

# Circumcision as a public health issue: some cultural considerations

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# Reflexivity

- Purpose of presentation

# Defining culture

- A way of life – guiding principles that regulate relationships and interaction
- Shared beliefs and practices that denote similarity and signify belonging (includes/excludes)
- The “In my culture phenomenon” –social capital and a resource

**amaXhosa**

**vhaVhenda**

**amaZulu**

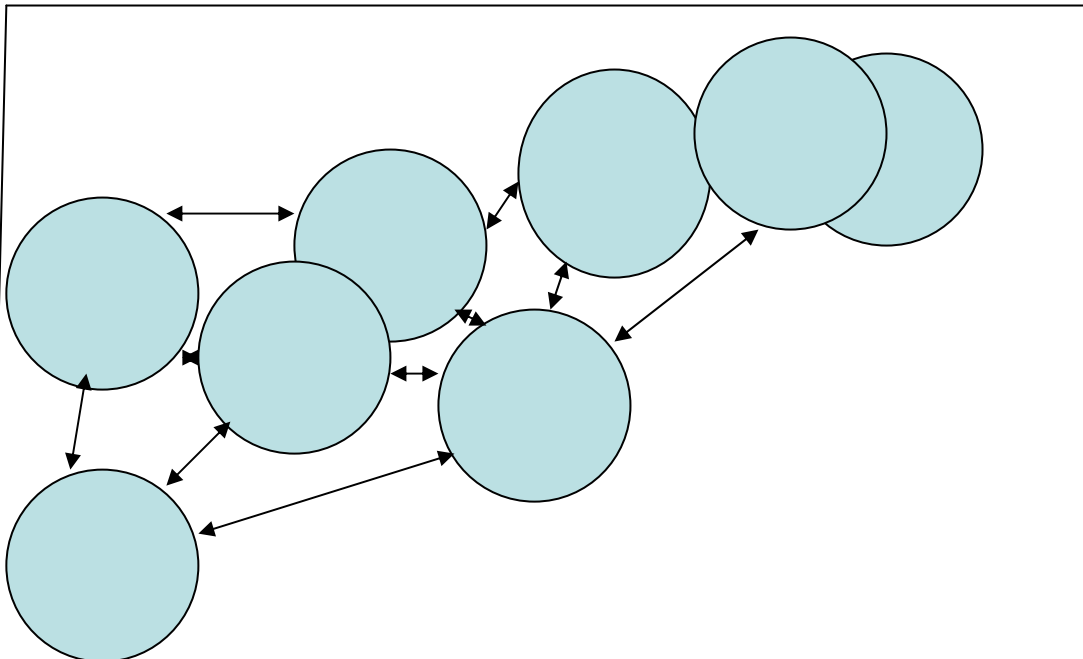
**amaSowetans**

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**Afrikaaners**

# Defining culture

- Is culture a discrete entity with closed boundaries and is constant over time?
- Open, contested and manipulated (power), adapts, fluid



# Culture under siege

- Hegemony – all is well – no threat
- Internal/external pressures – catalyst
- Reinterpretation and anomie
- Invokes deep-seated emotions
- Nature and extent of networks - schism
- Available options – diffusion of innovation
- The Reds and the school – a case in point
- HIV risk awareness and ownership

# Culture and circumcision

- FGM – the salience of naming
- Male circumcision – violence, maiming
- Circumcizing vs non-circumcizing groups
- Circumcision as ritual/ ritualised  
circumcision – culture and religion
- Identity-formation – group/individual
- Medicalization of circumcision – different  
meaning and associations

# Culture and circumcision

- Facilitators
- Barriers
- Not either/or
- The female partners
- Being a good parent – helping sons to be men (age)
- Conform vs norm

# Bottom-line

- New beast? Comprehensive strategy
- Need for formative studies
- Decisions made in light of current state of circumcision and demands of our times
- Middle ground
- Routine circumcision – opt-out option
- Positive stories – diffusion of innovation
- Non –therapeutic but prophylactic

**THANK YOU**