reported was their sense of self-mastery. The findings of this study revealed that, through their rites of passage experience, they were able to learn the

importance of personal responsibility, which facilitated a sense of internal locus of control. Accepting accountability, and increasing awareness around personal responsibility, was suggested to be part of a best practice approach for juveniles, for the prevention of offending behaviour (Beyer, 2003). This is particularly important, as the participants in the programme are from communities that are considered at-risk for youth delinquency; however, the programme was effective in creating a sense of self-responsibility in participants. The findings of my study also suggested that the participants' experience in the programme contributed to the development of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is developed through four sources: 1) mastery experiences; 2) vicarious experiences; 3) social persuasion; and 4) emotional states (Lopez-Garrido, 2025). The participants in the programme were able to experience all four of these sources in the rites of passage programme. They experienced mastery by completing the programme. They received motivation by seeing others progress in their journeys, thereby experiencing vicarious success through the success of others. Subsequently, they experienced social persuasion, through the help of mentors, who motivated and encouraged them throughout the programme. Finally, they were able to practice emotional regulation and developed skills to manage their feelings. Therefore, the findings of this study suggested that the rites of passage experiences facilitated the development of self-efficacy, which is important for the development of motivation (Lopez-Garrido, 2025).

The findings of my study also support the phenomenon that youth with emotional dysregulation, have a higher involvement in high-risk behaviour. The participants, throughout the study, report the development of skills to manage their emotions and, through their emotional expression, were able to heal from past traumas. Most participants also reported a reduction in risky behaviour, on account of being able to manage their feelings, such as anger, and having developed a sense of taking responsibility. The findings of a study conducted by Sing & Sing (2023) concur and assert that adolescents, who struggled with emotional regulation, had higher rates of health risk behaviours.

When reflecting on the development of their identity, the participants reported developing an identity that was rooted in their autonomous selves. They reported that their rites of passage experience embedded an inclination to be their authentic selves. Van Gennep (1960), noted that rites of passage involve a threefold process, namely, separation, liminality, and integration. The participants were separated from society, and consequently, separated from previous conventions of themselves. Through their rites of passage experiences, they were thrust into a

liminal space, where experiences promoted an exploration of self, outside the convention of social norms. During this phase, the participants were allowed to go beyond previous boundaries and return with a new sense of self. Most participants reported experiencing discomfort throughout the rites of passage programme, as they were exposed to concepts that reshaped their inner world. With this new sense of self, they returned home with a new sense of self, enjoying a different view of themselves, as well as their role in society.

One of the new experiences that participants were exposed to during this experience was the capacity to tap into their emotional world. Coloured youth's perceptions surrounding masculinity are reported to involve notions of bravado and performative machismo (Mthembu, 2015). Coloured boys learnt that it is necessary to be tough and display signs of strength. However, beyond the performative sense of masculinity, there was a pained sense of self, one that struggled to heal from past experiences (Mthembu, 2015). The findings of this current study supports this idea, as demonstrated when participants reflected on the various types of masks they wore to hide their pain. Once the participants learnt to express their emotional pain, they no longer needed to present a performative false self to the world, and instead, they learnt to engage with themselves and others with their true sense of self. In this study, participants revealed the positive impact that healing from past painful experiences, and developing the capacity for emotional regulation, has on at-risk youth. Through the development of emotional competencies, many of the participants were able to develop a sense of self-mastery, which laid the foundation for future success.

5.3. Superordinate theme 2: Rewriting the narrative

Findings from the participants revealed that their experiences within their rites of passage journeys, laid the foundation for positive change in their lives. These changes contributed to a rewriting of narratives about themselves, the experiences of the past, and their expectations of their futures. Aspects of their rites of passage journeys, which contributed to this, were that their experiences allowed them to process traumatic experiences of their past and facilitated changes in their attitudes towards learning.

One of the findings of this study that was not reported by other researchers, who studied the phenomenon of rites of passage, was the impact that symbolic exercises had on the participants, specifically, the rites that are enacted during the participants' experiences allowed for deeper

connections to themselves. Their experience through these symbolic enactments, such as the Waterfall activity, saw the participants accessing painful memories, and initiating the healing process from these past traumas. In addition, through this symbolic approach, the lessons that were learnt were remembered long beyond the completion of their rites of passage experiences. This is significant to observe, as it may provide others involved in rites of passage programmes with a blueprint on the nature of activities that have a greater and longer-lasting impact on their participants.

Being able to reflect on their lives through the utilisation of metaphorical storytelling, as in the case of Jack and the Beanstalk, and symbolic enactment, as in the case of the Waterfall, the participants were confronting narratives about themselves and their lives. It allowed them to revisit certain experiences, and detach themselves from the intensity that it initially provoked, and subsequently, in an unthreatening manner, make sense of their experiences. This is an important exercise that the participants were exposed to, as through these experiences, they created certain narratives about themselves, which may have been unfounded. Therefore, by revisiting their stories and their experiences, a powerful opportunity was provided to reshape dominant narratives that they had held about themselves. As, Lyle highlighted the impact of the symbolic exercises such as The Waterfall and meeting a younger version of himself was able to lead to internal transformation and healing.

Experiences such as these allowed the participants to access painful memories, through the utilization of symbolic enactment, and afforded them a powerful way to reshape narratives that they may have held, which negatively contributed to their sense of self. Participants could provide hope to their stories, and a promise of a better future, thereby potentially reshaping an expectation that they had towards their future, on account of an experience. Therefore, participant's responses in the study support therapeutic approaches, such as Narrative Therapy, which promotes the idea that individuals need to separate themselves from their problems and observe experiences calmly. The participants in my study could reflect on their life's story, as well as the trauma they experienced, which facilitated the process of healing. This supports the idea of Narrative therapy, as Carey (2018) highlights that by revisiting the narratives, which individuals hold following traumatic events, a renewal in understanding how one has responded to the trauma is allowed, and opportunities for new narratives to emerge are potentially provided. In addition, my study notes the transformative impact that the changing of narratives could induce on the lives of individuals. To access this change of narratives, I noticed the use of symbolism and metaphor as an important vehicle to access this change.

In addition, participants reported the positive impact that their rites of passage experiences had on their attitudes towards school. This supports the findings of other studies, which have revealed that rites of passage contributed to improved relationships with schoolteachers, who formed part of the participants' experiences (Smith, 2011). Participants were able to develop better relationships with parental figures and other adult figures. This may have contributed to a change in attitudes towards authority figures, a position held by teachers, and therefore, contributed to the changes in attitudes towards school.

As mentioned, I reported that the participants were able to make changes in their attitudes towards schooling. This concurs with the findings of Burns et al. (2021), which revealed that, students with high future time perspectives [FTP] tended to be more engaged in their learning experiences, whereas students with low FTPs tended to be more disengaged. In addition, FTPs comprise two values, namely, the school importance value, and the school completion aspirations. Students possessing these values tended to have an extended period of FTP, which was observed to be characteristics of more engaged students, who achieved greater degrees of academic success (Burns et al., 2021). When investigating my findings, the responses captured by the participants suggested that, after completing their rites of passage, both values, namely, realizing the importance of school, and having a desire to complete school, were observed to be present.

To illustrate this, Jordan reportedly realised that school was not only a place to socialise, but also an opportunity to shape and determine his future. Similarly, other participants were able to realise the importance of school in the shaping of their future, which ultimately motivated their desire to complete their schooling journeys. Therefore, the participants showed that they were able to change their personal narratives, and the narratives that are popularised, regarding Coloured boys. They directed this change towards a positive future orientation, which was facilitated by their healing journeys, and attitudinal changes towards school.

5.4. Superordinate Theme 3: Initiating connections

Another major theme, uncovered, was that participants were able to initiate connections. Initially, the participants developed a relationship with themselves; however, they were able to extend this connection with others. Participants were able to repair relationships with parental figures and foster extended relationships within the community.

Therefore, I found that their rites of passage aided, and increased their capacity to repair severed relationships. My findings supports that of another study, which revealed an improvement in existing relationships between fathers and sons, who participated in a rite of passage programme (Jennings, 2011). However, my findings takes it a level further, where it facilitated reparations between the participants and their fathers. Mike noted the insight that he had gained after his ROP experience was when he realized that his father was putting in the effort, however, he was not allowing him in. By becoming more open, he started noticing an improvement in their relationship.

In addition to the relationship between participants and their fathers, I found improvement between the participants and their mothers. Both Lyle and Jordan reported improvement in their relationships with their maternal figures, with the former having improved his relationship with his grandmother, and the latter improving his relationship with his mother. This supports the findings of another study, which revealed that rites of passage programmes were able to positively influence the relationship between sons and mothers (Lertzman, 2002).

The changes in a relationship that were achieved by the participants were initiated by changes, which they first made within themselves. This laid the foundation for change elsewhere, as the participants learnt how to reframe the way in which they saw and understood themselves, and also questioned the nature of their other relationships. Joseph Campbell's theory of the hero's journey speaks of the return of the individual to his society and establishing a different norm (Sonnenburg & Runco, 2017). The theory can be seen in the reports of participant, where after their own rites of passage experiences, they were able to change their old norms to new ones, as seen in the new relational norms between themselves and maternal figures. Through their development, they were able to make changes to their old norms, which included changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards family members.

Participants revealed that community involvement and feelings of belonging were increased. This is important, given the context of South Africa, where the Apartheid Government was intentional in severing connections between communities, as seen in the case of the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Cochrane & Chellan, 2017). The participants found themselves being involved in serving their communities, and being involved in community activities, whether in the form of participating in community sports, or serving at the local churches. They strove to make their presence known. In the case of Shaun, this created a feeling of pride, as he was

acknowledged by his community. The community was able to see the type of person he was becoming.

This contrasts with studies that portray some Coloured boys as intent on destroying their communities, and shows that, when youth experience the warmth of the village, they will embrace it and widen its reach (Chetty, 2017; Lewin & Perez, 2018; Owen & Greeff, 2015).

5.5. Superordinate theme 4: Catalyst for change

The final theme of findings related to the participants' desire for continued growth and the search for opportunities where this desire could be realised. The participants' experiences throughout their rites of passage journeys served as a catalyst for change.

Van Gennep (1960) noted the culmination of rites of passage, as a process of reincorporation within society, whereas for Campbell, he described it as the process of return where initiates strive for the establishment of a new status quo ((Sonnenburg, & Runco, 2017). Both these theories speaks to a shift that had occurred for the individual through their respective journeys, and returning home with a new sense of being. Participants experiences through their rites of passage journey's exposed them to new ways of being, which resulted in them questioning their ways of operating in their reality. This was observed in the participants accessing the world of their emotions or hearing one of the mentors expressing that they are loved, and in one case, experiencing the acknowledgment of a parental figure. Through these experiences, the participants were forced to question their worldview, and initiated a construction of a new reality, one in which growth and healing became part of their language.

A potential new finding that my study suggest is that rites of passage experiences served as a motivation for further development. As was discussed previously, the participants were able to develop important skills, which resulted in emotional and cognitive development. This served as the foundation for further development, on the completion of their rites of passage journeys. Saif noted that through his rites of passage experience, he realised that he required further healing after getting exposure to this process. He took the initiative to undergo a therapeutic process that would lead to further development and enhancement of self.

Therefore, the rites of passage experiences served as a catalyst for change, to many participants; however, it also motivated their desire to pursue their own development, and grasp at opportunities that were presented.

5.6. Integration of themes

The rite of passage journeys that the participants undertook, resulted in their growth, in a personal and interpersonal manner. By analysing their journeys and the theme of their development, a pattern was observed; however, although each participant had their own pattern, they were all a series of patterns that were interconnected and related to each other. Ultimately, the pattern influenced the outcome, which was that the participants were geared towards a positive future, and a new sense of self. The pattern observed from the participants followed the following trajectory:

- Development of self-mastery,
- leading to a change of personal narratives, that ultimately,
- Enabled deeper connections to self and others that laid the foundation for long-term change and a new sense of self, geared towards a positive future outcome.

Through their rites of passage journeys, this pattern could be observed to some extent within all the stories of the participants, some more than others. This finding also provides insight into the cycle of change, in relation to Coloured boys, which may not have been considered. It demonstrates an understanding that change is not dependent on one factor, but a host of factors that prepare individuals for significant change. This is important to consider when developing programmes to intervene for Coloured at-risk youth.

In addition, I have demonstrated that the aspect of the participants' development, which served as a gateway towards the outcome of change, was their capacity to develop in areas of self-mastery. One of the most difficult areas related to self-mastery, which was necessary for the participants to learn, was the expression and management of emotions. This lesson may be particularly difficult for some Coloured boys to overcome, as traditional notions of masculinity entail Coloured men not showing emotions, as it is contrived as a form of weakness (Mthembu, 2015). Therefore, much effort is required to change this perception that Coloured men do not express emotions, and in a broader context, the notion that *men don't cry*.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussion of the findings and their implications for existing research have been the focus. In this chapter, the researcher noted the extent to which the findings of this current study contributed to new research and revealed how it supported existing research. Additionally, the integration of the themes, and their relevance to positive outcomes was highlighted, coupled with discussions regarding the new contribution to knowledge that this study was able to achieve. Finally, this chapter was concluded with a discussion on the integration of the themes of this current study, revealing how they related to each other, and contributed towards a coherent golden thread.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this current study was to understand the experiences of the participants in a South African rite of passage programme, named the Boys to Men ROP. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis [IPA] to understand their experiences, it was revealed that the ROP was able to shape the identity of the participants, as they adopted an identity that was rooted in the pursuit of *self-mastery.* Their new sense of self, motivated them to pursue the best versions of themselves, which allowed them to rethink the previous tendency towards risky behaviour. Instead, the participants reflected a greater degree of maturity, which was rooted in personal responsibility, a *rewriting of narratives* that they had created about themselves and their place in the world. Through the lessons learnt through their ROP experiences, the foundation was laid for the repairing of broken relationships, and the mending of past wounds, on account of these relationships. Additionally, there was an observed shift in their attitudes, and actions in the community. They viewed themselves as valuable contributors to the upkeep of the community. From this view, their ROP experiences served as a springboard to initiate *connections with* themselves and others. Finally, the participants' experience in their ROP influenced shifts in their attitudes towards school. It was no longer only perceived as a pastime, instead, school was perceived as an opportunity that needed to be grasped, which resulted in the participants working harder to be successful in their schooling journeys. Considering this change in attitude towards school, the Boys to Men ROP served as a *catalyst for change*, and provided the participants with a platform to reflect on the direction in which their lives were moving. Therefore, the themes that emerged from the responses of the participants were able to answer the initial research questions and allowed the researcher to conclude that the experiences of the participants in the Boys to Men ROP, were able to positively impact on various aspects affecting their lives.

The findings of this current study cast a different light on Coloured youth and their experiences. It demonstrates the resilience of Coloured youth, as well as the latent potential they possess, to rise above their difficult circumstances, when supported by interventions that strive to elicit the best versions of themselves. The findings of my study provide a sense of hope, not only for Coloured youth, but other youth from marginalised communities, who feel hopeless. These participants serve as a shining example and an encouragement for those developing interventions, as their impact is being made on the lives of the participants, as well as those in their lives. It showcased the impact that rites of passage experiences have had on the development of identity, interpersonal relationships, the healing of trauma, and ultimately, how it facilitated a positive orientation towards the participants' future.

The implications of my study could be considered from multiple levels. Firstly, from a practical view, using the findings of this study I can inform programme development, and serve as a guide to what may potentially succeed for Coloured youth from at-risk communities. My study provides insight into aspects required to change attitudes towards school, and may serve as a guide for educators, as they target intervention with challenging students. Additionally, it informs approaches to youth counselling, and highlights prerequisites for youth entering counselling spaces. Finally, from a practical perspective, I may also inform policy, as government officials will have insight into the problems that affect Coloured youth, and simultaneously, potential solutions for these challenges. From a theoretical perspective, I provide insight into theories of the development of identity, and the impact that rites of passage have in the shaping of identity. In addition, the process of transformation and resilience that the participants displayed may help in the development of theories related to personal development, especially development related to at-risk youth. Finally, I also demonstrate the importance of incorporating culturally grounded practices in the healing, as well as developmental processes of youth. This could be regarded as a cultural or social implication of this current study.

6.2. Limitations of the study and future research

One of the limitations of this current study was the small sample size that the researcher used to support the findings. Qualitative research facilitates in-depth understanding; however, the cost of this is that generally sample sizes are smaller. While, for the nature of this current study, the sample size was appropriate, the findings do not support a wide range of claims and would

require a larger sample size to draw greater conclusions. Therefore, for future studies, a greater sample size would allow for broader findings that have wider and more conclusive implications. If given the opportunity, I would consider conducting a qualitative study on the subject matter, and potentially compare the findings of the different studies. Data saturation was another consideration for the sample size, as through the interview process, the participants were reflecting on similar experiences, which suggest that data saturation was reached.

Another limitation of this current study was the subjective interpretations that accompany use of the IPA approach. A significant criticism of the IPA approach is its subjectivity, which may be influenced by the positionality of the researcher (Pringle et al., 2011; Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Muzingili, 2025). This is particularly the case of those of a more positivist orientation. It needs to be noted that, despite this claimed limitation, I did engage in member checking with the participants, in terms of interpreting their experiences. To mitigate this limitation, future research on this subject matter should consider conducting a mixed methodology, which allows for the deep insight that accompanies qualitative research, but simultaneously enjoys the objectivity of quantitative research.

A recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal follow-up on the impact of rites of passage experiences on the lives of Coloured at-risk youth. However, not many studies investigate the impact of the rites of passage experiences on females, especially Coloured female experiences. To date, no study has investigated the experiences of Coloured at-risk females, who participate in rites of passage programmes. This will add valuable knowledge, as another group that is underrepresented in research is at-risk-Coloured females.

6.3. Contributions to knowledge

In this current study, I explored the lived experiences of Coloured boys, as they journeyed towards manhood. Their experiences about the rites of passage phenomenon were captured and the impact that it had on their lives was highlighted. I have provided various contributions through my study.

Firstly, I highlighted that the rites of passage programmes facilitated a reduction in risky behaviour, and improved interpersonal relationships, which supports the finding of a study that evaluated the effectiveness of rites of passage on participants from the Stellenbosch area, in

Cape Town (Knoetze, 2003). However, this current study goes beyond that, as the findings revealed that the rites of passage could facilitate emotional skills development, cultivate an internal locus of control, initiate the healing of past trauma, shift attitudes toward school, repair relationships with parental figures, and seek opportunities for further growth.

Secondly, the findings of this current study provide insight into the impact of the rites of passage on at-risk Coloured youth, which is rare, as studies on the rites of passage within the South African youth tend to focus on Black African South Africans. Therefore, this study facilitated important findings concerning the psychological growth of Coloured boys, and the necessary components that lead to transformational change. This information will be valuable for those developing intervention programmes that target at-risk youth, especially Coloured youth from lower economic statuses.

Thirdly, the importance of cultural transformation, and the recognition of trauma, as well as finding avenues to heal from traumatic experiences, are highlighted in this current study. All the participants throughout this study referred to wounds that were unhealed and, through their rites of passage, they were able to identify these wounds and initiate the healing process. According to the findings, the participants were able to make personal shifts, by addressing the untreated wounds and moving beyond these hindrance factors. This is an important finding as it provides insight into aspects related to Coloured boys' experience that go unmentioned, namely, the experience of unprocessed trauma, with which they live, and that frequently catalysed their risky behaviour.

Finally, the findings of this study also contribute to changing stereotypes that Coloured boys are set in their ways, which interventions cannot change. Additionally, it brings to focus underrepresented voices and sheds a new light on the experience of Coloured boys, reinforcing the message that they too are important. In closing, this study has been a journey with the participants as they navigated and transitioned from one stage to the next. It mirrors life's journey and captures the essence of overcoming and striving to be better versions of ourselves. In addition, it demonstrates the innate capacity of human beings to rise above their circumstances. Ultimately, it provides the hope that, through healing and taking small steps towards growth, human beings could self-actualise.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Key themes listed by participants

Superordinate themes:	Subordinate themes:	Example quotes:
1) Self-Mastery	• Internal locus of control	"The I. You must, you must never speak about We or us, you must always speak about yourself ", "Because you can't blame other people for what you do" ***Lyle***
	• Emotional regulation and skills	"And it's, it's not always a bad thing to be open (emotionally). And not everyone is going to judge you when you're open", "But it was also an emotional shift from where I used to be before", "But when I opened, it lifted me" ***Jordan***
	• True self	"The mask that you create represents the image that you show to people, the thing that you are hiding behind", "once you break the mask that's when you know that you, it's almost like believing in yourself "***Saif***
	• Healing	"I know what you're going through, and I feel the pain that you're going through now, but I'm going to send something in the future for me and for you. In the future, there is always light at the end of the tunnel" ***Lyle***
2) Rewriting the narrative	• Processing experience	"They put the blanket around me, two people. They kept it, and I was supposed to break through to get to my father. And as I'm shouting, he's not listening to me. And I'm shouting, I'm screaming, tears in my eyes. His not turning around. I'm shouting to my mother, nobody is turning around, I must break through all that pain and the anger, to get through to them" ***Lyle***
	• Attitudes towards school	"Yes, I was not in a very focused mindset regarding schoolwork (prior to the camp)" ***Shaun***
3) Initiating connections	• Repairing relationship with parental figures	"Like that neglect of not having a fatherly figure around. And that affected me. And yeah, I think it also just gave me an awareness that I also maybe his trying and I'm not letting him in and that when I started letting him in more that's when I saw how much effort he was trying to make and try to be there for me, you know. So that's, yeah, I've been in a pretty good space" ***Mike***
	• Expanding social support network	"Yes, huge change, and there was also a change in my behaviour. It also helped me overcome my fear of talking to people and connecting with them" ***Jordan***
4) Catalyst for change	• Seeing growth	"Then after that camp, I started going for counselling, the camp motivated my willingness to go for counselling and I

		thought that the school has a counsellor, so I should make use of it. I was never interested in counselling, but I decided to try it out and went, and it helped a lot "***Saif***

Appendix B: Information sheet

I am a Master's clinical psychology student at the University of South Africa. My research will be exploring the experience of Coloured adolescent boys in rites of passage programmes. The study aims to understand the impact that rites of passage programmes have on Coloured youth sense of identity, their place in community, role in the family and attitude towards school.

To attain this, the researcher will be required to interview Coloured youth who partook in a rite of passage program, specifically the Boys to Men rites of passage program. The researcher will ensure the confidentiality of all participants and be guided by the ethical principles set out by the University of South Africa and the ethics committee.

Finally, if psychological discomfort or trauma is experienced by any of the participants, then the researcher will ensure that they receive counselling. For further enquiries, you may contact:

Imraan Kube

Cell number: 063 072 4139

Email: Imraankube@gmail.com

Student email address: 14429055@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Appendix C: Participant consent form

I, …… have read and understood the ethical guidelines hereunder and have agreed to partake in this study at my own will.

I understand the purpose of this study. Any questions that I have been answered by the researcher. The researcher has made it clear to me that I can withdraw from the study at any time, and I am not forced to participate in this study. I understand that my identity will be protected throughout this study and that access to my information will be protected and safeguarded by the researcher.

I understand that once the research is completed, then it will be published for public access.

I understand the information sheet and have understood the ethical principles stipulated above.

I give the researcher consent to participate in this study.

Signature of participant……. Date…….

Signature of researcher …… Date…….

Thank you.

Appendix D: Consent form for parents/guardians

I……. give permission for my son.

……. to partake and be interviewed by the researcher for his study.

I understand the purpose of this study. Any questions that I have been answered by the researcher. The researcher has made it clear to me that my son can withdraw from the study at any time, and that he is not forced to participate in this study. I understand that my son's identity will be protected throughout this study and that access to his information will be protected and safeguarded by the researcher.

I understand that the researcher intends to disseminate his findings to the wider public and have given him permission to do so.

I have read the information sheet attached and have understood it completely.

I therefore give permission for my son to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/ Guardian: ……. Date: …….

Signature of Researcher: …… Date: …….

Thank you.

Appendix E: Preliminary interview questions

Biographic and demographic information

Name:

Age:

Race:

Culture:

Language:

Relationship status:

Number of dependents:

Place of residence?

Profession or Job: (what do you do for a living?)

What were your experiences in the rites of passage programme?

- What have your learnt from this experience?
- What lesson stood out for you?
- What were some of the positive experiences that you encountered?
- What were some of the negative experiences that you encountered?

What are the themes of their experiences?

- What message was often repeated to you whilst participating in the programme?

How has their sense of identity been impacted by the programme?

- How do you see yourself now?
- How did you see yourself initially?
- What aspect of the program if any, contributed to this?

How do they understand their place in the community?

- How do you see yourself in community now?
- Is there any difference?

Does the programme impact their perception towards risky behaviour?

- What is your attitude towards risky behaviour now?

Has their relationship with their families changed since being involved in the programme?

- What is your relationship like with your family currently?
- Has there been changes to any specific relationships?

Has their engagement with schooling been affected because of participating in the programme?

- What is your attitude and approach to school?
- Has there been a change in your attitude towards school?

Appendix F: Boys to Men permission letter

Re: Permission letter for research interview to be conducted on participants in the "Boys to Men" rites of passage program:

To whom it may concern:

My name is Imraan Kube, I am currently a second-year master's student enrolled in the Clinical Psychology department at the University of South Africa (Unisa). I am writing this letter as a formal request for your permission to conduct my research interviews on individuals that partook in your rites of passage program, referred to as "Boys to Men" rites of passage.

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys who have attended your rites of passage program and understand how it has impacted their lives. After receiving permission from yourself I will then request assent and consent from both the guardians and participants that will be interviewed for this research

Date: Signature:

Full name: (Researcher)

Appendix G: Editorial certificate

Idea Corporation t/a

AQUARIAN PUBLICATIONS

18 November 2025

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Editorial certificate

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling, as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

Thesis title

Rites of Passage and manhood: A phenomenological study exploring the experiences of Coloured adolescent boys from South Africa in the Boys to Men: Rites of Passage programme

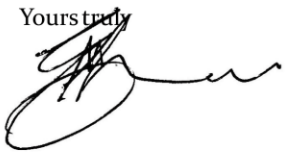
Author

Imraan Kube

The research content, or the author's intentions, were not altered in any way during the editing process, and the author has the authority to accept, or reject my suggestions and changes.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this edited document, I can be contacted at the listed telephone and fax numbers or e-mail addresses.

Yours truly



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