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**THE DEMISE OF TRADITIONAL INITIATION SCHOOLS OF THE  
BATSWANA CULTURE IN THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCE, SOUTH  
AFRICA.**

**By**

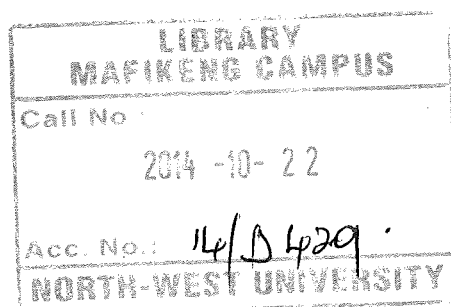
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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN SOCIOLOGY, IN  
THE FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AT NORTH WEST  
UNIVERSITY,  
(MAFIKENG)

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SEPTEMBER 2014



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## **Abstract**

The study focuses on the demise of Batswana culture in the North West Province, with specific emphasis on the initiation practices. The objective of the study is to examine the causes of the degeneration of Batswana culture. The significance of initiation schools amongst the Tswana youth also forms part of the objectives of the study. The study also aims at determining why some people undergo traditional circumcision despite multiple deaths amongst initiates.

The study uses Focus group interviews to collect data from respondents which will then be analysed. It was found that the degeneration of the traditional initiation school is influenced by the Westernization processes such as hospital circumcision amongst others. Additional contributory factors include unqualified traditional surgeons, as well as distortions of information by the media about traditional initiation schools.

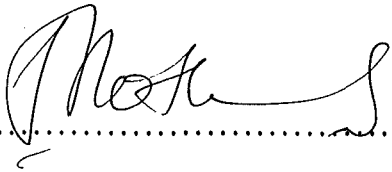
The problems relating to traditional initiation schools include death due to severe living conditions, the beating of initiates by their guardians, the conditions of traditional initiation schools which compromise some physically weak initiates, the illegal establishment of some initiation schools, and commercialization of some traditional initiation schools. Other problems include the criticism by such Western oriented establishment as churches and the claim that African practices are unscientific. The traditional initiation school was the practice of teaching boys and girls good manners, responsibility and respect to the elders but today it is otherwise; what initiates are taught at initiation school is not what should be displayed by the initiates, for instance initiates disrespect elders.

The practice takes place far away in mountains and bushes, but recently some initiation schools are held in the nearby villages, roads even at homes in secret. It has become a tourist attraction, because when the practice is held nearby to villages, initiates steal, and rape the people passing and thus bring the culture down. For the culture of traditional initiation schools to be effective they need to stick to guidelines in the Bill that has been drafted by the committee under the supervision of the Department of Arts & Culture and the House of Traditional Affairs in the provinces. The individuals should be taught the necessity of undergoing traditional initiation school. It must be obligatory for all the Batswana to attend a traditional initiation school and there must be teachers who are responsible for cultural importance as an awareness of the tradition.



## **Declaration**

I, Motlhankane Joseph Monnapula, herewith declare that this mini-dissertation submitted to Department of Sociology at the North West University for the partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Social Sciences in Sociology has not been submitted by me at this University or any other academic institution. I also declare that the mini-dissertation is my own work and that all materials contained or utilized are fully acknowledged by means of complete references.



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## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr Ncala and Mr Mojaki, my supervisors, for the guidance, and constructive and comprehensive comments made at different stages of my research. The sacrifices they made in the dying minutes of the year was unbelievable, not overlooking the fact that they made me work hard in every part of the research project. These are the people who brought out the best in me. My thankfulness will not be complete without thanking the participants in the study.

## Dedication

I thank my father, Jack, my three brothers Moses, David, Jeremiah, my beautiful new baby daughter Precilla Dinkwetse, her mother Maki, Nontsikelelo Mangena and the entire Motlhankane's family. My family makes my life worth living, the reason to wake up every morning having an important task to execute, and most importantly they are my pillar of strength.

My thankfulness will not be complete without thanking the person who gave birth to me, who raised me, who never left me alone because she cares for me, who calmed me when I cried, who bathed me the first day when I started school, my late mother Dinkwetse. My late sister Nnanyana who used to tease me by saying she doesn't need to finish school and go to the university because I am already at the University and I will take care of her and her kids because I will be an uncle to her kids. I also thank my late grandmother Modiegi. My gratitude also goes to my two late uncles Rainboy Maruping and Daniel Shakes Obotseng Timenyane. These people gave me the strength, love and support. They will always be in my heart, until we meet again.

The study is also dedicated to *Batlhaping boo phuduhutswana* the fish people tribe of the Tswana to which I belong.

There are other people who played an important role in my studies, people I admire, look up to as my brothers and role models, namely, to mention a few, Dr Mercutio Motshedi, Thabiso Lobelo and Tumelo Dintwe. Finally I want to thank the Almighty, the Lord of Lords, the ruler of the universe, the King of Kings, the Alpha and Omega, the creator of the universe for the strength He gave me throughout my entire life.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the introductory aspect of the study comprising of the historical culture background of the Batswana, leading to the statement of the problem, objectives and the significance of the study.

Since the main focus of this study is on the discussion of the Tswana culture, it is necessary to explain what culture is about. According to Mazrui (2004:54), culture serves at least seven functions. First, it helps to provide lenses of perception and cognition; how people view the world. This perception is greatly conditioned by one or more cultural paradigms. Secondly, culture provides motives for human action and behaviour. It determines what makes a person behave in a particular manner, which is in many cases influenced by cultural factors. The third point is that culture provides criteria for evaluating what is deemed better or worse, ugly or beautiful, moral or immoral, attractive or repulsive. The evaluative function of culture does not always correspond with the behavioural function. Fourth, culture provides the basis for a sense of identity. Religion and race are often a basis for solidarity or a cause for hostility. Fifth, culture is a mode of communication, and the most elaborated system of communication is language itself. In Africa and Asia there has been considerable debate about policy and culture as a mode of communication. This can take other forms, including music, the performing arts and wider world of ideas. The sixth function of culture is as a basis for satisfaction, class, rank, and status which are profoundly conditioned by cultural variables. The seventh function of culture lies in the system of production and consumption (Teffo, 1999:160). These seven functions are appropriate to apply in this study on the demise Batswana culture, with specific reference to initiation schools in the North West Province.

### **1.1. The relevance of Mazrui's seven functions of culture to the study**

The introduction states that seven functions of culture are relevant to the discussion on Batswana culture (Mazrui 2004: 54). An indication will be made of different functions of culture to different people across the spectrum.

People have different perceptions as to what culture entails. Culture provides motives for human action and behaviour. Human action and behaviour in culture are often seen in initiates who have graduated from the initiation school. Some graduates are acting in a manner that is not acceptable in society. Their behaviour changes, in either a good or bad way, when they come from initiation schools there are several different schools. How and what behaviour a person displays is influenced by cultural factors in a society.

As stated earlier culture provides criteria for evaluating what is right or wrong. At initiation school it is believed that men and women are taught good morals, responsibilities and how to be principled as a man or woman of the house. Culture provides the foundation and platform for a sense of identity, for instance, who we are, why we participate in certain rituals, for example initiation school and ancestor worshipping. Last, but not least, culture of the initiation schools among the Tswana speaking people has a specific communication technique. They use a secret language when they communicate with one another so that others who are not initiated cannot hear them. They also have secret new names that they get when they are in initiation school camps. Some people can tell by the way one speaks to elders that they have been initiated at a traditional initiation school. African culture, including Batswana culture has encountered rapid change since the colonial invasion and the Apartheid era. Contemporary African culture is the result of a mixture and combination of traditional elements and alien or foreign features of the West. Local African culture was oppressed for many years by the West and local

whites in South Africa who found their own cultural roots in Western countries. Western cultures tend to be more individualistic and emphasise achievement and personal interest. African culture is collectivistic, group-oriented, and more concerned with the welfare of the community. During colonialism, native law was officially recognized in 1848, but only insofar as it did not infringe on the humanitarian principles of 'civilized society'- understood to be 'white society' in those days. The aim and objective was to maintain control over African people (Maluleke, 2012:4).

## **1.2 Historical and Cultural Background**

Batswana are sometimes referred to as the Western Sotho. They are a heterogeneous group, which includes the descendants of the once great Batlhaping and Barolong societies, as well as the Bahurutshe, Bakwena, and other small groups. Their language, Setswana, is closely related to Sesotho, and the two are mutually interchangeable in most areas. About 4 million Batswana people live in Southern Africa, of which 3 million in South Africa. Many Batswana predominantly live in the area that formed the numerous segments of the former homeland, of Bophuthatswana, as well as the neighbouring areas of the North West Province and Northern Cape. By the nineteenth century, several Batswana groups had become politically independent, and consisted of loosely affiliated chiefdoms that clashed repeatedly with the Afrikaner and British officials who seized almost all Batswana republics. In 1910, when the Cape and the Transvaal were incorporated into the Union of South Africa, Batswana chiefs lost most of their remaining power. The Batswana people were forced to pay taxes to the British Crown. They gradually turned to migrant labour, especially in the mines to survive (<http://www.gaabomotho.co.za/tswana.html>).

It was during this period that one of Chief Malope's sons gathered his people and trekked to the Zeerust area in the North West. A typical characteristic of the Batswana was the tendency to migrate and to merge with bigger groupings. Unlike many Bantu speaking societies, Batswana rarely experienced internal strife when the chief died (Joyce, 2009:134). Other forces that encouraged fusion included cattle ownership. Batswana were cattle-owning communities, where wealth and respect were related directly to the number of livestock, and poorer groups would naturally gravitate towards and allow themselves to be absorbed into richer ones. The major groups were Bagwato in Botswana, Batlhaping around Bataung, Bangwaketse and Bakwena. Despite the fact that they were coherent groupings they could not claim to be homogenous, certainly in terms of heritage (Joyce 2009:134). The Batswana creation story asserts that the people originated from an ancestor called Matsieng, or Lowe. He emerged from the underworld, bringing cattle, sheep and goats. It is said that the prehistoric footprint found on some rocks in Botswana are from this ancient ancestor. The well-known footprints in stone are in Rosesa, a village 25 miles from Gaborone, the capital of Botswana (Bolaane, 1997:14).

In the days gone by, most Botswana inhabitants were involved in stock farming, even though the big villages may have been far from the vast communal grazing grounds. For most of the time herdsman would find shelter in outlying cattle posts, returning to their home base and their families at intervals. Some of the wealthiest farmers owned dozens of these posts, which could be anything up to 100 kilometres away from the nearest neighbour. Much closer to the village were the cultivated lands, and these too were subject to ritual and magical practices. Rain making had deep significance; the diviner would 'treat' seeds before the planting season; sacrifices would be made to the ancestral spirits; the first fruits of the harvest were received, or 'toasted', with elaborate ceremony (Joyce, 2009:140).

Today the modern phrase for explaining and describing the political life of the Tswana is its 'village democracy'. The concentration of people was divided into *dikgotla* (community councils), and each one of them was served by an open meeting place where local affairs were debated. The Tswana culture is similar to that of the related Sotho peoples, although some Tswana chiefdoms were more highly stratified than those of other Sotho or Nguni. The Tswana culture was distinguished by its complex legal system, involving a hierarchy of courts and mediators, and harsh punishments for those found guilty of crimes. Tswana farmers often formed close patron-client relationships with nearby Khoisan-speaking hunters and herdsman. The Tswana generally, received meat and animals' pelts in return for cattle and sometimes dogs for herding cattle (Joyce, 2009:140).

There was also a composite village *Lekgotla* (traditional council); a centrally located, rather grander, more spacious place reserved for a local chief (or sub chief). As with other Sotho-related groups, each Tswana family also had its open space, or courtyard. Traditionally there were call-ups to circumcision school and young girls were also gathered in sets to learn skills needed to become good women, or good wives, and good mothers. Tasks were given to men to perform. In the early days, men tended the cattle, waged war, embarked on cattle raids, and hunted while the women looked after the crops and the home. Some of the culture, customs and costumes of the Tswana were similar if not identical to that of other Sotho peoples, including betrothal and marriage practices which were arranged, more in the interest of the two families than those of young couples. Religion too, was cast in the general Sotho mould, with belief in and reverence for Badimo (ancestral spirits) being the central dynamic. These unseen entities remain guardians of family, kin and tribal grouping. To make sure of the kindness of Badimo and to avert their anger their descendants made regular offerings and prayers. The various types of spirits,



mediums, diviners and healers are key figures in communication between the dead and living. There is also the acceptance of *Modimo*, (the Supreme Being), the Creator of all things, who is infinitely remote and uninvolved in human affairs (Joyce, 2009:141).

A person's behaviour can be shaped by his upbringing. But a person does not necessarily act in the ways he is taught, because he is born with certain qualities that are not affected by training. Children can grow up to disappoint and hurt their parents who have tried to mould them properly. A person's conduct can be shaped by events which a person is powerless to change. Some people have blamed bad behaviour and a perceived loss of *Ubuntu* in modern society, particularly among the youth as resulting from the cancellation of traditional initiation schools and ceremonies during the colonial era *Bogwera* and *Bojale* for the boys and girls, respectively taught young people to respect their elders and to understand the nature of their responsibilities to their families and community. The call for a return to past traditions represents a romanticized correction for the problems of the present. In the 1980s Kgosi Linchwe II briefly reintroduced initiation schools in Mochudi, the capital of Kgatleng district in Botswana, to teach young people about their history, moral behaviour, and family values. The initiation was conducted during the holidays and attracted a large number of people from within and beyond the Kgatleng district in Botswana (Thebe & Denbow 2006:173).

### **1.3. Initiation Schools**

Traditional cultural practices like initiation and circumcision reflect and symbolize values and beliefs held by members of society from generation to generation. Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs. South African communities are no different in this respect. In many communities South Africans practice traditional initiation ceremonies.

These have been practiced by our ancestors since time immemorial and were passed on from generation to generation. Africans were however forced to abandon some of their customs and religious practices, which were seen to be Afro-centric, barbaric, heathen, and considered uncivilized during colonialism (Twala, 2007:28).

The fact that contemporary traditional initiation schools are built not far away from national roads across the country exposes the whole initiation course to tourists who stop to take photographs of the participating initiates, something that never happened in the past. Today in South Africa, people who are anti-initiation and anti-circumcision believe that these practices are outdated and should be replaced by modern ways of undergoing the circumcision. The noble cultural significance and spiritual values of traditional initiation practices progressively eroded, since this ritual has been associated with botched operations which, in some instances, have left initiates infected, some losing their male organs, and others dying of complications at and outside the initiation school. These activities and incidents at initiation schools have received wide media coverage that has led to provincial governments and other stakeholders expressing their views publicly.

#### **1.4. The Historical Importance of Initiation Schools**

South African communities, particularly the Tswana, Xhosa and Southern Sotho, display a respect and appreciation for the need to mark or celebrate the important steps of development and maturity. These aspects of the socialization process help individuals to take good care of their families or larger community and in some instance, lead the community as a chief. One of the most celebrated stages of development in Tswana, Xhosa, and Zulu and Sotho culture is the traditions of initiation ceremonies or practices. These ethnic groups view the option of staying or remaining uncircumcised at the mountain or bushes as

impractical, because those who are initiated at the initiation school will not take them seriously. Often those who are not initiated are regarded as 'boys' rather than men because they did not go through the ritual cultural practice of manhood. Attending initiation school and undergoing circumcision qualifies one for manhood and acceptance as someone who can lead, and is knowledgeable about their culture in a society (Twala 2007:25).

In Tswana culture, the initiates have clan names and surnames. A boy learns more about his clan-names, because during initiation rites clan-names play a significant role, which invariably clarifies the status hierarchy of individuals with regard to the other initiates. The clan name coupled with an initiation name determines the position of the initiates. It serves as identification and password to enter the lodge or the yard of the initiation school without hindrance.

### **1.5. Social institutions**

Community-based knowledge is important in all areas of productivity, politics and belief systems. The local people build their plans on the basis of what they already know and understand. Among the Bakgatla, community based knowledge used to be generated and transmitted in various ways, the main being the initiation practices *Bogwera*, (initiates school for boys) and *Bojale* (initiates school for girls) *Kgotla* (traditional courts) and *Bongaka* (traditional healing) are still practiced. They have been corrupted to some extent by Western influences. They still maintain certain core-aspects of the traditions. Indigenous knowledge that is relevant to the role of *Bogwera*, for instance, is disappearing as a result of the early Christianization process which made the chief disregard *Bogwera*. However, those who happened to have undergone the passage to manhood have overwhelming respect for *Koma* (initiation school) (Ntsoane, 2001:113).

Myemana (2004:16 ) as cited by (Ntombana, 2011:632) states that it is evident that a practice that was once regarded as instilling good moral values has suddenly become tainted by instances of moral decline. Stimulated by the general degeneration in the context of initiation practices, some politicians parents and church leaders (Mcotheli, 2006), as cited by Ntombana, (2011: 632) have called for the discontinuation of the practice of initiation. One of their reasons is that many have died as a result of their guardian's negligence, something that was rare in the past. Secondly the behaviour of initiates has become unacceptable.

The initiation school has now become a place where criminal activities are committed and the practice of initiation no longer contributes to the building of society, but instead contributes to the moral decline of the communities concerned (Ntombana, 2004:74). In 2004, the South African government, in partnership with the House of Traditional Leaders, intervened and took relevant steps to address the problems associated with initiation practice by passing the Traditional Health and Practitioners Act, which gives directions and regulations for initiation. In particular, the role of traditional surgeons is highlighted and regulated through the Act. As a result of the Act and other interventions, some of the earlier problems related to deaths of initiates have been dealt with. However there are still reports of deaths, criminal activities and casualties during initiation (Ntombana, 2011:632).

### **1.6. Statement of the problem**

The culture of initiation schools has been characterised as a brutal operation by those who don't understand or appreciate African culture. Initiation ceremonies have been prevalent for centuries in many African societies. There have been multiple deaths due to the unqualified traditional surgeon's engagement in initiation schools. The demise of cultural initiation is caused by the fact that

many people open these traditional schools for business purposes, income, and economic purpose as opposed to cultural purposes. Today the Batswana are no longer associating themselves with traditional circumcision because of the Western culture. These include western oriented weddings in churches and the Western way of life in general. Globalization has for centuries had a negative impact on aspects of African culture. It has however, had a positive change on technology and science.

Makang, (1997:326), states that if one adapts to a Western way of life, he or she is not an authentic African. It makes sense to say Western people do not adapt to our culture and do not take it into consideration, but Africans do adapt to Western customs. The main focus of this study is on the demise or degeneration of Tswana culture.

### **1.7. Aims of the study**

- This study aims to examine demise of the Batswana culture in South Africa especially the traditional initiation schools.

### **1.8. Research questions**

This study explores the following research questions:

- What is the importance of traditional circumcision among the Batswana tribe in the North West Province?
- Why do some people undergo traditional circumcision even though there are multiple deaths?
- What are the causes of the degeneration, and the significance of initiation schools amongst the Tswana youth?

### **1.9. Significance of the study.**

The following point highlights the significance of the study. The Christian faith states that the rituals that Batswana people engage in are associated with 'devil worship' or 'Satanism, which is an insult to Batswana. It is these initiation schools that assist in empowering youth on matters of culture, biological diversity and related knowledge and that strengthen youth with the necessary knowledge to deal with the challenges of life. The sociological study will make a contribution in enlightening Batswana and other ethnic groups about the importance of initiation ceremonies in Batswana culture. It will help and encourage Batswana to be proud and know their roots, rituals and customs and their significance.

The study will also help Batswana society to know how important it is not to let their culture of initiation schools disappear. The initiation school circumcision is contributing to help decrease the risks of getting HIV/AIDS which is a social problem in our country. The Sociological relevance of the study is to identify how the Western school of thought has influenced Batswana culture and tradition. It is also important to explain how culture becomes a social problem in a society when people abandon their own culture. It is also essential to know the impact as well as the causes of degeneration in Batswana culture. Social problems are identified through human behaviour in a society as a result of the socialization process. Initiations are sociologically relevant because they are social practices which are of interest to social scientists. These initiation schools are worthy sociological topics as they involve practical risks like infections, diseases and deaths.

### **1.10. Contribution to the existing knowledge**

The study will contribute to existing knowledge and research on the topic. There have been rigorous debates and controversies around the phenomenon by scholars and researchers about the contribution of initiation schools. It is hoped that this study will enlighten scholars and researchers on initiation schools among Batswana.

### **1.11. Limitations of the study**

The limitations of the study include that a sample of initiates could not be interviewed. There were also difficulties in making appointments to interview the Chief of Barolong Boo Ratshidi and his traditional council members. During the interview, there were several interruptions. I interviewed six members of the traditional court council members and four members of the public who happened to be at the court at that time. The interviewees were reluctant to talk to me as they thought I would use the information to disrespect initiation schools, and contribute to their degeneration. There was limited information available about initiation schools in the Barolong Boo Ratshidi as the practice was discontinued in 1902.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review on African Initiation Schools as Institution for rites of passage to Adulthood.**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents general overview of traditional initiation schools in Africa and South Africa, the degeneration of traditional initiation schools, and the Western influence on traditional initiation schools.

#### **2.2. Overview**

Social theorists have tried for centuries to develop a rich and concrete theory to explain the nature of social change. But their efforts did not have a chance of accounting for diversity of human social development, from the early hunting, gathering and pastoral societies to traditional civilization and finally to the highly complex social system we see today. The concept of tradition is generally understood to refer to the handing down of opinions, principles, doctrines or customs from ancestors to posterity by means of oral communication. Initiation is a ritual that is practised among various groups to incorporate a new member into the existing group, but it is practised more often when there are prominent or marked changes in the lives of individuals (Lodewijckx & Syroit, 1997:275-300).

African traditional initiation practices involve traditional surgeons who are responsible for cutting an initiate's foreskin (Twala 2007:24). It often requires seclusion as well as certain ritual practices and prescriptions by the adults regarding certain aspects of adult life. Often, and especially with boys, initiations contain a physical challenge that could serve as a test for masculinity (Twala, 2007:24). Circumcision practice is performed at a particular place that is



far away from people, e.g. mountains or bushes to prevent people from seeing the activities that go along with circumcision. The Tswana, Pedi, Xhosa and Zulu follow this practice. The world's oldest account of circumcision is an image in an Egyptian tomb, on the West Bank of the Nile, across from Memphis. This practice goes according to the ethnic group to which people belong, but surprisingly some societies undermine the initiation procedures of others. Western ways comparable to initiation practices relate to medical circumcision (Gallaher, 2000:1).

### **2.3. Factors contributing to the degeneration of African culture**

According to Giddens (2006:50), globalization refers to the fact that we all increasingly live in one world, so individuals, groups and nations become interdependent. Globalization is created by the coming together of political, social, cultural and economic factors. It has been driven forward above all by the development of information and communication technologies that strengthen the speed and scope of interaction between people all over the world. For instance world sporting events such as the Olympics and the Soccer World Cup can be shown to billions of people around the world. Technology makes life easier for people across the globe and ultimately some people can abandon their roots and indigenous knowledge in the process of globalization. Embracing globalization has to a great extent led to the degeneration of aspects of African culture. Colonialism also contributed to the demise of the African culture.

Globalization theory harnesses its agenda by claiming to be modern, anti-African traditional knowledge systems, and can influence people across the globe. Today, people have lost and stopped practising their traditional and cultural ways. In Africa today people follow Western ways and this influences the way they live since it makes life easier for them because of science and

technology. The effect that globalization has on people is that they tend to lose their own way of life.

The empirical basis of knowledge had immediate practical results in such areas as agriculture and herbal medicine because our ancestors, whose main occupation was farming and knew of the system of rotation of crops. They also knew when to allow a piece of land to lie fallow for a while. They had some knowledge of the technology of food processing and preservation; and there is a great deal of evidence about their knowledge of medical potencies of herbs and plants. These was the main source of their health care delivery system before the introduction of Western medicine. Even today there are countless cases of people who receive cures from traditional healers where the application of Western medicine could not cope with an illness and yet Africans are slowly but surely adapting Western ways. The degeneration of our culture is caused and influenced by globalization through science and technology.

Young people today are easily influenced to move away from their cultural identity by Western images and famous international artists. This is affecting the local cultures and traditions. For instance, there are some Tswana people who are living Rastafarian lifestyles, others who after being converted to Christianity and are “born again” and abandon their traditional practices such as initiation schools. This means that these Tswana children have abandoned their cultures for foreign for Christianity and Hip-Hop culture. Such abandonment is clearly visible in their life style. Hip-hop culture became a source of alternative identity formation and social status for the youth. Alternative local identities were forged in fashion, language and names.

Most hip- hop fans, artists, musicians and dancers continue to belong to an elaborate system of crews. Identity in hip-hop culture is rooted in a specific local formation of gangs, provides an unyielding environment and may, in fact,

contribute to community-building networks which serve as basis for new social movements (Guins & Cruz, 2005:403).

Many African youth embraced the hip-hop culture which has resulted in the Hip Hop style with young people impersonating artists using style to form an identity which plays on class distinctions and hierarchies by using commodities to claim the cultural terrain. Clothing and consumption rituals, for instance, expensive champagne or Hennessy Whiskeys, testify to the power of consumption as a means of cultural expression. Hip-hop fashion is an especially rich example of this sort of appropriation (Guins & Cruz, 2005:409).

Some of the young people are influenced by this type of hip hop fashion, hence some of them change their behaviour in society. Hip-hop culture encourages young people to ask their parents to buy expensive clothes and jewellery for them. If parents refuse or can't afford it, they threaten to quit or drop out of school, commit crimes such as theft and sell drugs to raise money for such clothes. This results in deviant behaviour and disrespect towards their parents emerges in society. The 1990s trends of oversized pants and urban warrior outer apparel, as in 'hoodies,' 'snooties,' 'times', and 'triple fat' goosedown coats make clear the severity of urban 'storms' to be weathered, and the saturation of disposable goods in hip-hop style forges local identities for teenagers who understand their limited access to traditional avenues of social status attainment (Guins & Cruz, 2005:409).

## **2.4. The initiation schools in Africa**

Most African countries and people have rites of passages in their own communities and they are still practising them. These ceremonies mark the transition from child to adulthood, because culture has been transferred from one generation to the next through knowledge, understanding what they say, and how they relate to one another. The initiation of the young is considered as one of the key moments in the rhythm of an individual life, and the corporate group of which individuals are part (Mbiti, 2008:118).

Initiation rites have symbolic meanings attached to them. The ceremonies involve boys and girls being withdrawn from the community to live alone in the forest or in specifically prepared huts away from the villagers. They go through a period of withdrawal from society, absence from home, during which they receive secret instructions as to how one has to behave when they get back to society, relatives and parents at home. This process involves rebirth, that is the act of rejoining families, and it emphasises that young people are now new with new personalities since they have lost their childhood. In some societies they even receive new names (Mbiti, 2008:118).

The significance of the traditional rites of passage is to introduce the boys and girls into adulthood. They are now allowed to share in the full adult privileges and duties of the community. They enter into the state of responsibility; they inherit new rights, and new obligations which are expected of them by the society. The initiation school prepares young people in matters of sexual, marriage, procreation and family responsibilities. In essence, initiation rites have a great educational purpose. This period often marks and symbolizes the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is otherwise not accessible to those who are not initiated. It is the period of awakening to many things, a period of dawn for the young. They learn to endure hardship, learn to love one another,

learn the secrets and mysteries of man and woman relationships, and in some areas, especially in West Africa, they join secret societies each of which has its own secrets, ceremonies and language (Mbiti, 2008:119).

#### **2.4.1. Akamba initiation**

Akamba is a Kenyan ethnic group which speaks Kikamba and are mostly found in the Central Eastern part of the country (Kitui, Machakos, Makueni, and Mwingi districts). Their initiation school has three parts; the first two are the most important. From the beginning, everybody has to go through these first two, but only a small number of men go through the third which is performed when they are over forty years old. Individuals who are initiated are not viewed as people and full members of the Akamba people. Thus, no matter how old one is, so long as one is not initiated, one is despised and regarded as only boy or a girl. Usually the ceremonial rituals take place in the months of August to October, when it is dry and relatively cool. Boys undergo circumcision, and girl's clitoridectomy( Mbiti,2008).

The date for the ceremony is announced in a given region, and when it arrives all the candidates are called by their parents and relatives to the home where the ceremony takes place. The specialist men and women perform circumcision with a special knife on the candidates. The foreskin of the boys is cut off and the clitoris of girls is removed. Those who manage to go through this procedure successfully are perceived to be brave and they are praised by their community. When the initiation process has been completed the community and families rejoice, dance and sing to their newly graduates. In the course of these rituals, while the wound heals, families visit their initiated boys and girls, bring them food, ornaments even sheep for those who can afford them (Mbiti, 2008:119).

Endurance of physical and emotional pain is a great virtue among Akamba people, as it is indeed among other Africans since life in Africa is surrounded by much pain. Notably people die of hunger and wars from one source or another. The relation to the Tswana initiation school is to indicate how other cultures are functioning despite Western influence. One must take notice of other cultures and make comparisons to identify the sustainability and consistency of them in order to identify the cause and effect of the degeneration or discontinuity of a particular culture. The Batswana circumcisions are not radically different from those of Kenya. Batswana, an African tribe, practice culture in a manner that is similar to that of African tribes, but each has its own specific conditions.

#### **2.4.2. Maasai initiation rites**

The Maasai people are an indigenous African ethnic group of East Africa. They live in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania along the Great Rift Valley, on semi-arid and arid lands. The community is known for their diverse and rich culture and their patriarchal nature where elder men decide major matters.

Among the Maasai, circumcision takes place every four to five years, for young people between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Those who are initiated together form a life-long age group, and take on new names. The arrangements for the ceremonies are that firstly, all candidates assemble together, covered with white clay and carrying no weapons. They spend three to four months in the countryside. Ultimately when the period of their initiation is close by, they go and wash themselves in cold river water. When the foreskin has been cut off, the blood is collected in an ox hide and put on each boy's head, and for days boys are kept in seclusion, after which they show up dressed like women having had their faces painted with white clay and heads adorned with ostrich feathers. After the wounds have healed the heads are shaved and they grow new hair and become

warriors. Regarding the girls, the portion of sex organ is cut off or pierced. Their heads are adorned with grass leaves of a special tree (doom palm). After the wounds have healed, the girls can get married, and in some parts of the country they also have their heads shaved (Mbiti, 2008:123).

The Akamba share most of the practices and meaning of initiation, for instance, the emphasis of separation from childhood and incorporation into adulthood. Cutting or piercing of the sex organ and the shaving of the head symbolize the break from one status and entry into another. Smearing of the face with white clay is the symbol of new birth, new person, and a new social status. When the ceremony is over the men start their duties of defending their society, the nation and their families, and women are ready to get married and often get named immediately after initiation school (Mbiti, 2008:123).

#### **2.4.3. South African Initiation Rites.**

South African communities, particularly the Tswana, Xhosa and South Sotho, display a respect and appreciation of the need to mark or celebrate the important steps of development and maturity as well as experience. These are the rites of passage to adulthood. They help individuals to take good care of their families or the larger community. One of the most celebrated stages of development in Tswana, Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho culture is initiation. Amongst these ethnic communities boys who refuse to go to initiation schools in the mountains or bushes will not be taken seriously by those who have been there already. Often those who are not initiated are regarded as 'boys,' not real men, because they did not go through the ritual cultural practice of manhood. Attending initiation school and undergoing circumcision qualifies one for manhood and acceptance as someone to lead, be prominent, and culturally knowledgeable in society (Twala, 2007:25).

A traditional leader in a Tswana community will periodically call upon boys of a certain age usually between 16 to 20 years of age, to participate in this ritual. Generally speaking, the initiation ceremony comprises the following phases. First, there is the "sacred ground" where the boys and girls would be in isolation during the festival. Secondly, they are separated in the bush or forest in a special, organised camp where they are instructed on the traditions of the tribe. Lastly, circumcision will be performed on boys by a traditional healer of that particular initiation school (Twala, 2007:26).

#### **2.4.4. The degeneration of initiation schools in Africa**

Changes are rapidly taking place in Africa and the Batswana cultural practices and their initiation rites are some of the areas of life most affected by modern changes. This is partly because children at that age are going to school, and partly because Christian missionaries and some governments have attacked or discouraged the practices. Yet, where initiation rites were part of the traditional cycle of individual life, the practice still lingers on often with some modifications, or in a simplified form (Mbiti, 2008:128).

The social change that is taking place has both positive and negative effects on cultural rites. Modern times affect and improve people because some people have adjusted to a new way of life, for instance adapting to the Western way of circumcision. Westernization together with illegal traditional initiation schools is affecting the Tswana traditional initiation rites. These initiation rites are extremely important in traditional life and need no further emphasis. If they are to die out, they will die a long and painful death. They are at the 'middle' of life for the individuals concerned, not only because they often coincide with puberty changes, but because they close a whole phase of life, childhood in the broad sense of that word, and open up a new and whole phase of life, adulthood, with all its implications. Because of this radical change, many African societies mark



the occasion with a dramatization and physical-psychological experiences that are hard for the individual to forget (Mbiti, 2008:129).

The shortcomings of these traditional forms of moral education for both men and women in pre-colonial times are clearly apparent. On the whole, initiation schools were not for the fainthearted. They were run with military like discipline, initiates were awoken at the crack of dawn, sometimes with splash of cold water over their bodies. Flogging was common for those that were reported to have been disrespectful to parents and elders before entering *Bojale* (initiation school for girls) or *bogwera* (initiation school for boys) (Matemba, 2010:332).

Death in the traditional initiation camps was not common. The most common cause of death in the initiation camps seems to have been related to unsanitary procedures involving penile circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls. The dead used to be buried on the same day inside the camp close to the group's fire place. Such deaths were closely-guarded secrets in the camps and outsiders, including the family of the deceased, were not told of it while the initiation was in progress (Matemba, 2010:332).

#### **2.4.5. The Degeneration of Initiation schools in South Africa**

Historically among Christian societies of Southern Africa, traditional cultural rites was discouraged and discarded by the missionaries. Rites of passage like initiation were regarded as heathen and superstitious and therefore very bad (Thabane, 2002:1). Gradually people lost the main purposes of performing some of these rituals. Those that lagged behind, who continued to perform such rituals were labelled heathen and backward. Institutions like church and modern schools removed the rich culture from the people and replaced it with western civilization. The church excommunicated from services all parents who took

their children to the initiation school, as well as those children who attended such schools. They were also not allowed to go back to formal educational schools which they were attending before joining initiation, if they were still in school. They had to undergo church rituals of repentance and cleansing before they could be allowed back (Thabane, 2002:1).

Since the initiation was one of the foundation pillars of South Africa's and African communities, it automatically became the target of the churches, European schools and governments. All who practiced it were regarded and labelled as uncivilized and heathen. The white government then allowed it to be practiced voluntarily. In cases where the children were Christians, forcing them to attend could be punishable by the church and the state. The parents who were Christian were expected to teach their children that initiation and circumcision were pagan practices and therefore to be abhorred. In order to succeed in the war against initiation schools, missionaries and the government were united against initiation schools and other African cultural practices (Thabane, 2002:239-252).

All over the country, the authorities established schools. African teachers who were strong adherents of the Christian religion and were then produced in great numbers to hold the sword against the African cultural practices. The outcome of the discourse was that African cultural practices became dormant and Western institutions became the driving force for everything occurring in the lives of Africans. International institutions such as WHO (World Health Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization). UNESCO is an agency that promotes education and communities and arts. Others organization also joined against women and children's initiation in so far as it included mutilation of the genitalia. In the rural areas of South Africa, however, individuals and communities continued to practice their

culture, hold initiation schools and practice circumcision despite the rebuke by Christians and Western schools (Thabane, 2002:106).

The initiation schools in South Africa have become a social problem for quite some time now, due to the deaths of initiates. This has resulted in debates on whether to continue or discontinue initiation rituals or not. Another negative aspect relating to initiation ceremonies is that they have become a tourist attraction. This exposes the secret activities of the ritual, particularly in the Western Cape Province where people who pass by on the road take photographs then publicised in the media. In the past initiates would never talk about what is being done in initiation schools nor could 'outsiders' have access to initiates. The culture of initiation and its secrecy seems to be disregarded as some initiates boast about entering manhood and looking down on those who have not attended an initiation school. In the past boys would be allowed by parents to undergo initiation school, but now they go without their parent's approval. Some also go because of peer pressure so that they feel part of the group (Twala, 2007:29).

Problems associated with deaths of initiates have included the use of blunt and unsterilized blades, which lead to infections. The ANC led government is encouraging boys to be circumcised in hospitals as a way of reducing deaths at initiation schools. From a medical perspective, this is understandable, but from a cultural point of view it has contributed to the degeneration or demise of a significant part of the Tswana culture (Twala, 2007:29).

As a compromise, and as a strategy of ensuring that the initiates are not harmed, the ANC Youth League in the Eastern Cape proposes that nurses, social workers and psychologists be given access to these schools to curb the escalating death rate. This proposal is, however problematic, in that it violates

*tribal identities and ethnocentrism at the expense of national identity and national unity, and the very fact that this useless primitive ritual has, in some cases, resulted in deaths gives me a reason or right to discourage it as much as I can. In any case, it would be irresponsible of me to encourage the mutilation of our young boys and girls in the bush. There are more useful things to do than running around naked in the forest'' Sir Seretse Khama (Grand, 1984:8).*

#### **2.4.7. The Incidences that Spark Debates Relating To Initiation Schools**

Initiation schools came under attack in the light of negative incidences covered and reported by mass media, and especially of deaths of initiates. kThe Mail and Gurdian newspaper of 19 July 2012 reported that in Jarha, a remote village east of Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape, while a well-respected, government-sanctioned initiation school was being run, the owners Ramos, Phansikwakhe and Gcinikhaya Jeke did not however offer ablution facilities for their initiates. One of them, Gcinikhaya, was reported to have said that the initiates could not use his toilet as he did not want them to be exposed to his wife being male initiates. The report went further to say that nearly 50 deaths occurred in the Eastern Cape province since June 2012, and that most have occurred in Mpondoland in the north eastern region of the province, whereby five initiates have had to have penile amputations and 300 have been hospitalised because of injuries related to circumcisions.

The report also stated that in another part of the province, i.e. Butterworth, there was an incident whereby an initiate was stabbed to death during a fight with a friend over who the "real" man was between them. Initiates were reported to have died of exposure while receiving their instruction in remote bush venues during winter, or due to medical complications caused by unqualified surgeons performing the circumcision. This, it is reported, has led to many initiates across South Africa and their parents are opting for the operation to be conducted by

medical practitioners.(see <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Initiate-killed-in-real-man-fight-2009>: accessed on 13 February 2013).

The media also reported that a 60-year-old Mahikeng man was arrested after 56 initiates were taken to hospital following botched circumcisions. According to the SABC news report, numerous complaints by parents to the police preceded his arrest. It was alleged that the initiates were abducted and taken to the initiation school without their parents' consent. All the boys were taken to the local hospital for treatment and observation. The initiation school in Letlhogoring, Mahikeng was closed down. The school instructor was arrested for circumcising children under the age of 16 without consent, and faces charges of kidnapping and abducting boys for his initiation school (see <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/56-in-hospital-after-botched-circumcisions-20111205>: accessed on 13 February 2013).

Further reports stated that in Johannesburg, two teenagers died at an initiation school in Ottosdal while seven others were hospitalised with septic wounds. A 17-year-old became very ill and succumbed to his wounds whilst the other teenager was assaulted by workers at the school after attempting to escape, and died of his injuries, Sergeant Karen Tredoux said in a statement". A traditional healer and a worker at the school were arrested. Police received a call saying the initiate had died. The school had 21 boys, aged between 14 and 21, and was closed down by police. Seven of the remaining children were admitted to the Ottosdal hospital for treatment of septic wounds while the remaining 12 were handed over to their parents (see <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Initiate-dies-trying-to-escape-school-20111215>: accessed on 13 February 2013).

It is clear from the above reported incidents that initiation schools came under spot light due to high rate of death incidents which led to serious questioning of

their relevance and necessity. Apart from these, the section below will highlight the significance of initiation schools today and especially their educational role.

#### **2.4.8. Indigenous Education in the Initiation School**

Moral education in pre-colonial Botswana was rooted in an indigenous knowledge system of education which taught young people cultural and moral values. The aim of traditional education was to inculcate the *Botho* or *Ubuntu* moral code that highlighted virtues such as the importance of community and observance of communal and cultural practices (Gaie & Mmolai, 2007) as cited by Matemba (2010:330). Indigenous education in pre-colonial Botswana came mainly through initiation schools known as *Bogwera* for boys and *Bojale* for girls. In traditional initiation schools young people were taught all aspects of traditional survival skills, customs, values, marriage, parenting, religion and respect for others, in a formal setting under the tutelage of specifically appointed experienced village instructors. The first stage of initiation, known as *bogwane* began when boys turned 12 years. Instruction occurred in the village, where children were sometimes taken away to a secluded area for parts of this period. The *bogwane* curriculum consisted of instruction in societal norms, sex education, traditional taboos, agricultural activities and self-defence (Matemba, 2010: 330).

Mautle (2001:27) as cited by Matemba (2010:332) mentions that boys are keen to enter *bogwera* proper, which is the second stage of initiation school. After a preparatory stage of *bogwane*, boys (now young man) were accepted for *Bogwera*, during which stage the new initiates were circumcised. The *bogwera* (traditional initiation school) curriculum included showing honour and obedience to the chiefs and the elderly and abstaining from excessive drinking. Sex and married life took centre stage during *Bogwera*. Instructions such as physiology of sexual relations, procreation, how to conduct themselves with

ritually unclean women such as *Batsetsi* (new mother) and widows. When girls reached puberty they entered the initiation process known as *Bojale* which lasted only three months. During *Bojale* young women wore thorny attire and painted their faces with (fine clay) *letsoku*. As part of *Bojale*, clitorodectomy was performed on the girls. The curriculum of *Bojale* included motherhood, respect for elders and husbands, general behaviour towards men, female hygiene and handling household chores. In addition, child bearing appears to have been a topic of emphasis (Mgadla, 1989 as cited by Mtameba, 2010:333).

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Chapter two focused on factors contributing to the demise of the Tswana cultural rites of initiation. The study looked at Africa, South Africa and narrowed the topic down to the North West Province. Globalization, colonialism and the hip-hop sub-culture and their role in the degeneration of aspects of African culture were looked at. There is wide spread Western influence on this culture. Western influences, through churches have led to criticisms of traditional initiation school practices. Some of the Tswana ethnic groups have joined Western churches and left the African churches they grew up in. The invasion of media into the mountains, bushes, and forest where traditional initiation schools are held contributed to the demise of the practice, because now the secrets of initiation schools have been exposed to everyone to read and see. The modern day life styles like hip-hop have contributed negatively to the demise of traditional initiation schools and African culture in general.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework in terms of globalization theory as reality and as myth, and Durkheims (1992:238) theory of collective representation, Mbeki's,(1996)Africa African renaissance idea, South Africa and African renaissance and Manuel Castell's theory of construction of identity.

#### **3.2. Globalization theory**

Giddens (2006) in sociological and economic terms, globalization impact on various terrains, from the traditional to the modern. It implies the widening and deepening of the International flow of trade, finance and information within a single, integrated global market. The outcome of this process is the easing and reduction of nationally and culturally determined barriers, the expansion of capital flows and the escalation of technology transfer. The impact of globalization on nation states has implications regarding their autonomy and policy-making capacities (Giddens, 2006:51).

With South Africa's re-entry into the global arena, there are both opportunities and challenges for the management of indigenous knowledge systems. The cultural implications of globalization relate to the mixing of, and very often the imposition of different ideas and values to create a homogenous worldwide culture in the global village. Important modalities in this aspect are the modern information technology platforms, which tend to accelerate the establishment of such homogenous cultural practices expressed in eating, singing, dancing, speaking, and writing which constitute global village homogenisation. This



implies that due to the fact globalization is taking place at rapid speed, our traditional culture is becoming homogeneous, where we are doing the same ceremonies and rituals together, and that will be due to the fact of adopting of the Western life style. Globalization has not only impacted on the African way of life and cultural practices, but has also specifically impacted on the Batswana cultural practices. As a theory globalization is, therefore important in explaining the dwindling of the Tswana culture of initiation schools ([www.dst.gov.za](http://www.dst.gov.za): 20).

### **3.3. Globalization theory as reality**

The main arguments and debates in favour of globalization are outlined below, Electronic communication alters our notion of social groups we work with and live with. The Batswana culture of initiation schools is part of the global village in practice since global changes affect the Batswana practices and their way of life (Baylis et al, 2011:10).

Young people are especially tempted by global influence such as the Western fashion styles as compared to their own indigenous style. For example they prefer the hip-hop culture trying to emulate the life style of the actors and artists in Hollywood. Such tendencies explain the realities of societies becoming more homogenous, with differences amongst people in various parts of the global becoming weaker every day (Baylis et al, 2011:10). Indeed the world is becoming one, because of the technological network that is led by the internet network. The world is sharing advancements in science, having the same types of resources, and economic transactions led by trade are mushrooming by the day. Communication is increasing due to the level of social networks, namely Facebook, twitter, my space and blue world. These networks, in some cases, are the leading cause of cultural degeneration in some parts of the world, such as in the Tswana communities. In South Africa the rituals of initiation are being illegally recorded and posted on social networks for users to see and critique

them. Time and space seem to be collapsing. Our old ideas of geographical space and chronological time are undermined by the speed of modern communications and media. There are claims that media can manipulate the content or information at their disposal to suit their profit-making goals and aims. A cosmopolitan culture is developing. People are beginning to 'think globally and act locally' (Baylis et al, 2011:10).

### **3.4. Globalization theory as myth**

One obvious objection to the globalization thesis is that globalization is merely a buzz-word to denote the latest phase of capitalism (Baylis et al, 2011:11).

A related objection is that globalization may well be simply the latest stage of western imperialism. It is the old modernization theory discussed, in a new guise. The forces that are being globalized are conveniently those found in the Western world. Westernization has imposed itself on the African continent and South Africa in particular. Westernization has by the same token eroded cultural practices of Batswana in South Africa and elsewhere (Baylis et al, 2011:11). Along with globalization, it has contributed to the degeneration of aspects of African culture. For instance, the South African government encourages people to go to hospital. For circumcision in hospitals which is a Western oriented practice (Baylis, et al 2011:12).

### **3.5. Durkheim's Theory of Collective Representation**

For Durkheim, 'representations', meant "the cultural beliefs, moral values, symbols and ideas shared by any human group, every cultural group in the society has its own values that brings them together as society, they have their own way of life that distinguish them from other social human group." (in Bocock, 1992:238) The human group in the community share lot of things in common for instance language, sign language but having different beliefs

distinguish them from others and they represent themselves as a certain cultural beliefs. Such cultural components serve as a way of representing the world meaningfully to members of a particular cultural group such as Batswana. For instance the Setswana speaking people have their own way of transmitting cultural beliefs from one generation to the other. Just as Durkheim asserted “It is not a question of asking what such cultural items represent in the outside world, (as though there could be true or false representations).” Batswana culture’s initiation practice is not a false representation. It has a meaning attached as consistent with Durkheim’s argument that “myths, which are literally false, have powerful meanings and real effects” (see Bocock, 1992:238).

Representations create a symbolic world of meanings within which a cultural group lives. For Durkheim, it includes such fundamental notions as the particular way time and space are perceived in a culture, as well as its moral and religious belief. This approach accepts that different people different cultures for instance Tswana people adopting Western circumcision approach. Is the question of how those from a Western cultural background would judge which beliefs and ideas are “true” or “false”, this would only tell us what we find acceptable and congruent within our own cultural framework. Western thought has had a tendency to tell the non Western countries, why it is wrong to perform African cultural practices.

The issue of falsehood of different cultural worlds is thus sidestepped by using the concept of “representations” in a more relativistic descriptive way. The cultural values, beliefs, and symbols of a group (its representations) are produced and shared collectively by those who are members of the same group. The issue of representation goes with how cultures and tradition represent

themselves in a society and also how people represent their own cultures to others (see Boccock, 1992:238).

But the West is imposing the Western way of life on Africans in many ways and that destabilizes, weakens, erodes, and degenerates African culture and the Batswana culture of initiation schools in particular indeed. In both pre-literate and modern societies, those who produce their own values, beliefs and symbol systems are often treated with hostility. They are not treated as full members of the group, precisely because they do not share its cultural language, values, beliefs and symbols.

To explain the above statements, one will say people in a community will be divided, if they don't share common values, symbols and beliefs. That is why some boys who are initiated don't get along with those who have not been to traditional initiation schools. Even the basic layers of a person's sense of identity, of who he or she is, is produced by being a member of a specific ethnic, national, or tribal group.

### **3.6. South Africa and the African Renaissance**

South Africa's renaissance discourse has been associated with the pronouncements of former president, Thabo Mbeki. It has been said to have been sparked by Mbeki's speech in Parliament in May 1996 entitled 'I am An African,' a speech which indeed did invoke a great deal of emotion (Mbeki, 1996). This speech was important not only because it generated debates around the world, but more profoundly because it prompted South Africans to reflect on their identity crisis, whether were they part of Africa or Europe. Thabo Mbeki's notion of African renaissance can be said to constitute the third moment of the African renaissance (Ajulu, 2007:33) as cited by Vale & Maseko, (1998).

Vale and Maseko (1998) identify two broad interpretations of South Africa's discourse on African renaissance. First is the African interpretation which seeks to use the African renaissance to construct a new African history, identity and culture and to reassert the notion of 'Africanness'. Second is the globalist interpretation, which emphasises Africa's economic and political regeneration as part and parcel of globalizing of the world economy (Ajulu, 2007:33).

### **3.7. Mbeki's African renaissance in contemporary African society**

African renaissance is said to be one of the best ideologies African people were ever inspired with. The philosophy behind the concept of African renaissance has emphasised the passion for the African continent. It is said to be the rebirth, the rediscovery of our African continent in terms of our culture and tradition as well as our indigenous way of life that has been practised by our forefathers. African renaissance seeks to encourage people to come out of their comfort zone and confront the Western way to stop it from manifesting itself in our mother land. We, as Africans have lost what was historically ours; the land, minerals and the African system of governance. The speech was intended to motivate Africans to continue practicing their cultural and traditional practices, such as traditional initiation schools. The speech was directed to those who have lost their roots and have adapted to the Western way of life due to globalization.

### **3.8. Manuel Castell's Theory of construction of identity**

This theory of construction of the Batswana as argued by Manuel Castell's (1997) theory of identity is relevant. This necessitates the following and arguing Castell's theory in this sociological study. The Tswana have their own identity, what makes them unique from other tribes. Their values, norms, rituals like initiation schools give Tswanas a sense of belonging together as the Batswana because the values, norms as well as customs have a meaning attached to them

and it is how they are identified as a social group. African renaissance philosophy is included in the chapter, because it supports and proves that Western influence contributes to the demise of African traditional practices. Identity refers to social actors, the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning. Roles, for instance, refer to lawyers, accountants and union members. These roles are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society (Castell, 1997:6-7).

Legitimizing identity is introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination as social actors, for example, the Western school of thought, but also fits with various theories of nationalism (Castell, 1997:8). For example, cultural globalization is a dominant system that is spreading throughout the world and forcing people to turn against their own culture, from traditional initiation schools to medical circumcisions in hospitals. Resistant identity is generated by those actors who are in positions or conditions devalued or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to those permeating the institutions of society (Castell, 1997:8).

Project identity is when social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in a society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of the overall social structure (Castell, 1997:8). In the Tswana context one can say, for instance, that whichever cultural materials, or western cultural material, they adapt to in every way possible is the reason why the traditional initiation school is no longer respected, protected and practiced. Men and women no longer get their identities from traditional roles. We do not take identities from the past, but create new ones interacting with other people. The Tswana people did build

new identities, but because of globalization Tswanas have adopted Western ways of circumcision instead of traditional and cultural ways of doing it (Giddens, 2006 :169). Drastic globalization came with change, it is evident as to why new identities have been created and cultural values eroded, because people want to change with the times. In the Batswana society social construction as argued by Manuel Castell's theory of identity is relevant. This necessitates following and arguing Castell's theory in this sociological study.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

The inclusion of theories in chapter three was to support and analyse the data gathered in the study with the relevant information to come to a conclusion on concrete information. The theory of globalization as myth and reality, the construction of identity, collective representations, and African renaissance philosophy were included in the chapter, because they support and prove that Western influence contributes to the demise of African traditional practices. The inclusion of African renaissance in the chapter served as an ideology that seeks contribution to the rebirth and rediscovery of the tradition that has been lost by Africans, because of the colonial era and apartheid system. The continuity of the traditional roots of the Tswana culture of initiation has indeed been influenced by the Western churches and science.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Qualitative methodology is to be used because it seeks to understand things from the participant's viewpoint and perspectives, and the researcher can put him or herself in the participant's shoes and try to 'feel' the way the participants 'feel'. That way he or she will be able to get rich information in his or her study. In short, close involvement with subject under study is important (Bryman, 1984:78). When the researcher applies close involvement with the participants he or she can get information and can also see and feel the way the participants feel, but the researcher must not be close to the extent that he or she too loses control. This method is called participants observation where the researcher joins circumstances under study and examines that from the inside. This is an effective method of observation.

Qualitative methodology is concerned with producing descriptive data such as people's written and spoken words. In-depth interviews yield people's spoken words. Qualitative research can produce data that describes and explains the quality of an object as being brown or blue or black. Numbers or counts are usually used in quantitative research; however, the investigator may wish to refer to numbers, for example the number of people representing the sample or the number of people interviewed for instance, 10 people, that is why Bless and Higson Smith (1995:99) believe that qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other.

Chapter four focuses on the methodology aspect of the study in terms of qualitative methods since the research involves non-numeral assessment and a focus group interview, sampling method, data collection instrument, and the



advantages of focus group interview, interviews and open ended questions. The qualitative methodology is unstructured and the focus group interviews conducted by the researcher are aimed at identifying meanings about what the initiation school means to the Tswana. Patterns of relationships between those who are uninitiated, initiated, and those who are initiated at hospitals are investigated to see whether there is a good relationship and whether there is demise in cultural initiation and an increase in the number of those who undergo circumcision in hospitals. In sociological terms the emphasis in qualitative research is on norms of behaviour (Babbie, 1998:297), how people behave before and after initiation school in terms of being principled. Ethical considerations of voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality and anonymity principles of a research project were adhered to.

The study relied on qualitative data from focus group discussions. Focus group discussions can offer insights into how a group thinks about initiation schools, about the range of opinions and ideas and the inconsistencies and variations that exist in a particular community in terms of beliefs and their practices (Dawson, Manderson & Tallo, 1993). The aim of the focus group discussions was to explore perceptions of male and female circumcisions. The study looked more specifically at the dominant notion of ‘‘manhood’’ and ‘‘womanhood’’, types of male circumcision, purpose of circumcision, perceptions of circumcised towards those who are uncircumcised. Moreover, the informality of the group setting encourages a degree of participation and spontaneity that is not present in one-to-one standard interviews (Kline, Kline & Oken, 1992).

#### **4.2. Qualitative methodology**

The focus group discussions were conducted on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012. A total of two group discussions were with held 10 Traditional court council members of the Barolong Boo Ratshidi. The focus group interview guide consisted of 20

questions. The focus group discussions were held at a venue that was conveniently located for the participants, which was the Traditional court council room, and which at the same time ensured maximum privacy. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Prior to the focus group interview, permission was granted by the Chief of the Barolong Boo Ratshidi, and the participants remained anonymous.

Care was also taken to select the participants who shared enough information about the background of initiation school and why ‘‘they’’, the Barolong boo Ratshidi are not promoting the initiation school because it has been discontinued since 1902. There were no clear reasons for discontinuing and they do not see anything wrong with the discontinuity because hospital circumcision is the alternative for them. The traditional court council members are the advisers of the Chief, who dispense land for housing, certify documents for the members of the Community of Barolong Boo Ratshidi, and engage in conflict resolution for members of the villages of the Barolong Boo Ratshidi.

Qualitative methods were the choice for this study. Qualitative techniques explore the meaning, or describe and promote understanding of human experience such as pain, grief, hope or caring, or unfamiliar phenomena such as female genital mutilation and traditional circumcision of males and so on. Qualitative methods are more appropriate and effective alternatives in such cases, because they provide in-depth, rich personal data to be analysed to answer the research questions stated in the beginning of the study. A variety of research designs fall under the umbrella of qualitative research, but focus group discussion are the most appropriate for this study. Each method has a specific focus and goal for discovering knowledge as there are commonalities that bind them together. As the name implies, qualitative research focuses on the qualitative aspects of meaning, experience and understanding, and it studies

human experience from the viewpoints of the research participants in the context in which the action takes place (Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2009:113).

Qualitative method is an inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts. It is the preferred method in the study because of its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue, such as initiation schools of the Tswana people. It provides information about the 'human' side of an issue, that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals (Bryman, 1984:78).

#### **4.3 Sampling method and Data collection**

The sampling method of the study was purposive and judgemental. The researcher used his discretion to select subjects for inclusion in the study. Barolong boo Ratshidi as a group was the unit of analysis of the study of Ratshidi tribal councils (Chadwick, Howard and Stan, 1984:65).

The researcher selected eight former initiates who underwent initiation school. These eight former initiates were deemed to have sufficient information about traditional initiation schools for the study. Five of these initiates were accessed at the North-West University's Mafikeng campus at the time of the study, as they were registered as students. The other three were accessed in the community of Barolong boo Ratshidi. Both were interviewed as two separate focus groups. The third focus group was comprised of ten traditional court council members of the Barolong boo Ratshidi.

The techniques of collecting data may vary. The main techniques used in the study were two focus group interviews using open-ended questions. Focus groups enable participants to discuss the issues and questions with each other

and provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other to resolve important dilemmas they are confronted with. (Bless et al, 2009:137).

The group is 'focused' in the sense that it involves some kind of collective activity such as talking about initiation schools of the Tswana people or simply debating a particular set of questions. Crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of the group interaction. Focus groups have advantages for researchers as they do not discriminate against people who cannot read or write and they can encourage participation from people reluctant to be interviewed on their own or who feel they have nothing to say. Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalise on communication and relationships between research participants in order to generate data regarding specific topics, like initiation. Although group interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously. Focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view. Even in the focus group an interview with the present study respondents were held simultaneously, because the group interview method was used (Kitzinger, 1994:104).

#### **4.4. Advantages of interviews**

According to Cooper & Schindler (1998:137) this is a way of conversation initiated by an interview to obtain information from the respondent by answering questions. The respondent is asked to provide information and has little immediate or direct benefit from this cooperation. The greatest value of personal interview method lies in the in-depth information details that can be secured. It exceeds the information obtained from telephone and self-

administered, questionnaires. The interviewer can also do more things to improve the quality of information received than with other methods. In the case of this study unstructured discussion questions were posed to the respondents. They were allowed to respond as they wished.

Interviewers also have more control with this type of interviewing than with other kinds of interrogation. They can make sure that the correct respondent is replying and they can set up and control interviewing conditions. Interviewers can also adjust to the language of participants, because they can observe the problems and effects the interview is having on the respondent.

#### **4.5. Advantages of open-ended questionnaires**

According to Neuman (2006:287), open ended questionnaires permit an unlimited number of possible answers, adequate to complex issues, and creativity, self expression and richness of details. The question would be appropriately used in the context where the researcher needs to analyse the respondents' thoughts. If the researcher feels that the variable is not fully explored, he or she would use the open ended questions.

#### **4.6. Ethical Consideration**

Regarding ethical issues, avoidance of harm is the fundamental ethical rule of social research. The research must not harm the participants (Babbie, 2007:7). Since participants can be harmed in a physical and or emotional manner, one may expect that harm to respondents in social science will be mainly of an emotional nature. Physical injury cannot be ruled out completely. Ethical consideration was not overlooked because an ethical letter of introduction was given to the participants in order to solicit their consent and permission.

#### **4.7.Voluntary participation**

Participation should at all times be voluntary when conducting research and no one should be forced to participate in a project (Rubin & Babbie, 2005:71). Participants were allowed to withdraw from the research project at any given time or stage of the project. The participants in this study voluntarily participated without being forced at any circumstances.

#### **4.8.Informed Consent**

Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of investigation and expected duration of participant's involvement and respondents were informed that at any stage of the research they could withdraw if need be. According to Royce (2004:52-54), increasingly voluntary participation and no harm to participants have become formalized in the concept of informed consent (Babbie, 2007:64).Written informed consent becomes a necessary condition rather than a luxury or an impediment (Hakim, 2000:143).

#### **4.9.Confidentiality**

The purpose of this part is violation of privacy, and the right to self – determination and confidentiality which can be viewed as being synonymous. Privacy in its most basic meaning is to keep to oneself that which is normally not intended for other to observe or analyse. Every individual or in this case, every initiate has the right to privacy and it is his or her right to decide when, where, to whom and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour will be revealed.

This principle can be violated in a variety of ways, and it is imperative that researchers be reminded of the importance of safeguarding the privacy and identity of respondents, and to act with the necessary sensitivity where the

privacy of participants is relevant (Yegidis & Weinbach, 1996:34). Participants should be informed of all possible limits to this principle as well as the steps that will be taken to ensure that no breach of this principle will take place (Morris, 2006:246). The names of respondents were in no way relevant for the purpose of this study.

#### **4.10. Anonymity**

All interviews were guaranteed anonymity throughout the study. Clearly, the anonymity standard is a stronger guarantee of privacy, but it is sometimes difficult to accomplish, especially in situations where participants are known, such as being council members. Sensitive issues were not questioned into the interviews. Increasingly, researchers have had to deal with the ethical issue of participant's right to privacy (Trochima, 2006).

#### **4.11. Conclusion**

The qualitative method was utilized as explained in chapter four due to the fact that it seeks to know the what, how and why. Questions and answering thereof is the most important aspect of this research study in order to understand the phenomenon of initiation schools in Tswana communities. It seeks to see and feel the way participants feel and see the phenomenon. A focus group interview was used comprising 21 open and closed ended questions. The focus group interview was conducted with ten of the Barolong boo Ratshidi village traditional tribal court council members. All the necessary steps of the research project were followed to execute the research project without any harm to the participants' well-being.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The data analysis**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

Chapter five focuses on the collected data of the study on initiation schools, the necessity of initiation, where it is performed, what ethnic group is dominant on initiation school practices, and in terms of gender dominance and factors that contributed to the degeneration of initiation schools for the Tswana ethnic group in the North West Province.

Qualitative data analysis is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, and theorising, explaining, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the role of analysis. The methods used for qualitative analysis therefore need to facilitate such detection, and to be of a form which allows certain functions to be performed. These functions will vary depending on the research questions being addressed (Huberman and Miles, 2002:309).

The qualitative data analysis aspect of the study is mainly thematic. With the type of analysis the common themes and the trends suggested by data are followed through. The nature of data gathered in the study is mainly qualitative, because it emanates from focus group discussions and open ended questions. Therefore, the only analysis tool that was applied to this data is thematic and according to categories. The following 21 questions asked in the focus group discussions are based on the 3 main research questions to eventually find answers to the research questions.



### **5.1. What is the traditional initiation school?**

The first question posed sought to understand what a traditional initiation school is. According to respondents, a traditional school is a place where boys and girls are taught respect, good manners and Tswana culture. It is also a place where boys and girls are circumcised and are taken to perform their traditional initiation activities. Lastly, the traditional initiation school is a school that teaches boys and girls how to behave like men and women. It is indeed a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood.

### **5.2. Where are Traditional initiation ceremonies performed?**

Historically the traditional initiation ceremonies were performed in mountains, forests, or bushes which are far away from residential places in order to avoid disturbances from the residents. Some have been performed in homes and secret venues. There have, however, been changes as a result of practical constraints. Initiates cannot go too far away from their homes because of factors such as landownership and the fact that some of the initiates are gainfully employed.

### **5.3. Why is it necessary for boys and girls to undergo traditional initiation school?**

The purpose is to help initiates to know about their own culture and traditions. To be taught how to be a man or woman who are responsible and have respect for their communities. They are taught about the rate of HIV/AIDS infections and how the initiation process contributes to a reduction of HIV/AIDS.

### **5.4. In which tribe or ethic group are initiation ceremonies more prevalent?**

The ethnic groups in South Africa practicing traditional initiations are the Xhosas, Zulus, Sothos and also those Batswana groups that are categorized as *Batlhaping, Bahurutsi, and Bakgatla boo Kgafela*.

### **5.5. Which gender dominates in terms of undergoing traditional initiation school?**

Males are dominant in undergoing traditional initiation schools due to the fact that they are potential heads of households. However, females too have their own initiation schools.

### **5.6. Who permits children to undergo traditional circumcision at schools?**

Parents generally grant permission for boys and girls to undergo traditional initiation schools, where they receive guidance from elderly people and the Chief of the village. But before one undergoes circumcision, medical check-ups must be performed to avoid infections. A consent form is completed on recommendation from a medical doctor. In other cultures, fathers and uncles play an important role in granting permission.

### **5.7. What causes deaths of initiates at traditional initiation school?**

Participants gave the following response to this question: “The causes of deaths in traditional initiation schools stem from inexperienced traditional surgeons. People take it as a business, and it creates recklessness, selfishness and ignorance and as a result they don’t take extra measures for the well-being of initiates, which leads to deaths of some of them. Other respondents assert that other causes are due to the fact that some boys and girls are physical weak in nature, yet they undergo initiation school. Traditionally, all protocols of the traditional initiation schools are followed when the initiation school period starts. Lack of proper care and treatment as well as severe living conditions are other contributory factors”.

**5.8. What is it that the government is currently planning to do in order to reduce the deaths of initiates at traditional initiation schools?**

The respondent said in response to this question: The government established a committee which drafted guidelines for initiation schools under the supervision of the Department of Arts & Culture. Tribal offices and Provincial Governments around the country are strategizing to make sure that the deaths at initiation school are reduced by incorporating the Department of Health to assist where possible. This involves the introduction of medical check-ups by qualified medical doctors before initiates undergo traditional initiation practices. Those who wish to open initiation schools are trained and certificated. In cases of emergency nurses are allowed to enter schools where initiates are camped, to monitor and evaluate initiates'' said the respondent.

**5.9. In which seasons are the traditional initiation schools taking place?**

''Historically it has always been winter because the wounds heal faster than in summer. In some instances it differs from one ethnic group to the other. For instance, the Xhosa prefer winter and Batswana prefer summer. Some respondents assert that winter is not good because it is cold'' said the respondent.

**5.10. How long do the initiates stay at initiation school camp before coming back home?**

''The period of stay at initiation camp used to be three to six months, but today it is less because some can undergo traditional initiation school that lasts a week. To some today one month is preferred'' said the respondent.

**5.11. What kind of activities and practices are performed at the traditional initiation school?**

“These include singing, dancing, stick fighting, circumcision and hunting and being taught how to praise the chief of his/her tribe and the tribe she/he belongs to, and most importantly to praise him/herself” said the respondent.

**5.12. Why are initiation school processes and procedures kept a secret?**

“The activities of initiation schools have been kept secret. It is kept a secret to dignify our heritage. People pay to learn at traditional initiation schools and they don’t want to disclose something they paid for. This is aimed at increasing the curiosity of non-initiates in order to motivate them to join initiation schools”

**5.13. What is taught at traditional initiation schools?**

“They are taught respect and Tswana culture and traditions. They also learn about survival as they are prepared for life challenges. They are taught how to identify traditional herbs for medication purposes” said the respondent.

**5.14. What is the influence of Western tradition on African traditional initiation schools?**

Most African tradition is now moving towards Western ideas; in the process African culture is lost. The influence is too strong as individuals do not see the necessity to undergo initiation schools. “The practice has been changed to a business. The youth of today adapt to Western ways of life. Western religion has made people leave their African churches; and join western churches, after joining those churches, they stop practising traditional practices as these are against church rules, and they reject their roots. Science and technology instilled in our minds that medicines are not good to be used unless scientifically tested

in the laboratory. Western Education which is promoting science in our school degenerate our traditions by teaching students that phenomena need to be tested for scientific approval, whereas in the olden days our forefathers never used scientific procedures to approve traditional medication.”

*“Today ‘we’ are having difficulties with teaching our kids our culture and tradition for instance, if I ask my child to drink a particular traditional herb for stomach pains, he/she would ask me whether is it scientifically tested at the laboratory. When I encourage my son/ daughter to undergo initiation school she /he says he would rather go to hospital. Westernization has destroyed our kids.”*

#### **5.15. Who heads the traditional initiation school in the village?**

In response to this question, respondents said: “Traditional healers and chiefs are responsible for heading traditional initiation schools as well as some of the elder members of the community who are knowledgeable about initiation ceremonies and practices. But these days anyone can open a school as long as he has knowledge about initiation schools” said the respondent.

#### **5.16. How have Western countries and colonization influenced initiation schools?**

In response to this question, respondents said: “The shift from indigenous knowledge to modernization and new development from the West has influenced the African culture and tradition, whereby boys prefer circumcision in hospitals to that in the bushes, mountains and forests. Westernization influenced our African culture because of the things the Western education write about us, by distorting information to suit their Western life. They critique our culture by saying it’s backward, not dynamic.”

**5.17. Do you think that western countries and colonization have contributed to the demise or degeneration of traditional Tswana culture?**

There are claims that western countries and colonization have contributed to the degeneration of traditional Tswana culture, because Africans now are westernized, and have left their own African churches and joined western ones. There are an increasing number of churches that are opposed to African culture and tradition and young people today believe in science not African tradition.

**5.18. Why do you think boys who are initiated in mountains disrespect those that are circumcised in hospitals?**

A respondent stated that: *"I personally have seen such disrespect amongst those who were initiated at traditional schools towards those that have done it in hospitals"*.

"Some relate this to the pain they endured compared to those who were circumcised in hospitals where they are given pain killers, whereas in traditional circumcision school they are not given pain killers. The harsh living conditions result in initiates perceiving themselves as comparatively superior to those that were circumcised in hospitals. One of the respondents said "to go to hospital is meaningless, because traditional initiation schools are not only about the removal of foreskin, but about many things that a man has to be taught, which is something one cannot get in hospital."

**5.19. What kind of behaviour is expected of one who has been traditionally initiated?**

"One is expected to have changed to be a highly mannered person, responsible, hardworking, caring for his/her family and has acquired respect for the elders,

parents, relatives and the community at large. One is expected to have grown up and become a responsible man/woman who is no longer a boy or girl.”

#### **5.20. What are your recommendations on how to maintain and sustain Tswana culture, particularly initiation practices?**

“The primary issue that must be emphasised in our African people, particularly the Batswana, is that individuals and communities must be taught from the early age the necessity of going to traditional initiation schools. Generally, people must be encouraged, motivated to value their roots, identity, and there must be teachers to teach people about the importance and the need for traditional initiation schools of circumcision.”

#### **5.1.2. Conclusion**

Chapter five presented data collected and found that Western influences contribute to the demise of the Tswana traditional initiation school as evidenced by answers to 20 questions by the 3 focus groups. The influence originated with the introduction of Western churches that discouraged its members from practicing their traditions. Western science and technology played a role in the demise of traditional initiation schools because medical doctors are the ones African youth prefer to consult compared to traditional healers. Nurses and doctors are sent to traditional initiation, schools to perform circumcision in some instances or to monitor the initiate which is traditionally and culturally unacceptable. The chapter also discussed how the activities of initiation schools have been exposed and publicised by the media and the role of unqualified African traditional surgeons in the deaths of some initiates.

## **Chapter 6**

### **6.1 Findings**

Chapter six presents the findings of the study. As mentioned earlier qualitative data analysis techniques were used to answer the research questions to eventually solve the problem and come to conclusions. The previous chapter found out that by answering the 20 questions in the focus group discussions, the answers to the original research were also included in the answers, the 3 main research questions were: What are the causes of the degeneration, and the significance of initiation schools amongst the Tswana youth? What is the importance of traditional circumcision among the Batswana tribe in the North West Province? Why do some people undergo traditional circumcision even though there are multiple deaths?

The qualitative method gave the study the detailed information regarding a traditional initiation school camp, period of stay, how it is performed, the necessity thereof, what is expected of an initiate after initiation, (for instance responsibilities and good manners) and also the meaning of it for the Tswana speaking people. The traditional initiation school is the way of teaching the true culture of the Batswana and good manners, responsibility and respect to the elders. The practice takes place in the forest, mountains and bushes but recently, it can be held in the nearby villages, roads, even at home in secret. It has become a tourist attraction, and causes shame, because when the practice is held nearby villages, they are visible to other people. The initiates can steal, and rape a passerby, which is bringing our culture down and making it disappear. Males are said to be more predominant because of their physical nature as compared to women. Recently permission is granted, based on the approval of a medical doctor, for boys and girls to undergo traditional initiation schools. Some of the Chiefs in villages are still encouraging young males and females to be initiated



in the forest and mountains. Modernization has changed the perception of the Batswana people about traditional initiation, because of the introduction of circumcision in a hospital. The Departments of Arts and Culture is drafting a Bill aimed at stopping deaths caused by unqualified practitioners in initiation schools. The season for initiation schools was during winter due to the fact that the wounds heal faster as compared to summer. These out of season initiation schools are usually headed by unqualified traditional healers and they are taking place even during school days. As articulated in the literature review of the study, aspects of African culture are degenerating. This includes such traditional practices as initiation activities. The period of stay has been reduced from three months to six months, but even a week or two is allowed these days, which brings disrespect to the culture and tradition of the Batswana initiation school. What is practiced at initiation schools is circumcision, hunting, stick fighting, dancing, singing, poems, praising and responsibility. It has been kept secret because of its nature and because initiates have to pay to attend, so they do not wish everyone to know what takes place, so it remained a secret cultural tribe.

Today the traditional initiation school has been turned into a quick business practice. People who are responsible to head the initiation school are the chiefs, traditional leaders and elders who have been initiated. Recently anyone can open a school illegally without experience. Even those who have been trained by medical doctors and certificated can open a school. Westernization influences people to go to hospitals instead of traditional initiation schools and that has reduced the importance of traditional initiation schools. This kind of tradition has been demoted into a simple Western way of life. Boys and girls who underwent traditional initiation school claims that boys who have been circumcised in hospital did not experience the pain due to the use of Western pain killer. They are only circumcised, not taught what the initiates are taught in initiation school. Initiation school lessons include responsibility, leadership,

good morals, stick fighting, singing and the poem of praising one's tribe. Many, if not most of the Batswana tribe namely, the Batlhaping, Bakgatla boo Kgafela and the Bahurutsi in the North West Province in South Africa take part. The Xhosa are not excluded, even though they were not part of the study, but in general accept and embrace initiation schools. Today the Batswana are living a modern type of lifestyle that causes the degeneration of traditional schools. The Barolong Boo Ratshidi in Mafikeng is no longer practicing traditional initiation schools. According to one of the interviewees: *'they stopped practicing since 1902 due to the bloodline that has differences in terms of their leadership style'*. Due to ever changing challenges they assert that this culture has to change, because it is meaningless these days because of westernization. Western education namely, science and technology is one of the things that parents claim has brought tension between tradition and science. The majority of respondents' views or responses agree on the fact that the nature of traditional initiation schools has lost many of its characteristics.

The traditional initiation school practices have been published by the media and the numbers of deaths are sometimes fabricated just to discourage people from undergoing traditional initiation schools. The fact is that traditional initiation school operations being practiced by unqualified surgeons or healers is the main cause of death of this traditional rite of passage into adulthood. Western thought must not be taken into consideration in terms of traditional initiation school versus science because science is scientific the traditional initiation school is a culture of Batswana's way of life. The huts of initiates near villages or roads must be eliminated and be moved a good distance away from villages to avoid exposure, taking of pictures, visits of initiates to the village and theft of cows, sheep, goats and chickens.

## 6.2. Conclusion

Introduction of science and technology has eliminated the Batswana's indigenous knowledge systems. The European countries or the former colonizers sent their missionaries to Africa to spread and instil Western beliefs and values into Africans. This is the reason why we have different religions, beliefs, values in Africa. Traditional initiation schools have been practiced for centuries by the Tswana tribe and the practice is growing despite increasing numbers of deaths of initiates. It is true that the initiation school is degenerating because of Western thought and the fact that it needs to change and adapt to hospital circumcision and to discontinue traditional initiation schools.

Batswana culture of traditional initiation schools is to be guided by the Bill that has been drafted by the committee under supervision of Department of Arts & Culture and the House of Traditional Affairs in the province. The young people should be taught the necessity of undergoing the traditional initiation schools. It must be obligatory for all the Batswana to attend traditional initiation school and there must be teachers who are responsible for cultural importance as an awareness of the tradition. There must be adherence to culture and respect for one's of culture. The increasing number of Western churches must not criticize initiation schools in order to avoid Western influence on African churches whereby people leave their own church and join Western ones. Initiates must be taught thoroughly that what they are taught in traditional initiation schools must not give them a chance or opportunity to disrespect parents, elders and members of the community. People who are running initiation schools illegally without proper documentation or knowledge, must be arrested and spend a few years in prison. People are losing their lives because of uninformed teachers and lack of experience in conducting these schools.

### **6.3. Recommendations**

South Africa has ratified a number of international treaties aimed at protecting children against harmful cultural practices. These include United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

As such it has been argued by human rights groups that virginity testing, as well as male circumcisions carried out in South Africa has the potential to violate a number of provisions contained in international instruments aimed at protecting the dignity of children. Despite the potential risk involved to children in both practices, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 allows both virginity testing and male circumcision under certain condition as set out in the Act. The provisions aimed at protecting children from harmful cultural practices in the Children's Act, but do not offer children adequate protection against abuse and maltreatment.

Virginity testing as proposed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child should continue. If this is not possible, it is recommended that alternative non-invasive methods be utilized. In the case of male circumcision, recommendations will centre on legislative reforms in order to improve the conditions in which the practice is carried out making it much safer and more hygienic for male circumcision. The provisions in the Bill relating to male circumcision are contained in section 12 (8-10). Circumcision performed under the age of 16 is prohibited, except when circumcision is performed for religious purposes in accordance with practices of the religion concerned and in the manner prescribed, or when circumcision is performed for medical reasons on the recommendation of a medical practitioner. Circumcision of male children older than 16 may only be performed when or if the child has given consent to

the circumcision in the prescribed manner, after proper counselling of the child and in the manner prescribed (Le Roux 2006:63).

#### **6.4. Directions for Future Research**

For future research, the use of the triangulation method by using interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary sources can be utilized so that it can cover all the necessary characteristics of initiation schools. The use of observation is also encouraged. The observations of community initiation ceremonies must not be overlooked; for instance, when the traditional initiates arrive from the Initiation Mountains the ceremonies that are performed before the arrival of initiates from initiation schools, are important and relevant. A case study method could form part of the methodology to investigate a case or small number of cases. Qualitative methods of study should be used to capture the rate of increasing number of deaths, number of initiates per year and month.

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## APPENDIX

1. Certificate of Correction
2. Solemnly Declaration
3. Questionnaires

Focus groups interview conducted with traditional court council of the  
Barong boo Rashidi- Barolong village, North West University students  
and members of the community of Barolong boo Ratshidi (Mafikeng)

Questionnaires

1. What is a traditional initiation school?.....  
.....
2. Where are traditional initiation ceremonies performed?.....  
.....
3. Why is it necessary for boys and girls to undergo traditional initiation  
processes?.....  
.....
4. In which tribe or ethic group are initiation ceremonies more prevalent?  
.....
5. Which gender dominates in terms of undergoing traditional initiation  
School?.....
6. Who permits children to undergo traditional initiation school?.....  
.....
7. What causes deaths of initiates at the traditional schools?  
.....
8. What is it that the government is currently planning to do in order to  
contain deaths of initiates at traditional initiation schools?.....  
.....  
.....

9. In which seasons do the traditional initiation schools is take place?

.....

10. How long do the initiates stay at initiation school camp or bush before coming back home?.....

11. What kind of activities and practices are performed at the traditional initiation schools?.....

12. Why are initiation school processes and procedures kept a secret?

.....

.....

13. What is taught at traditional initiation schools?

.....

.....

14. What is the influence of western Tradition to the African traditional initiation schools?

.....

15. Who heads the traditional initiation school in a village?

.....

.....

16. How have western countries and colonization influenced initiation practices?

.....

.....

.....





9. In which seasons do the traditional initiation schools is take place?

.....

10. How long do the initiates stay at initiation school camp or bush before coming back home?.....

11. What kind of activities and practices are performed at the traditional initiation schools?.....

12. Why are initiation school processes and procedures kept a secret?

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13. What is taught at traditional initiation schools?

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14. What is the influence of western Tradition to the African traditional initiation schools?

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15. Who heads the traditional initiation school in a village?

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16. How have western countries and colonization influenced initiation practices?

.....

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.....

17. Do you think that western countries and colonization have contributed to the demise of traditional Tswana culture? Yes /No if yes elaborate.....

.....  
.....

18. Why do you think boys who are initiated in mountains disrespect those that are circumcised at hospitals?

.....  
.....

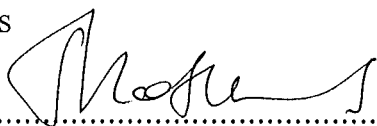
19. What kind of behaviour is expected of one who has been traditionally initiated?

.....  
.....

20. What are your recommendations on how to maintain and sustain Tswana culture, particularly initiation practices?

.....  
.....

Thanks



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