Chapter 3

Culture and cultural practices

1.   Introduction

In order to obtain the goal of the study namely to establish the influence of cultural practices of the Batswana on the transmission of HIV/AIDS in Botswana it is important to make first of all an in-depth study of culture and cultural practices in general.

This chapter will focus on understanding what culture is all about. It will also help us understand the difference between cultural practices and culture. The different aspects of culture and the importance of culture will also be explored.

Hobbes (in Cuff and Payne, 1981:26) suggests that men coming together and agreeing or making a contract to live side-by-side in peace rather than continuing fighting one another formed societies.

Durkheim (in Cuff and Payne, 1981: 26) argues that for men to come together, at all to make a contract, they must already have some common agreement on the value of such a contract and some agreement to be bound by the unwritten rules of a contractual situation. This prior agreement for Durkheim represents a framework of order, which is the essence of society. If men could make a contract with each other, that means they were already members of a society because they held certain values in common. Consequently, it is their common roles, practices, expectations and beliefs that bind them together. Men are bound together by common values, based on shared and common experiences.

Hoogevelt (1980:24-25) believes that societal identity is always grounded in common cultural orientations shared by the members. The community defines who are we and who are they and the cultural system says why this is so. He further stated that cultural systems are basically sets of interrelated answers to fundamental questions about the human condition. Who am I? Where was I before I was born? Where am I going after death? What is real, what is unreal? What is true, what is false? (Hoogevelt, 1980:30-31)

2. <u>Conceptualization of the concept culture</u>

Culture is that complex phenomena which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society (Compare Seymour-Smith, 1990:65; Nxumalo, 1998; Giddens, 1990: 31; Pai, 1990 in Goodnow, et al., 1995; Kavanagh & Kennedy, 1992:11.)

Culture is a historically created system of meaning and significance or, what comes to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life (Parekh, 2002:143).

Belief systems are conceptual frameworks and explanations that groups and societies create to empower them to deal with their experiences. Such framework includes religions, ideologies, science etc. An understanding of what is right and wrong is based on cultural beliefs, attitudes and knowledge's (Pai, 1990 in Goodnow, et al., 1995; Nxumalo, 1998).

Kwashi (2002:19) perceives culture as a complex whole, the way of life of people. He says that culture is the powerful influence behind the beliefs and practices that govern the daily behaviour and conduct of people. He further argues that culture is dynamic and differs from place to place and from people to people.

Culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group's knowledge stored up (in memories of men, in books and objects) for future use (McNall, 1973:49).

However, cultural differences involve patterned life ways, values, beliefs, ideals, and practices. Cultural and sub cultural differences are not limited to extreme contrasts in, for example, language, national origin, or political orientation, but often involve more subtle differences such as those between religious, class, age, or gender groups (Kavanagh & Kennedy, 1992:11).

According to Kwashi (2002:19) culture may be defined as custom and civilization of particular people or group; or the way of life of people; the beliefs, customs, institutions, arts and all the products of human work and thought created by people or group at a particular time.
Kroeber (1952) as quoted by Moore (1997:73) believed that customs and beliefs existed independently of the individuals who held such beliefs. He continues to say that culture is transmitted by human interactions, 'not by the genetic mechanism of heredity.

Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) and Williams (1986) argue that culture also includes behavioural norms; dress, food and eating related matters as well as appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Giddens (1989:31) supports Pai's views of culture and adds that culture includes how to dress, marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits. It covers also the goods people create and which become meaningful for them – bows and arrows, factories and machines, books etc. Culture refers to habits, customs and

materials people produce.   Society refers to the system of interrelationship, which connect together the individuals who share a common culture.

Mcgurk (1990) also perceives culture as a process that is goal oriented and in its final analysis is morally driven. His view is that culture also determines what foods a person will like, whether he will think something is beautiful or ugly, what gods he will worship, and what he sees in the world.

Every culture develops over time and, since it has no coordinating authority, it remains a complex and unsystematized whole (Parketh, 2002:144).

Kluckhohn (in McNall 1973:45), Nxumalo (1998), Giddens (1990:31) and Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) argue that the societal legacy the individual acquires from his/her group or culture can be regarded as that part of the environment that is the creation of man.

To the anthropologist, however, to be human is to be cultured. The past experience of other men in the form of culture enters into almost every event. Each specific culture constitutes a kind of blueprint for all of life's activities (McNall, 1973:46). He elaborates on this by saying that any cultural practice must be functional or it will disappear before long.   That is, it must somehow contribute to the survival of the society or to the adjustment of the individual. Every culture is precipitate of history. Each culture embraces those aspects of the past, which, usually in altered form and with altered meanings, live on in the present.

Culture is the total behaviour pattern of the group, conditioned in part by the physical environment, both natural and manmade, but primarily by the ideas, attitudes, values and habits that have been developed by the group to meet its needs (Brown, 1957:80; McNall, 1973:45).

It widely agreed that any culture is a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men. However, culture creates problems as well as solves them (McNall, 1973:49).

Seymour-Smith (1990:65), Kavanagh and Kennedy (1992: 11) and Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) add that culture include material artifacts produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to another.

Nxumalo (1998), Gillin and Gillin (1965:127) and Giddens (1990: 31) on the other hand explain that material culture relates to physical objects used within a culture. For example, artwork, tools and technology.

Williams (1986) and Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) further mention that the important elements of culture include verbal and nonverbal communication and linguistic styles.

Like Nxumalo (1998), Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) postulates that belief systems and knowledge include language, which is seen as an organizing framework for ideas and communication. They say that language can determine or limit understandings. Culture is articulated at several levels. At the most basic level it is reflected in the language shared with some cultural features in common. Culture of a society is also embodied in its proverbs, maxims, myths, rituals, symbols, collective memories, jokes, body language, and modes of non-linguistic communication, customs, traditions, institutions and manners of greeting. A slightly different level it is embodied in its arts, music, oral and written literature, moral life, ideals of excellence, exemplary individuals and the vision of the good life. Being concerned to structure and order human life, culture is also articulated in the rules and norms that govern such basic activities and social relations as how, where, when and whom one eats, associates and makes love, how one mourns and disposes of the dead, and treats one's parents, children, wife, neighbours and strangers (Parketh, 2002:143-144; Pai (1990) in Goodnow, et al., 1995; Nxumalo, 1998).

Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995), Seymour-Smith (1990:65), and Kavanagh and Kennedy (1992: 11) like Kluckhohn (in McNall, 1973:45), Moore (1997: 73), Nxumalo (1998), Williams (1986), McGurk (1990), Billington, Strawbridge, Greenside and Fitzsimon (1994:1-9) and Giddens (1990:31) believe that culture is a learned system of symbols with shared values, meanings, and behavioural norms.

Culture is learned behaviour, a set of techniques allowing the individual to adapt to the world around him. This learning takes place in a group that defines the appropriate way of responding to the patterns of nature (Kluckhohn in McNall, 1973:45; Williams, 1986; McGurk, 1990).

Culture extends to learning styles, family and kinship patterns, gender roles, how an individual is viewed and historical awareness of cultural community (Kavanagh & Kennedy, 1992:11).

By learning styles, Williams (1986) and Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow; et al. (1995) refers to the value of education cooperative and competitive approaches to learning. Family kinship patterns refer to who is related to whom, close and distant relations, familial expectations and obligations. Gender roles according to Pai (1990) as quoted by Goodnow, et al. (1995) refers to the roles the society expects males and females to perform. He also says that the historical awareness of a cultural community refers to the religious and spiritual beliefs and practices or differences in communication styles, which can indicate cultural identity.

According to McGurk (1990) culture is a single universe of discourse uniting all people within the single context determined by geographical proximity, social interaction and economic relations.

When a community's culture changes or is abandoned in favour of another it remains the same community, now united in terms of another shared culture. Its cultural identity is different, but since its membership, historical continuity and so on are unaltered, and its communal or ethnic identity remains the same (Parekh, 2002:155).

Parekh further postulates that our culture is the one we live, which has members of our cultural community who share its beliefs and participate in its practices. Like all communities cultural communities are not and cannot be, just imagined communities, for imagination needs content, an experiential basis, constant reinforcement and social relevance (Parekh, 2002: 155).

Culture is important in the relationship between individuals and society. Every society has a set of individuals who share common ways of thinking and behaving and this is what is called common culture. Social structures are created to attain cultural goals. Therefore, individuals learn culture as the result of belonging to some particular group; and it constitutes that part of learned behaviour, which is shared with others. It is one of the important factors, which permits us to live together in an organised society, giving us ready-made solutions to our problems, helping us to predict the behaviour of others, and permitting others to know what to expect of us. Culture regulates our lives at every turn. From the moment we are born until we die, there is, whether we are conscious of it or not, constant pressure upon us to follow certain types of behaviour that other men have created for us (McNall, 1973:51).

Nxumalo (1998) adds that group identity is identified through collective experience and shared culture including common language, dress, beliefs, behaviour patterns and regulations as well as shared music and dances. Group identity is developed through the following mechanisms – language, including use of slang to distinguish members of a group from outsiders or newcomers.

Giddens (1990:32) argues that no culture could exist without a society. But equally no society could exist without culture. He further states that society refers to the system of interrelationships, which connects together the individuals who share a common culture. He argues that without culture, we would not be human at all in the sense in which we usually understand that term. We would have no language in which to express ourselves, no sense of self-consciousness, and our ability to think or reason would be severely limited (Giddens, 1989:31 - 32).

Just as a body of people sharing a common language, religion and structure of civil authority constitute respectively a linguistic, religious and political community; a body of people united in terms of a shared culture constitutes a cultural community. Cultural communities are of several kinds. Some also share a religion, especially when their culture is religiously derived. Some share common ethnicity. Indeed, since every culture is bearer, all cultures tend to have an ethnic basis. However, the two can part company. An ethnic community might lose its traditional culture, as when it migrates or abandons that culture in favour of another. And a culture might lose its ethnic rooted ness, as when it is freely adopted by or imposed on outsiders (Parekh, 2002:154).

Parekh (2002:154) also points out that a cultural community has two dimensions, cultural and communal. It has content in the form of a particular culture, and a communal basis in the form of a group of men and women who share that culture. Although the two are closely related, they are distinct enough to be separated in thought and practice. One might retain one's culture but lose or several ties with one's cultural community; for example, immigrants or those who cherish their culture but leave their community because they find it oppressive or otherwise uncongenial.

The beliefs and practices of a culture are closely related; they are also autonomous and subject to their own distinct logics. The two differ in at least four important respects. Beliefs are

necessarily general, even vague and amendable to different interpretations, whereas practices, which are means to regulate human conduct and social relations, are fairly determinate and concrete. Secondly, while beliefs are not easy to discover and enforce, conformity to practices is easily ascertainable and enforceable. Thirdly, beliefs primarily pertain to the realm of thought and practices to that of conduct. Beliefs are therefore more likely to be influenced by new ideas and knowledge, practices by new social situations and experiences. Fourthly, coherence among beliefs is a matter of intellectual consistency and is different in nature from that among practices where it is basically a matter of practical compatibility. Based on these and other differences, beliefs and practices, although internally related and subject to mutual influences, are also subject to their own characteristic constraints and patterns of change. A society's beliefs might change but its practices might not keep pace and visa versa because either can change at an unusually rapid pace. It might become unduly conservative about the other to retain its sense of continuity or stability (Parketh, 2002:145).

From the above discussion, we learned that culture is learned and transmitted from one generation to the other. It refers to the way of living and the way people adapt to their living environment. Culture also brings people or individuals in a society or community together. Through norms and values, it regulates our lives. The discussion above makes it evident that culture is dynamic. The following section will therefore focus on the functions of culture.

3. Characteristics of culture

3.1. Cultural universals

Cuff and Payne (1981:26) argued that all human association gives rise to expectations of patterns of conduct. As a person associates or develops relationships with others, he/she tends to develop common ways of perceiving, evaluating, feeling and acting. These new patterns of values, perceptions and action then give rise to expectations and constraints on how person should behave. Thus persons associate with each other, so there emerges a collective consciousness, which in turn constrains them and obliges them to behave in particular ways. It is also quite common for people to talk of moral pressures coming from society. People speak of activities which society does not allow and also about the society having to protect itself against those who break its rules, and of wrong doers having to pay their debt to society.

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Contained in these observations and ideas is the notion that society somehow exist over and above us. It was this notion, which Durkheim a social theorist appeared to be drawing on when he suggested that a society was a moral reality and moral entity. Durkheim's view is that this moral reality included the collective values, the order of priorities on which the members of the society are agreed. He made the assumption that for any group of people to live together co-operatively, they might have some basic common agreements on what their priorities are as a group and on how they ought to behave to each other and arrange their relationships (Cuff & Payne, 1981:26).

There are common features in the diversity of human cultural behaviour. When these features are found in all or virtually all societies, they are called cultural universals (Oswalt, 1972; Friedl, 1981 in Giddens, 1990:39). For example, there is no known culture without a grammatically complex language. All cultures have some recognizable form of family system, in which there are values and norms associated with the care of children. The institution of marriage is a cultural universal, as are religious rituals and property rights. All cultures also have some form of incest prohibition. For example, the banning of sexual relations between close relatives, such as father and daughter or mother and son, or brother and sister.

According to Brown (1957: 61-62), Popenoe, Cunningham & Boult (1998:36) and Giddens (1990:39) divergent cultures reveal many elements common, which are, called cultural universals and they include:

- A means of communication commonly understood by all, including verbal expression, facial and other gestures, and art forms. More advance cultures have added written symbols.
- Well-defined and often vigorously enforced familial relationships, including that between the sexes both prior to and after marriage.
- A form of organizational structure, which governs interpersonal relationships both as to behaviour and in ration to property.
- Some form of religious expression that acknowledges the individual's relationship to a power beyond himself and recently prescribes the means of communication with such being or beings.
- Division of labour to maintain a productive economy sufficient for self-preservation.

- A folkmore of historical tradition relating to origin that includes songs and sagas of its heroes and is reflected in the judgements and values of the group.

- A degree of consciousness of and pride in belonging to the group. This feeling of belonging, which is one aspect of ethnocentrism, is perhaps the most important element of all cultures for it is the basis for continuity of the cultural pattern, and it resists the inroads of other cultures. Identical processes of social interaction are found in every society although the social climate in which they operate may be quite different.

- Cultural universals may include cooking, feasting, folklore, funeral rites, music and laws. Marriage and family are also important cultural universals (Popenoe, et al., 1998:36; Giddens, 1990:39; Popenoe, 1987:64).

- Culture similarities exists in terms of basic values and social processes, however there are distinct culture contrasts in the forms of their expression in the behaviour, in the institutions, and in the cultural artifacts of each group (Brown, 1957: 61-62;Popenoe, et al., 1998:36; Giddens, 1990:39; Popenoe, 1986:64).

A cultural homogeneous society has its own strengths. It facilitates a sense of community and solidarity, makes interpersonal communication easier, sustains a thick culture, is held together with relative ease, is psychologically and politically economical, and can count on and easily mobilize its members loyalties. It also, however, has a tendency to become closed, intolerant, averse to change, claustrophobic and oppressive, and to discourage differences, dissent and what Parekh (2002:170 called experiments living. Since it has limited resources for internal resistance, it can be as easily mobilized for evil as for good purposes (Parekh, 2002:170).

Like any other society, a multicultural society needs a broadly shared culture to sustain it. Since it involves several cultures, the shared culture can only grow out of their interaction and should both respect and nurture their diversity and unite them around a common way of life (Parekh, 2002:219).

McNall (1973:47- 48) and Popenoe, et al. (1998:36) say that the very fact that certain of the same institutions are found in all known societies indicates that at the bottom all human beings and cultural concepts are very much alike.

3.2. <u>Cultural diversity</u>

There are factors that help shape a culture, which include climate, geography, plant and animal life. Physical conditions are not as important as social factors. For example the society's level of technology, its language, its prevailing beliefs and the extent of its contact with other cultures. However, both physical and social factors shape culture and give rise to different values and norms of behaviour that vary from culture to culture (Giddens, 1990:37; Popenoe, et al., 1998:35-36).

According to Giddens (1990:37-39) the diversity of human culture is remarkable. Values and norms of behaviour vary widely from culture to culture. For example, in the modern West the deliberate killing of infants or young children is regarded as one of the worst of all crimes. Yet in traditional Chinese culture, female children were frequently strangled at birth, because they were regarded as a liability rather than an asset to the family. Westerners regard kissing as a normal part of sexual behaviour but in many other cultures the practice is either unknown or regarded as disgusting. All these different traits of behaviour are aspects of broad cultural differences, which distinguish societies from one another.   Industrialized societies are themselves culturally diverse involving numerous different sub-cultures. In modern cities, for example, there are many sub-cultural communities living side by side (Giddens, 1990:37-39; Popenoe, et al. 1998:35; Popenoe, 1986:63).

Cordeiro, et al. (1994) and Popenoe, et al. (1998:210) postulate that the mere presence of cultural diversity in a society inevitably means that there will be pressures for both cultural maintenance and cultural assimilation.

Culture and cultural difference can play a critical role in social cohesion. Verbal and non-verbal communication depends upon words, signs and meanings specific to each cultural or linguistic group or sub group. A failure to recognize differences within these meanings, notable when dealing with persons from diverse cultures, can result in failure of understanding and break down in communication.

Some writers argue that since human beings are culturally embedded, they have a right to their culture. Cultural diversity is inescapable and a legitimate outcome of the exercise of that right. Cultural diversity is also an important constituent and condition of human freedom. Unless

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human beings are able to step out of their culture, they remain imprisoned within it and tend to absolutize it, imagining it to be the only natural or self-evident way to understand and organize human life. They cannot step out of their culture unless they have access to others (Parekh, 2002:166-167).

Parekh (2002:166-167) further stated that the diversity of culture also alerts us to that within our own. Being used to seeing differences between cultures, makes people tend to look for the differences within our own and learn to do them justice. We appreciate that our culture is a product of different influences. It contains different strands of thought, and is open to different interpretations.

Parekh (2002:166-167) adds that cultural diversity creates a climate in which different cultures can engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue. Different artistic, literary, musical, moral and other traditions interrogate, challenge and probe each other, borrow and experiment with each others' ideas, and often throw up wholly new ideas and sensibilities that none of them could have generated on their own (Parekh, 2002:168).

Although Nxumalo (1998) says that every cultural group defines certain appropriate patterns of behaviour for interaction between people. Differences in cultural traditions and styles can cause confusion and hostile behaviour amongst individuals and groups. Both the form and the content of communication reflect and reinforce power relationships between people and groups.
Every culture contains its own unique patterns of behaviour, which seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds. We cannot understand these practices and beliefs separately from the wider terms of its own meanings and values. Sociologists endeavour as far as possible to avoid ethnocentrism, which is judging other cultures by comparison with one's own. Since human cultures vary so widely it is not surprising that people coming from one culture frequently find it difficult to sympathise with the ideas or behaviour of those from a different culture (Giddens, 1989:394)

4. __Functions of culture__

There are various functions of culture. Some functions are general and some are specific to the individual and some to groups.

According to Gillin and Gillin (1965:135 -138), Hobbel and Frost (1976:30) and Giddens (1990:38) it is the possessions of a common culture, which gives the members of a society a feeling of unity with the group and enables them to live and work together without too much confusion and mutual interference. Human society without these common modes of life is unknown.

The following are functions of culture for groups of people or group life according to Gillin and Gillin (1965:138), Hoebel and Frost (1976:29) and Popenoe (1986:54-55):

- It provides a series of patterns whereby the biological demands (primary drives) of the group members can be met for sustenance, shelter and reproduction and the group itself is thereby maintained.
- It provides a set of rules to insure cooperation of the individual members of a group in adjusting to the environmental situation.   The group is thus able to act in certain situations as a unit.
- The culture provides channels of interaction for the individuals within the group, thus preserving certain minimum of unity and preventing the group from being torn apart by conflicts.
- It creates acquired drives or needs and provides for aesthetic, moral, and religious interests. The culture thus provides methods of adjustments of the group to its external and internal needs.

For example, in multicultural societies dress often becomes a site of the most heated and intransigent struggles. As a condensed and visible symbol of cultural identity it matters much to the individuals involved, but also for that very reason it arouses all manner of conscious and unconscious fears and resentments within wider society. It would not be too rash to suggest that acceptance of the diversity of dress in a multicultural society is a good indicator of whether or not the latter is at ease with itself (Parekh, 2002:243).

Elliot (1962: 35) as quoted by Billington, et al. (1994:10) and Hoebel and Frost (1976:29) continue to argue that in a healthy society this maintenance of a particular level of culture is to the benefit, not merely of the class, which maintains it, but of the society as a whole.

From an individual point of view, culture provides a large number of ready-made adjustments, which the individual only has to learn. The individual is provided with a whole series of problems already solved. For example, what kind of food to seek; how to protect himself from the weather; and how to get along with other people. The person is thus spared the time and energy, which would be required for analysis and solution of many problems vitally concerned with his very survival.

Culture also provides a series of familiar stimuli to the individual to which he has only to respond in a familiar way. The majority of expectable life situations are already analysed and interpreted in the culture, and through constant reinforcement, the individual respond to them automatically. In addition to supplying patterns of response and artificial stimuli, the culture also provided traditional and therefore familiar interpretations for many situations on the basis of which the individual may determine the precise form of his own behaviour (Gillin & Gillin, 1965: 136-137; Hoebel & Frost, 1976:33 & Giddens, 1990:31).

According to Tepperman and Curtis (1993: 25-26) culture helps to explain how individuals and groups fit together. Culture takes in all the shared ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterize a group of society and distinguish it from another. Culture is uniquely human, learned, not genetically programmed and transmitted by 'socialisation' about which we say more in the next section.

Tepperman and Curtis (1993:27) argue that shared ways of thinking and acting arise naturally out of daily experience. They are not the result of efforts by a ruling class to protect its own interests. Cultural patterns arise and persist because they actually help people make sense of their everyday lives. Culture does not only reflect economic relations, it also shapes them. According to Nxumalo (1998), behaviour patterns usually enable individuals within a community to deal with each other effectively. These forms of behaviour soon translate into the following categories:

> (i). Norms of behaviour, which are, accepted forms of behaviour of any given group. Norms may change dramatically depending on changing circumstances or specific situations and may vary widely between cultures.
>
> (ii). Customs and traditions -These are learned responses to specific situations developed by neither group nor society. These responses vary from ways of greeting people to

dances and dress. Customs also refer primarily to practices that have been often repeated by a multitude of generations, practices that tend to be followed simply because they have been followed in the past (Davis, 1960:59; Hoebel & Frost, 1976: 24; Webster, 1991:49-52 and Popenoe, et al., 1998:112).

(iii). Laws and regulations –These are mechanisms for determining behaviour within a group. They include both codified and non-codified laws. The effectiveness of a regulation depends on its interaction with existing aspects of culture (i.e. the material culture, beliefs and knowledge, behaviour and customs). According to the Popenoe (1986:59) and Giddens (1990: 121) laws are norms usually mores that have been enacted by the state to regulate human conduct. It is possible for an action to be illegal but at the same time acceptable when judged by certain informal social norms.

There seems to be a lot of benefits from adhering to culture of a group that an individual belongs to. The above sections focussed on functions and definitions of culture. It seems that every single group of people or society or community are guided by their own culture. It is also mentioned that there is no society without culture or culture without society. A lot has also been said about culture being learned. In the next section, we will discuss socialization as a phenomenon in culture.

5. <u>Socialization as a phenomenon in culture</u>

Parsons (in Cuff and Payne, 1981:39-40) emphasizes the acquisition of values and the plasticity and sensitivity of the newborn member of society, whose dependency involves deep emotional attachments. The child is seen as an empty vessel, which has to be filled with a culture, with orientations to values and with expectations about roles. In this way, culture of the society is passed on to new members. The society is therefore internalized in the new generation and it shapes and gives identities to the young. Parsons assumes that individuals are natural seekers after gratification and approval. They are eager to learn and to conform to the values, norms and expectations of society.

However, the transmission of group understanding from generation to generation is interpretative as well as a selective process (Mannheim, 1979: 83). Each act of transmission interprets, and selects certain elements from past experience. One cannot properly visualise this interpretative process without the concurrent social selection, which takes place when a

new generation accepts or modifies the accumulation of the old. The transmission of thoughts is basically a phase in the succession of generations. It is the analysis of this succession, which illuminates the continuity, or discontinuity of thought (Mannheim, 1979: 83).

Giddens (1990: 76) refers to groups or social contexts within which significant processes of socialization occur as agencies of socialization. He says that in all cultures, the family is the main socializing agency of the child during infancy. At later stages of an individual's life, many other socializing agencies come into play. Since family systems vary widely, the range of contacts which the infant experiences is by no means standard across cultures.

In modern societies, most early socialisation occurs within a small-scale of a family context. Varying patterns of child rearing and discipline, together with contrasting values and expectations, are found in different sectors of large-scale societies. It is easy to understand the influence of different types of family background if we think of what life is like, say, for a child growing up in a poor black family living in a run-down city neighbourhood, compared to one born into an affluent white family in a white suburb. Many sociological studies have been carried out allowing us to detail these differences more precisely (Giddens, 1989:77).

According to Glaser and Niringiye (2002:23) a family can be a family put together by culture or family put together by religion.

Giddens (1990:384-385) states that a family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children. He says that in virtually all societies we can identify what sociologists and anthropologies have come to call the nuclear family which consists of two adults living together in a household with their own or adopted children.

Kwashi (2002:19) adds that a family comes into being when a man and a woman agree to live together and have children. A family is also a group of people living for one another and living together with one another. For example, a child who comes to live with you comes to be a member of the family. Dictionary definitions according to Kwashi, explain that a family include any group of people related by blood or marriage; and parents and their children, a person's children, a set of relatives. All the descendants of a common ancestor, their line of descendants.

Elliot's (1994:4-8), Popenoe's (1986:361), and Giddens' (1990:385-386) views of the family in modern societies is that a family denotes a unit consisting of a husband and wife, and their children. This unit is widely thought of as a group based on marriage and biological parenthood, as sharing a common residence and as united by ties of affection, obligations of care and support and sense of a common identity. The term 'nuclear family' is used to refer to a unit consisting of spouses and their dependent children. The conjugal family may be compared with the 'extended family', a term used to denote any grouping, related by descent, marriage or adoption that is broader than the nuclear family. Functionalism emphasizes the importance of the nuclear family to the stability and continuity of society and so meshes with traditional family values (Bell & Vogel, 1968:3 in Elliot, 1994:8; Popenoe, 1986:302; Popenoe, et al., 1998:274-275).

Institution on the other hand refers to a group of human individuals serving a common purpose on a semi-permanent basis. It means that subdivision of society, which consists in human being in groups, established together with their customs, laws, and material tools, and organised around a central aim or purpose (Fiebleman, 1965:20-21). According to Popenoe (1986:82) an institution is as table cluster of social structures that is organised to meet the basic needs of societies. One basic need, for example, o is for socially approved ways of replacing members and training the very young. The institution known as the family does this. Popenoe (1986:82) further states that this institution consists of such specific social structures as family groups and family roles and statuses. Sexual behaviour is channeled to take place between husbands and wife, and off spring is cared for y by this pair. Husband and wife are expected to teach their children to behave in acceptable ways.

Leeds (1976) as quoted by Seymour-Smith (1990:153) points out that an institution is a form of standardized action or behaviour linked to a set of complex and interdependent norms and roles and applying to a large proportion of persons within a society or territory. More briefly an institution is an established social group working in customary ways with material tools on a common task. The institution is the social function in a steady state. It organizes folkways and usually laws into a unit, which serves a number of social functions. The family is an institution. We must look more closely to the two properties which we have said characterize institutions i.e. societies and culture.   A society is that social organization within a culture whose

boundaries are recognized. A feeling of community holds the society together. Culture is the work of man and their effects.

We may characterize the main social function of the family then as falling in for closely related divisions. For example, reproduction, maintenance, placement and socialization of the young (Davis, 1960:395; Hoebel & Frost, 1976:7 & 413-418; Popenoe, 1986:356).

When identity with a certain family gives one membership in a wider group, the process is called descent. All kin groups acquire their membership primarily in this way, one of the most prominent being the clan. Theoretically the clan is an organized body of kinsmen descended from the same ancestor, though actually many clans become so large that their common ancestor is either mythical or forgotten. The clan represents the expansion of the immediate family (Davis, 1960:407; Giddens, 1990:384).

Popenoe (1986:85) also states that the family is the most important unit in the society. Kinship is the basis of all organization. There maybe kinship groups larger than the family such as clans or tribes. The status of old people is directly connected to the place of tradition and kinship in a society. In societies in which the family is strong and religious beliefs are central, the status of the old is usually high. They are storehouses of family traditions and religious beliefs. Furthermore the needs of old people in such societies can be met within the family and community.

As the family has given up some of its former functions to outside specialized agencies, so it has become more specialized in its functions of socializing children and of providing a social environment in which adults can develop and maintain stable, well-balanced personalities (Cuff & Payne, 1981; 41).

According to Popenoe (1986: 134), Popenoe, et al. (1998:92-95) and Giddens (1990:76-78) children now spend almost as much time watching television as they do with their parents. Working families also leave their children in their day care centers. Agents of socialization such as schools, peer groups and the mass media overshadow families these days.

Another socializing agency is the peer group. Peer groups are friendship groups of children of a similar age. In some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalized as age-grades. Each generation has certain rights and responsibilities, which alter

as its members grow older (Giddens, 1990:77). Through the peer group culture is learned. Culture is passed from one generation to the other through the process of socialization.

Schools and the media are other examples of institutions or vehicles which culture can be passed from one generation to the other.

Schooling is a formal process of socialization. There is a definite curriculum of subjects studied. Yet schools are agencies of socialization in more subtle respects too. Along side the formal curriculum there is what some sociologists have called a hidden curriculum conditioning children's learning (Giddens, 1990:78). Children learn from their homes how to behave in the society. The learned behavior is shared with other children at school. Teachers also expect school children to behave in a certain way when they are in the classroom or at break times. How the children are expected to behave is influenced by how the teachers perceive as acceptable behaviour in the community or culture. In that way, the behaviours learned at school are reinforced at school or what the society expects from their members is maintained at school.

Mass media, for example, television, newspapers, periodicals and journals flourished in the West from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, but were confined to a fairly small leadership. The spread of mass media involving printed documents was soon accompanied by electronic communication (Giddens, 1990:79). Through television for example, children watch movies and news where people enact behaviours that are socially acceptable and behaviours that are unacceptable, are being criticised or people enacting the negative behaviours are seen been punished.

In some conditions, adult individuals may experience resocialization, marked by the disruption of previously accepted values and patterns of behaviour, followed by the adoption of radically different ones. One type of circumstance in which this may happen is when an individual enters a circular organisation – a mental hospital, prison, barracks, or other setting in which he or she is separated from the outside world and subjected to rigorous new disciplines and demands. In situations of extreme stress, the chances in outlook and personality involved may be quite dramatic (Giddens, 1989:80).

Other socializing agencies besides those mentioned, are groups or social contexts, in which individuals spend large parts of their lives. Work is in all cultures an important setting within which socialization processes operate although it is only in industrial societies that large number of people go out to work – that is, go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people till the land close to where they live, or have workshops in their dwellings (Giddens, 1990:79).

Kagan and Lamb (1990:152-153) suggest that learning standards is more often a consequence of identification with others, especially emotionally significant authority figures and friends, than it is the result of scaffolding or reward and punishment. Although this view is sympathetic to the role of culture, it holds that observers cannot literally "see" moral development in concrete social interactions because the child's identifications are abstract representations and internal constructs.   Morality is self-constructed through culture but not through casual public encounters.

The discussion above confirms that culture is indeed learned. It is through socialization that culture is learned and different institutions throughout life facilitate the process of socialization.

6. <u>Elements of culture</u>

According to Giddens (1990: 31) culture consists of the values the members of a given group hold and the norms they follow. Popenoe (1986: 52) and Williams (1988:27) add that culture is a system of values and meanings shared by a group. Culture, values and norms seem to be inseparable. The previous sections focussed on the conceptualisation of culture to give us a better understanding of the concept. Therefore the following sections will present and discuss norms and values, folkways and mores, language, religion, religion in Africa, traditions and marriage as elements of culture to get a broader picture of the concepts.

6.1. <u>Norms and values</u>

Williams (1986: 27) and Popenoe, et al. (1998: 31) state that the guidelines, used to direct our behaviour within our particular culture, are called norms. He points out that norms are concrete and specific and values are more general. Values are about what is right and wrong, good and

bad. Norms are part of the human society and highly internalised. For the individual growing up in a society, each norm is not necessarily an external rule, which they obey or try to evade, but simply part of himself automatically expressed in behaviour. Such internalized norms guide and determine his intuitive judgments of himself. They lead to the phenomena of conscience, guilt feelings, striving, elation and depression. They are more personal than habit, deeper than consciousness.

A norm is the average or modal behaviour of a given type that is manifested by a social group (Hoebel & Frost, 1976:25).

According to Popenoe, et al. (1998: 30-31) and Popenoe (1986: 57) norms are expectations of how people are supposed to act, think, or feel in specific situations. Norms can either be formal or informal. Formal norms have been written down or codified often in the form of laws and carry specific punishment for violators. Informal norms are not written down but are widely understood by the members of a society.

Most norms however are concerned with the behaviours expected of people occupying specific social positions and playing specific roles such as mother, man or employee (Davis, 1960:55; and Popenoe, et al., 1998: 137).

Values are usually emotionally charged and provide the basis of justification for a person's behaviour. For example an important value in African society would be respecting the elderly. Like symbols, values do not exist in isolation. They relate to one another to form a unified pattern. For example, the values of honesty and integrity reflect society's disapproval of crime. The values of a culture typically come in pairs, so that for every positive value there is a negative value. For every admired quality, there is a quality that is disapproved of. For example, someone who comes from a poor background and achieves financial success through hard work is admired. The person who wastes it all or avoids work is disapproved of (Popenoe, et al., 1998: 30-31; Popenoe, 1986: 57).

Davis (1960:55) and Popenoe, et al. (1998: 137) states that defining a sense of obligation implies the conception of norm. The individual in a given situation should follow certain behaviour. Unless he/she makes an effort to carry the required pattern, the condition that the norm requires will not come about. One can argue that all culturally transmitted behaviour

patterns carry a sense of obligation and are therefore normative. If an individual learns to speak a language there is an obligation to speak it correctly. If he lives among people who possess that language there is an obligation to use it rather than some other language. Most cultural transmissions impart to the learner a sense of obligation. The relations between social norms, the individual's selection from them, his conduct, and his feelings about his conduct are far from self-evident. Acting counter to one's own norms always leads to neurosis. Neurosis develops even more easily in persons who never violate the moral code they recognise as valid but repress and frustrate some strong instinctual motive.   A person, who succumbs to temptation, feels guilt, and then purges himself/herself of his guilt in some reliable way. For example by confession he/she may achieve in this way a better balance, and be less neurotic, than the person who never violates his norms and never feels conscious guilt (Davis 1960:55; and Popenoe, et al., 1998: 137).

Culture consists of the values the members of the given group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create. Values are abstract ideas, while norms are definite principles or rules which people are expected to observe. Norms represents the dos and don'ts of social life. Thus monogamy, being faithful to a single marriage partner is a prominent value in most western societies. In many other cultures a person is permitted to have several wives or husband simultaneously. Norms of behaviour in marriage include for example, how husbands and wives are supposed to behave towards their in-laws. In some societies a husband or wife is expected to develop a close relationship with parent's in-law in others they are expected to keep a clear distance from one another (Giddens, 1989:31).

Davis (1960: 55) further states that the norm is observed not simply because it is traditional, not simply because others around one observe it, but because it conforms to an abstract principle of justice, purity, fairness and truth. It is more self-conscious, abstract, and consistent than sheer custom.   It is therefore closer to the mores although it stresses the sentiment, rationalisation, and consistency behind the mores.

Internalization is the acceptance of the norms of a group or society as part of one's identity. Once a social norm has been internalised successfully, a person generally continues to obey it even when no one is watching. Everyone sometimes deviate from what the group or society expects of them. The process of internalisation is however never perfect. Internalisation is also one of the most effective means of socially controlling deviant behaviour. Although everyone at

times feel some deviant impulses, the internalisation of social norms tends to keep these impulses in check. For example, people may lie to their parents, teachers or friends but in most cases the internalized social norms lead to remorse and guilt. As a result, the deviant behaviour is likely to be abandoned (Popenoe, et al., 1998:138).

Parsons in Cuff and Payne (1981:39) sees a society in a state of equilibrium, as one in which there is no conflict. One in which everyone knows what is expected of him in any role and one in which these expectations are constantly being met. This is a condition of perfect equilibrium and as such in practice is never realised but is assumed to be a condition society is always striving to attain. The key process of attaining this theoretical state of equilibrium is socialisation and social control. Role players learn or are socialized into the expectations attached to the role and this process is backed up by positive sanctioning (reward) and negative sanctioning (punishment) of role performances, which do or do not meet these expectations.

In this regard Parsons (in Cuff and Payne,1981: 39), Williams (1986:31) and Popenoe, et al. (1998:134) state that deviants are seen as those who have been inadequately socialised. Those who are insufficiently committed to the values and norms of their society.

Deviance therefore is defined in terms of the dominant value system and is seen as a pathological state. At societal level, it can also be interpreted as a disturbance of the equilibrium of the social system, which requires the intervention of agencies of social control such as the police force, mental institution and the prison service (Cuff & Payne, 1981:40).

Patterns of culture pose an interesting conflict between the individual and culture. On the one hand culture is an expression of core values, which most people learn and absorb and on the other hand, there are individual personalities that lie outside the particular segment of the arc of possibilities that defines that culture. Therefore not only are cultural values relative, but the very definition of deviance as well (Moore, 1997:84).

Giddens (1990:117-121) also argues that our activities would collapse into chaos if we did not stick to rules which define some kinds of behaviour as appropriate in given contexts, and others as inappropriate. The norms we follow in our action give the social world its orderly and predictable character. People quite often deviate from the rules they are expected to follow. Since norms vary between different cultures and different sub-cultures within the same society,

what is normal in one cultural setting is deviant in another. Therefore Giddens (1990) defines deviance as a non- conformity to a given norm or a set of norms that are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society.

Giddens (1990:120) mentions that all social norms are accompanied by sanctions, which protect against non-conformity. A sanction is any reaction from others to the behaviour of an individual or group, which has the aim of ensuring that a given norm is complied with. He distinguishes between positive and negative sanctions. He says that sanctions may be positive (the offering of rewards for conformity) or negative (punishment for behaviour which does not conform). They can also be formal or informal. A formal sanction exists where there is a definite body of people or an agency whose task it is to ensure that a particular set of norms is followed. Informal sanctions are less organized, and more spontaneous, reactions to non-conformity. The main types of formal sanction in modern societies are those involved in the system of punishment represented by the courts and involved in the system of punishment represented by the courts and prisons. Fines, imprisonment or execution are all types of formal negative sanctions. Formal positive sanctions are found in many other areas of social life. However the presentation of medals for bravery in combat, degrees or diplomas to mark academic success, or awards for performances of sports events. Informal sanctions positive and negative are commonplace features of all context of social activity. Those of a positive type include: saying well done to someone or giving a person an appreciative smile or a pat on the back. Examples of negative informal sanctions are speaking insultingly to, scolding, or physically shunning a given individual.

It seems apparent from the above discussions that positive reinforcement alone cannot maintain a complex social system. Taboo and negative sanctions oppose the desire for immediate gratification of the members of any society and seem to be, therefore a requirement for social living. It also seems that simple punishment for wrongdoing does not create enduring enough inhibitions for the maintenance of social order. Another method that might be used by a society to prevent the extinction of inhibition is that of continuous negative reinforcement (Chasdi, 1994:175).

For example in the case of adultery, Cohen (1992:133) points out that although the law provided that the husband, or the appropriate magistrates, could put to death the adulterer taken in the act, some aggrieved spouses were perceived as responding with silence, extortion,

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or complicity. Social norms of honour and shame linked the women's sexual modesty to the honour of her husband and other male relatives, some women were thought to buy the favours of young men, and some men to acquiesce in the financial advantage they might gain from their wives' infidelity.

Cohen (1992:133) further states that such rules represent but one facet of social control in face-to-face societies. They influence, but do not determine, the social practices through which they may reflect the norms of ethical and legal ideals; they may vary widely from other normative expectations, which play a central role in patterns of social conduct. In the case of adultery, then, one must investigate the dynamic interrelation of these normative structures and social practices within the larger social context. At the level of sexual role behaviour, the man who adopts a submissive, passive role is unmanly, women-like, and he therefore dishonours and shames himself. He will experience no pleasure in the act, and hence must be providing services with his body for gain, an act, which dishonours and shames him. Placing him in a submissive role, which is against nature (Cohen, 1992: 189-190).

A somewhat different mechanism of social control found in many societies consists of the belief that dogs, ghosts, and spirits are concerned with moral behaviour of the living and will punish them for wrongdoing. Beliefs in supernatural sanctions of this kind are so familiar to us in the Western World that there is no need not illustrate them. The sin of transgression against the rules of the gods and the belief that retribution will follow either here or in the afterlife is widespread throughout the world and clearly operates to maintain conformity to social rules in many societies (Chasdi, 1994:181).

Another mechanism of social control to be considered is the superego or conscience. It has been a subject of considerable interest in recent years, particularly as it relates to the process of identification. Most research in this field rests on the assumption that internalised moral values are a consequence of identification with the parents, and that guilt, remorse, or the readiness to accept blame is a measurable consequence of the degree of parental identification (Chasdi, 1994:187).

However, according to Fraser (1986:88-89) the problem of moral behaviour is a complex one. It is possible to make a distinction between the contents of moral judgments and the process of arriving at such judgements, which has a strong cognitive component. While there can be no

argument about cultural diversity of content, certain basic principles may well have a biological as well as social basis, being essential to the survival of any human group. For instance, no culture is known where there is freedom to kill, maim, or steal from anybody one dislikes.

A person can seem entirely normal while secretly engaging in acts of extreme deviance. Deviance does not just refer to individual behaviour, but concerns the activities of groups as well (Giddens, 1989:118-119).

The following section will focus on the behaviour patterns in communities and therefore discuss folkways and mores as elements of culture.

6.2. <u>Folkways and mores</u>

Seymour-Smith (1990:121) states that folkways is a term used to describe the customs and habits, or typical behaviour patterns, characteristic of a given community.

Brown (1957: 66), Sumner (in Gillin and Gillin, 1965: 134), Popenoe (1986:59) and Popenoe, et al. (1998:31) add that folkways are behaviour patterns of everyday life, which generally arise unconsciously in a group without planned or rational thought such as tipping the hat, calling on strangers, and shaking hands. The folkways are usually without moral significance. The meanings and values attached to them do not usually carry the idea that the folkways are of great or vital importance to the existence of the group. Folkways are one means by which the ethnocentrism or we-feeling of a group is maintained. They exercise significant influence in determining the behaviour of its individual members.

Folkways are sometimes referred to as folk or popular culture. The two terms refer to the beliefs and practices of ordinary men and women or to culture as it is actually lived, and high culture to the great creative achievements of the talented minds of society (Parekh, 2002:143).

Mores on the other hand are those customs and group routines, which are thought by the members of the society to be necessary to the group's continued existence. Institutions such as the church, state and family are organized patterns of folkways and mores and are often associated (Sumner in Gillin & Gillin, 1965:134; Popenoe, 1986: 59; Popenoe, et al., 1998:31).

Seymour-Smith (1990:199-200) considers mores as the moral norms of human group or society. He says that the domain of norms which relate to the behaviour of persons and which are characterized in that they are justified not in terms of their practical consequences but rather in terms of their intrinsic goodness or badness. Moral values or attitudes are thus those connected with the control which is exercised by social groups over the behaviour of their members, a control internalized by the individual and a part of his or her own set of values, to which emotional importance is attached.

The mores thus prescribe organisational structure and relationships, which a given society regards as essential to its stability at a given time and place.   These mores – and accompanying folkways – are so inclusive that an adult member of society finds himself equipped to handle most problems involving social relationships in their terms rather than through reference to more objective procedures. Mores are both positive and negative; that is, they both prescribe certain types of behaviour and prohibit others. The latter are termed taboo that is a prohibition whose infringement results in an automatic penalty, frequently resting on some magical or religious sanction (Brown, 1957:68; Popenoe, 1986:59; and Popenoe, et al., 1998:32).

Krober (in Moore, 1997:73) argued that culture 'embodies values, which may be formulated (overtly as mores) or felt (implicitly, as in folkways) by the society carrying the culture, and it is part of the business.

Whereas each folkway is not considered tremendously important and is not supported by an extremely strong sanction, mores on the other hand are believed to be essential for social welfare and is consequently more strongly sanctioned.   There is a greater feeling of horror about violating mores and a greater unwillingness to see it violated. Presumably, therefore the mores relate to the fundamental needs of society more directly than do the folkways (Davis, 1960:59; Popenoe, 1986:59; and Popenoe, et al., 1998:32).

Folkways and mores are basic patterns of behaviour that form a vital part of the cultural heritage of each individual. They are a conservative influence but are subject to change. They are past on informally and in the early stages of the child development, are accepted without even an awareness of their existence in modern heterogeneous.   The individuals are

continually forced to choose among the different folkways and mores of the groups with which he identifies himself (Brown, 1957:68-69; Popenoe, 1986:59; and Popenoe, et al., 1998:32).

6.3. <u>Language</u>

Language is one of the most important set of symbols and elements of culture. Through language, the ideas, values and norms of a society find their complete expression. Language is flexible and precise to get across all complex subtleties that humans can understand (Popenoe, 1986:56).

According to Popenoe, et al. (1998:28) language also reflects the culture and environment of its speakers.
Giddens (1990:40) points out that no one disputes that possession of language is one of the most distinctive of all human cultural attributes, shared by all cultures although many thousands of different languages are spoken in the world. Every competent adult human language speaker has a vocabulary of thousands of words and is able to combine them according to rules so complex that linguists spend their entire careers trying to find out what they are.

Language is also a term often used to refer to the unique verbal communication system employed by humans, and which is characterized, amongst other features by its highly specialized and independent development, its complexity of symbolic use and its arbitrary nature (Seymour-Smith, 1990:162).

Verbal communication is not the only aspect of language, non-verbal interactions are also present in language. Non- verbal communication involves numerous forms such as the exchange of information, meaning through facial expressions and gestures or movements of the body. Non-verbal communication is sometimes referred to as body language (Giddens, 1989:91-92).

Cordeiro, et al. (1994) added that language often plays a central role in ethnic and cultural identification. Even after an ethnic community has been largely assimilated into the dominant culture, certain terms and phrases are commonly retained as markers of ethnic identity.

Hoebel and Frost (1976: 368) say that language is a completed system of symbols and abstractions. Every language represents a finished product, a perfect system in the sense that each language is wholly adequate to all human situations. The ideas that a language can express are in some measure dependent on the interest and preoccupations of the society, which develops it.

Hoebel and Frost (1976: 377) continue to say that every language is in itself a cultural phenomenon. Language has nothing to do with biological inheritance. A language is spoken by a group of people solely because they were isolated from other populations and developed their own mode of speech.

In conclusion, language plays a very important role in socialisation. Socialization is the process through which people acquire personality and learn the ways of a society (Popenoe, 1986: 120). Language is a mode of transmitting culture through socialization.

6.4. <u>Religion</u>

Religion can be applied to many kinds of behaviour. According to Popenoe (1986:414) religion is a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is supernatural and sacred. Religion always involves a focus on some supernatural being, world or force.

Tylor (in Seymour-Smith, 1990:242) defines religion as the belief in spiritual beings. According to Kwashi (2002:19 & 21) religion is the belief in the existence of a super human controlling power, especially of God or Gods and usually expressed in worship. It is a controlling influence in a person's life.

Hoogevelt (1980:33-34) points out that the link between the world of ultimate reality and that of human empirical reality is completely severed with the appearance of the great historic religions of Islam, Buddism, Hinduism and Judaism. Common to these religions is the conception of a supernatural world that altogether transcends the human world. It is the domain of the sole creator of the universe, the one God who has neither court nor relatives nor whose virtues and attributes are infinitely beyond what is distinctive in the human realm. For the point of view of these religions, it not longer matters who a person is, elevated position in the social order he/she may have. For, in the eyes of the transcendent God, all men are equal and all men are in principle capable of salvation.

Giddens (1990:451) further writes that in the West, most people identify religion with Christianity. This is a belief in a supreme being who commands us to behave in moral fashion on this earth and promises an after-life to come. Certainly, religion cannot be defined as a whole in these terms. These beliefs, and many other aspects of Christianity, are absent from most of the world's other religions.

In order to overcome the pitfalls of culturally biased thinking about religion it is probably best to begin by saying what religion is not, considered in general terms.

According to Wilson, et al.(1972) as quoted by Giddens (1990:451) religion should not be identified with monotheism, which is a belief in one God. For example, Nietzsche's thesis of the death of God was strongly ethnocentric, relating only to Western religious ideas. Secondly, religion should not be identified with moral prescriptions controlling the behaviour of believers like the Commandments Moses was supposed to have received from God. The idea that the Gods are very interested in how we behave on this earth is alien to many religions. Thirdly, religion is not necessarily concerned with explaining how the world came to be as it is. Fourthly, religion cannot be identified with the supernatural, as intrinsically involving belief in a universe beyond the realm of the senses.

Giddens (1990:452) believes that all religions do seem to share the same characteristics. For Giddens, religions involve a set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence and are linked to ritual or ceremonials such as church services practised by a community of believers. Whether or not the beliefs in a religion involve Gods. There are virtually always beings or objects inspiring attitudes of awe or wonder. The rituals associated with religion are very diverse. Ritual acts may include praying, chanting, singing, eating certain kinds of food or refraining from doing so which can be fasting on certain days.

Durkheim (in Seymour-Smith, 1990:243) however viewed religion as a social creation, which expresses and reinforces social solidarity, so that religious beliefs are in sense metaphors for society itself, the sacred nature of social obligations and social cohesion.

Every major religion stands in intimate relation to the morality of the people who profess the religion. Certain of the moral tenets are explained as having a supernatural origin. The powers

of the other world are conceived as supporting and cherishing these principles being ready to punish their violation and to reward their observance. The salvation and blessedness are interpreted in terms of the individual's relation to other moral ideals. Religion therefore adds something to morality and strengthens it by connecting it with the world lying beyond the senses. It often happens that not all the moral rules are embodied in religion (Davis, 1960: 73-74; Popenoe, 1986:416-417; Popenoe, et al., 1998: 324).

According to Popenoe, et al. (1998: 324) religion strengthens the society's basic norms and values. Social norms are foundations of all social organizations. By giving norms and values enhanced moral meaning, by making some of them sacred, religion consoles people for sacrifices they must make when their personal wishes conflict with social requirements as in times of war. The role of religion in promoting social stability is especially evident within the institution of the family. The impact of religion on the family begins with the concept of marriage. By enforcing the norm of chastity and condemning swxual activity outside a lawful union, many religions promote the sanctity of marriage. People who attend religious services are usually more opposed to premarital sexual relations than those who do not attend services. Religion at times encourages the subordination of women to men and the ideal norm for women is submissive behaviour (Popenoe, et al. 1998: 324).

6.4.1. <u>Religion as a cultural element in Africa</u>

In the context of this study it is important to focus specifically on the role of religion as a cultural element in the African world.

The African world is primarily a religious one in which every object has religious significance and meaning. In this regard the following aspects, according to Onunwa (1994:250) are important. Firstly, man maintains the stability and harmony of the universe through the observance of rules that are codified and ratified, although in unwritten form. Religion offered satisfying and encouraging explanations to the mysteries of life. Whenever an unusual event took place, a religious explanation offered reassurance to curious but bewildered man. Secondly, man uses religion to predict when misfortune would befall him/her or fortune favors him/her. Thirdly, religion becomes a powerful instrument of control in society. Rebellious man is held in check by religious sanctions, ritual laws, and commandments. Apodictic principles establish norms by enshrining religious codes of behavior in the minds of members of primitive

societies. Religious rite is used to control not only man but also God and the spirit beings. When a man wants to curry favor and manipulate a deity to achieve his desire, he performs sacrificial rite

Kwashi (2002: 21) further postulates that religion in Africa shapes our understanding of the family and other social and cultural issues in various ways including the following:

- **Religious roles:** In a few cases men, women and children is seen as equal before God, but most religious traditions give the complete leadership in all matter of faith and worship to men. Religious roles are strictly for men; they are more exposed to the secrets of their religion. Only they can commune with the deity. The man therefore leads in prayer, scripture reading and any ritual performance. Sometimes when he is absent, the women and children are forced simply to wait for his return. The women and children are assigned only minor, supporting roles, such as providing the food and drink

- **Bread winning:** The man is expected to meet all the needs of the family including the provision of food, clothing, health and education expenses. If he fails in this, his leadership is threatened. If laziness is the cause, he stands to loose his respect from other family members. Some religious practices are very strict in reserving this role for the man, whereas others allow the women to participate in providing for the needs of the family.

- **Freedom of association**: Some religions allow freedom of association between men and women, whether married or unmarried but others do not allow close contact even between husband and wife except in the bedroom. In public and even in religious gatherings, husband and wife sit apart from each other. They do not eat together nor are they free to discuss matters of mutual interest. It is common to hear men comment that when the men are talking, women like other children, should keep quiet.

- **Jobs/courses:** Some religions are liberal and open-minded but others are very restrictive. In the latter case, women are not allowed to read engineering courses nor join the armed or police forces nor any paramilitary organization, or to play football nor

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other vigorous sports. Men may be prohibited from following domestic courses such as catering or nursing.

- **Participation in politics:** There is a diversity of opinion as to who may or may not take part in politics.

- **Divorce, remarriage and polygamy:** Some religions frown at divorce, remarriage and polygamy, but other freely permit these practices.

- **Movement:** Some religious traditions take the position that women should not leave their homes in the daytime but may visit relations and friends at night with their head covered.

- **Headship of the family:** As with most cultures, most religious practices see man as the head of the family.

- **Gender issues:** Most religions tend to view women as being the weaker sex, physically mentally and spiritually. Women should therefore be treated with caution and care.

- **Discipline:** Discipline, especially in Africa, is seen as a common responsibility of all within the family.

- **Social life:** Especially in Africa, social events concern all members of the family and community, whether it is a matter for rejoicing such as birth, marriage, and promotion or of sorrow such as sickness, s death or disaster.

The important role of religion in cultural practices is therefore clear and must always be considered.

Onunwa (1994:249- 251) says that society was so afraid of being destroyed by rebellion-prone man that it devised a strategy of self-defense and survival by sacralizing itself. Consequently, when one worships a deity, one is invariably worshipping the society in which one dwells. No

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individual put himself above the society as represented in the deity, and no one saw himself or his security outside the confines of that society.

In some monarchical societies kings were regarded as sacred representative figures standing for the people. Such sacred kings were believed to be immortal. Their death would mean death for the whole community that they represented. When they die, people euphemistically describe them as having joined the ancestors.

In different cultures religion plays different roles. No culture can be wholly derived from religion. However a religion can never cover all areas of human life and anticipate all situations. Hardly any religion tells its adherents how to eat, dress, talk, sit, sleep, brush their teeth or make love. Although it might issue such general norms as that they should respect their parents, it does not tell them whether that involves refraining from smoking in their presence or remaining seated when they are standing. These and other areas are largely dealt with by culture. Culture and religion influence each other at various levels. Religion shapes a culture's system of beliefs and practices, which is why when individuals or communities convert to another religion; their ways of thought and life undergo important changes. For its parts culture influences how a religion is interpreted, its rituals conducted, the place assigned to it in the life of society, and so forth, which is why converts carry their culture into their new religion as seen (Parekh, 2002:147).

According to Van Dyk (2001:112) if something bad happens to a traditional African, he or she will not attribute such an event to bad luck, chance or fate. They believe instead that every illness has been directed by an intention and a specific cause, and in order to fight the illness, it is necessary to identify, uproot, punish, eliminate and neutralize the cause, the intention behind the cause, and the agent of the cause and intention.

Van Dyk (2001:112) further mentions that in traditional religious systems in Africa, God is seen as a Supreme Being or creator who has withdrawn himself from human beings, and who is thus perceived as distant and remote from the people. Ancestors can, however, punish their people by sending illness and misfortune if people do not listen to their wise counsel, if certain social norms and taboos are violated, and if culturally prescribed practices and rites are neglected or incorrectly performed. In some cases, it is believed that ancestors do not actually send illness themselves but that they merely allow it to happen by withdrawing their protection. The

illnesses caused by the ancestors are seldom serious or fatal, and traditional Africans are usually quick to restore their relationship with their ancestors through offerings and sacrifices.

She further mentions that the day-to day fate of traditional Africans is regulated and controlled by the complex relations between human and the invisible but powerful beings and creatures who inhabit an intermediate otherworldly zone of existence that is the territory of evil spirits, witches and scorers. Nearly all forms of illness, suffering, misfortunes, conflict, as well as accidents and death, are ascribed to beings that operate from this zone.

Many African people consult both traditional healers as well as Western health care professionals for the same condition (Van Dyk, 2001:113; Tabane, 1995:3). The traditional healers are consulted to diagnose the personal cause of the condition e.g. bewitchment) or to prevent a recurrence of the illness (e.g. performing a ritual), while a Western doctor is consulted for medication to treat the condition symptomatically.

According to Felhaber (1997) as quoted by Van Dyk (2001:113) witches or sorcerers are usually blamed for illness and misfortune in traditional African societies because people in Africa often use the services of witches and sorcerers to send illness, misfortune, bad luck and suffering to their enemies. They also believe that whatever bad luck or illness befalls them it is sent by witches or sorcerers.

Accusations of witchcraft and sorcery are usually leveled against others when the harmony of a group is threatened or disturbed because conflict, jealousy, tension and unhealthy competition have become too prominent and are threatening to overwhelm the stability of relationship in African community life (Beuster, 1997; Hammond-Tooke, 1989 in Van Dyk, 2001:113). (Compare also Monnig, 1978:71-72; Kuper, 1986:68-69.)

According to Lewis (1990: 71) sorcerers are people who employ magical spells, rites and medicines to achieve their fell ends. Their malevolent apparatus is tangible and external to themselves. He says that witches on the other hand do not need any of these aids. Their power consists in their own innate psychic capacity to cause harm. Their weapon is malicious thought it, not techniques which in principle can be detected and observed.

Witchcraft and sorcery are believed to bring about conceivable misfortunes and illness. If your children are stricken with serious disease or if you or your wife fall ill, then again you suspect witchcraft (Lewis: 1990:72).

6.5. <u>Traditions</u>

Another important element of culture is traditions. Seymour-Smith (1990:279) defines tradition as a set of interrelated cultural elements or traits, which persist over a relatively long time span. In anthropology, the word is used instead for patterns of beliefs, customs, values, behaviour and knowledge or expertise which are passed on from generation to generation by the socialization process within a given population.

According to Kwashi (2002: 20) the following is a list of traditions that would apply to many but not necessarily to all African cultures:

- **Leadership of the family**. The man automatically assumes the leadership of the fairly. Women may even be seen as property, which can therefore have acquired, changed or given to someone else.

- **Domestic chores and child rearing:** Cooking and other household chores are the women's responsibility. The raising of children, particularly in the early months, is also primarily the woman's responsibility. For example if the father has carried the child for a short while, the child then cries or gives trouble. It is not uncommon to hear him say his wife must come and carry your child

- **Education:** women should not be highly educated because their place is in the kitchen

- **Slavery**: the women are meant to serve the man, to toil and labour without being adequately appreciated.

- **Economic control:** the woman has no rights at all with regard to the family income. The man controls the finances and he alone decides what, when and how family resources should be used.

- **Right to inheritance:** inheritance or rights to property is the prerogative of the man. At the death of the father and mother, the male child or children may inherit what belonged to both parents at the expense of the female children.

- **Divorce:** men may marry and divorce at will like a worn out dress, a woman may be thrown aside and a new marriage contracted.

- **Ownership of children:** the children belong to the man, rather than to both the man and the woman.

- **Communication:** the wife and children are not free to speak to the husband and father at will. The man is viewed almost as a semi-god, and therefore he may not be approached at random

- **Childbearing:** it is often thought to be an essential that a married couple must have children and especially boys. A childless marriage encourages the man to marry again. It is generally assumed that the failed lies with woman and that she is responsible for the lack of children or for the lack of male children.

6.5.1. <u>Marriage</u>

In the context of this study traditions and cultural practices regarding marriage are very important.

Whatever its form, marriage involves at least two individuals who wish to live together, hopefully but not necessarily forever. Their relation with each other are not and need not be closer or morally more important than those with their parents, brothers and friends. Marriage partners share their deepest feelings, make common plans for themselves and their children, and relate to others as a single unit. All this remains true whether their marriage is arranged or self-chosen or romantic or non-romantic, it occurs within a nuclear or a joint family (Parekh, 2002:287).

Lewis (1990:234) sees marriage directly establishing affinal relationships between the kin of the bride and groom. Ideally it also produces offspring and hence provides the ideological principle of descent that is socially recognized common parentage or blood relationship. Marriage thus gives rise to the fundamental social unit of two siblings, one of whom is married, the spouse and their child.

Given the nature of their relationship, married partners need to build up at least some degree of mutual trust, commitment, affection, and an instinctive understanding of each other's desires,

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needs and moods. Even if they have known each other before marriage, their relationship acquired a different character after marriage, and they now need to get to know each other at a different level. In the case of some forms of arranged marriages, this task begins after the marriage and is even more demanding. Getting to know another person well enough to live with him or her is a difficult and prolonged process, and required time, energy, leisure, a relative absence of outside interference, and an emotionally relaxed environment. The monogamous relationship provides these conditions better than the polygamous (Parekh, 2002:287).

In some African communities the tradition exists however that marriage is not an individual affair legalizing the relationship between a man and a woman, but a group concern, legalizing a relationship between two groups of relatives. Primarily marriage is a legal act in which the relatives of the groom publicly transfer certain marriage goods to the relatives of the bride. In return for this presentation her relatives publicly transfer the bride to the bogadi (the in-law's place), or literally the place where the 'magadi' (lobola) comes from (Monnig, 1978:129).

Another important tradition or cultural practice regarding marriage which differ between different cultures, is the so-called polygamy or monogamy marriages.

A monogamous marriage according to Popenoe (1986:369) and Hoebel and Frost (1976:198) is marriage between one man and one woman.
Polygamy describes any type of marriage, which allows a husband or wife to have more than one spouse. There are two types of polygamy: polygamy, in which a man may be married to more than one woman at the same time, and polyandry (which is much less common), in which a woman may have two or more husbands simultaneously (Giddens, 1989:386).

Polygamy, including both polygyny (more than one wife) and polyandry (more than more husband), is banned in all western societies. Since polygyny is practiced by some Muslim communities they feel unjustly treated and have campaigned for the ban to be lifted on two grounds, one positive the other negative, the former offering a reasoned defense of it, the latter attacking the ban as incoherent, hypocritical even racist (Cligent, 1970, Gbadegesin, 1993 in Parekh, 2002:282).

Parekh (2002:282-283) found out that Muslim defense of polygamy is fivefold. Their argument invokes the cultural authority of the practice, the rest appeal to its importance to their way of life and the worthwhile values it allegedly realizes:

- Firstly, polygyny is both cultural and a religious practice sanctioned respectively by tradition and the Koran.

- Secondly, in most societies it is common to divorce a woman if she is infertile or sexually incapacitated or if the married partners are emotionally or sexually incompatible. Since divorce causes considerable suffering to all involved, it is more humane to allow the husband to take a second wife without having to divorce the first.

- Thirdly, all males are tempted to stray from the path of matrimonial fidelity and sometimes strike up extramarital liaisons with all the concerned and aisle more honest if the man were allowed to marry women involved rather than break up the existing marriage or lead a life of deceit.

- Fourthly, extramarital relations sometimes result in children who carry the stigma of illegitimacy all their lives, and the males involved have no social or even financial obligations to them or to their mother. In such cases it is more sensible not only to allow but also to require the man concerned to marry the women and accept full responsibility for their children.

- Fifth, in some societies the gender ration is skewed and women out-number men. This results in compulsory spinsterhood for many of them, undesirable pressure on monogamous marriages, and even prostitution. In such situations polygyny has much to be said for it. After the Nigerian civil war when the town of Calabar was swarming with unmarried women and widows, even the Christian tribal elders preferred to allow polygyny to their members rather than risk the obvious dangers.

In a polyandrous culture, husbands seem uninterested in establishing biological paternity. Who is deemed the father of a child is established by means of a ceremony in which one of the husbands presents the pregnant wife with a toy bow and arrow. If other husbands subsequently with to become fathers, the ritual is re-enacted during further pregnances. Polyandry seems to exist only in societies living in extreme poverty, in which female infanticide is practised.

In polygynous families, co-wives sometimes live in the same dwelling as one another, but often have different households. The husband usually has one home as his primary dwelling, but may spend a certain number of nights per week or month with each wife in rotation. Co-wives are frequently co-operative and friendly; but their situation is an obviously one that can lead to rivalry and tension, since they may see themselves as competitors for the husband's favours (Gidden, 1990:387).

According to Lewis (1990:260-262) a conspicuous display and the desire for as many heirs as possible encourage men to take more than one wife. They say in Nuristan, a wife is like a field. You plant seed in more than one field. The older and more important men are, the more wives they tend to have. These privileges and prizes are not without cost. They increase familial tensions, not only between co-wives but also between husband and his sons. Conflict centres on competition over women and over the use of family property or how to acquire wives. The family heads latest marital adventures may seriously inconvenience his unmarried sons when they are desperately seeking brides but cannot find the necessary bride-wealth. Co-wives are usually ranked in the order of their marriage to their common spouse. Typically the first wife keeps the keys of the family chest or moneybox. Her authority as first lady over her younger co- wives is to some extent counterbalanced by the family's heads disproportionate interest in his later and younger partners.   The legal superiority of the first wife is reflected in the privileged position, which her children assume on their father's death.

Monnig (1978:130) refers to the Pedi ethnic group who many of their marriages are polygamous. Their marriage ceremonies for a first wife differ from the marriage celebrations for subsequent wives. The difference however does not lie in the marriage principles but in the time taken when marriage negotiations are held. The negotiations may for example involve the lobola to be paid to the bride's family. In some cases the initial arrangements take place even before the birth of the bride or groom. The negotiations may take up to two decades.

Herdt (in Moore, 1997:216) states that the nature and structure of the traditional family system are also important determinants of patterns of sexual relations within and outside marriage. Polygyn on this scale still found in Nigeria has been sustained only by the very substantial delay of male first marriage. It has inevitably produced a situation where half of adult males are single and sexually active. On the other hand, polygyny has taught men to believe that relations with only one woman are not part of mans nature, while postpartum abstinence makes women unavailable for sex for a considerable part of their reproductive life span. During the long period

of postpartum abstinence men look for partners elsewhere. Commercial sex workers, divorced women and widows meet a significant proportion of their sex needs.

Since polygamy involves sexual discipline which some find trying, they seek from time to time to escape its constraints. However, such lapses are associated with a sense of guilt or at least unease, and incur at least some measure of social disapproval. This why such lapses occur secretly, provoke charges of deception and betrayal, and require an explanation. None of these would happen if monogamy were not a deeply valued liberal practice (Parekh, 2002:288).

The polygamous marriage is likely to be marked by jealousy, unhealthy competition for affection, insecurity, intrigue and mutual manipulation. It is also unlikely to create an environment conducive to the balanced growth of children. It is true that the child in polygamous family has more role models and is not intensely identified with one of them. However such a family at best includes a couple more adults than it monogamous counterpart, and hardly amounts to the kind of community the Muslim critic has in mind. Although the plurality of role models has its advantages, it also has its disadvantages. The opportunity to play off adults against each other, the rivalry among them for the child′s affection, the relative lack of a clear structure of authority and so on, mean that children lack a moral and emotional focus, are subjected to conflicting moral and emotional demands, and are less likely to develop their powers of self-direction and self-discipline (Parekh, 2002:290-291).

7. <u>Summary</u>

This chapter focused on culture in general. Many examples of cultural issues of African communities were discussed in this section. It is true that culture exists in all societies especially African societies. In the following chapter one will also learn about the relationship between African societies. How these societies emerged from each other. It is also clear that a society cannot exist without culture and culture also cannot exist without a society.

The following chapter will focus on the cultural practices of the Batswana people in relation to HIV/AIDS.