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The meaning of the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla, near Pretoria, South Africa: A socio-cultural and socio-psychological approach

ANNEMARIE THERESE VILJOEN (neé Kuschke)

Thesis

PhD Cons Sc (Food Management)

Supervisor: Prof Dr P Botha
Co-supervisor: Prof Dr CC Boonzaaier

October 2009

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by

ANNEMARIE THERESE VILJOEN (neé Kuschke)

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PhD in Consumer Science (Food Management)

in the

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Science

Department of Consumer Science

University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Prof Dr P Botha
Co-supervisor: Prof Dr CC Boonzaaier

October 2009

DECLARATION

I, **Annemarie Therese Viljoen**, hereby declare that the thesis for the **PhD in Consumer Science** degree at the University of Pretoria, hereby submitted by me, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university and that it is my own work in design and execution and that all reference material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

ANNEMARIE THERESE VILJOEN

19 October 2009

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SUMMARY

The meaning of the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla, near Pretoria, South Africa: A socio-cultural and socio-psychological approach

by

ANNEMARIE THERESE VILJOEN (neé KUSCHKE)

Supervisor: Prof Dr P Botha
Co-supervisor: Prof Dr CC Boonzaaier
Department: Consumer Science
Degree: PhD in Consumer Science: Food Management

In this study the aim was to describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context in which the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla were construed. South African society is multi-cultural and black South Africans, upon contact with Western-oriented societies, seem to have gradually or partially adopted the Western lifestyle including eating patterns, leading to changing traditional food practices that can be mostly attributed to the effect of acculturation, urbanisation and modernisation processes.

The current knowledge base of food practices of the South African population as a whole is fragmentary, with limited information on what some sectors of certain population groups eat. Inadequate attention is paid to the reasons why specific food items are chosen or excluded. To facilitate meaningful consumer education and to recommend sound nutrition interventions, a thorough understanding of *why* as well as *what* South Africans eat is urgently needed. Moreover, cognisance should be taken of the factors that contribute to the development of typical food practices within specific communities.

As confirmed in various studies in other countries, the reasons for human food choices require an appreciation of the fact that food practices are embedded in the food choice processes which, in turn are guided by numerous interrelated and interdependent factors that are context-specific. A holistic and contextual approach with knowledge of the socio-cultural, psychological, historical and demographic factors that contribute to food practices should be

uncovered when attempting to understand and describe these practices and their underlying meanings.

The human ecological perspective, as overarching theoretical perspective, is supported by cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives and other theoretical models, and combined with a qualitative research design to uncover, describe and interpret all the environmental levels, the physical, politico-economic, socio-cultural and the micro-world of the individual, and their embedded factors. Data was obtained from focus group discussions and interviews, supported by participant observation and unobtrusive measures. Purposive sampling was used to select female participants for the focus groups and theoretical sampling for the individual interviews. Gathered data was systematically analysed according to the grounded theory approach throughout the data collection phase.

From the findings it became apparent that the food practices of the peoples in Mmotla continue to develop and change. A distinct move towards the modern Western-oriented food practices emerged. Although acculturation of food practices was evident, traditional food practices were not discarded, and both traditional and modern food practices were embraced and regarded as important. Meanings linked to the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments were used to define the context in which food items were used as symbols, signs or codes to define a specific situation and/or communicate the associated meanings. This resulted in dynamic movement between the two poles, the modern and the traditional, depending on the context. Thus the acculturation response is consequently seen to be fluid, context-specific and driven by various interacting factors from the different environmental levels.

This valuable and noteworthy contribution augments existing theories and models on food choice within the South African context.

Keywords: food choice, food practices, food context, traditional food, meanings, acculturation, human ecological perspective, symbolic interactionism, cultural perspective

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CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

As is happening in many other parts of the world, South African society is changing. A particularly striking observation is evident in the black population groups, where a shift from the traditional to a partially Western-oriented lifestyle is taking place. Food practices, which include food choices and food-related behaviour, are part and parcel of a lifestyle and therefore also subject to change (Bisogni, Falk, Madore, Blake, Jastran Sobal & Devine, 2007; Bisogni, Jastran, Shen & Devine, 2005; Murcott, 2000; Oltersdorf, Schlettwein-Gsell & Winkler, 1999). In fact, a gradual shift to a Western-style diet by black South Africans has been reported on for over four decades (MacKeown, Pedro & Norris, 2007; Vorster, Venter, Wissing & Margetts, 2005a; MacIntyre, Kruger, Venter & Vorster, 2002; Bourne, Lambert & Steyn, 2002; Labadarios, 2000; Labadarios, Walker, Blaauw & Walker, 1996; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996; Bourne, Langenhoven, Steyn, Jooste, Nesamvuni & Laubscher, 1994; Crous & Borchardt, 1982; 1984; 1986; Manning, Mann, Sophangisa & Truswell, 1974; Lubbe, 1971; Leary, 1969; Oudkerk, 1965). It is suggested that these changes can be attributed to a variety of factors such as migration, urbanisation, acculturation, education and economic development (Vorster, Margetts, Venter & Wissing, 2005b; MacIntyre, *et al.,* 2002; Bourne, *et al*., 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001; Labadarios, *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995; Bourne, Langenhoven, Steyn, Jooste, Laubscher & Van der Vyver, 1993).

South African society is multi-cultural and the indigenous African people of South Africa, upon contact with Western-oriented societies, seem to have gradually adopted or partially adopted the Western lifestyle. This has led to a change and/or adjustment to traditional food practices due to increased exposure to Western foods, mainly as a result of the effect of urbanisation and modernisation processes. Such interaction with Western-oriented food practices is reflected in a change in the dietary patterns of these people. In accord with what is reported for other African countries, this is characteristically a change from securing food from indigenous cultivated and gathered foods to becoming almost totally dependent on food provided by the commercial and industrial sectors (Raschke & Cheema, 2007; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Gockowski, Mbazo'o, Mbah & Moulende, 2003; Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003). Moreover, several specifically South African studies confirm that a nutrition

transition[1] is taking place as a direct consequence of these demographic and lifestyle changes. Some positive consequences of these changes in dietary patterns include a decline in protein-energy malnutrition, infectious diseases and gastro-enteritis, especially among the very young, together with increased life expectancy (Labadarios *et al.,* 1996). Of greater concern in recent times are the negative consequences, particularly the increase in the occurrence of obesity and other non-communicable diseases associated with it, especially in the urban population (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001). The changed dietary patterns of some South African ethnic groups to a Western-oriented food pattern, are characterised by an increased intake of protein, fats, sugar and salt and a decrease in the consumption of plant proteins, dietary fibre and complex carbohydrates (Vorster *et al*., 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002).

Undesirable outcomes of the nutrition transition usually culminate in increased mortality and morbidity rates (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; Labadarios *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995; Bourne *et al.,* 1993). It is reported that the occurrence of degenerative diseases continues to rise and an increased burden is being placed on the public health services in South Africa (Bourne *et al.,* 2002; Labadarios *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995: Bourne *et al.,* 1993). This partially explains why nutrition and food-related research in the South African context has been mainly of an epidemiological nature, directed to investigating the nutrient content of the diets and their health consequences for specific population groups and the compilation of risk profiles for chronic non-communicable diseases among the different South African population groups (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002).

The current knowledge base of the food practices of the South African population as a whole, is, however, still fragmentary and research limited. Most of the studies referred to above predominantly provide information on **what** some sectors of certain population groups eat and their research findings report solely on the nutrient content of the diets, although some include information on meal patterns and composition. Inadequate, if any, attention is given to the reasons **why** specific food items are chosen and included in the eating pattern(s) of the study group(s) concerned.

To be able to deliver meaningful consumer education and facilitation, and recommend sound nutrition interventions and education to all South Africans, a thorough understanding of **why** as well as **what** people eat is urgently needed. To be able to better understand the reasons

[1] Vorster, *et al*. (2005b:761) define nutrition transition "... as a stepwise sequence of characteristic changes in dietary patterns and nutrient intakes associated with societal, economic and cultural changes during demographic transition of populations."

for human food choices, an in-depth knowledge of the food practices[2], specifically the food choice process, is crucial as has been pointed out in various studies in other countries (Devine, 2005; Croll, Neumark-Sztainer & Story, 2001; Paisley, Sheeshka & Daly, 2001; Reynolds, Hinton, Shewchuk & Hickey, 1999; Falk, Bisogni & Sobal, 1996). Food practices and the embedded food choice process are guided by a number of interrelated and interdependent factors that are often context-specific (Sobal, Bisogni, Devine & Jastran, 2006:7; Devine, 2005; Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal & Falk, 1996). Hence such studies require a holistic approach where knowledge of the socio-cultural, psychological, historical and demographic factors that contribute to the formation of food practices are all considered too. It is therefore imperative to investigate all related factors that could contribute to the development and change in the food practices within the different South African population groups.

Only one South African research group used a holistic approach and followed an integrated, trans-disciplinary approach to study the interactions between biological, psychosocial and environmental factors. The aim of this *Transition and Health during Urbanisation of South Africans* (THUSA) study was to determine the response of individuals and groups in transition to changing circumstances (Vorster *et al.,* 2005a). Its published research reports only commented on **what** was consumed by the study population in response to the changes and, once again, only in terms of the nutrient content. It thus seems, as far as the researcher could establish, that to date no South African study has dealt with **why** people consume the food they do as a result of the ongoing nutrition transition experienced by South Africans, and more specifically that of the indigenous African people who are exposed to continuously changing circumstances.

Unlike animals, human food consumption is shaped by a variety of factors apart from biological survival. Factors that relate to culture, social, historical, psychological, religious, economic and political aspects also come into play and have to be acknowledged and investigated (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:7). In this regard, Bryant, De Walt, Courtney and Schwartz (2003:3) refer to the dynamic relationships that exist between the biological, cultural, environmental and broader socio-economic factors. Rozin (2007:8) and Pelto, Goodman and Dufour (2000:1) similarly refer to the unique interrelationship between food and social forces that shape human food use and nutritional status. Food intake by humans is under the direct influence of culture (Rozin, 2007:13; Ferraro, 2006:22; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:8; Fieldhouse,

[2] Food practices in this study imply how the chosen food is used, and includes the food-related behaviour that is typical of an individual or a group. It is simultaneously regarded as a concrete manifestation of the culture and the effect of the socio-psychological structure and cognition of the individual and the influences from his various environments (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1; National Research Council, 1945:13-14). The food choice process is regarded as an integral part of and embedded in food practices as concept.

1995:1; Fischler, 1980). It is thus important that both the biological (nutritional) and cultural component be included when seeking to understand human food consumption, as, for example, when changes in dietary patterns are being observed. Recognition of the cultural component also implies that food choice is embedded in a network of social meanings and takes a central place in social interaction (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:1; Ogden, 2003: 51, 59; Falk *et al.,* 1996).

Clearly, a relationship between social meanings, social interaction and food choice exists. It is people who give meaning to actions and events, and, through symbolic interactionism people have the ability to create, negotiate and change social meanings through the process of interaction (Sandstrom, Martin & Fine, 2006:1). In their choice of food people create meanings, but, in turn, it also reflects the meanings they associate with food (Furst *et al.,* 1996). Todhunter (1973:301) describes a whole assortment of meanings that can be reflected through food, such as status, prestige, friendship, feasts and rituals to name a few. She explains that food can also be a means of expressing, inter alia, individuality, sophistication, affection and, most of all, tradition, custom and security that too can be symbolised through food. In food choice some of the meanings relate to the food itself, but it is often the medium through which a whole range of meanings can be communicated (Ogden, 2003:52-53).

Due to its dynamic nature, culture changes. Food practices, as part of culture, are similarly subject to change. As cultural meanings are often expressed through food practices, it implies that the meanings attached to food practices can also change. Although culture changes, it is paradoxically also resistant to change, and the same applies to food practices and the meanings attached to it. Therefore, in some instances, the meanings attached to certain food practices, such as traditional food practices, directly contribute to the sustainability of the said food practices. On the other hand, new meanings can be created for a food or food practice which can then be instrumental in the expansion of the food practices of a cultural or social group and the associated meanings attached to them. Unfortunately most documented research regarding the dietary intake of the South African population, rarely mentions the cultural and other individual factors when reporting on food consumption and the assumption is made that limited, if any, attention is given to the reasons behind the phenomenon.

At the 18th International Congress of Nutrition held in September 2005 in Durban, South Africa, the New Nutrition Science Project, as part of the Giessen Declaration, was introduced to the nutrition community (Cannon & Leitzmann, 2005). One of the commendable objectives of the project states that more attention needs to focus on the social and environmental

dimensions of nutrition science as was done in the past. These two components, together with the biological aspect, could provide a more integrated and holistic approach to the study of human food consumption. This was necessary to not only prevent chronic diseases associated with lifestyle and to alleviate global malnutrition, but also, and more importantly, to obtain an in-depth understanding of the food choice process and the food practices of individuals and groups of individuals (Cannon & Leitzmann, 2005).

In America and Europe there has been renewed interest and focus on research dealing with the food choice process as part of the food-related behaviour of individuals and groups of people in recent years. Examples are the studies conducted by researchers at Cornell University (Bisogni, Falk, Blake, Jastran, Sobal & Devine, 2007; Devine, 2005; Devine, Connors, Bisogni & Sobal, 1998; Falk *et al.,* 1996; Furst, *et al*., 1996) and the initiatives of the International Union of Nutrition Sciences (IUNS) (Oltersdorf, 2003; Gedrich, 2003; Oltersdorf, *et al*., 1999). Most studies concerning food-related behaviour emphasise a holistic understanding of the food choice process to assist in promoting optimal nutrition education and consumer facilitation (Bisogni, *et al.,* 2007; Blake, Bisogni, Sobal, Devine & Jastran, 2007; Devine, 2005; Bisogni, Jastran, Shen & Devine, 2005; Oltersdorf, 2003; Devine, Sobal, Bisogni & Connors, 1999). From the studied literature it is clear that a similar holistic approach is fundamental to understanding and describing the food-related behaviour of the various cultural groups of the South African population.

In order to fully understand human food practices, all aspects of the social and cultural setting, the context in which it takes place, are to be addressed (Meiselman, 2007; Rozin, 2007:16; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:2; Falk *et al.,* 1996). When people confront others whose origin, world view and culture may differ in many aspects from their own, all interacting forces that are present have to be considered. The scope of these interacting forces and especially the resultant meanings that are attached to food, require an all-encompassing point of view. Context includes both the physical and social environments as well as all behaviour settings in which food consumption takes place (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:6; Furst *et al.,* 1996). To realise such a holistic research approach, necessitates an extensive theoretical framework as will be justified in Chapter 2 (see 2.3). The contextual approach is therefore deemed to be appropriate and includes the human ecological perspective as overarching theoretical perspective, supported by cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives. A qualitative research design (see 3.2) was devised as it is closely associated with the contextual approach and suitable for investigating a multifaceted topic such as the food practices of a group of people. In order to understand the food practices of a group requires that the different contexts in which the food practices take place, including all the interrelated and interdependent factors that contribute to it, be uncovered. To expose as many of these facets

as possible, comprehensive descriptions from those who themselves engage in the food practices are sought.

Furthermore, this methodology will elicit an in-depth understanding of the research question that stipulates that the food practices of a group of people are based on knowledge and insight that recognises the cultural context in which food choice takes place. This includes the values, meanings and symbolism attached to food as well as **how, when, where** and **why** food is used. A comprehensive appreciation of the underlying reasons why specific food practices are followed will enhance not only nutrition education and intervention programmes, but will also contribute to improved consumer education and facilitation in this regard.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A comprehensive overview showed that limited information is available on the current food practices of the different ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, and what changes have taken place with regard to their use of food. For example, it is not known to what extent traditional food practices are still adhered to by the various ethnic groups, whether they have been changed or discarded and for what reason(s). From the discussion presented as background to this study, it is evident that there are gaps with regard to what is known and documented about the food practices of the various ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, and meanings attached to them.

To guide people in their decision making on food choices, health practitioners and consumer facilitators need to understand and explain the food practices of individuals or groups of individuals they wish to advise. It is important for them to know what is consumed as well as the significance of the underlying meanings attached to the associated food practices. The reason(s) why certain foods are chosen and consumed in a specific situation must also be known and understood.

Against this background, the research goal of this study is:

> ***To describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of peoples living in Mmotla[3].***

[3] This particular community is situated in a densely populated village 55 km north-west of Pretoria in the vicinity of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater. This community could be described as being somewhere in-between an urban and traditional rural South African community.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In order to describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of people from different ethnic groups living as community in Mmotla, a suitable conceptual framework to guide the investigation on the food practices and meanings attached to them in a South African context had to be developed. To achieve the aim of a holistic and integrated approach to the present study, various models, frameworks and methodologies in the field of food practices and the embedded food choice process and meanings attached to it, were to be studied (Bryant, *et al.,* 2003; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Pelto, *et al.,* 2000:2; Falk, *et al*., 1996; Furst, *et al*., 1996; Parraga, 1990; Krondl, 1990; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). It became evident that, in the South African context, cultural traditions and customs, including food accessibility and affordability are some of the pervasive factors that guide the food practices of the majority of black South Africans (Vorster *et al.,* 2005a; Bourne *et al*., 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002).

The model by Sims and Smiciklas-Wright (1978) based on the ecological systems perspective, together with the food choice framework described by Fieldhouse (1995:27), was used as point of departure to compile the conceptual framework for the research as, between them, they address most of the aspects applicable to the South African situation. As pointed out by Rozin (2007:15), most of the existing models deal with the food choice process of individuals in developed countries where tradition and necessity are less important considerations and where the range of alternatives and opportunities in the food choice process is much broader. South Africa is classified as a developing country and many South African households still live with poverty (Kruger, Puoane, Senekal & Van der Merwe, 2005; Rose & Charlton, 2002; Walker, 2002). South Africans are often referred to as 'the rainbow nation' to illustrate the cultural diversity of its people. In this multi-cultural society people from various cultural groups are continuously in close contact with one another and acculturation is inevitable and a shift from the traditional to a partially Western-oriented lifestyle by black South Africans is noted (Mackeown *et al.,* 2007; Vorster *et al.,* 2005a; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002). On the other hand, traditions and customs are not totally discarded or changed by all, and it is observed that some groups tend to cherish their traditions and customs even more than they did before. The goal of this study is to describe and understand the food practices and the meanings attached to them by the peoples of Mmotla. In order to achieve this, a complete picture of all the related facets of the food practices and meanings associated with them was required.

Three theoretical perspectives were chosen to assist in obtaining an in-depth understanding of the food practices of the participants. The human ecological perspective, as overarching

perspective, was selected to guide the understanding of the interacting dynamics between individuals or groups and the embedded forces in the different environmental levels in which they interact. It was complemented and supported by the cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives. In a multi-cultural community, such as Mmotla, where cultural traditions and customs are still honoured in spite of acculturation, the cultural perspective was considered as an appropriate perspective to include. The cultural perspective allows for the study of change over time at the socio-cultural environmental level, including how social interactions and changes manifest on the socio-psychological and the individual environment. In addition, the symbolic interactionism perspective that focuses on the socio-psychological and individual level was selected in order to help in understanding the food-related behaviour and the meanings attached to the food practices that emerged from the social interaction that groups and individuals have with one another. Moreover, the symbolic interactionism perspective further enhanced and supported the cultural perspective, which also deals with the symbolic realm of social life.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives, other theories and theoretical models that could possibly guide or assist in the interpretation of the findings to understand and describe how aspects from the various environments contributed to the meanings attached to the food practices, were identified. Acculturation theories and the developmental model of food culture (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal 2000:7), were recognised as potentially useful to understand the dynamics and changes taking place at the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environmental levels.

1.4 RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The research goal was to describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla. The following objectives and sub-objectives with regard to food practices were initially set to guide the research:

1. To describe and interpret the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla and how these food practices developed and changed over time with particular reference to:
    - an overview of the historical development of their food practices;
    - their current everyday food practices;
    - the changes that took place in their everyday food practices;
    - the social occasions of this group of people and the meanings each of the occasions held for them;

- the food practices associated with selected special social occasions; and
- food practice changes that took place at selected special social occasion events.

2. To describe and interpret the environmental forces and/or the associated meanings from the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments that manifest in the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla during social interaction at a particular social occasion by identifying these from within:
    - the socio-cultural environment; and
    - the socio-psychological environment .

3. To identify the salient codes (modern and traditional) and the meanings that are in interplay when food practices are negotiated to define situations, interpret meanings or assign new meanings to facilitate effective communication by identifying, describing and interpreting both:
    - the salient codes (traditional and modern) that are used to negotiate food practices for a particular social occasion in order to define the situation and interpret or assign meaning to the occasion; and
    - changes in the underlying codes and meanings that contributed to the changes in the food practices of this group of people.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose and nature of the objectives of the study require that a qualitative research approach be employed. The justification for this strategy being regarded as the most appropriate lies in the fact that it lends itself to studying people in their natural setting in order to understand, or interpret, the meanings people bring to their way of doing things (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

Food practices, as part of the culture of a group, are learned behaviours that are internalised and become part of the lifestyle of people. This implies that the culture of the group as it relates to food practices needs to be understood as well. The ethnographic research design was deemed to be a fitting design to achieve this. In order to ultimately present a descriptive, interpretative and holistic cultural portrayal of a group of people, their behaviour, customs and ways of life have to be studied (Fouché, 2005:271). Ethnography is tasked to study and describe a culture in order to understand the way of life of a group from their own point of view (Spradley, 1979:3). To be able to present the end result of producing descriptions, interpretations and representations of people's lives, as members of a cultural

group or society, the researcher is compelled to employ a combination of data collection techniques (Tedlock 2000:455). Participant observation and interviewing techniques are the techniques most often used in ethnographic research designs (Fouché, 2005:271; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:280), therefore the data collection techniques chosen include interviewing individuals and focus group discussions that are supported by participant observation and unobtrusive measures.

Focus group discussions are often used as an exploratory technique and serve the purpose of getting acquainted with the participants and their environments as well as opening up initial lines of communication and building up trust and rapport with the participants, regarded as essential prerequisites to creating and obtaining quality data (Greeff, 2005:300; Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998:316). Individual interviews can be useful as a complementary interviewing technique when the purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the personal views and/or perceptions of participants on a specific phenomenon (Kvale, 1996:6). In addition, further information about participants' natural and everyday environments was gleaned from observing them and using unobtrusive measures (i.e. photographs, recipes and other material artefacts) as data collection techniques.

Since female members of the household are customarily responsible for food acquisition and preparation, and that these tasks continue to be seen as the domain of women by black South Africans (Walker & Charlton, 2001; Coetzee, 1982:67; Krige, 1965), they were considered to be the most knowledgeable about the topic under review and be able to provide the required information. Therefore purposive sampling was done to ensure that the focus groups consisted of both younger and older female residents from all the cultural groups in Mmotla. Moreover, both specialists and laymen were included in the sample.

As foreseen, the gathered data was systematically analysed throughout both data collection phases and as an ongoing emerging process. Since the study deals with more than *what is*, and includes the *why it is*, it implies that explanations need to be sought. Seeking explanation is the same as theorising and designing analysis procedures facilitate theorising (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:22; Tesch, 1990:84-85). Theorising deals with the act of systematically integrating the various concepts from the data by clarifying relationships in order to explain a specific phenomenon. In this study, where the research was geared to uncovering the "connection" of food practices and their meaning, grounded theory was regarded as the most appropriate approach to pursue. Through her data analysis flow diagram, Tesch (1990:72) demonstrates that, when the research interest deals with the identification or categories of elements and the establishment of the relationships or

"connections", the grounded theory approach to data analysis is an accepted method to employ.

Data analysis actually commenced during the data collection phase and the constant comparison method was deemed to be reasonable and a sound approach and so was followed according to the guidelines suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Huberman and Miles (1994).

1.6 PRESENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY[4]

This first chapter of the thesis spells out how the research developed and was conducted. A brief description of the second and ensuing chapters is given as an indication of the structure of the thesis that is organised in four sections. These sections were created to form a coherent presentation of the study as the following broad outline illustrates: section 1 (Chapters 2 and 3) contains the two chapters that address the conceptualisation, the theoretical framework and the methodology of the study. The findings of the research are presented in Sections 2 and 3. Section 2, comprises Chapters 4 and 5, where the external environments of the participants and their everyday food practices are described and Section 3 contains Chapters 6 to 8 that deal with the food practices on special occasions. In Section 4, the penultimate and final Chapters 9 and 10 respectively, present a discussion of the central themes that emerged from the findings and the conclusions derived from these. The chapters are described as follows:

Chapter 2 This chapter presents the main concepts and explains how the conceptual framework for the study was developed. The three theoretical perspectives chosen to inform the contextual approach to the study are justified and explained, including how each contributes to an understanding and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 3 This chapter is devoted to the description and justification of the research design. The qualitative research methodology chosen for the study is defended. The research methodology and techniques used for the collection and analysis of data are validated and briefly explained. Measures taken to enhance the quality of the study are specified.

[4] Referencing method used in this study: Adapted Harvard method as compiled by the University of Pretoria Library Services.

Chapter 4 In this chapter the external environments of the Mmotla community are sketched and provide sufficient information to contextualise the current food practices of the participants. The geographic location of the village, a description of the physical environment together with a brief historical overview of the community, is given. This then serves as background for understanding the changes and development of the food practices that have taken place.

Chapter 5 Descriptions of the daily food practices and how participants view and use food are given, differentiating between weekday and weekend experiences. How these everyday food practices evolved and changed over time and the underlying meanings attached to these, receive attention.

Chapter 6 The findings on the food practices during initiation rites and the associated celebrations are described and interpreted for both gender groups in this first chapter dealing with special occasions.

Chapter 7 In this second chapter on the findings related to special occasions, the focus falls on traditional wedding celebrations and other special events. The emphasis is on the traditional Ndebele wedding because of its more involved procedures and the extensive descriptions given by the Ndebele participants. The procedures followed by the other groups are included to juxtapose similarities and differences. Other special occasions dealt with are those that are not part of the traditional celebrations of the participants such as birthdays, family-related occasions and celebrating New Year.

Chapter 8 This last chapter on the food practices associated with special occasions describes and interprets food practices typical of religious events, both those associated with Christianity and those related to ancestral ritual communication. As the last rite of passage, funerals are regarded as religious occasions and discussion on their specific procedures is included here.

Chapter 9 In this chapter the meanings of food and food practices and the symbolism attached to food are presented. Following the grounded theory approach to data analysis, a number of themes regarding the meanings and symbolism attached to food and food practices emerge from the findings. The analytical process for the development, refinement and interrelation of concepts is presented, together with structured explanatory frameworks that illustrate the relationships between the categories of concepts.

Chapter 10 In this last chapter of the thesis the conclusions derived from the main findings and how the research goal was realised, are given. The final inductively developed conceptual framework portrays the salient factors operating at the various environmental levels and how these contributed to the nature of food practices of the Mmotla people at the beginning of the twenty first century. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the contribution and significance of the study and its theoretical contribution. The practical implications of the findings and where future research can possibly be directed are highlighted.

SECTION 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This first section addresses the conceptualisation, the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. It includes the introduction and conceptualisation of the main concepts and how the conceptual framework for the study was developed. The three theoretical pespectives selected are justified and explained, together with two other applicable theoretical models that were identified as useful to understand and explain change in food practices. This is followed by the chapter on the research methodology where the research design and process employed to achieve the research goal and objectives are presented.

The following chapters are included:

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework

Chapter 3: Research methodology

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As components of scientific knowledge, theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks are useful to understand and explain social phenomena (Mouton, 1996:180). The body of scientific knowledge has a definite hierarchical order and conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives hold a higher hierarchical order than statements of an empirical nature, definitions or concepts that occupy the lower levels (Mouton, 1996: 180). However, in the scientific literature the terminology used when referring to the higher levels of knowledge is inconsistent and often confusing. The hierarchical order of knowledge as explained by Mouton (1996:180) is helpful in this regard and used in this study to distinguish between the different levels of theoretical abstraction.

Initially a clear distinction between conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives is required. Mouton (1996:195) describes conceptual frameworks as the familiar structures of science and distinguishes three types, namely typologies, models and theories. Within the body of knowledge each fulfils a specific function[8]. In this study the term theoretical perspective refers to the highest order of theoretical abstraction which, according to Mouton (1996:180), is the broad theoretical paradigm or research tradition.

The aim of this study is to describe and gain an understanding of the food practices of a group of people and the meaning they attach to their food and food practices. This chapter sets out to conceptualise the two main concepts of the study namely food practices and their meaning. It then justifies and introduces the selection of the theoretical perspectives and models chosen to assist in exploring and describing the multifaceted phenomenon of food

[8] - Typologies have a classifying or categorising function based on single variables.
- Models provide a systematic representation of phenomena by identifying patterns and regularities amongst variables.
- Theories provide an explanation of phenomena by postulating an underlying causal mechanism.

practices and their underlying meaning. The developed conceptual framework for this study, based on these theoretical perspectives and models, is then presented and explicated.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Food practices as concept

In this study the concept of **food practices** implies how the **chosen** food is **used**, and has embedded **food-related behaviour** that is typical of an individual or a group. It is, however, simultaneously a concrete manifestation of culture and the effect of the socio-psychological structure and cognition of an individual within a specific environment as relates to the processes of socialisation[9] and enculturation[10] as well as to the socio-cultural environment.

In order to explain food practices as concept as it applies to this study, requires that the food choice process, as an integral part of food practices, be described first. It is therefore necessary to first define the key concepts related to the food choice process before proceeding to the conceptualisation of food use.

In this study, **food choice** implies the process in which the individual makes decisions about what food(s) would be consumed out of the **available** and **accessible** food for a specific food event. **Food availability** and **accessibility** are either enhanced or restricted by components or systems emanating from the physical, political and economic environments (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2). This is determined by the geography, climate and seasonality, combined with various technological driven influences that determine food transportation and distribution capabilities. Government policies as well as market-related factors are also acknowledged (Anderson, 2005:82; Fieldhouse, 1995:27; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). However, from the available or potentially available food, not everything is selected for consumption, because human food choice is equally significantly guided by what food is regarded as **acceptable**. Factors from the economic, cultural and/or socio-psychological environments determine what is acceptable and these are often closely associated with the socio-cultural environment (Rozin, 2006:29-30; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:86; Fieldhouse, 1995:27; Parraga, 1990). Food acceptability as a related concept has two

[9] Socialisation, according to Segall (1979:187), "includes all the more or less direct teaching to which the individual is exposed". This teaching involves the inculcation of norms and customs by various socialisation agents (parents, teachers, elders and others) who are consciously shaping the individual according to the cultural model of a "proper" member of society. Fieldhouse (1995:3) gives a similar description and views socialisation as "a process by which culturally valued norms of behaviour are passed on from generation to generation".

[10] "Enculturation refers to the entire incidental learning that occurs through imitation of elders and others …" Segall (1979: 187).

dimensions and both of these overlapping dimensions apply to this study. The first dimension deals with the fact that culture, and more specifically its ideological component, as contained in the value and belief systems of a particular culture, primarily directs what food is regarded as acceptable (Rozin, 2006:24; Randall, 1982:124). Cardello (1996:2) views food acceptability "as a perceptual/evaluative construct" and further expands by explaining that food acceptability "is a phenomenological[11] experience, best categorised as a feeling, emotion or mood with a defining pleasant or unpleasant character. This explanation relates to the acceptability of food from a sensory evaluation perspective and represents the second dimension of food acceptability as concept. It is this overall like or dislike of a food item from a sensory evaluation point of view, together with the social, situational and marketplace factors that also contribute to the selection and consumption of food (Cardello, 1996:4). Human food choice therefore always takes place within the boundaries of what food is **available, accessible** and **acceptable**. It is only after the conditions of acceptability have been met that individual or personal factors come into play.

Three aspects guide individual food choices, namely, the food product itself, the characteristics of the individual and the food event or social situation in which the individual has to make the food choice (Rozin, 2006:27-29; Devine, 2005; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Shepherd, 1989:9; Randall & Sanjur, 1981). It is only during this stage that the individual's own personal values, beliefs and attitudes about the food, as shaped by culture, would steer the food choice process (Fieldhouse, 1995:3-6). Various environmental forces operate in the different stages of the selection process and the decisions that are made therefore incorporate not only decisions based on conscious reflection, but also those that are automatic, habitual and subconscious (Rozin, 2006:28; Furst *et al*., 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:25-27).

How humans **use** food is part of the cultural pattern that guides food-related behaviour and relates to activities such as how the food is acquired, preserved or stored, prepared and presented. This includes not only how the food is served, but also to whom it is served, how frequently, as reflected in identified meal patterns, and how it is consumed (Kittler & Sucher, 2008: 2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1). Implied here is that food preparation and consumption involve social interaction between members of a household or a specific society. The classic definition by Margaret Mead (1945) on food habits strongly resembles this first aspect of the concept: " … the way in which individuals or groups of individuals, in response to social and cultural pressures, select, consume, and utilize portions of the available food supply"

[11] A phenomenological interpretation, according to Kruger (1988:37), is based on "a rigorous approach which attempts to clarify what appears or shows itself to us and the manner in which we encounter the world and fellow-man. It is concerned with how we are aware of the world and the manner in which we discover meaning in the world. "

(National Research Council, 1945:13). Here the emphasis is on food as a material aspect of culture, essential for survival and sustenance.

The second aspect of the food practices concept focuses on the contribution of the cognitive and socio-psychological domains, and indicates that these are of equal importance and need to be included to achieve a holistic inquiry of the food practices of a group. Levi-Strauss is often quoted as saying (in Bryant *et al.*, 2003: 221) that food is not only "good to eat," it is "good to think", becomes an applicable quotation at this point to indicate the pervasive role of cognition. The socio-psychology of food deals with how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals impact on food choice (Conner & Armitage, 2002:2). It is closely associated with the ideation approach to culture where culture is considered as a symbolic system that contains the "learned, shared and patterned sets of meanings" that enable humans to "perceive, interpret and evaluate life" (Lett, 1987:58). In this regard, Goode (1989:127) points out that food as material culture is essential for human survival but its consumption often simultaneously represents symbolic meaning with intricate rules for use. The continuance of preferred food habits is therefore not only for practical reasons but more often also because they are "symbolically meaningful behaviours" in a particular culture (Fieldhouse, 1995:1). This viewpoint that the symbolic domain of life as it relates to food be recognised, is included in the food practice concept in this study.

When dealing with the food practices of a group or an individual it needs to be kept in mind that people make food choices in different contexts. In this work the concept **context** is interpreted according to that of Furst *et al.* (1996), who view it as the environment or behaviour settings in which food consumption takes place, specifically described as the "physical surroundings and the social climate" of a food event or situation. Sobal *et al.* (2006: 6) and Sobal, Khan and Bisogni (1998) delineate food context similarly, and explain that both the physical and social environments, together with other systems that exist in these environments, such as the seasonal and temporal climate, social institutions and policies, are included when food context is referred to or discussed. Kaiser, a social psychologist, conceptualises context in the same way, and explains context as a setting or relationship. A context may even be within the individual self as (s)he attempts to understand her/himself and others (Kaiser, 1997:30). Context can also include the attributes of people and the entire history of their relationships and the nature of the setting in which the interaction occurs. She (ibid) also points out that the culture in which individuals live and the historical meanings that individuals associate with their material artefacts, inter alia, food and clothing, represent a general context that influences how people relate to one another.

The above interpretation of the concept context is not opposed to that of Coertze, an anthropologist, who regards the human environments as human adaptation to the natural world (Coertze, 1980:25-28). According to his existential viewpoint, these environments include the nature environment (earth, climate, etc.), the unseen, spiritual environment and a person's own inner environment. This is the result of human ability to objectify and reflect on personal inner sensations. In addition he maintains that the socio-cultural environment is an integral part of context and stems from the fact that people share their own reality with others. Thus human beings are simultaneously creators and products of culture. The very nature of an individual as a biological, psychic and social being makes survival and adaptation to the surrounding environments possible. Although it is the physical being which demands need for physical survival in the natural environment, it is the psychic being with its intellectual, emotional and spiritual characteristics, together with the attribute of being a social being that determines the unique ways in which adaptation to complex environments takes place. Moreover, it defines the social world, accumulates systems of knowledge and views of reality. Following the viewpoint of Coertze, human beings need food to survive, but the **ideas** and **ideals** of culture determine the way in which it is consumed. **Ideas** are represented in the ideation approach to culture, where culture is regarded as a symbolic system that represents the learned and shared meanings that people use to direct their lives (Lett, 1987:58). **Ideals** are similarly rooted in and derived from cultural and symbolic factors and could include aspects such as standards, norms, beliefs and expectations that guide or direct the food choice process (Sobal *et al*., 2006:5; Devine *et al.,* 1999; Furst *et al.,* 1996).

2.2.2 Meanings attached to food and food practices

All food is permeated with meanings and can mean different things to different people (Parraga, 1990). Furthermore people may attach different meanings to the same food in different contexts (Blake *et al*., 2007). Food is both a cultural as well as a social object (Kjaernes & Holm, 2007:512-524; Rozin, 2007:12-13; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:2; Bryant *et al*., 2003:2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1). In this regard Steelman (1976) states that food is cultural as it is the knowledge, beliefs and customs surrounding food that are shared by a cultural group that are passed on to succeeding generations and it is a social object, because the behaviour surrounding food is often shared with other people. This implies that meaning similarly is a social and cultural product that is created, negotiated and changed through the process of interaction, which indicates that meaning is not inherent in things or objects. In other words it is created by people and each person has to learn, discover or develop the meaning attached to objects on their own (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:7-9). This learning takes place through social interaction with other people through the process of socialisation and enculturation.

Culture is viewed as a symbolic system, made up of shared, identifiable, public symbols and meanings, which implies that a culture contains a complex set of symbols that are created, defined, labelled and understood by the cultural group who uses them (Lett, 1987:56). Humans thus have complex meaning systems that are representative of their culture and hence guide their behaviour. Through these meaning systems they understand themselves and others, and make sense of the world in which they live (Spradley, 1979:5). Symbols provide the mechanism through which culture is created and acquired (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:31) and as part of culture, food is often used symbolically (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:3; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:222).

Symbols are defined as objects that not only exist in and of themselves, but are created by humans to represent or stand for something else and whatever it represents, constitutes its meaning. It is humans who instil the meaning to an object and the association between a symbol and the meaning it represents is arbitrary assigned (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:29-30; Bryant *et al*., 2003:222). Anything can become a symbol and objects are then used on a daily basis as signals or symbols for the exchange of meanings between individuals. Through the use of objects (artefacts) a direct relationship between people and objects is established, and, in using objects as symbols, a communication relationship between two or more human beings is established (Roth, 2001). These symbols emphasise specific activities and provide for interaction between people in a socially accepted manner (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:31; Fieldhouse, 1995:3). The meanings humans assign to objects, could then refer to, or represent non-tangible concepts such as ideas, emotions, identity or religious beliefs. Food as cultural material or object also conveys meanings and is often used as a “language” or “code”, and then becomes part of a system of communication. Food practices can therefore be regarded as part of this organised communication system of a culture (Counihan, 2000:1516-1517).

A prerequisite to understanding the symbolic meanings or messages attached to food practices is familiarity with the non-verbal codes of the culture and the ability to decode the intended meanings. In this regard Roth (2001) cautions that the encoded messages are not universal but culturally specific and arbitrary. This implies that cultural knowledge and experience is required for the encoding process. Meanings attached to food are learned and shared in the cultural group and could thus be regarded as part of the cultural heritage of the group (Blake *et al*., 2007; Fieldhouse, 1995:37; Parraga, 1990). Symbolic systems represent the learned and shared meanings that people use to make sense of their lives.

Humans therefore not only use food to satisfy the basic physiological function of nourishment, but also as a medium to express faith, friendship, hospitality, identity, status

and even emotions such as joy, anger and love. In this way food has moved away from its primary function of serving the basic human need of nourishment and has become, according to Shaw and Clarke (1998:163), "increasingly linked to symbolic meanings, values and lifestyles" of local cultures. This confirms that food consumption decisions are linked to the cultural context in which it takes place and that food has meaning, and consequently conveys these because it is part of this cultural system (Counihan, 2000:1517; Roth, 2001; Shatenstein & Ghadirian, 1998).

Food categories are often used to classify or define food as symbols to assist humans in making sense of food (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:9-11; Furst, Connors, Sobal, Bisogni & Falk, 2000; Fieldhouse, 1995:49; Hertzler, Wenkam & Standal, 1982). A food categorisation schemata shows how people in a culture view food and it serves as indication of their priorities regarding food (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:7; Counihan, 2000:1517). Some examples of food categories are food groups (key nutrient foods), food preferences (like-dislike), food taboos, health foods and festive or celebratory foods. Each category has a special connotation depending on the content and **context** in which it is used. Meaning is then also associated with how a cultural group uses this food categorisation and this is simultaneously an indication of the values and beliefs that are assigned to the functional role that food has in a culture (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:9-11; Furst *et al.,* 2000; Fieldhouse, 1995:37; Messer, 1984b:218; Sanjur, 1982:148-154).

2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND MODELS

To fully understand why people eat as they do, can only be accomplished when all the separate components of the complicated system of food choices and their interrelationships are understood (Krondl, 1990:14). This requires a comprehensive study of these components and prevailing influences to see how they contribute to human food practices, including the embedded food choice processes and the use of the selected food, as reflected in the behaviour of an individual or group. The available literature on this topic indicates that there are various approaches and conceptual models each with their own specific strengths and shortcomings that could be employed to understand food choice behaviour (Bryant *et al*., 2003:3-4; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2; Sobal *et al*., 1998; Furst *et al.,* 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:17-20; Krondl, 1990; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). As rightly pointed out by Rozin (2007:15), it needs to be borne in mind that the majority of models dealing with food choice are about individuals in developed cultures where tradition and necessity are less important forces in the food choice process and where the range of alternatives and opportunities for choice are more extensive.

After a review of the limited literature on conceptual models applied to the study of food choice and food practices, it was decided that the most appropriate approach to follow, in the South African context, would be a holistic approach such as is offered by the human ecological perspective, or an adaptation thereof. This approach provides the opportunity to include the whole spectrum of contributing factors from the different environments (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:2; Pelto *et al*., 2000:2; Sobal *et al*., 1998; Krondl, 1990:9-11; Sanjur, 1982:2,51; Jerome, Kandel & Pelto, 1980:15; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). It is thus possible to address the reciprocity of the individual, physical and cultural environments in an integrated manner (Jerome *et al.,* 1980:15). Bryant *et al*. (2003:2) reasoned their choice of the ecological perspective on the grounds that it accommodates the biological, socio-cultural and physical environmental factors that direct the food choice process along the entire length of the food chain, from the production phase, throughout its processing and distribution, up to the final consumption of food by individuals or groups. In other publications Story *et al.* (2002) and Pelto *et al.* (2000:2) also justify the ecological perspective as a suitable model for understanding the factors that shape food practices. Story *et al.* (2002) emphasise the central tenet of this perspective, namely reciprocal causation between the different components, as justification for using this approach. They highlight the dynamic nature of the interrelated components by explaining that the environment shapes, maintains and constrains behaviour, and that humans on the other hand, create and change their environment through their behaviour. Pelto *et al*. (2000:2) accentuate the suitability of the ecological perspective on the grounds that a holistic analysis of the various components is made possible when this approach is used.

Since the human ecological perspective offers such potential for the application of a holistic approach, it is chosen as the overarching theoretical perspective for this study. Due to the intricacy of the food choice process, and to be able to understand and describe the food practices and the meanings attached to them, necessitates the inclusion of two other theoretical perspectives. To complement and enhance the human ecological perspective, the cultural and the symbolic interactionism perspectives were included. Each of these is relevant in its own right and applicable to a study of food practices, as each operates at specific environmental levels to augment the understanding of the meaning of the food practices that emerge from different contexts. Jointly they complement and enhance one another.

Through the combined application of these three theoretical perspectives, a holistic representation of food choice as behavioural process and the food practices linked to it, can be achieved to support the **contextual** approach to the study. This approach serves to guide the exploration of the various contexts and situations in which the meaning attached to food

could be described, showing how they develop in the social realm of life; why meanings manifest as they do; how they change over time; how the particular choice of food for a specific social occasion represents a set of codes that give meaning to social life; how aspects from and across contexts and over time influence these meanings; and how these meanings are interpreted and negotiated.

How each of the theoretical perspectives can assist in the interpretation and understanding of food practices is discussed in the next sections. The premises of each perspective are briefly explained and the relevance of the assumptions to the research goal and objectives of this study is clarified. Examples illustrate the points made.

2.3.1 Human ecological perspective

The human ecological perspective is a perspective that recognises humans as both biological and social beings, and deals with the interaction of humans with their environment(s) (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:419). These authors emphasise that human ecology is concerned with interaction and interdependence of humans within the environment, and point out that the core of this perspective not only deals with how humans adapt to their environments but also how each of the environments is adapted by humans (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:421). This implies reciprocity between humans and their environment(s). Environment, as conceptualised by Bubolz and Sontag (1993:432), is "the totality of the physical, biological, social, economic, political, aesthetic, and structural surroundings for human beings and the context for their behaviour and development." These are differentiated and comprise the following:

- the **natural physical-biological environment** (atmosphere, climate, soil, water, minerals, plants and animals);
- the **human-built environment**[12] that refers to everything made by people and the resulting "alterations and transformations" to the natural environment (roads, cultivated land, urban settlements, material artefacts);
- the **social-cultural environment** which refers to the presence of other human beings including their abstract cultural constructions (language, laws, norms, cultural values and patterns) and social and economic institutions.

It needs to be pointed out that Bronfenbrenner (1979:7-9) and other scholars in family studies (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:423; Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988:29; Melson, 1980:21),

[12] In some food choice models the human-built environment is distinguished as the technological environment (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:4; Jerome *et al.*, in Krondl, 1990: 10; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978).

distinguish four different levels of environments, the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-environments based on their immediacy in relation to the individual or group. Bronfenbrenner (1979:8) views the micro-, meso- and exo-environments as rooted in "the broad ideological values, norms and institutional patterns of a particular culture". This implies that the other environments (micro-, meso- and exo-) are guided by cultural norms, values and beliefs.

The environmental levels are presented in Figure 2.1 showing where and how they each operate in the food choice process. They are then briefly defined and explicated as they pertain to the present study.

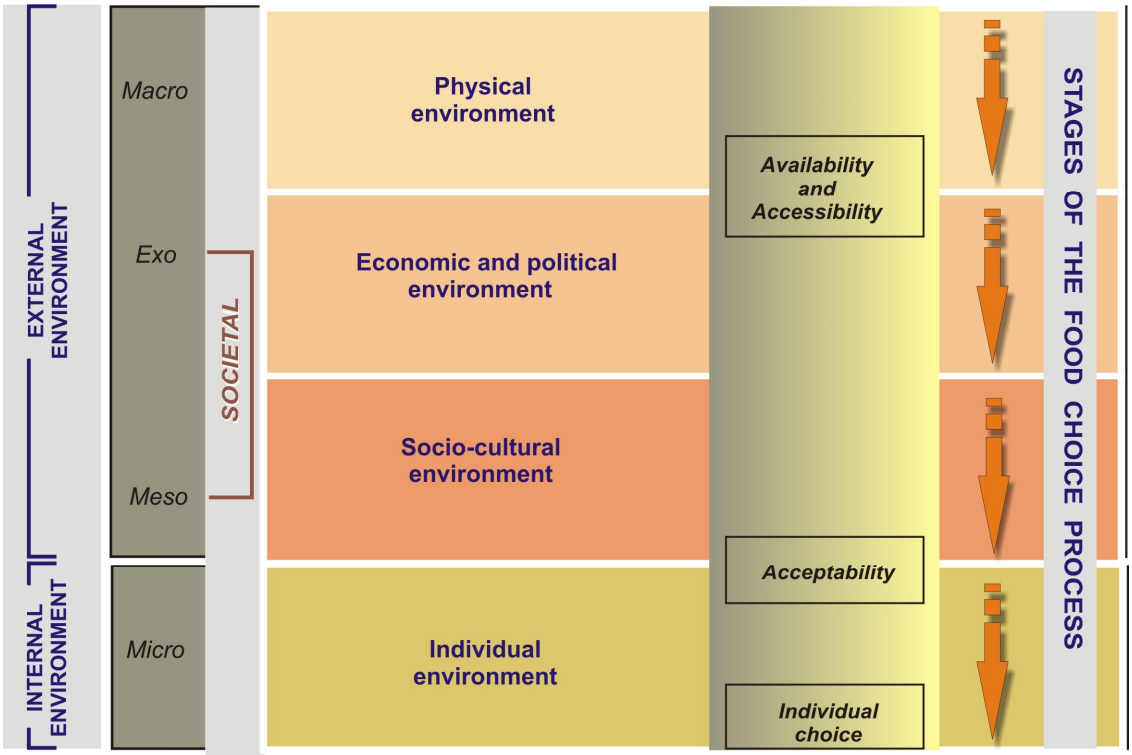

FIGURE 2.1: ENVIRONMENTAL LEVELS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FOOD CHOICE PROCESS (adapted from Fieldhouse (1995:27) and Sims-Smiciklas-Wright (1978))

2.3.1.1 Physical environment

The physical environment describes the natural and structural environment in which humans live. It refers to the natural-biological features of the environment such as the climate, soil and water resources, plant and animal life. This environment also includes the human-built environment. The physical environment determines what food is available for consumption and often creates both opportunities and constraints with regard to food availability in a specific area (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Anderson, 2005:86-89; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11).

From the available or potentially available food for human consumption as provided by the physical environment, certain underlying principles guide the final consumption choice. Issues such as affordability, together with cultural, socio-psychological and religious orientation, have a pervasive influence in determining what is available and acceptable for certain individuals or groups of individuals (Conner & Armitage, 2006:41; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:10; Conner & Armitage, 2002:1-3; Furst *et al.,* 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:27).

2.3.1.2 Economic and political environment

The economic and political environment encompasses the political and economic systems that determine the way in which production, distribution, exchange and consumption of all goods, including food products, are managed (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:13; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2). The political system refers to aspects such as governmental legislation, policies and controls that impact on production, processing and distribution. The economic system includes aspects such as income, the price of food, marketing strategies and consumer demand (Fieldhouse, 1995:26). People's access to food and other resources, and the capacity to exploit these resources, are largely determined by the forces present in the economic and political environment (Bryant *et al*., 2003:13).

2.3.1.3 Socio-cultural environment

The twin concept socio-cultural indicates that there is an interdependency and inseparability of the concepts, "social" and "cultural". In this regard Fieldhouse (1995:2) uses the early definition of culture by Tylor (1871) as explanation, namely that "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society." He argues that what is implied here is that there can be no culture apart from society and that culture describes the patterns of behaviour, and society refers to the people who participate in the culture. According to Coertze (1980:26), the term socio-cultural also implies the inseparability of people and their culture, because human beings create culture and yet are simultaneously products of culture. Similarly Ferraro (2001:25) explains that humans acquire culture only through the process of learning and interaction within their social environment. Societal behaviour, which is often unconscious behaviour, refers to the basic rules of living together on which a society (i.e. a social group) has agreed. The socio-cultural environment represents the complex interrelationships and interactions that exist among individuals, their culture and society. The socio-cultural environment provides a framework for the behaviour of a society including our food-related behaviour. Food is a cultural as well as a social object as explained by Steelman (1976:21): "Food is a cultural object in that knowledge, beliefs and customs surrounding food

are shared by members of a society and are passed on to succeeding generations. Food is a social object, also because behaviour surrounding food is often shared with other people". Food choice and food practices tend to be influenced by both social structures and social relationships that exist in a particular culture and people are often not conscious of the social rules that govern their food behaviour, and accept it as simply how things are done.

The concept culture consists of three structural components or sub-areas, namely, ideology, social organisation and technology (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:12, Hamilton, 1987). Ferraro (2001:22) aptly refers to these three components in his definition of culture as "everything that people **have, think** and **do** as members of a society" and views the three verbs as representing the components of culture, and summarises that "… all cultures comprise material objects; ideas, values, and attitudes; and patterned ways of behaving."

- **Ideology** According to Hamilton (1987:3) ideology "… is a set of cognitive rules, explicit and implicit, that helps and guides individuals in their behaviour; it defines good or bad, right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate". According to Ferraro (2001:22) ideology is regarded as "everything that people think" and this includes the ideas, values, and attitudes that people "carry around in their heads". In other words, it is the intangible parts of culture (Ferraro, 2006:23). In terms of food, ideology includes the values, attitudes beliefs, norms and meanings that groups of people share with regard to food and includes the symbolic meanings and associated values placed on specific foods (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:13; Fieldhouse, 1995:30).

- **Social organisation** According to Radcliffe-Brown cited in Hamilton (1987:3) social organisation is "… the continuing arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions, i.e. socially established norms or patterns of behaviour." Bryant *et al.*, (2003:12) give a similar description and explain that it is how "social groups organise its members into families, social strata, communities, and other groupings." This includes how relationships and work is organised, for example, according to age and gender. In this regard Ferraro (2006:19) refers to the normative or expected patterns of behaviour of people when he explains that people behave in certain socially prescribed ways as represented in what they do. How food is distributed and exchanged often serves as a reflection of the social relationships that are part of the social organisation in a group.

- **Technology** Hamilton (1987:3) describes technology as "the means used to satisfy bio-material needs" and defines it as the physical objects or material culture including the techniques for their use that are employed by humans in order to adapt to their

physical and social environments (Hamilton, 1987). Bryant *et al*. (2003:12) similarly regard technology as being represented in the knowledge, practices and tools that a group uses to meet their needs for shelter and subsistence. The explanation of technology in terms of food given by Pelto *et al*. (2000:2), ties in with these ideas. According to them technology includes "…the entire range of tools and techniques that are utilised for the production, distribution, acquisition, storage and preparation of food."

2.3.1.4 Socio-psychological environment

It is acknowledged that the socio-psychological and individual environments are rooted in the socio-cultural environment. The cultural background and past experiences of individuals are assumed to be reflected in their personal knowledge base, beliefs, values and attitudes and guide their behaviour which would also relate to food choice and food practices. The socio-psychological environment deals with how thoughts, feelings and behaviour impact on food choice and how the interaction with others in the social environment contributes to what is eaten. What is eaten could even be used as a way of understanding people (Conner & Armitage, 2002:2). The constructs of ideas and ideals are important components of the interpretation of the environmental levels used in this study.

- **Ideas** are represented in the ideation approach to culture, where culture is considered as a symbolic system composed of beliefs and their associated behaviours (Lett, 1987:58). Symbolic systems as part of culture thus represent the learned and shared meanings, both explicit and implicit, that people use to make sense of their lives (Hamilton, 1987:3).

- **Ideals** can be described as the benchmarks (points of reference and comparison) or standards used to judge and evaluate what is acceptable behaviour in daily life experiences, such as food practices, in a specific situation. These ideals are rooted in and derived from cultural and symbolic factors and could include aspects such as standards, norms, beliefs and expectations that are used in the food choice process (Furst *et al.*, 1996). Devine *et al.* (1999) similarly explain that ideals are often based on deeply held beliefs and expectations about food and eating that provide guidelines and rules for making food choices. Sobal *et al.* (2006:5) define ideals as the standards and norms that people have learned and use as a guide when making food choices including what and how one should eat. This includes which foods are acceptable and preferable for consumption as ascertained through cultural norms.

2.3.1.5 Assumptions of the human ecological perspective

In the application of the ecological perspective to family ecology, Bubolz and Sontag (1993:425-426) listed a number of assumptions that rest on the basic premises of this perspective. One of these deals with human interaction with the environment and the interdependence between the different parts and the ecosystem as a whole. This basic premise as well as those relating to the sustainability of life and the implied physical and psycho-social well-being of humans is relevant to the present study. The applicable assumptions derived from these premises follow, together with examples of how each could be related to or interpreted in terms of food and food practices.

1. All parts of the environment are interrelated and influence each other. The natural physical-biological environment provides the essential resource base for all life; it is impacted on by the social-cultural and human-built environments and also influences these environments.

   Example: The natural environment, especially the climate, soil conditions and available water resources, determines what food could be produced and cultivated. The human-built or "man-made" environment, including technological developments for the production/cultivation, processing, preservation and distribution of food, affects what food is made available for consumption. The social-cultural environment, comprising technology, social organisation and ideology, guides behaviour and indicates what specific foods, from those available, should be chosen, based on what is regarded as acceptable for consumption in the particular group to which the individual or group belongs (Bryant, *et al.,* 2003:10-13; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978:174).

2. Humans interact with multiple environments.

   In the example posed above, the many different environments that humans are in interaction with during the food choice process are mentioned. This complex interaction with various environments is illustrated in the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.3).

3. Humans respond to, change, develop, act on, and modify their environment. Adaptation is a continuous process in ecosystems.

Although the ability to adapt to different environments is a characteristic of humans for survival, humans do not simply adapt to the environment, but also respond to it by changing, developing, acting on and modifying it to obtain the desired outcomes (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:433). This implies that things do not stay the same and that humans have the ability to alter the environment. According to Bubolz and Sontag (1993:433), learning is an essential part of the process.

Example: The impact of the Industrial Revolution on humankind comes to mind: no other event has brought about, nor continues to effect changes in the way that people earn their living, the conditions of their material existence and the patterns of their daily lives, including their food patterns and the kind of food consumed. Industrialisation and the subsequent large-scale urbanisation influenced not only what people ate, but also when and where they ate it. This tendency still prevails today (Bryant *et al*., 2003: 60-62).

In response to the initial period of the Industrial Revolution, which was marked by appalling living conditions, poor nutrition, disease and death, technological advancements in transportation, refrigeration, food processing and preservation, later contributed to a remarkably improved diet, in quantity and quality, of the working class during the second half of the nineteenth century. The available food supply was modified and expanded. However, not only did the variety of foods increase but also the keeping quality and ease of preparation due to improvements in food preservation techniques, a trend that continues even now. The large number and increased variety of convenience food available to the modern time-poor consumer is another example of how humans adapt to changing circumstances by modifying and developing new food products to suit their present life-style.

4. Interactions between humans and environments are guided by two sets of rules, the physical and biological laws of nature, and human-derived rules. According to Bubolz and Sontag (1993:426), the human ecological perspective requires that both set of rules be considered.

   Example: One of the laws of nature dictates that all living organisms need food for survival. The human need for food for survival and sustenance thus guides human interaction with the natural physical-biological environment to cultivate and produce food for human consumption.

The social norms that relate to the use and allocation of resources, role expectations and distribution of power are examples of human-derived rules (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:426).

Example: In traditional Zulu communities the meat of a slaughtered beast was apportioned to the different age and gender groups according to certain social rules (Bryant, 1967:266; Krige, 1965:56). Senior members in the group would receive the best quality (softer) and tastier sections.

5. Environments do not determine human behaviour, but pose constraints as well as possibilities and opportunities for humans.

   Environments could either restrict or enhance the well-being of individuals. Bubolz and Sontag (1993:433) point out two important aspects with regard to the environment that have to be kept in mind. First, the "adequacy of the environment and the range of choices perceived by individuals depend on their resources, needs, values and management plan"; and second, legislation and policies could determine access to opportunities for employment, education, goods and services.

   Example: The natural-physical environment as determined by the climate, soil and water resources, plant and animal life, as well as other features such as topography, all have a significant impact on human food choice and dietary patterns. Since the natural and climatic conditions of the natural-physical environment of different regions are not the same, the kind of food that could be cultivated, varies. People usually eat the foods that are readily obtainable in their environment, and consequently acquire a taste and preference for such available foods including the methods employed in their preparation (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11). For example, the natural environment in the Arctic regions is not suitable for the cultivation of crops, however, many animals and fish are available for consumption. The Copper Eskimo who live at 69°N within the Arctic Circle zone, traditionally never obtained their food from plants but, through the opportunities and constraints offered by their natural environment, they acquired a preference for consuming an entire animal, including its entrails and organs. These organs provided the essential vitamins and minerals acquired from the meat of the available animals (Bryant *et al*., 2003:127-128).]

   In the South African context, legislation and policies during the *apartheid* era for example, determined the access for many people to goods and services such as

electricity. The lack or limited access to electricity in some areas determined the food preparation and storage methods used in households.

2.3.2 Cultural perspective and assumptions

The cultural perspective is based on theories and concepts from a variety of human sciences including anthropology, consumer behaviour, ethnic studies, cultural studies, semiotics, sociology and women's studies (Kaiser, 1997:48).

In the newer, interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture the symbolic realm of social life is addressed, where the study of cultural forms and social relations as related to the historical and contemporary value systems or ideologies that characterise a cultural group, are included (Kaiser, 1997:25). This approach incorporates a strong focus on the expressive culture, or the artefacts or products of culture. This perspective accommodates a description of the meaning of the material artefacts of a group as they have developed over time. There is an interest in how, and why, certain cultural artefacts are produced and used. Whenever people share a common culture they are likely to be exposed to a network of tangible products. The cultural perspective also deals with the signification or the development of meaning associated with cultural objects. It is not only the product that results in signification, but also the way people relate to these products and what they do to, or with it. A fundamental idea behind the cultural perspective, derived from semiotics, is that the perceiver of a cultural message is a vital part of the process of gaining meaning, in the way that he/she actively or passively participates in the process.

In her excellent book "The Socio-psychology of Clothing", Susan Kaiser (!997), uses clothing and appearance as field of application to explain human behaviour. For the purpose of this study the assumptions as posed by Kaiser (1997:49-54) are used in a similar manner for guidance in an attempt to understand human food-related behaviour.

The assumptions of the cultural perspective, according to Kaiser (1997:49-54), are given and made applicable to the study area of foods. Examples to illustrate how each assumption could be interpreted are included.

1. Collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms.

   These include material forms such as food, and relationships, as portrayed through the use of food, for example, to underline the position/status of a person. This assumption implies that food as material artefact represents shared values within a

culture that are linked to the belief system of the culture. This suggests that food communicates symbolic meanings.

Example: Bread is an excellent example of how food could be used as a symbol to portray various symbolic meanings. Bread is often referred to as the "staff" of life. In this instance bread represents food and sustenance. Another example often used, refers to the "breaking bread" with family and/or friends. Here the breaking of the bread symbolises the gesture of intimacy and friendship between family and friends enjoying a meal together. Bread also represents the body of Christ in the Christian sacrament of Communion (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:3), but the rite of sharing the bread during Communion also symbolises unity in Christ.

2. Cultural beliefs and values tend to be perpetuated when they are represented on a relatively unconscious level.

   Ideology (the principal beliefs and values) may be reflected in everyday objects, such as food customs, that people do not question and that they interpret with relative ease because of their shared meanings. For the duration of time that the custom is followed, the values underlying the custom are perpetuated.

   Example: In the instance of some of the indigenous groups in South Africa, the last sip of beer is always poured on the ground in honour of the ancestors. It is believed that it would keep the ancestors happy and when they are happy good fortune would be ensured for the living relatives of the ancestors. The beer as message maintains the belief and value.

3. People have the potential to transform their own realities by manipulating the objects in their cultural world.

   Objects, ideas and images provided by culture could be used in imaginative ways. They may be reorganised or combined in new ways. In this way cultural conventions may be applied in new ways or may be broken or bent to help the individual make sense of reality.

   Example: The explanation why Tswana females of childbearing age are not allowed to eat eggs, as documented by Grivetti (1978:1214), is an excellent example of how the reasons given for a cultural tradition are altered according to the situation. The following explanations have been recorded:

- Undesirable adolescent pregnancy: Girls who consume eggs will conceive at an early age and will therefore be unable to properly care for their babies.
- Maternal and child health: If eggs are consumed the mother will have a difficult labour and the child may die of impaired breathing.
- Based on homeopathy: If the mother eats eggs and has a successful delivery, the child will always annoy the family by making silly noises at dawn in imitation of the domestic cock.
- Fear of sterility: An argument that is used to scare adolescents and younger girls who look forward to marriage and having a family.

4. Culture provides abstract pictures or representations of social life.

   People experience their lives within a larger culture at many levels, from the practical to the imaginary. A cultural approach, drawing from the principles of semiotics, provides a framework for interpreting cultural images, dreams, fantasies and stories that allow people a means for escape or making sense of who they are and what they are doing.

   Example: Foods are classified or categorised in order to help people make sense of this world. Categorisation could, for example, be based on pre-scientific understandings of the interrelationships between food and disease, or the socio-cultural uses of foods (Bryant, *et al.*, 2003: 221; Fieldhouse, 1995:49). In some traditional communities food is categorised according to food for specific age and gender groups, and certain physiological conditions such as menstruation, pregnancy and lactation. The classification could also be based on the foods' actual or imagined properties or on their supposed effect on the body or on a disease process. Meat and red wine are regarded as masculine while light salads could either represent feminine or healthy food. Peanut butter is grouped as food for children and olives as food suitable for adults (Parraga, 1990).

5. People use codes to decipher the meanings of cultural representations of social life.

   A semiotic approach to cultural representations entails finding the cultural meanings that lie beneath the surface of messages. This approach also assumes that the world is coded and that meaning can be found in everyday cultural objects as well as in abstract cultural representations. Kaiser (1997:221) explains that codes are rules of association or they can be underlying patterns provided by culture similar to protocol or etiquette. Therefore it is not a concrete object itself, but rather an abstract pattern,

a type of cultural knowledge that forms the taken-for-granted reality of a culture. Codes guide the way symbolic materials are patterned so as to shape the creation and re-creation of culture.

Example: The following example indicates how different codes give rise to different interpretations of a situation. In traditional African households meals are served according to prescribed etiquette rules. Large portions of food are dished out to visitors and it is considered rude to eat everything on the plate as this is seen as the host not having supplied enough food. It is therefore considered etiquette to always leave a portion of food on the plate to indicate that the host has provided enough food. In the Western-oriented culture a clean plate after a meal indicates that the guest has enjoyed the food. The host considers the guest's acceptance of a second portion as a compliment to the host's culinary skills. In the first example, if the guest has to ask for, or accepts a second portion the host is considered stingy.

2.3.3 Symbolic interactionism perspective and assumptions

Charon (1998:12) describes symbolic interactionism as a perspective in social psychology that focuses on the human being in social interaction and that tries to understand human behaviour. A similar description is given by Kaiser (1997:39) who explains that it "is a perspective that pursues the study of social actions and social objects." Sandstrom *et al.* (2006:1) add to these by explaining symbolic interactionism as a perspective in social psychology that is concerned with the meanings that people give to actions and events including how these meanings are constructed and negotiated. Symbolic interactionism has at its core the link between symbols (i.e. shared meanings) and interactions (i.e. verbal and non-verbal actions and communication). Charon (1998:41) relates symbols to all that is human and points out that the symbol is the central concept of the perspective and that every individual depends on society to provide these symbols. It is useful for understanding how humans, in interaction with one another, create symbolic worlds and how these are used to shape human behaviour and maintain social order (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993: 135-136).

Symbolic interactionism also stresses the process by which the individual makes decisions and forms opinions. The particular situation concerned determines the form of the interaction that emerges (Wallace & Wolf, 1980).

An example from an Ndembu ritual as described by Turner (1967:20-25) serves to indicate how the assumptions from the symbolic interactionism perspective could apply to this study and guide interpretation. The symbolic interactionism rests on seven assumptions that reflect

three central themes. The first theme deals with the importance of meanings for human behaviour in social interaction; the second theme with the development of a self-concept, and the third theme relates to assumptions on society (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:143-144; Blumer, 1969:2-6). The assumptions derived from the first and third theme are applicable to the present study and are illustrated by using examples from the Ndembu female puberty ritual with the exception of the last example.

The first theme deals with the importance of meanings for human behaviour and is based on Blumer's premises as described in Blumer (1969:2-3).

1. Human beings react to things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Symbols are often used to define or represent the meanings.

   Example: At the Nkang'a, the puberty ritual of the Ndembu girl of Zambia, the milk tree is a dominant symbol. The *Diplorrhyncus condylocarpon* exudes a milky latex liquid. This obvious resemblance to milk resulted in various associations with human milk, its physical appearance, nutritional value as well as the nurturing bond between mother and baby. At the highest level of abstraction the milk tree stands for unity and continuity of the society. It is therefore no longer an ordinary tree but stands for tribal custom itself and is respected as such (Turner, 1967:20-21).

2. Meaning arises in the process of interaction between people.

   Meaning is a social product; it is created and not "inherent in things" – meanings therefore arise from the process of interaction between people, and are not a given, or passively received. Each person must learn, discover or develop an independent meaning (Charon, 1998:61; Wallace & Wolf, 1980:239). In this regard Sandstrom *et al*. (2006:7) emphasise that meanings are not simply learned through experiences, but are learnt through interaction with others. If we are to understand social interactions and meanings, the viewpoints of the different people in a situation should be taken into account. One context gives rise to a new context and in this way meaning changes. Symbolic interactionism accepts change and fluctuation in meanings as normal, because humans are creative and dynamic as they attempt to construct meaningful lives for themselves and others with whom they are connected. Within this fluctuation there are strands of continuity that seem to influence ongoing actions and social order.

Example: The milk tree can again serve as an example. Meaning can be identified at different levels of abstraction as it develops over time during the rituals. At a first level of abstraction the white juice of the tree stands for milk, at the next level of abstraction it stands for human breast milk. The third level describes the social tie between the mother and her child, and moves on to the next level of abstraction where it stands for the values of social organisation where the tree symbolises matrilinear descent, the principle on which the continuity of Ndembu people depends. It also stands for social order and structure in the Ndembu social life. It stands for tribal custom itself as it symbolises the total system of interrelations between groups and persons. At the highest level of abstraction, the milk tree stands for unity and continuity of the Ndembu society (Turner, 1967:20-21).

3. Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things encountered.

   Individuals do not just respond directly to their environment but interpret reality through the symbols and the shared social meanings of their culture. Once symbols are learned, the individual is able to use the vantage point of the generalised other to negotiate the specific meanings of self, others and the social setting (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:143). Blumer (1969:5) explains that the individuals have to point out to themselves the meaning of the objects towards which they are acting. This is an internalising social process. Through this process of communicating with oneself interpretation becomes a way of handling meanings. The individual in this process selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings according to the experienced situation and the direction of the chosen action. Therefore, according to Blumer (1969:5), interpretation should not be regarded as a mere application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action.

   Example: The milk tree can again be used as an example. The Ndembu learns what the milk tree stands for through the process of social interaction in the tribe. For the Ndembu woman the tree represents harmonious dependence. The child depends on the mother for nourishment. The Ndembu tribesman also equate nourishment and learning to the milk tree. The milk tree is compared to going to school where the tree equals the process of instruction in tribal matters, which follow after the initiation ceremony, under the milk tree. Being part of this socialisation process, the Ndembu girl evaluates and accepts herself in terms of the respective beliefs and values (Turner, 1967:22).

The third theme relates to symbolic interactionism assumptions about society.

4. Individuals and small groups are influenced by larger cultural and societal processes.

   Symbolic interactionists recognise that individual behaviour is constrained by societal norms and values (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:144). Social interaction is a process that shapes human conduct and, as explained by Blumer (1969:8), humans take into account what others are doing or about to do. They are therefore forced to direct their own conduct or handle a situation in terms of what is taken into account. In the process of considering the actions of others the individual may abandon an intention or purpose, revise it, check or suspend it, intensify it or replace it. Their own line of activity is fitted in some way or other into the actions of others.

   Examples: In societies such as the tribal Ndembu, individuals submit themselves to the rituals without questioning them.

5. It is through social interaction in everyday situations that individuals work out the details of social structure.

   Symbolic interactionism emphasises that social structure is dynamic and challenges the static view of the structural functionalists that social structure determines behaviour (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:144). Blumer (1969:6-7) explains that social position, status, role, authority and prestige represent social structure. This refers to the relationships that emerge from how people act toward each other during interaction. In any human society this is an ongoing process of fitting together the activities of its members. Structure and organisation is established and portrayed by this ongoing dynamic process.

   Examples: Generally, eating with someone is an indication of social equality between those who do so. In some traditional communities men may, however, eat separately from women and children. This act of eating together with only other males, not only establishes their class relationship towards each other; but also between them and women and children (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:5).

In addition to these three identified theoretical perspectives, and following Siebold's (2002) suggestion, various other theories and theoretical models were used to guide the analysis and enhance the interpretation and understanding of the food practices of the study group. These are dealt with separately in the next section.

2.3.4 Theoretical models

Two theoretical models considered useful to understanding and explaining the process of change in food practices are the developmental model of food culture and the dietary acculturation model. An explication of these two theoretical models follows.

2.3.4.1 The developmental model of food culture[13]

The developmental model of culture accentuates that, to be able to understand contemporary cultural forms and patterns, requires that the social processes that influence change be taken into account. A fundamental characteristic of human societies and their culture is change which reflects its dynamic nature (Ferraro, 2001:29; Pelto & Vargas, 1992). As an integral part of culture, food practices too are simultaneously undergoing development and change. Over the past two centuries practically all populations in the world have experienced dramatic changes in the food they consume and in their eating patterns (Bryant *et al*., 2003;62-72; Sobal, 2000; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269). In this process, humans employ various adaptation mechanisms to enable them to meet their basic need for food. In this regard, Pelto *et al*. (2000:3) consider socio-cultural adaptations as the most common and rapid means of responding to environmental change. The socio-cultural adaptations are seen to involve both behavioural and technological innovations that are collectively described as socio-cultural processes (Pelto *et al.,* 2000:6).

Contemporary changes in food consumption and their patterns world-wide are therefore attributed to large-scale, ongoing socio-cultural processes. According to publications by author Gretel Pelto, various labels such as globalisation, modernisation, delocalisation, industrialisation, progress and acculturation are often used to describe these processes (Pelto *et al*., 2000: 6; Pelto & Pelto, 2000: 270). Although delocalisation has various different facets it is agreed that, overall, it is the shift from local autonomy to increased dependence on a distant and often worldwide system of resources (Sobal, 2000:3; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:40). Pelto and Pelto (2000: 269) aptly describe delocalisation as the "processes in which food varieties, production methods, and consumption patterns are disseminated throughout the world in an ever-increasing and intensifying network of socio-economic and political interdependency."

[13] This model was originally put forward by Sobal (2000) to analyse how social dynamics impact on food and eating. In a later publication Kittler and Sucher (2004:11-12) referred to it as the "developmental perspective of food culture". According to the hierarchical order of knowledge as explained by Mouton (1996:180) this is strictly speaking a model and in this study it will be referred to as the developmental model of food culture.

In terms of food, a central feature of delocalisation is the greater dependence on commercial food sources in comparison with previous times. This means that food, energy and services that were previously provided and available within the local setting are now transformed into market exchange commodities. This implies that most of the food consumed reaches the consumer through commercial channels. It is further pointed out that, in industrialised nations, delocalisation is associated with an increase in the diversity of available food, whereas in the less industrialised countries of the world delocalisation tends to have the opposite effect. Many developing countries are still primarily dependent on locally produced food supplies (Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:41). The transformation from a subsistence economy to a market economy, together with the introduction of new technologies and the migration of people are all part of the process (Pelto *et al*., 2000:6).

According to Pelto and Pelto (2000:269) three fundamental developments contribute to the basic food-use change process. The first relates to the world-wide distribution of domesticated plant and animal varieties. Fresh strawberries could serve as example here, as this traditionally seasonal fruit has become available any time of the year due to a worldwide network of producers and suppliers (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11).

The second development deals with the rise of increasingly complex, international food distribution networks and the growth of food processing industries. Advances in food accessibility for example, have been made possible through developments in the storage and preservation methods of food such as heat processing, preservation and packaging, while modern techniques employed in retailing and advertising have also significantly enhanced the status of the food industry as have technological improvements in transportation and refrigeration facilities stimulated the rise of commercial food distribution networks (Bryant *et al*., 2003: 63-65, 68: Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:34-40, 66; Southgate, 1996: 380-382)..

The third development concerns the migration of people from rural to urban locations, and from one continent to another. This contributes not only to the adaptation, and often exchange of culinary and dietary techniques, but also introduces another dimension, that of altered food preferences and the transfer of food knowledge (Pelto & Pelto, 2000:273).

Each of these developments has been strongly affected by national and international economic and political actions, over and above those of a more cultural and religious nature. The most pervasive of all these is the development of new technologies of which modern food processing technologies, together with advances in transportation and communication

technologies are the most significant (Bryant *et al.*, 2003: 63-66; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:272; Southgate,1996: 380-382).

The developmental model of food culture as described by Kittler and Sucher (2008:11-12), which is largely based on the model of social dynamics and food culture by Sobal (2000), offers a conceptual model to show how the socio-cultural processes described above are paralleled by trends in food and food consumption patterns. Figure 2.2 portrays the food culture changes that tend to occur during structural change where development aims at the Western model.

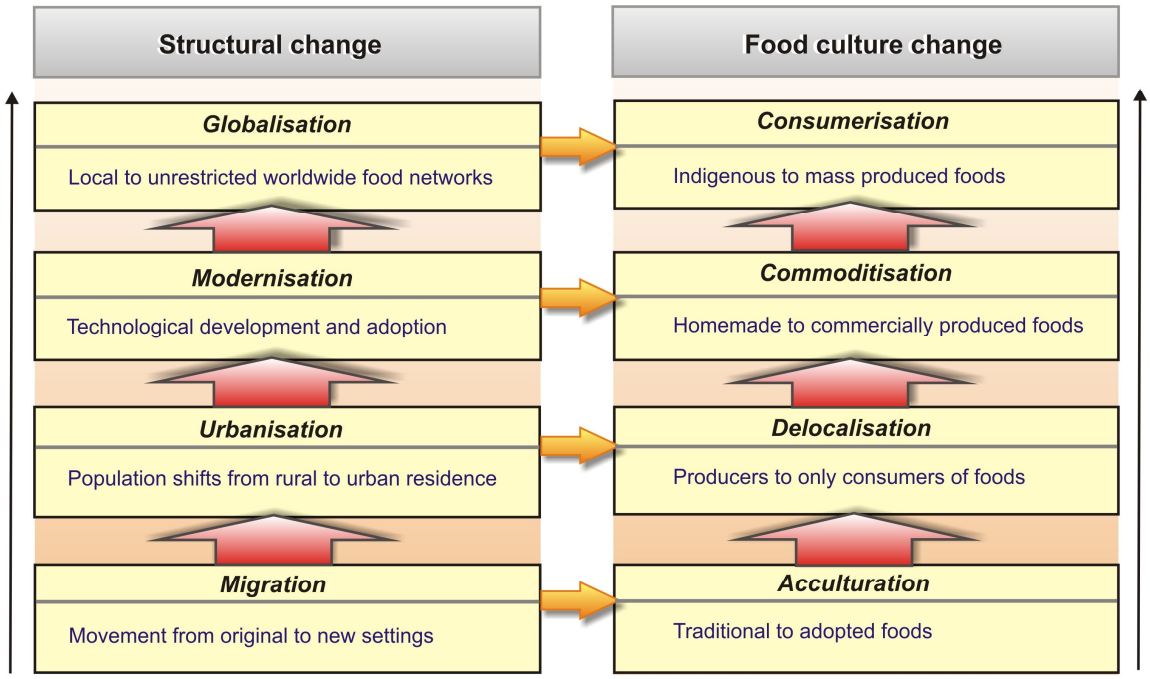

FIGURE 2.2: DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF FOOD CULTURE (Adapted from Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:7)

Socio-cultural processes lead to structural changes in society, which, in turn, influence food consumption patterns. Sobal (2000:3) explains these as a system of structural and cultural changes that should be viewed as a complex system of interrelated processes that operate together to result in "development" as societies move from traditional to modern ways of life. Similarly, Kittler and Sucher (2008:11) pose the assumption that cultures progress from being underdeveloped to becoming developed by means of engaging in these structural changes. Each of the structural changes and the paralleled change in food culture is briefly explained.

The first identified structural change of **migration** occurs when people move from their original place of residence to settle in a new location that could be in another region, urban area or country. New cultural contacts are created, and eventually the prolonged contact with the other culture(s) results in **acculturation**. Acculturation of food practices results from the introduction and acceptance of foods from other cultural groups and a movement from the original or traditional foods to the adopted foods. These food items are often incorporated into the traditional, original cuisine of the migrants, giving rise to the emergence of new culinary traditions and traits from this contact (Kittler and Sucher, 2008:12; Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 1999b; Cwiertka, 1998).

Kittler and Sucher (2008:12) define **urbanisation** as taking place "when a large percentage of the population abandons the low density of rural residence in favour of higher density suburban or urban residence." These population shifts often mean that those previously involved in subsistence agriculture now become dependent on others for food that they can only procure if they have the necessary financial resources. This shift from producing food for own consumption to being dependent on commercial channels to provide daily food needs, is referred to as **delocalisation** in the food culture change process (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269; Sobal, 2000:3).

Modernisation is the structural change that encompasses technological development and the adoption of these new technologies. This contributes not only to changes in the material culture but often also in cultural, social, economic and political shifts (Bryant *et al*., 2003:61; Sobal, 2000:2). The Industrial Revolution and subsequent ongoing industrialisation led to changes not only in food production and processing but also in food preparation methods and consumption patterns (Pelto *et al*., 2000:6; Sobal, 2000:2). In response to these material transformations brought about by modernisation, major changes in social structures as well as cultural beliefs, values and behaviours took place (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:2). **Commoditisation** is the associated food culture change that arose from modernising the entire food chain from the production, processing, marketing to the distribution of food, including its preparation and consumption, through the application of advanced technologies (Sobal, 2000:2). Food thus became an economic object and treated by producers, industry and retailers as a commodity instead of an item for sustenance (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:3).

Lastly, the fourth identified structural change of **globalisation** refers to the wide distribution of food products (often modified by advanced preservation techniques) around the world (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:70). This, according to Kittler and Sucher (2008:11), brings about the integration of food products produced at local, regional and national level into an unrestricted

worldwide network. In terms of food culture change, this leads to **consumerisation**, which refers to the transition of a society from being producers and consumers of indigenous foods to become mainly consumers of mass- produced foods (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:3). People therefore become dependent on multinational corporations and mass production in the food industry who dominate the world food markets (Bryant *et al*., 2003:71).

As the first two structural changes of urbanisation and migration are prominent in the South African context, and because of the impact of acculturation on food culture change, it is deemed necessary to conceptualise acculturation and briefly reflect on the process of acculturation and how it applies to food practices.

2.3.4.2 Dietary acculturation

Acculturation, according to the classic definition in anthropology by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits in Jun, Ball and Gentry (1993:76) encompasses "… those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes taking place in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups." Els's (1993:19) succinct description captures a similar understanding of acculturation in that he too views it as a process, emphasising that it is selected cultural elements that are involved in and contribute to changing cultural patterns.

It needs to be kept in mind, as Lee, Sobal and Frongillo (1999a) point out, that acculturation is a multidimensional process of adaptation by groups and individuals to a new society. This adaptation deals with changes relating to cultural, social, psychological, economic and political dimensions. A similar description is given by Park, Paik, Skinner, Ok and Spindler (2003) who state that "acculturation is a long-term process in which individuals modify or abandon certain aspects of their original culture as they adopt patterns of the new culture."

In the above definitions, it is implied that acculturation is a process that results in changes at the population and group level and various researchers distinguish between them (Satia-Abouta, Patterson, Neuhouser & Elder, 2002; Jun *et al.,* 1993; Segall *et al*., 1990:295). Berry (in Jun *et al.,* 1993) bases the distinction on the different phenomena at each of the two levels. At the population level, changes in the social structure, economic base and political organisation take place, whereas at the individual level, changes in behaviour, identity, values and attitudes occur. The process of acculturation could therefore be regarded as a process of adaptation by specific people to a changed or changing environment (Lee *et al.,* 1999a; Lee *et al.,* 1999b; Els, 1993:19). Satia-Abouta *et al.* (2002) describe acculturation at the individual level as the micro or "psychological" level and refer to dietary changes in

attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours at this level. At the macro or group level, acculturation results, according to them, in physical, biological, political, economic and cultural change in the acculturating group or in the society as a whole. This view is in accordance with the ecological systems perspective and the model proposed by Segall (1979:186) that implies reciprocity and interaction between the individual and the various environments. When dealing with the development of food patterns, the same interconnectedness of the different environments applies, as change or development in one environment eventually affects the others (Pelto *et al.*, 2000:2).

Food practice, as part of the cultural pattern of a group, is therefore included in the process of acculturation. Some researchers in the field of nutrition use the term dietary acculturation when describing the acculturation process concerning food. The description by Satia-Abouta *et al*. (2002), for example, describes dietary acculturation as the process that occurs "when members of a cultural group adopt the eating patterns and food choices of another group." Similar to other domains in the process of acculturation, it is multidimensional, dynamic and complex. The process of dietary acculturation must also not be assumed to be a linear process that moves toward one of the opposite poles of being either acculturated or unacculturated, but should rather be viewed as a non-linear trend over time (Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 2003; Satia-Abouta *et al*., 2002; Jun *et al.,* 1993:77). The relationship between these sets of factors is portrayed in Figure 2.3.

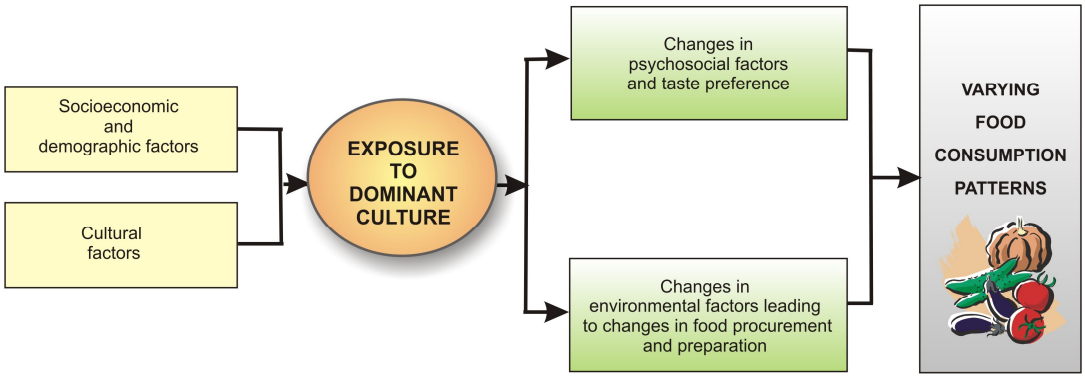

FIGURE 2.3: DIETARY ACCULTURATION MODEL (adapted from Satia-Abouta *et al.,* 2002)

In the dietary acculturation model proposed by Satia-Abouta *et al.* (2002) based on research conducted with immigrants, the complex and dynamic relationship that exists between the socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors with exposure to the host or dominant

culture, contributes to the degree of change in food consumption patterns. These different sets of factors seem to predict the extent to which the migrants may change their attitudes and beliefs about food, including their taste preferences, as well as their food purchasing and preparation practices. The food consumption patterns that result from these changes, according to Satia-Abouta *et al*. (2002), could then vary between maintaining the traditional eating patterns and varying degrees of adoption of the eating patterns of the host culture group.

Based on the theoretical perspectives and models described, a conceptual framework suitable to guide the investigation on the food practices and meanings attached to it for the South African context was compiled.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In Figure 2.4 the conceptual framework developed for the study is presented.

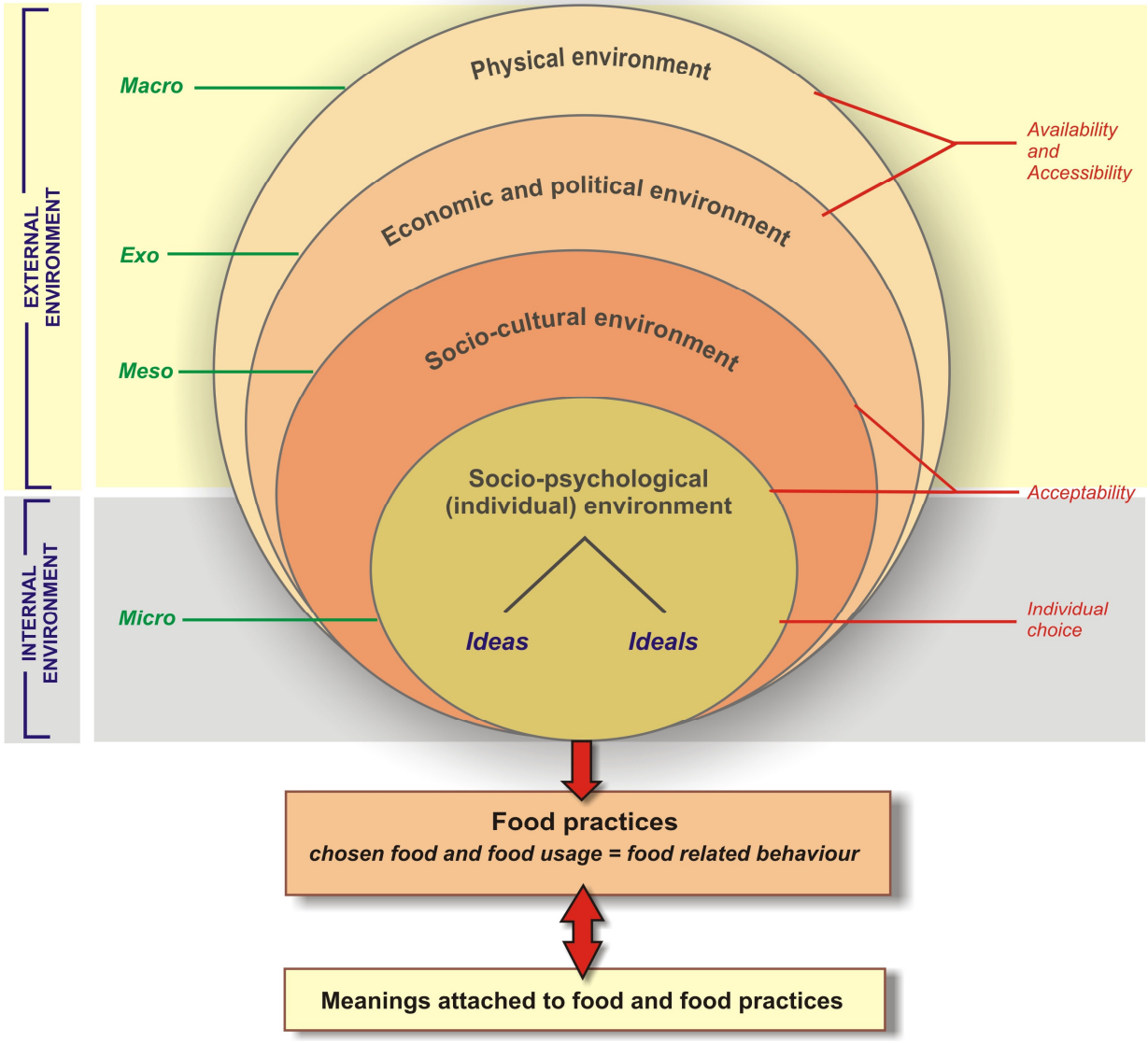

FIGURE 2.4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework depicts the different ecological environmental levels and indicates where each operates in the food choice process from the broad macro-environmental to the micro-environmental level. Included are the different sets of interrelated and interdependent factors from these environments that contribute to food practices. The clusters or sets of factors are grouped together to facilitate a logical argument, and it is acknowledged that each environment and/or set of factors operates at different stages in the food choice process and in food practices. It should, therefore, be kept in mind that a particular factor or set of factors does not operate exclusively at one environmental level neither are all factors identified of equal importance to all individuals or groups of individuals in all contexts. The constant human interaction with and interdependency of the different environments at each level is implied – nested in each other. A multifaceted matrix is thus formed through the interrelationships and interdependency of the various environments and their related

components during the food choice process and subsequent food practices of an individual or a group. This underscores the complexity attached to human food choice and food practices.

Three theoretical perspectives, as fully analysed in section 2.3, were selected to aid in explaining and/or understanding the food practices of the study group and the meanings attached to the food practices in different contexts. Each of the theoretical perspectives operates at specific environmental levels to augment the understanding of the meaning of the food practices that emerge from different contexts. Where and how each theoretical perspective and model fits/slots into the conceptual framework is explained.

The **human ecological perspective** is the overarching theoretical perspective and reinforces the interacting dynamics that take place between individuals or groups and the environmental forces in the different environmental levels ranging from the micro to the macro setting in which they engage. Moreover, its dynamic nature also allows one to consider the relative changes that occur over time and, in this regard, links with the cultural perspective. Above all, it acknowledges that human beings and the different environments in which they exist form a unity and ought to be studied as such to promote a holistic understanding of human behaviour. This perspective is therefore appropriate to the exploration, interpretation and understanding of food choice and food practices in different contexts and over time.

The **cultural perspective** provides a useful framework to describe human behaviour as mirrored in the behaviour of the group or society over time and is used mainly at the socio-cultural and individual environmental levels. This perspective leads one to consider the meaning attached to food and food practices as they have developed and evolved over time. This implies that the past influences the present and the present the future.

The **symbolic interactionism perspective** focuses mainly on the individual level and offers a perspective that deals with the meanings that emerge from the interaction that individuals and groups have with one another. It particularly assists in understanding the human behaviour that results from these interactions. It therefore seems appropriate to apply the premises of the symbolic interactionism to describe the meaning attached to food; the role of food as a symbol in its own right and how food has obtained symbolic meaning; what meanings are attached to food in different contexts; and how food obtains new meanings with new or ongoing interactions with other groups.

To understand the dynamics and changes taking place at the socio-cultural environmental level the theoretical model of food culture change and the process model of dietary acculturation theory were selected to facilitate the interpretation and understanding of the dynamic nature of human food practices.

2.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In this chapter, food practices and the embedded food choice process and the meanings attached to food and food practices were introduced and conceptualised as the main concepts of the study. The theoretical perspectives and models selected to develop the devised conceptual framework that guided the study have been justified, explained and presented. The theme of Chapter 3 is the methodology used to collect the data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design and the process followed to achieve the research goal and objectives of the study. The rationale for selecting a qualitative research methodology is justified and the role of the researcher as research instrument and the competencies required to conduct a qualitative study, are reviewed. Apart from the methods and techniques employed to collect and analyse the data, the data capturing and analysis procedures are rationalised and briefly explained.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

As explained in the previous Chapter (see 2.2.1), food practice is a complex process and necessitates a holistic and contextual approach to uncover the factors that contribute to food practices. This, in itself, requires an in-depth knowledge of food selection processes to better understand the food practices of a group in a specific situation and context. To realise the overall goal of the study of describing and understanding how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of a South African community, requires that the various facets of the problem as illustrated in the conceptual framework be taken into account in the study's research design.

Therefore to understand the events, actions, processes and meanings surrounding food practices in their context, indicates that the idiographic research strategy is the most appropriate for this study. The idiographic or contextual strategy examines a single or specific event or case within its own context in order to understand it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:272). According to Neuman (2000:511), this approach enables the researcher to obtain "detailed descriptions of specific events in particular time periods and settings" which is similar to the view of Mouton (1996: 133) and Geertz (1975:6) that the aim of this approach is to produce extensive "thick descriptions" of the phenomenon in its specific context. Following advice from the literature (Janesick, 2000:382; Neuman, 2000:146), the researcher studies the social setting or context to be able to fully appreciate the meaning that the participants themselves attach to the context they experience.

Furthermore, the research goal suggests that this study concerns the food practices of a group of people that warrant being described and understood as well. In order to uncover the meanings that an individual or a group attaches to their food practices it is required that the opinions of those who engage in these food practices, be sought. It is their perspective of the phenomenon of food practices as manifest in their food-related behaviour of food choice and usage that requires investigation. The qualitative research approach is well suited to capture how people view, experience and interpret their own world (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Janesick, 2000:382). A qualitative approach as Schwandt (2000:200) emphasises, is based on “a profound concern with understanding what other human beings are doing or saying”. In this study the researcher therefore in the first instance seeks to understand the different contexts in which the food practices of the study group take place and how the people themselves understand and interpret the meanings they attach to these contexts and their typical food customs. In the second instance the researcher strives to attain a holistic overview of all the factors that contribute to the complexity and dynamic nature of food practices. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) stresses that qualitative researchers need to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

When considering a qualitative study, two important issues arise. First, it needs to be kept in mind that findings from such a study cannot be generalised to larger populations or other contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272; Mouton, 1996:133). However, they can be transferred to another context, depending on the richness or “thickness” of the description of the findings. Second, the design of the study is developed as “an emergent design” during the course of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:275). The qualitative research design is therefore not, as is the case in quantitative research, a fixed step-by-step plan, but allows the qualitative researcher to “create the design best suited“ it as the research progresses (Fouché & Delport, 2005: 83). This flexibility in the design of qualitative studies allows the researcher to adapt and make changes to the research design when needed, in order to refine and extend it, thus enabling the researcher to uncover information about humans and their ever changing social worlds (Fouché, 2005:269; Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275,279; Neuman, 2000:122-123).

The ethnographic research design is the most appropriate design for this study that strives to capture and understand the food practices of the study group and the meanings attached to them. The core of ethnography is to understand the meaning of people’s actions and events (Spradley, 1979:5). Ethnography therefore, provides a detailed account of how people experience life in a particular culture, and includes how the values, beliefs and social rules are used in the process, apart from aspects such as typical activities, technology, ways of

communication and meaning-making. This provides an opportunity for researchers, over a period of time, to learn from those they are studying in order to reach a better understanding of their beliefs, motivations and behaviours (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:42; Tedlock, 2000:470). It actually enables the researcher to uncover the complex meaning systems that are representative of their culture and behaviour. This total picture then portrays how people construct their own social world or reality, through their own interpretations of it, and through actions based on these interpretations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:10,11).

The task of the researcher is then not only to capture people's ways of life in the form of research data, but also, as Tedlock (2000:455) explains, "Ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context. It is not simply the production of new information or research data, but rather the way in which such information or data are transformed into a written or visual form. As a result, it combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personal situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives. As an inscription practice, ethnography is a continuation of fieldwork rather than a transparent record of past experiences in the field."

Qualitative researchers, in their quest to understand the way of life of others, strive to give an insider perspective of those they are studying, the "emic" perspective as opposed to an outsider or "etic" perspective, where outsiders award meaning to events and experiences from different viewpoints (Henning *et al.*, 2004:44). One of the larger goals of ethnography, according to Spradley (1979:232), is to give a holistic, "emic" description of life. In the same way, Tedlock (2000:471) argues that humans, as the object and subject of an inquiry, "… exist in multiple strata of reality …". This viewpoint implies that humans not only exist in the realm of meaning, but also live and function in various other environments from whence the realm of real meaning emerges. Although Tedlock (2000:471) uses the term "material and organic strata" her explanation implies a holistic approach and "strata" in her exposition could be equated with the different human ecological environments. Ethnology, as research design, is thus also compatible with the human ecological perspective, chosen as the overarching theoretical perspective for this study.

Before proceeding to a detailed description of the methodology, the pivotal role of the researcher in a qualitative study will be spelt out. The researcher, as link between the research design and the collection of the empirical evidence, performs the role of research instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:371; Schurink, 1998:258).

3.3 THE RESEARCHER AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The researcher plays a central role and becomes the most important 'instrument' in the qualitative research process as observer, interviewer and interpreter (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Neuman, 2000:347; Janesick, 2000:386; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995:19). As part of the "strategy of inquiry" the qualitative researcher uses personal skills, practices, knowledge and methods to obtain the necessary data for a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:371). This implies that the background of the researcher, which includes aspects such as the researcher's training, experience, values, beliefs and interests, affects the perspective of the researcher as research instrument. As Janesick (2000:385) points out, qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven - one cannot pretend that research is value-free. In this regard she urges qualitative researchers to not only identify and articulate their own beliefs and ideology, but also to describe and explain the social, philosophical and physical location of the researcher in the study, including their role in it (Janesick, 2000:385,389).

The researcher in the present study has acquired specific competencies as registered dietician during her training and in her work where she was involved in counselling clients. She knows how to probe for information with regard to people's food choice and the related practices. Following an anti-positivistic research approach, as required in the present study, was a natural outflow of the researcher's previous experience. Apart from conversational skills, Kvale (1996:147) advises that researchers in the interview situation should be knowledgeable about the topics they are investigating, including the theme and context of the inquiry (Kvale, 1996:108). For the present study it was essential to have knowledge not only of food practices in general and of those more specific to the ethnic and cultural groups represented in the study, but also insight concerning the cultural background and customs of all the different South African ethnic and cultural groups.

As lecturer in the socio-cultural aspects of food at undergraduate and post-graduate level, as well as experience in previous research and outreach projects, the researcher gained insight into the eating patterns of most South African cultural and ethnic groups. Particularly helpful was her participation in the multi-cultural, quantitative investigation into the food habits and food preferences of the conscripts, representative of all ethnic groups, in the former South African Defence Force (SADF).

Cross-cultural research requires the researcher to be competent in working with and dealing with the often fragile and sensitive relationships that emerge when engaging in projects with people from cultural groups different from their own. These situations have their own unique

challenges and demands. Throughout her professional career, the researcher dealt with people, formally and informally, as clients, post- and undergraduate students and colleagues from different ethnic and cultural groups. In particular, as lecturer responsible for the training of dietetic students in nutrition counselling, valuable and appropriate experience was gained through exposure to, and participation in, a number of cross-cultural community outreach projects dealing with nutrition education in communities in and around the greater Pretoria area. During the course of this study, the contact and the frequent open discussions with colleagues and specifically graduate students were important sources of information and verification, especially as the community being interviewed for this research endeavour, was ethnically and culturally akin. Moreover, in managing and working in a comparable situation, the researcher became conscious of the way of life of these communities as well as the needs and difficulties that exist from the people's own perspective, thus supporting Spradley's (1979:24) insightful observation. It also sensitised and made the researcher aware of the protocol and etiquette rules applicable at meetings in these communities.

Certain aspects relating to the code of ethics for the profession of dietetics (Hudson, 2006:341) are also part of the code of conduct required of qualitative researchers. It is expected from professional dieticians to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity and fairness, and to protect confidential information. Sensitivity to cultural differences without discriminating against others on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, religion, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation, together with respect for the unique needs and values of individuals, are essential too. Objective evaluation of others and situations requires that all reasonable effort needs to be made to avoid bias of any kind. These codes have become so ingrained in the researcher's personal and professional conduct that they have become the natural way of dealing with others.

In preparation for this research, a systematic study of the available academic literature on aspects relating to food practices and their development was undertaken. This included a thorough search of the literature available on the food practices of all South African ethnic groups. Attending appropriate short courses further contributed to the knowledge and skills required to undertake this study. The two short courses on qualitative research methodology and the use and application of the computer software package Atlas.ti (Muhr, 2004), respectively, also provided valuable information that enhanced expertise in the field.

Researchers are part of the social world they study and cannot escape or be separated from it, due to the close interaction often required with those whom they study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:79; Fouchè, 2005:271-272; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:16). As part of the socially created research setting, the researcher cannot take a neutral stance in the collection and

analysis of data (Neuman, 2000:347). The value commitments of the researcher therefore have to be transparent and this requires that researchers become sensitive to the social relationships formed and the personal feelings that develop in the course of fieldwork (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:367; Neuman, 2000:355). The researcher has an effect on the people studied and, because this cannot be eliminated completely, it is essential for the researcher to understand and minimise this reactivity, or to consciously monitor it (Hammersley & Atkinson; 1995:18). Therefore, it is not possible to conduct a value-free inquiry.

On the one hand, the researcher is responsible for establishing good rapport with those being studied by gaining their trust; as this enables the researcher to get close enough to the participants "to generate legitimate and truthful descriptions" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). On the other hand, the researcher then also has the added responsibility of being unbiased when describing and interpreting the research findings. How the researcher, as primary research instrument, is involved in the data collection, analysis and interpretation, and how this effect is monitored, should be made quite clear. In this regard, Kvale (1996:117) emphasises the role of the researcher and states as follows: "The person of the researcher is critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge and for the soundness of ethical decisions in any research project. By interviewing, the importance of the interviewer him- or herself is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge." It is thus imperative that researchers describe and justify their own role in the research process and systematically exploit their own participation in the settings to produce accounts of the social world (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:21).

3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.4.1 Choosing the research site and gaining access

Neuman (2000:352) mentions that the choice of a research setting should be guided by the potential "richness of the data, unfamiliarity and suitability". Richer and more interesting data is more likely to be found in settings where there is a network of social relations and various activities. Schurink (1998:254) gives the same advice by stating that the selection of a setting must be where "the process to be studied will be most likely to occur." Unfamiliarity refers to an unknown setting with strangers as participants. Neuman (2000: 352,355) is of the opinion that it is easier to notice cultural differences, cultural events and social relations when the researcher is not familiar with the surroundings. The suitability of a research setting refers to ease of physical access as well as other practical and logistical issues such as travelling distance, the available time and skills of the researcher and the researcher's personal

characteristics and feelings (Strydom, 2005:279; Neuman, 2000:352; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995:54).

3.4.1.1 Suitability of Mmotla as research setting

Mmotla was chosen as a research setting, because it fulfilled the following criteria. A fairly large number of social activities and interactions were taking place there and, although colleagues of the researcher were involved in the community, the inhabitants of the village and the surroundings were new to the researcher. Logistically the village could be easily reached as the travelling time is approximately one hour's drive from the University of Pretoria. The good relations that existed between the University of Pretoria and this community contributed to the fact that the researcher was well received in the community and never felt threatened when visiting the village on her own.

The village of Mmotla, is a densely populated area in the vicinity of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater, near Pretoria. The majority of the residents live in brick houses although the typical housing in this area contrasts between the traditional type of housing and temporary and permanent structures. A taxi service operates between the area and the city. Adults can therefore work in the city and return home at night. Services such as electricity and refuse removal are available, tap water is currently only to be had in some residential areas and in the others it is in the process of being installed. In these areas, water is only provided at fixed points from where it has to be transported to the various households in large plastic containers, usually with the aid of wheelbarrows. Community structures such as schools, churches, *spaza* shops[14], a grocery store, butchery, local cafés, a garage, beer halls and crèches are in place. Various social networks exist and are active in the village such as community, church and other social organisations. Examples of these are women's groups and other groups formed by churches, informal support groups and burial societies. Kinship ties are still fairly strong and the chieftain system with its initiation traditions is still in operation. Consequently members of the community are in contact with both traditional and modern western-oriented lifestyles.

As is the case in many South African communities, a large percentage of the residents are unemployed and the literacy level is low. A few income-generating projects operate in the village including a literacy project (an Adult Based Education and Training project), an initiative of the National Department of Education to improve the literacy skills of adults to

[14] A *spaza* shop is usually operated in a suburb, sometimes in the yard of the owner, and could be described as a small-scale informal convenience store where a limited number of basic food items, toiletries and cleaning aids can be purchased.

equip them to become literate or to upgrade their literacy skills. Members of the community actively support it.

3.4.1.2 Access and establishing trust

Following the guidelines of Neuman (2000: 252-254) and those of Strydom (2005: 279), the following strategy was followed to gain access to the Mmotla community.

The Department Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria has been involved in an income-generating project since 1996. Lecturers assisted the community in establishing a beadwork project. A colleague is still actively assists and advises members of this now self-sufficient and successful community project. Since its inception a good relationship between the Department of Consumer Science and the bead workers has prevailed. The venue of the beadwork project was used as one of the 13 venues of the literacy project where training was offered on three mornings a week. Initial access to the community for participation in this research was negotiated through the beadwork project with the help of a colleague through the kind offices of the chairperson of the beadwork income-generating project through the researcher's colleague. At an introductory meeting held with the members, this colleague explained the aim of the research and the research procedures in detail, particularly the data collection and recording techniques. She emphasised the important role of the participants in the whole process. This initiative to make the aim of the study clear to prospective participants, laid a foundation of trust and ensured that good rapport with the participants was soon established. Moreover, interest in the study was stimulated, an important factor for success, as rightly pointed out by various other researchers too (Neuman, 2000: 354; Schurink, 1998: 258; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:72).

The group was informed that publications on the traditional and current food practices of the different South African population groups and the importance of preserving and recording their culinary heritage were limited. In this study the researcher simply wanted to know what people in the Mmotla community eat and record how familiar they were with traditional foods and the extent to which they were still used today. The idea that they themselves would play a part in documenting their own culinary heritage appealed to them and they were delighted about being specially invited to be part of the project. This, no doubt, not only contributed to their willingness and enthusiasm which lasted throughout the study, but also definitely made the researcher's entry into study setting easier.

The researcher's colleague identified a member of the beadwork project who was fluent in Afrikaans, English and Tswana and who had good organising skills and leadership qualities,

as somebody who could act as translator and facilitator in the group and individual interviews. This would help overcome the language-barrier between the participants and the researcher. She was approached and was willing to assist. By coincidence, the facilitator of the literacy project was also present at the venue during the first information/negotiation meeting. He spontaneously volunteered to assist in the research project and indicated that he had previous experience in survey research and had completed undergraduate courses in research methodology. These two people assisted with the data collection and they fulfilled various roles that could be described as informants, gatekeepers, translators, scribes and facilitators. Since they were respected and familiar figures in the community, the researcher was well received by the local people. As rightly indicated by Schurink (1998: 258), the involvement of indigenous people who are part of the setting to be studied, is one of the most successful ways to gain access to a setting.

To sum up, successful access to the community and the establishment of trust could be attributed to the community's positive attitude and relationship with the colleague involved in the beadwork income-generating project and the good introduction of the study she presented. Equally significant were the neutral topic of the research and the eagerness of the different cultural groups in the community to have their culinary heritage recorded. Finally, yet importantly, the enthusiasm and support of the two gatekeepers who also acted as facilitators and translators during the data collection phase of the research, cannot be underestimated. This laid a firm foundation for the researcher to build rapport and further relations with the participants. Neuman (2000:356), points out that trust is a key aspect in developing good rapport with participants, which in turn, is essential to understanding participants in order to obtain the recommended insider as well as outsider point of views. In this study it was further equally important to gain an in-depth understanding of the various environments in which the participants lived and interacted.

In the interpretative research paradigm sampling, data collection and analysis are closely interconnected and the methods and techniques employed are typically guided by the research question (De Vos, 2005:341). This implies that a degree of flexibility is allowed in data collection and accommodated as the study proceeds and takes shape. Such an approach enables the researcher to acquire the accumulated knowledge to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. This is possible through the inclusion of various data sources on account of their information richness and the freedom to adjust the data collection techniques accordingly (Fouché & Delport, 2005:74-75).

3.4.2 Data collection phases

The data collection evolved in two distinctive phases. After the initial immersion stage, and as more knowledge was gained on the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla, the data collection moved to the second phase to enhance and aid in achieving the holistic and in-depth understanding of the food practices of the study group. Due to the specific objectives of each phase of the study, the methods and techniques of sampling and data collection employed are presented separately. However, before attending to the detail of the data collection techniques in each of the two phases, a brief review of the roles of the researcher as instrument in obtaining the data in the field is given.

Fieldwork requires the researcher to be alert and sensitive to what is happening in the field and be disciplined about recoding the data. This in itself has personal consequences as social relationships and personal feelings also come into play (Neuman, 2000: 355). In the process of their fieldwork researchers need to fulfil multiple roles in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. These roles develop during the course of the fieldwork and can be arranged on a continuum by the degree of involvement that the researcher has with the participants (Strydom, 2005: 280; Neuman, 2000:356-357; Adler & Adler, 1994:379). Two models are used in literature to illustrate this. Gold's classic typology of research roles describes a range of four roles through which observers may gather data (Neuman, 2000:357; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:104). These range from the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant, and the complete observer. This typology indicates the degree of attachment or detachment of the researcher at each level. The complete observer takes on an invisible or covert role, while in the observer-as-participant role, the researcher is usually known to the study group but has limited contact with them. In the participant-as-observer role the researcher is overt and becomes a close friend of those studied and, lastly, in the complete participant role the researcher acts as an intimate member and shares undisclosed information of the group (Neuman, 2000:357). The second model by Adler and Adler (1994:379) similarly suggests three membership roles that the researcher could occupy namely peripheral-member-researcher, active-member-researcher and complete-member-researcher. These membership roles similarly indicate the degree of involvement of the researcher with the study group. On the one pole of this continuum, the peripheral-member-researcher maintains a distance between self and those studied, whereas in the complete membership role as the opposite pole, the researcher converts and is regarded as a committed member of the group.

In this study the researcher could be regarded as peripheral-member-researcher according to the model by Adler and Adler and following the typology of Gold the role of observer-as-

participant was the role most frequently occupied. It should be kept in mind, as Neuman (2000:358) points out, that the researcher's level of involvement depends on a number of aspects that are unique to each study. Amongst these are the negotiations and relationships with the study group members, the specifics of the field setting, the researcher's personal comfort, and the particular role adopted in the field. These roles can change and different roles apply at different stages of a study as researchers often move from outsider to insider levels as the research process unfolds in the field (Strydom, 2005:280; Neuman, 2000:358). Each level of involvement has its advantages and disadvantages and researchers should be aware of how it influences the data collection techniques and quality of the collected data (Strydom, 2005:280; Botha, 2001; Neuman, 2000:358).

Being a white female researcher in the South African context placed specific limitations on how the data collection in the present study was conducted. This in itself contributed to the peripheral-member-researcher role occupied by the researcher in this study and largely determined the data collection techniques employed. Due to other commitments the researcher visited the research setting weekly over a period of 20 months on day trips. Logistics and time allowances were other considerations that guided the selection of data collection techniques. Each is justified and addressed in the discussion of the applicable data collection phase where it was employed.

The aim of the **first phase** of the study was to explore and become acquainted with the community, to gain an understanding of the life world of the participants and simultaneously to get a broad overview of the food practices of the community and to determine to what extent traditional food practices have been changed, adapted or abandoned. Focus group discussions, participant observation and a number of unobtrusive measures were employed as data collection techniques to aid the researcher in becoming acquainted with the research setting and the dimensions of the food practices of the study group. During the first phase it emerged that specifically the Ndebele group continued to adhere to their traditional food practices during certain special celebrations. This was in stark contrast to the other ethnic groups in the community, who have adapted and changed their food practices. A decision was thus taken to delve deeper into these traditional food practices that were still followed by the Ndebele group and make use of the opportunity to gain an in-depth insight and understanding of the reasons why they continue to adhere to traditional food practices in some situations, as opposed to the other groups who seemed to have discarded these. This decision led to a second phase in the data collection process.

In the **second phase** of the study the aim was to obtain specific theoretically important data from the Ndebele in order to gain more and deeper insights into the traditional and adapted

western-oriented food practices from this specific ethnic group. To obtain the in-depth understanding of the food practices of this group, individual interviewing with enculturated Ndebele females were conducted. Similar to the first phase, this was complemented by participant observation and unobtrusive measures as supporting data collection techniques.

The data collection and data analysis were tightly interwoven and took place concurrently as ongoing, cyclical and iterative processes in both phases of the study as described in literature (Maree, 2007:81; De Vos, 2005: 341; Huberman & Miles, 1994:429). The description of the sampling and data collection techniques employed in each phase of the study is, however, given first, followed by data analysis procedures as separate section.

3.4.2.1 Phase one of sampling and data collection

At the onset of the data collection stage of an ethnographic study the researcher first needs to build trust and rapport with the participants. Appropriate techniques for establishing rapport are asking questions, listening and observation (Neuman, 2000: 356; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:100). Rapport, helps the researcher obtain an understanding of the participants, which in turn, is a precondition for greater depth that paves the way for the next step, namely, adopting the participant's perspective or creating empathy (Neuman, 2000:356-357). To get acquainted with the social and physical environments of the research setting, and to establish rapport with the participants, focus groups and participant observation were selected as principal data collection techniques in this first phase. These were supplemented by a number of unobtrusive measures. Although participant observation and unobtrusive measures were used in both data collection phases, they are addressed in this section.

(i) Sampling and criteria for inclusion

The sampling technique associated with qualitative research is that of non-probability sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 166; Neuman, 2000:196). The purpose of non-probability sampling is for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest source of information to answer the research question. Therefore specific cases, events or activities are included to clarify and deepen understanding (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:79; Neuman, 2000:196). It is not concerned with representativeness but deals more with how enculturated the chosen persons are to the research topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:288; Neuman, 2000:196; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 45; Miles & Hubermann, 1994:30).

Purposive sampling, where sampling is based on the judgement of the researcher in order to get all possible cases that fit the criteria set was done for the first phase of the study. This decision is supported by recommendations proposed by Strydom and Delport (2005:329) and Neuman (2000: 196).

The community composition of Mmotla consists of various cultural groups, of which the Ndebele, Tswana, North Sotho, Tsonga and Swazi are well represented. Available female members from all these cultural groups formed the study group as they are customarily responsible for the acquisition and preparation of food. Such a decision was an acceptable practice as noticed by other researchers (Walker & Charlton, 2001; Coetzee, 1982:67; Krige, 1965:47; Schapera & Goodwin, 1962:159). The aim was twofold: first, to obtain general information from the various cultural groups on their current way of life in the community and to sketch the everyday food practices and those applicable to special occasions. In the second place, it was to ensure that sufficient data on traditional and current food practices would be captured, therefore, younger as well as older adult females, as well as specialists and lay people were included.

Turner (1967:27-43) advises to include participants, both specialists and lay people, from all the major cultural groups residing in a community. Specialists are able to supply more objective and comprehensive information and can include enculturated individuals such as *isinyangas* (traditional practitioners) and *isangomas* (diviners) and older females, especially those who still adhere to traditional beliefs and practices and those who have knowledge of earlier social customs. Lay people were those knowledgeable about traditional customs and food practices and who still take part in traditional rites and ceremonies.

(ii) Focus groups as data collection technique

Data collection started with focus groups as an “exploratory technique”, because it was believed that this was an appropriate method to get acquainted with the participants including their environments and to become familiar with the food practices followed by individuals and groups in the community. The role of the researcher at the onset of the study is compared by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:99) to that of a novice, who needs to be introduced to the study setting and equipped with the necessary knowledge in order to find the way and cope in the new situation. The role of the researcher upon entering the field was that of a novice or stranger who required orientation and induction training in order to get the required insider’s point of view (Neuman, 2000:356). Focus groups proved to be a suitable technique to orientate the researcher and establish the necessary rapport with the participants.

Greeff (2005:300) explicates focus groups as an appropriate technique to create the needed lines of communication between researcher and participants. In the larger process of such communication the worlds of the researcher and participants are connected and this facilitates in narrowing or closing the gap between them. In the same vein Schurink *et al.* (1998: 316), regard focus groups as a good point of departure to acquaint the researcher with the participants' views on the phenomenon under study. They view focus groups as a technique to learn how people talk and think about the phenomenon of interest. The researcher, however, not only gets familiar with the language that the participants use to describe their experiences but, in the process, also gets acquainted with their cultural values and styles of thinking and communication about the research topic.

A focus group is basically a group interview where the data and insights are produced by the interaction between the group members in the focus group under the guidance of the researcher or moderator who supplies the topic(s) for discussion (Fontana & Frey, 2000:651; Morgan, 1997:2). The manner in which the focus group is planned and conducted should facilitate open discussion in which each participant is in a position to share experiences and attitudes, to make and respond to comments, ask questions to qualify, clarify, and also to build upon the responses of the other group members and, in doing so, more in-depth information is uncovered by the researcher (Schurink *et al.,* 1998:314; Betts *et al.*, 1996:280). The resultant group interaction process thus produces ideas or statements and provides meaningful information that may not be generated when other data collection techniques are used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292; Morgan, 1997:2).

Schurink *et al.* (1998:314) point out that, in using this technique, the researcher is in the position to inductively develop concepts, theories and typologies that are grounded in and reflected by the intimate knowledge the participants have of the phenomenon under study. In this work, it concerned their own food practices. Via the participants' own perceptions, using their own words and their own expressions, the focus group creates "emic data" which, when used together with "etic data", helps to uncover and gain insight into the world of the participants (Schurink *et al.,* 1998: 315).

Apart from being an appropriate data collection technique in exploratory studies (Betts *et al.,* 1996:279), the focus group is also an effective technique to obtain data from adults with low literacy skills (Keim, Swanson, Cann & Salinas, 1999; Betts *et al.,* 1996). Most of the participants in this study could be described as having low literacy skills. Other advantages of focus groups relate to the cultural background of the participants and the type of data that can be obtained. In cross-cultural studies like the present study, focus groups seemed to be acceptable to cultural groups where a high premium is placed on group participation,

because the participants were more at ease when they were interviewed as a group as opposed to individually. In this study, this was the case at the beginning of the data collection phase. Trollip (1991:77) reports the same experience with a group of Ndebele women, and ascribed this to the cultural background of the participants, where the group and group participation were important, and argued that this could be a reason why this technique was successful in her research. Achterberg (1988:247) suggests that when participants are interviewed in a group, a wider range of information, insight and ideas is produced as a result of the combined group effort. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 292) point out that a large deal of interaction on a topic can also be observed in a limited space of time through focus groups. Achterberg (1988:247) supports these views and feels that the focus group "speeds up the interview process and the accumulation of data".

Since the group creates meaning among themselves rather than individually, the researcher is able to explore situations and is in the position to get hold of information that would not otherwise be available or accessible (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292; Morgan, 1997:8). Fontana and Frey (1994:365) raise another point by commenting that a group discussion sometimes facilitates "recall aiding", in which participants are stimulated by the discussion and this helps some participants to remember or recall incidents or events from the past that they might have not thought of or seen as relevant or valuable. This contributes to cumulative and elaborate data over and above the individual responses that are created during the focus group (Fontana & Frey, 1994: 364).

An account of the procedures to capture the data follows. Similar procedures were followed in both phases of this study, therefore a detailed description is presented as part of phase one of the data collection. The account of the procedures below similarly applies to the individual interviews conducted in phase two.

Data was captured through audio tape recordings of the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Field notes of observations and impressions during the focus group discussions, interviews and visits were kept by the researcher as well as the two facilitators and were later added to the transcriptions to produce a comprehensive data set of each research visit to Mmotla.

Permission to record the focus group discussions and individual interviews were requested at the beginning of the first meeting with the participant(s). The participants had no objection and, after the initial shyness and self-consciousness, it seemed as though they completely forgot about the recording and the interviews and discussions took place in a relaxed atmosphere. The biographical information of each participant was also requested during the

first interview. This was played back to them with the excuse that the researcher had to check whether the recorder was recording properly. The participants were initially very amused to hear their own voices. This technique also seemed to serve as an effective ice-breaker. The playing back of the first few minutes of the recording of each contact session served another purpose, and that was to check the audibility of the recording. Participants who spoke softly then often realised themselves that they had to speak up, even though they were also constantly reminded by the facilitators to do so when the need for such intervention arose.

Following the guidelines of Kvale (1996:127-128), the researcher introduced each contact session (focus groups and individual interviews), by presenting the themes or issues for discussion and, if a follow-up event, a point was made of enquiring whether any item raised in the previous session(s) needed further clarification or explanation. Spradley (1979:59) advises that the researcher needs to "remind the informant where the interview is to go." The contact session ended with debriefing and an offer to verify and elucidate uncertainties.
The two facilitators served individually as independent interpreters and scribes during the focus groups and individual interviews.

The interview themes[15] and probes for each contact session were typed out and the researcher made copies available to them. This helped and ensured that the interpreters understood the aspect that was under discussion, which, in turn, aided in translating the probes and questions more accurately. The male interpreter also acted as scribe and took notes in English as the conversation in the groups or individually was mostly in Tswana. These notes were then used as a back-up recording of the main points raised. This was valuable as some sessions were very lengthy and involved so, if the interpreter missed something that was mentioned, it could then be retrieved and added. Initially this also served as a safety blanket for the interpreter who was nervous in the this role in the beginning, and the assurance that someone else was also listening and translating, definitely led to a more natural conversation between translator and participants. These notes were also a useful back-up in case the tape recordings were not audible, or when the tape recording failed, as has happened on one or two occasions during data collection. The researcher directed the question to the female interpreter who then posed the question in Tswana with answers then being translated back into English. At her request, the scribe also assisted, from time to time, with the translations and explanations.

[15] See Addenda A and B for the probes on the environmental resources of the village and the list of topics that served as interview themes during focus group discussions and individual interviews.

The second and succeeding focus groups and interviews always started with a clarification cum briefing session on aspects from the previous session that were unclear to the researcher. These included uncertainties with regard to the data and its interpretation. These points were then discussed and verified with the participant(s). Apart from the clarification of queries at the beginning of contact sessions, a summary of the themes previously discussed, and their interpretation, was periodically reported on for the participants' reflection and comment. This gave them a sense of really being recognised as members of the research team, following the advice given by Babbie and Mouton (2001:310), Neuman (2000:369) and Kvale (1996:88) who refer to this as 'member checks'. Moreover, the role of the "socially acceptable incompetent", when certain aspects needed to be verified or clarified (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:290), was also adopted.

Apart from the audio tape recordings, the researcher and the two facilitators constantly made field notes during the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The aim of this note taking was also explained to the participants at the beginning of the first contact session and they had no objection to it nor did they feel threatened by it. In fact, some even checked to see that we noted aspects that they regarded as important information.

Different formats were used depending on the level of extensiveness. The translator took only cryptic notes to help her remember the key points of a discussion. The scribe took extensive notes during the conversations in Tswana. The researcher's notes were cryptic and included key words and phrases of important and interesting items and distinctive aspects that came up during the conversations. Concise notes complied by the researcher also related to interpretations, observations, impressions of interactions and other environmental aspects that occurred during interviews and afterwards. Following the advice of Neuman (2000:363) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:175-176), the cryptic notes that were taken during the focus groups and interviews were transformed into legible and meaningful notes directly after leaving the field. These were kept according to the guidelines of Schurink (1998:285) and Trollip (1991:79). Authors such as Miles and Huberman (1994), Strauss and Corbin (1998) also emphasise the importance of keeping field notes and editing these into a legible and understandable format as soon as possible after each contact session. Schurink (1998:285) distinguishes three different types of field notes, namely observation notes, methodological notes and theoretical notes. This taxonomy was followed and the field notes duly kept during the data collecting and capturing processes are briefly described.

Observation notes These are accounts of what happened during the fieldwork and provide an excellent method to capture the researcher's immediate impressions and feelings.

Observation notes dealt with the who?, what?, when?, where?, under what circumstances? How did the participants react? (Miles & Huberman, 1994:51-52).

Theoretical notes These are the researcher's "self-conscious notes" on what was thought and experienced during the observations and includes the private statements by the researcher on what could possibly "bear conceptual fruit." The researcher "interprets, infers, hypothesises, conjectures; … develops new concepts, links these to older ones, or relates any observation to any other…" (Schurink, 1998:286).

Methodological notes These are contained in the reminders, instructions and critical comments that researchers write to themselves (Schurink, 1998:286). Strauss and Corbin (1998:217) refer to these as operational notes. In essence, they are pointers or reminders of what was thought about, what needs to be done, or where to go next. Miles and Huberman (1994:51) also regard these as important notes and included similar notes on their contact summary sheet.

In this study three focus groups were formed with adult females and between 11 and 12 contact sessions were held with each of the groups. A total number of 35 focus group contact sessions were conducted during the first phase of the study. These focus group contact sessions continued until, as recommended in literature (Greeff, 2005: 306; Neuman, 2000:375; Kvale, 1996:102), all interview topics were covered and data saturation was reached.

(iii) Participant observation

Concurrently with the focus groups and individual interviewing, participant observation and unobtrusive measures were also employed as data collection techniques for this study. These techniques were considered appropriate to attain the research objectives as formulated, and were chosen to complement and reinforce each other. Each technique as such provided the means to view the problem from different points of view and enhanced triangulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:11; Trollip, 1995:151; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 438). The process of participant observation as conducted in this study is presented next, followed by the unobtrusive measures employed.

The researcher had the opportunity to observe the participants in their own natural environment and through direct contact with the participants (Henning *et al.*, 2004:82; Schurink, 1998:279-281; Adler & Adler, 1994:378). The description by Schurink implies that the researcher has to get involved in the everyday lives of the research participants in their

own environment to give an "insider perspective" of their life world. In other words, not only data on how "they go about their everyday lives" is revealed, but the researcher also has the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the personal or individual viewpoints of the participants (Henning *et al*., 2004:84-85; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:1-2).

In this study the researcher engaged with the life world of the subjects by conducting the research in their own environment, namely the village of Mmotla. The role of the researcher was that of observer-as-participant. Driving through the village to reach the participants and venues where the focus groups and interviews were being conducted, was an opportunity to examine, at first hand, the everyday world of community dwellers and to interrogate, observe and record data relevant to the research problem. Data on the natural surroundings and available resources that impacted on food practices described the structural environment (see Addendum A). For example, the poor soil conditions, semi-arid climate and lack of water were natural conditions that severely hampered crop production. Another aspect was the availability of resources such as electricity and piped water. Most of the households did not have piped water so water had to be bought from neighbours who were fortunate enough to have boreholes or transported from central water points in large plastic containers by wheelbarrow. Particular attention was paid to noting the location of formal as well as informal facilities where food products could be purchased. Through personal visits to these, the researcher became acquainted with the food procurement options available in the village and the prices of these products.

Another feature of participant observation is to facilitate the process of being placed inside the world of the participants, also results to promote empathy with the participants and fuller appreciation of their situation. Although becoming an "insider" allows researchers to "be non-judgemental about the stance, position feelings and world-view of others", the researcher has to be constantly aware of the "dualistic role" that has to be fulfilled (Schurink, 1998:282-283). On the one hand, the researcher has to become involved in the life world of the participants, whilst on the other hand, the researcher must guard against getting too involved with the participants and losing objectivity in the process (Adler & Adler, 1994:381). The advice of Hagan (in WJ Schurink, 1998: 283) is therefore applicable: "The observer must attempt to mentally operate on two different levels: becoming an insider while remaining an outsider." Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:115) have a similar opinion on this matter and give the following guideline: "There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done."

Adler and Adler (1994:381) caution that there are certain limitations to participant observation that could directly affect the validity of the observations. A researcher's "own perceptions" might obscure the reality of the observation. This was overcome in the present study by encouraging the facilitators and participants to assist in the interpretation of the observations and asking them to clarify and explain uncertainties and misconceptions expressed by the researcher. To ensure that reliable observations were recorded, the researcher was involved in the community for a long time and field observations were made, under varying conditions, over a period of 20 months.

(iv) Unobtrusive measures

Other material, such as photographs, newspaper articles, documents and artefacts provided by the participants or other people, were readily available in the field setting and, in some cases, as advocated in the literature, photocopied or photographed with permission (Schurink, 1998:284; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:18).

These unobtrusive data sources, such as photographs, maps, diagrams, charts, nutrition education flash cards and dishes prepared by the participants with the recipes of these dishes formed part of the data collected.

Photographs Photographs were used as data source to confirm and verify certain practices and customs. Important aspects with regard to acculturation were, for example, noticed by studying these photographs. The photographs also confirmed that some of the traditional practices were still followed. These photographs were either taken by the researcher or received from the participants from their family photograph albums. Sometimes the researcher requested some of the photographs, while on other occasions, they were spontaneously shown to the researcher to illustrate certain aspects that had been discussed. Permission to make copies of these to use as research resources was granted.

Maps The participants in the first focus group drew a map of the village to explain the layout of the village to the researcher. The most important venues and landmarks were indicated as well as the different residential areas.

Sketches The researcher supplied sketches of beef and sheep carcasses and requested the participants to draw or fill in how these were divided between family and kinship members at the different celebrations, where applicable.

South African Sugar Association's nutrition education flash cards The flash cards as well as pictures of indigenous vegetables were used to assist in the identification, description and verification of food items mentioned or described by the participants.

Recipes and dishes of traditional and modern food The participants prepared and provided the recipes of all the traditional and modern dishes that were mentioned during the discussions. The researcher took photographs of the prepared dishes. These helped the researcher recall them and, in some cases, when consulted in conjunction with the recipes, helped to clarify confusing and even conflicting information.

3.4.2.2 Phase two of sampling and data collection

After conducting the focus groups, the researcher had a broad, general overview of the food practices currently followed by each of the ethnic groups in the community. A significant aspect that emerged from the focus group discussions was that the Ndebele group, in contrast to the other ethnic groups, appeared to be more conservative with regard to following traditional food practices at certain special celebrations and occasions. The decision was then taken to continue with the Ndebele group in order to delve deeper into why they continue to cling the traditional food practices as opposed to the other groups who seem to have adapted, changed and in some cases even abandoned certain traditional food practices.

In the second phase of the study, individual interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the traditional and current food practices of the Ndebele group in this community. As pointed out by Frey and Fontana (2000:651) and Morgan (1997:22) the focus groups were a good starting point for the individual interviews, not only in providing the required background on this group but also to identify individuals who would be suitable interviewees. The focus groups were further particularly useful to reveal the range of future informants' thoughts and experiences prior to the individual interviews as Morgan (1997:22) rightfully indicates.

(i) Sampling technique and criterion for inclusion

The objective of the second data collection phase was then to obtain specific theoretically important data from Ndebele participants in order to gain deeper insight into the meanings attached to the traditional and modern food practices from this particular ethnic group. Theoretical sampling was followed during the second phase of data collection. This type of sampling is recommended when the grounded theory approach of data analysis is used, and

the rationale for the sampling process is based on the emerging concepts that are relevant to the evolving theory that transpires during the data analysis. It supports the production of as many categories and properties as possible to enhance the grounded theory approach of data analysis as Strauss and Corbin (1998:202) advocate. By implication this means that, during the research process, the theoretical interest that develops or the new insights that are gained, guide or steer the decision of what data needs to be collected next and where the data could be collected (Neuman, 2000:200; Schurink, 1998: 254; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:42) and hence which participants should be included. It thus builds on certain characteristics or criteria that help to develop and test the researcher's theory and explanation (Silverman, 2000:105). In theoretical sampling the researcher purposively tries to include cases that would help reveal features that are theoretically important about a particular setting/topic as Neuman (2000:196) explains. The criterion set for the individual in-depth interviews was that only thoroughly enculturated Ndebele females who still engaged in traditional food practices were eligible for inclusion.

(ii) Individual interviewing as data collection technique

A degree of flexibility was maintained in the interview situations conducted for the current study. The discussions were in the form of conversations and each was adapted to promote the natural flow of the conversation according to the communication style and temperament of the interviewee. The purpose of the individual interview in this study was to obtain the Ndebele participants' personal perceptions of their food practices and the meanings attached to them through carefully planned, semi-structured discussion. Although a list of themes was at hand to guide and remind the researcher what had to be covered in each interview, the list of topics was not used in a prescriptive manner. It should, however, be kept in mind, as Schurink (1998:298) points out, that the researcher is not passive in this whole process, but is "… directing the interviews by means of a definite research agenda in order to gain information on the phenomenon they study." In other words, the researcher defines and controls the interview situation (Kvale, 1996:6) and, although the research interview is very similar to an everyday conversation, it is conducted according to an interview guide where certain themes, and sometimes suggested questions, are included (Kvale, 1996:27). Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) distinguish individual interviewing as an "open" interview because it allows participants to speak for themselves instead of only providing answers based on the researcher's pre-determined hypothesis-based questions, as is the case in structured interview.

Although the researcher had a general plan of enquiry, in the form of themes and probes, the set of specific questions was not asked in a formalised way. The focus was on the

participant's perspective and experience. Neuman (2000:370) also regards the interview as "a joint production" of the researcher and the participant, where the active participant's insights, feelings and cooperation are deemed essential parts of the discussion process that will reveal subjective meanings. The semi-structured individual interview was a suitable technique to learn from each interviewee and her situation, as Neuman (2000:371) explains.

Another important facet of the individual interview that Taylor and Bogdan (1984:77) as well as Schurink (1998:299) emphasise, is that the participants express their perspectives, experiences or situations in their own words, and are thus sharing their "emic" experience. Kvale (1996:29, 105) holds the same opinion and, in addition, points out that the purpose of the research interview is to describe and understand the participants' lived world, their "self-understanding" and relation to it. Insight into the life world and own experiences of the participant contributes to the researcher's "insider-view" into the lives of the participants by literately "taking the role of" or putting the researcher in the shoes of the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 655; Cassidy, 1994).

In this study, the individual interviews were used as a complementary technique, to obtain an in-depth understanding of some of the topics that were only broadly discussed in the focus groups. It further provided the opportunity to be more focussed, to delve deeper and accommodate perspectives that were underrepresented in the focus group discussions. Moreover, as suggested by Botha (2001) as well as Morgan (1997:23), individual interviews also afford enculturated participants the opportunity to elaborate on topics that were not fully uncovered or explored in the focus groups. The conversation style of the interview also tended to put the participants at ease and promoted a more relaxed atmosphere that brought about even better rapport with the participants.

Themes for the interviews were based on the concepts and categories that emerged from the data analysis of the focus groups, as well as other aspects identified by the researcher in publications that needed further clarification, in-depth discussion and uncovering. Following the advice of Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) and Falk *et al.* (1996:258), only a general plan of inquiry was developed and no specific questions were formulated beforehand. The themes served as stepping-stones to guide the interview, serving as reminders or checks for the researcher. Therefore, as recommended, care was taken that the interviews were not too structured to ensure a flexible, iterative and continuous process, that simultaneously allowed for the probing of emergent themes as they developed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:289; Falk *et al.,* 1996:258).

As advocated by Falk *et al.* (1996:258), all first interviews conducted with the individuals were based on the same list of interview themes. Themes for the second and following interviews were developed after transcription and preliminary analysis of the first interview and were personalised for each participant. Emerging themes were covered in the second and successive interviews. From the second interview onwards, the identified themes were also explored by using the premises of the theoretical perspectives used in the study. This further enhanced the holistic and contextual approach of the data collection process.

The individual interviews as data collection technique in the second phase of the study were similar to the focus groups in phase one complemented by participant observation and unobtrusive measures. A description of the latter two data collection techniques were given under the first phase (see 3.4.2.1).

3.4.3 Transcriptions

The researcher transcribed every 90 to 120 minute focus group discussion and individual interview verbatim directly after each field visit. Voice tones and pauses were ignored as this was a translated version of the conversation. Although transcription was extremely time consuming, the advantage was that familiarisation and interpretation occurred simultaneously. This was indeed beneficial, endorsing the viewpoints of Kvale (1996:160) and Henning *et al*. (2004:105). Missing and unclear aspects were detected and listed and these could then be clarified at the beginning of the next focus group discussion or individual interview. Over and above this, listening to the recordings, typing up the transcriptions and conducting the first round of coding of the data, also helped in planning subsequent contact sessions. The researcher realised what had to be dealt with next, which aspects had to be probed further or needed clarification or could be verified according to the literature studied. These thoughts and ideas were then recorded in the theoretical and methodological sections of the field notes and included in the interview schedule for the next contact session.

To establish whether the translator had, in fact, translated all the relevant information that was requested, and as discussed by the participants, the transcriptions of the focus group discussions held with the first focus group, were initially also checked by an independent Ndebele graduate student who stood outside the context of the study. This Food Science graduate was fluent in Tswana and isiNdebele and had a sound background of the Ndebele as well as the Sotho-Tswana customs and traditions. He had successfully completed an undergraduate course in the socio-cultural studies of foods, and this, and as well as his Food Science background, contributed to his understanding of the research objectives. It was

found that the translations were an accurate and true version of what was requested and discussed.

Separate audio tapes were kept for each contact session with a label indicating the type of data collection technique and the date. The transcriptions of every contact session were kept in separate word processing files. Hard copies of the transcriptions were used as working documents during data analysis.

3.4.4 Data analysis

How the data of a qualitative study is analysed, is guided by the research paradigm and theoretical approach of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 491; Miles & Huberman, 1994:430). The justification of the research paradigm and theoretical approach has been given (see 3.2). In the same vein, Babbie and Mouton (2001:491), as well as Kvale (1996:179-180), indicate that how the analysis takes place depends on the content and purpose of a study. The topic of the research and the research question ("the what?") and their (*or its)* purpose ("the why?") are determining factors, because the theoretical conception of "what" is investigated should provide the basis for making decisions of how the content is analysed. In addition to this, Babbie and Mouton (2001:491) add that how one wants the content question to be answered also needs to be decided, however, this is often already indicated by the research paradigm and theoretical approach of a study.

A comprehensive guideline on the data analysis approach to consider for different types of qualitative studies is given by Tesch (1990:77-99). As this study seeks to explore the food practices of a specific group of people and to understand and describe the associated meanings attached to them, the research interest of this study fits under the "discovery of regularities", according to Tesch's (1990:84) framework. The "discovery of regularities" is described as dealing with the identification and categorisation of elements and the establishment of their connections. As a number of the formulated objectives for this study deal with the identification of elements that relate to food practices and their meaning, this approach was regarded as the most suitable to follow. In her explanation, Tesch (1990:84) indicates that it is particularly suited to studies that aim to systematically and insightfully describe the phenomenon under study, as is the case in this study on the meaning of food practices. She further stresses that such studies often deal more than just *what is*, by including the *why is it?* Seeking explanations is regarded as similar to theorising, therefore the analysis procedures need to facilitate theorising (Tesch, 1990:84-85) as is the case with grounded theory. The grounded theory approach to data analysis was accepted as the most appropriate for the present study and thus chosen as the preferred form of analysis.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:499) describe grounded theory as an approach that accommodates the study of a relatively unknown social phenomenon around which no theory may yet exist. This is, for example, the case in the present study as there is no theory up till now on the meaning of the food practices of this group of people. As rather simplistically explained by Babbie and Mouton (2001:499), the process of grounded theory entails that theory is literally built from the ground up, and the building blocks are the concepts that are grounded in the data, obtained through analysis. The more formal definition by Strauss and Corbin (1998:23) is also applicable here as it concisely includes the steps involved in the grounded theory approach. “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.”

Data analysis is an ongoing, emerging process in qualitative research. This implies that data analysis begins, and proceeds consecutively, with data collection and is not separate to, or done after the completion of the data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:11; Kvale, 1996:177; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:206). The grounded theory approach, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), formed the basis of the data analysis in this study. Techniques, procedures and guidelines described by other researchers were also incorporated, a decision endorsed by other scholars (Kvale, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Huberman & Miles, 1994).

3.4.4.1 The grounded theory approach to data analysis

The transcribed text obtained from the audio taped recordings was edited and supplemented with applicable notes, comments and/or interpretations from the field notes and other relevant data gathered. As advised by Strauss and Corbin (1998:207), analysis of the transcriptions obtained from a data collection session followed directly after the transcriptions were completed. In doing so, the researcher created the opportunity to become more familiar with the data, and to reflect on the data collection process and the data that it produced, as suggested by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:206. This procedure also guided the planning of, and preparation for, the next data collection opportunity.

Before proceeding with the description of the grounded theory process of analysis, it should be mentioned that the data analysis for this study was initially performed manually according to the guidelines of both Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994), and it

began during the data collection process. Unfortunately the opportunity to attend a short course on the computer software package Atlas.ti only arose after the data for this study had already been collected, and the software package itself was only available for use by the researcher over a year later. The volume of raw data collected from 35 focus group sessions and 26 individual interviews was, as could be expected, fairly large and extensive. It was, therefore, decided to re-run the analysis process with the Atlas.ti software package. The data analyses performed by both these methods are presented. As the same coding principles applied to both the manual as well as the computer-aided methods, a detailed description of the manual data analysis is given first. A brief description of the computer-aided method then follows.

3.4.4.2 Manual data analysis procedures

Following the transcription of the audio tapes, the coding of the information began and was done according the guidelines given by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Huberman and Miles (1994). To help the researcher make sense of the data, the transcriptions were read through several times, heeding the advice of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:210). The coding procedures started with open coding. Steps such as axial coding, memo writing, data display, data reduction, data aggregation and selective coding followed. It has to be kept in mind that these steps are not linear and that some took place simultaneously with others and at times the researcher moved back and forth between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:58).

Miles and Huberman (1994:56) emphasise that coding is analysis. The first step in the process of analysis is where the researcher organises the raw data into conceptual categories through the creation of themes or concepts that are then labelled or coded. Codes or labels are attached to words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs and the data is thereby analytically categorised into themes (Neuman, 2000:421). Coding is therefore regarded as the first step in data selection and reduction and this process should ideally be guided by the research questions.

Open coding As the first step of the analytical process, concepts were identified and their properties and dimensions discovered in the data, as suggested by Strauss & Corbin, 1998:101). The data was literally “opened up”, according to Strauss and Corbin, (1998:102), or “broken down” (Neuman, 2000:422). The purpose of this step was to expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained in the text and, in doing so, the themes in the data were identified and brought “to the surface” (Neuman, 2000:422). Moreover, this step provided the opportunity to closely examine the data thus enabling the researcher to note and compare

similarities or differences. The transcriptions were re-read several times at this stage, to code and note the identified themes, concepts, events and situations in each of the transcriptions.

It is important to take note of Strauss and Corbin's (1998:109) guidelines for this initial phase of microanalysis. Here comparisons are made and questions asked to dig deeper into the data and discover the "range of potential meanings contained within the words used by the respondents and develop them more fully in terms of their properties and dimensions." By doing this, conceptual ordering takes place, which is regarded as the first step in theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:19-20,103).

Axial coding After some conceptual categories were identified from the coded data, the next step in the coding and analysis process, namely axial coding, followed. This is the process where linkages or relations between concepts, categories or subcategories are established (Neuman, 2000:423; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:123). Here the coding takes place around the axis or centre of a category, which, in turn, is then linked to the identified properties and dimension it possesses. Axial coding is also regarded as a form of data reduction or condensation and, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998:124), this helps the researcher "to see the data", because what happens, is that the fractured or broken down data from the process of open coding, and, in fact, reassembled in a new way. In doing this, answers to questions such as who?, when?, where?, why?, how? with regard to the categories are sought. Using the guidelines of Huberman and Miles (1994:429), the linkages between concepts or categories were displayed as mini-frameworks or diagrams. As pointed out by Neumann (2000:423), axial coding stimulates thinking about possible linkages between concepts and themes and displaying them in various formats facilitates the process.

As advised by Strauss and Corbin (1998:88), the analysis of the focus group discussion with the first group was used to "open up" the mind of the researcher to all the possible meanings contained in the data. The same process was repeated for the other focus groups, and their data displays were put together with the data displays created from the axial coding of the first focus group. In doing this, the data displays were constantly refined as new or additional data became available. This also resulted in the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:213). During this systematic process of sifting and comparing the practices, relationships, concepts and categories, similarities and differences between the different data sets were noted.

Selective coding Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory and is considered the last type of coding to be performed in grounded theory. In this process a core category is chosen to which other categories are then systematically related. The

relationships between the core and other categories are validated and, if necessary, categories are further refined and developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:143). Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 501) describe the core category as the main story line, or the object of study that is identified or chosen. The story is, however, told in an analytical manner and the researcher needs to show all the properties and dimensions related to the core category and then relate all the other categories to the story line or core category.

Memos In the data analysis phase similar types of notes to those done during fieldwork were kept. These written records of analysis relate to the formulation of theory in the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:197). Two of the three types of notes were described under field notes, namely theoretical and operational notes (see 3.4.3.4). The third type, the code notes, contains the products of the three types of coding (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:501). These are notes, according to Neuman (2000:424), that researchers write that relate to the themes that are coded. They also serve as an aid to drawing conclusions (Huberman & Miles, 1994: 429). In this regard, Strauss and Corbin (1998:110) refer to memos as "the researcher's record of analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions and directions for further data collection." They therefore relate to those aspects that were unclear, missing or peculiar and need to be checked or addressed during a following contact session.

From the data obtained in the focus groups new themes emerged. These, together with the already identified themes, were used to compile aggregated descriptive summaries of the practices and procedures as they relate to the food practices in this community. Achterberg (1988:247) sees these summaries as serving another form of data reduction and preliminary analysis. The transcriptions, field notes and observations were then put together in a more coherent, systematic and organised manner that created a data set that was easier to handle.

The aim of obtaining a broad overview of the food practices of this community was achieved, and baseline data from which to work was then available. It served as valuable data and background for the researcher when conducting individual interviews. Subsequently, additional information and insights obtained from analysing the individual interviews was added to the aggregated descriptive summaries. On completion of the analysis of the individual interviews, it was possible to read the complete reduced data set and the major themes of the study could be identified.

3.4.4.3 Data analysis with the Atlas.ti software package

A range of computer software packages is available to assist in qualitative data analysis. The history and development of the type of packages and attributes of each is not addressed here, as most good qualitative research methodology textbooks nowadays usually address this topic extensively. However, a few important aspects regarding the function and use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis are referred to briefly. These packages are currently designed, not to perform the analysis, but rather to facilitate the data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:503). In essence this implies that they help to organise the data better, to store text more carefully, and as is the case with Atlas.ti. They perform a sort and retrieve function that is faster and more accurate compared to doing these data analysis tasks manually.

The computer-aided data analysis was done using the Atlas.ti software package, "The Knowledge Workbench" by Thomas Muhr (2004; 1997). It offers a code-and-retrieve function and provides support for theory building by facilitating the connections between codes to perform a higher order of abstraction of the data. Atlas.ti is based on the grounded theory methodology (Muhr, 1997:1). Coding principles are similar to those applied in the manual coding process, with the added advantage that the software can cope with multiple and overlapping codes and coded segments can be comprehensively and rather quickly retrieved.

Before proceeding with the description of the procedures followed, the different levels of the operation need to be explained. Atlas.ti provides data analysis in two modes or levels, the textual and conceptual. At the textual level, activities include the segmenting or coding of the primary documents and compiling or adding annotations to these. The filing and indexing of passages from these primary documents, as well as secondary materials such as memos and annotations, facilitates their retrieval at a later stage. At the conceptual level, the unique networking feature of Atlas.ti allows one to visually connect selected passages, memos and codes into diagrams that graphically represent or outline complex relations in the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:513; Muhr, 1997:7). Muhr also refers to a third level in Atlas.ti, namely the organisational level, which serves to connect the above two levels. All administrative functions related to the project are dealt with at the organisational level.

The strength of computer-aided data analysis lies in the ability to order, structure, retrieve and visualise data. In this regard, Muhr (1997:1-2) states one of the objectives of Atlas.ti is to serve as "a powerful workbench" for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical and audio data. Another objective relates to the capacity of Atlas.ti to facilitate in uncovering complex phenomena hidden in data in an exploratory, but focussed manner.

Muhr explains the main principles of the Atlas.ti methodology by using the acronym “VISE”, which stands for Visualisation, Integration, Serendipity and Exploration.

Visualisation in Atlas.ti refers to the direct support offered to the way humans think, plan and approach solutions. Complex properties and relations are visual through tools it offers that help to keep the researcher focussed on the data. When working on details (another fundamental design feature), the integrated whole of the project is still within reach through the “hermeneutical unit.” Serendipity stands for the intuitive approach to the data, browsing through data leads to making relevant discoveries. The process of getting acquainted with the data is systematic although an exploratory, discovery oriented approach is followed (Muhr, 1997:2).

The computer-aided data analysis proceeded according to the steps as described by Muhr (1997:8). The transcribed text was computerised using the Atlas.ti software programme. In Atlas.ti all the transcribed texts are stored as data files called “primary documents” in an “idea container”, which contains or encloses all data related to the project, namely the Hermeneutical Unit. Similar to manual procedures, the coding of the data follows. The text is read through and codes assigned to selected text passages. Coding data literally means that the data is categorised, and this facilitates the comparison of data segments that are differently or equally coded. These equally or differently coded segments are assigned to files and stored in the Hermeneutical Unit. From these coded segments the researcher is able to build networks, which, together with the codes, super codes and memos, are regarded as the cornerstone of the emerging theory.

Although the decision to re-run the data analysis with Atlas.ti had time implications, the benefit to the study was that a more detailed and refined analysis resulted. This was made possible through the find-and-retrieve function that definitely added value when the selective coding step was done as it enhanced the ‘thick descriptions’ that could then be compiled with more ease. The manual data analysis also had its advantages. It familiarised the researcher with the data set and provided a working knowledge of the grounded theory approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998). This also proved to be beneficial as the Atlas.ti programme is based on a grounded theory approach, and steps used were similar to the manual analysis process.

3.5 ETHICS

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences of the University of Pretoria. Participation in the study was on a voluntarily basis and those who participated gave their verbal informed consent to participate prior to the first focus group discussion or individual interview in which they participated. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time and confidentially and anonymity was ensured and honoured through out the study.

3.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In line with the goal of the study the rationale for the idiographic research strategy and methodology followed was justified. Appropriate methods and techniques to obtain the research goal were put forward. In the following chapter the external environments of the participants is described, to serve as background to the rest of the findings and their interpretation.

SECTION 2

FINDINGS ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTS AND EVERYDAY FOOD PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

This first section on the findings contains Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4 the external environments of the participants are described. This includes not only an account of the geographical location and physical environment of Mmotla but also refers to important aspects of the socio-cultural environment of the participants. In Chapter 5 the everyday food practices of the participants are contextualised by giving a description of how they view and use food. The contemporary eating patterns as they are followed on weekdays and over weekends are reported on and interpreted.

This section comprises two chapters entitled:

Chapter 4: External environments of the participants

Chapter 5: Everyday food practices

CHAPTER 4

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Human food choice always takes place within the boundaries of what food is available, accessible and acceptable to people and is primarily determined by the external environments in which they live as described in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.1). Each of these environments, namely the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural, provides both opportunities and constraints for human food consumption (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:10). This exemplifies the contention that where people live contributes to their potential food choices (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11).

In this first chapter on the findings of the study, the external environments of the participants are sketched to contextualise the contemporary food practices of the Mmotla community. The purpose is twofold: not only to comprehend the contemporary food practices, but also to provide a background to understanding the changes and developments in food practices that occurred over the past four decades, as reported on by the participants. The geographic location of the village, including a description of the physical environment, together with a brief historical overview of the community, is given. The socio-cultural environment is briefly described including an overview of the cultural groups residing in the community, together with aspects that relate to their world view, ideology and social organisation.

4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The study involved selected members of a black South African community residing in Mmotla, also known as Mmotle or Ga-Motle, a densely populated village 55 km northwest of Pretoria, in the vicinity of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater. The village falls under the Moretele Municipal Council, part of the Eastern District Region of the North West province. See Figure 4.1 for a map showing the location of Mmotla.

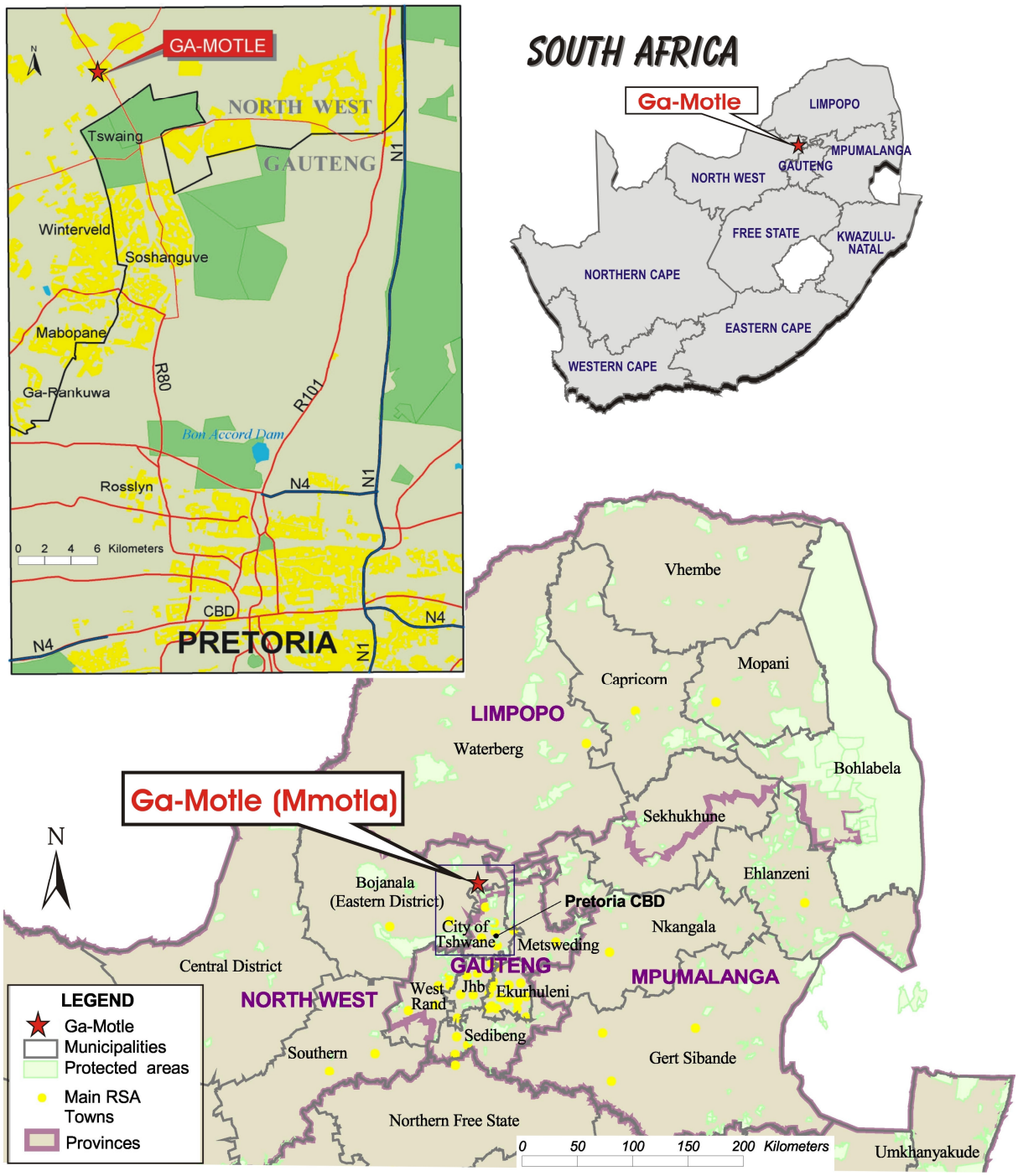

FIGURE 4.1: LOCATION OF MMOTLA VILLAGE

Mmotla was established during the early 1960s at the time when selected reserves around Tswaing (which formed part of the then Bantu Development Trust), were consolidated with some of the surrounding farms that were obtained by the Bantu Development Trust (Reimold, Brandt, De Jong & Hancox, 1999:113), to be proclaimed as a Trust area. The older participants said that they chose to come and live here, instead of staying on and working as farm labourers on white farms in areas such as Bronkhorstspruit, Witbank and Middelburg. Other participants could also recall when they moved from other nearby areas to Mmotla with

their parents and or relatives. In a publication that describes the natural and cultural history of the Tswaing area, Reimold *et al.* (1999:115) confirm that this happened. Many evicted farm workers, people living on mission stations or other 'Black Spots' in White South Africa as well as Black people residing in areas that were demarcated for either Whites, Coloureds or Indians were relocated in villages such as Ga-Motle or neighbouring villages such as Kromkuil or Kwa-Ratsiepane during the early 1960s. Most of the participants were thus able to describe the village life they experienced when they first moved to Mmotla and could compare it with the current situation.

When distinguishing between modern urban and traditional rural communities in South Africa, the Mmotla community could be described, as being somewhere in-between these two extremely different ways of life. The participants also mentioned that some of them still have close contact with relatives living in more rural areas and that close family members such as children or spouses, are employed in several of the nearby larger urban areas in Gauteng. It could thus be concluded that the residents of Mmotla have contact with the South African reality of people living poles apart, either following a rural or more traditional way of life or adopting a modern urban or Western-oriented lifestyle depending on where they live.

4.3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment as described in Chapter 2 (see 2.3.1.1), consists of the natural environment and all the built structures found in it. This environment primarily contributes to what food is available and accessible for consumption. The physical environment of Mmotla is presented by first sketching the natural environment, followed by a brief description of the infrastructure of the village.

4.3.1 Natural environment

Mmotla is located in the summer rainfall region of South Africa and receives 80% of its annual rainfall between September and April. The average recorded rainfall is 633 mm per annum. The average annual temperature of this area is 18.5° C. February is the hottest month, with daily temperatures ranging between 16° C and 28° C, and June is the coldest month. A probability of frost occurrence is calculated at 100% during the frost season during June up to mid-August. The evaporative demand is quantified as 2009 mm per annum (Agrometeorology Personnel, 2006).

Two land types dominate. To the north, land type Ae20, characterised by plains dominates whereas land type Bb18 to the south comprises slightly undulating plains. With regard to soil and terrain composition, both land types indicate average to good agricultural potential depending on the soil depth and natural fertility. However, a major limiting factor is the availability of water to sustain diversified crop production on a dry land agronomic system (Landtype Surveying Personnel, 1972-2004). Crop production in the village is thus severely hampered by the semi-arid climate and most of all the lack of water. Most of the residents are therefore not in the position to cultivate any crops for their own consumption – this was confirmed by the older participants. They indicated that they could not engage to the same degree of subsistence farming as they were used to when they worked and lived on white farms, before they came to settle here in Mmotla. At the time of the study, a small group of residents were involved in crop cultivation, on a limited scale, in communal fields on the outskirts of the village. This was, however, not regarded as very successful due to the lack of water and the continuous drought. In times of drought, *morogo* (collective name for indigenous leafy vegetables) is also not readily available for gathering in the veld or from household gardens. The natural environment is therefore not conducive to food production that would provide for or even supplement the food needs of the Mmotla community. The community is therefore largely dependent on the local commercial food markets to meet its basic food requirements.

4.3.2 Infrastructure of the village

Tarred roads make it easily accessible from Pretoria and Johannesburg as well as to the nearby big townships of Soshanguve, Mabopane and Hammanskraal. The village can be reached within one hour from the city centre of Pretoria by car, taxi or bus.

The village has two primary schools, one middle school and one high school. Medical services are inadequate and the only clinic is situated on the outskirts of the village. Various church groups are active in the community and the church seems to play a central role in the social organisation of this community. The buildings of eight Christian church denominations are found in the residential areas of the village.

Basic food commodities can be obtained from the village shops. Two general dealers, a butchery, a bakery, greengrocer and filling station with a convenience store are centrally situated where basic food items can be purchased. A number of small *spaza* shops and street vendors are scattered throughout the village. A *spaza* shop is usually found in a suburb, sometimes in the yard of the owner (it could even be part of the house), and can be described as a small-scale “convenience store” where a limited number of basic food items

such as bread, coffee, tea, sugar, condiments, toiletries and cleaning aids are sold. Most of the *spaza* shops sell fresh brown bread that is delivered on a daily basis early in the morning from big bakeries in Pretoria. The informal street vendors, on the other hand, engage in informal trade, offering a wide range of products, anything from electrical appliances to jewellery, sweets, potato crisps, fruit, vegetables or meat.

FIGURE 4.2: SPAZA SHOP

Most residents live in brick houses in the residential areas of the village. With the exception of one or two streets, most of the roads in the residential areas are not tarred. Although water is supplied to most of the residential areas, there are some areas without piped water. Running water is accessible to most households in the form of an outside tap in the yard. In the areas without piped water, water has to be fetched from communal taps by some, while others purchase it from those who have boreholes. In some instances, this is sold to those not having access to piped water at 50c per 25 litres of water. Sanitation facilities were recently installed or upgraded, and all the houses in the residential areas have outside toilets.

The stands are of medium size and some residents even keep livestock such as pigs, goats and fowls in their yards. Although vegetable gardening is not possible due to the limited supply of water, those who have boreholes occasionally engage in vegetable gardening. Those who own cattle keep them outside the village in camps.

Electricity has been available in the residential areas since 1994. Access to electricity led to the subsequent ownership of electrical household appliances such as stoves, refrigerators and deep freezers. Those who do not own refrigerators and deep freezers often store some

of their perishable commodities at the homes of relatives or neighbours who have refrigeration facilities. However, in the areas where electricity is not available, or in cases where it is not affordable, some people still collect firewood from outside the village to serve as fuel for food preparation. Alternatively, if they can afford paraffin, a paraffin primus stove is used for cooking. Technological advancement, made possible because of the availability of electricity, and specifically the acquisition of refrigerators and electric stoves, has considerably facilitated food provision and changed culinary practices in the village.

FIGURE 4.3: TYPICAL STREET SCENE

4.4 SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

To fully understand the behaviour of people, their cultural background has to be known, understood and appreciated. Not only knowledge of their ethnicity, but other aspects that relate to their culture, such as, the ideological and social organisational components, too are significant. A sketch of the cultural profile of the residents of Mmotla community is given together with a brief description of specific aspects that relate to ideology and the social organisation as observed in the community.

4.4.1 Cultural profile of the Mmotla community

As a direct result of the Groups Areas Act of 1950 and other *apartheid* legislation, large numbers of black people were removed from the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area, during 1953 and 1968, and resettled in towns northwest of Pretoria such as Mabopane, Garankuwa, Temba and Hammanskraal. Initially many non-Tswana people were located in what was then known as Mabopane-East. Mabopane-East was later to become Soshanguve. The name

Soshanguve was derived from the acronym to indicate the main residential groups in that area (*So*tho, *Sha*ngaan, *Ngu*ni and *Ve*nda people). Different cultural groups were thus forced to take up residence in the towns and larger residential areas neighbouring Mmotla (Reimold *et al*., 1999:114-116).

According to Reimold *et al*. (1999: 115) Mmotla was established in the early 1960s to accommodate evicted farm workers and other unwanted people from nearby urban areas. This serves as an explanation as to why, apart from the Tswana group, various other ethnic groups such as the Ndebele, North Sotho, Swazi and Tsonga-Shangaan still reside in Mmotla.

The different cultural and ethnic groups in this community, similar to other black South African communities in urban and semi-urban areas, have lived and worked together and have intermarried, a phenomenon also mentioned in the work of Schapera (1962:380-387). In this way they came into close contact with each other as well as with the white population and Western culture. As people observed and attended each other's celebrations, through the process of acculturation, adoption and assimilation of traditional traditions and customs[16] gradually took place. Although certain customs and traditions of the different cultural groups represented in this study are still observed, particularly those related to initiation and marriage, others have fallen into disuse or have been adapted to fit in with the lifestyle of the modern black educated person to which many aspire or often imitate.

As pointed out, the modern urbanised black South African's customs can be described as neither those of the traditional black ethnic groups nor those of the Westerner. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:400) aptly summarise this situation in the following statement: "What African people want is the freedom to live partially according to the Eurocentric culture, while at the same time retaining their own Afro-centric cultures and speaking their own languages."

4.4.2 Ideology

Apart from values, norms and knowledge, ideology includes, amongst other traits, the particular religious beliefs, world views and ethic principles of a group. A brief description of the study group's religious beliefs and world views is given as background to understanding specific aspects of their food practices.

[16] This is even noticed in the language usage of the various cultural groups in Mmotla.The different groups seemed to freely borrow and use words and terminology from each other's language with the result that linguistic purity is not observed anymore. This is for example noticed in the names of dishes and food items, where the Sotho, Tswana and isiNdebele names were often interchanged.

4.4.2.1 Christianity

Most of the participants indicated that they are Christians and members of church groups represented in the community. The influence of the church on the daily lives and food practices of some of the participants often emerged during the focus groups and individual interviews. Some churches seemed to dictate the extent to which their members could follow certain traditions and customs. This was also the case when the early missionaries started to engage in mission work in the rural areas of South Africa (Pauw, 1974:423). Comaroff (1996:21-26), for example, described their role in changing the Tswana people's traditional clothing practices to that of a Western-oriented style. Trollip (1991:110-111) also reported on the role of the church in influencing, and thus expecting, their members to abandon their traditional mode of dress. One may therefore assume that the same happened with food practices. The influence of the church on discarding practices such as initiation, traditional marriage and funeral rites are well documented (Jansen Van Rensburg, 1987:85; Pauw, 1974:431). Some church groups prescribed to their members in which customs they were allowed to engage. The following quotations, coming directly from the participants, illustrate the point.

"At the first church we got [belonged to], *they did not allow you, if you belonged to the church, to go again to those things* [initiation]".

"It [initiation] *is still the same, some they follow it but some have changed and they don't follow them any more, because of modern churches".*

"… it [modern weddings] *mostly started through the white churches, Dutch* [Dutch Reformed] *Roman* [Roman Catholic] *and Lutheran Churches. … the churches said people must be married in church, so that is when they started to adopt it* [modern weddings]".

"*The ceremony is done a week after the funeral by some families depending on the church to which they belong".*

Some churches also forbid their members to participate in certain traditional food practices especially those associated with customs in which ancestral communication is involved. Members from these churches are, for example, not allowed to brew or drink traditional beer and some even prohibit consumption of any form of fermented food. Others do not allow their members to eat from the meat of a beast that was slaughtered for ancestral veneration, as is the case, for example, during certain initiation and wedding celebrations and funerals. This was explained as follows:

"… based on her church beliefs a cow [beast] *is no longer slaughtered but the meat is bought from the butcher to cook a stew for the funeral".*

"Ja, some of the churches advise people what they must eat or must not eat. M's church, the Christian Assembly, if they tell people not to eat something, they read from the Bible".

On the other hand, some churches seemed to allow these practices as they have incorporated ancestral veneration in their liturgy. In this regard Pauw, (1974:431) mentions the syncretism of certain African traditions with those of the Baptist and Pentecostalism beliefs and practices, as is the case in some of the Zionist type of churches who make exceptions to some food practice rules enforced by them in the case of ancestral veneration, as is illustrated in the following quotation:

"Pork is not eaten by the Zionists [ZCC] *and the Apostolics. Traditional beer is used and drunk by the Apostolics, but the ZCC can use traditional beer to communicate to the ancestors but they are not allowed to drink it".*

Apart from its influence on food practices, the church was also seen as enhancing the close relationship that members have with one another, and the supportive and sharing role in the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, that they fulfil. Some of the participants always mentioned that members of the church are invited to personal celebrations and they are then included as family and friends at these celebrations. Similar to the findings by Pauw (1974:426) and Dubb (1974:461, 467), the impression was given that the church members have in certain instances replaced the kinship group. The church also influences the manner in which certain occasions are celebrated. In some churches, the church members play a central role in specific ceremonies, for example, marking the end of the mourning period after a year of the death of a loved-one, the unveiling of the tombstone or a birthday celebration. This was indicated by comments such as:

"The church people will come and other people will also be invited, and they will come and they will bring presents. The church women will be responsible for taking off the black clothes, then they will give her new church clothes".

"The people are invited to this event and members of the church are also there. The night before the unveiling there will be a church service in the tent at the family's house. Several morutis and priests will lead the service through the night".

"There is the party where the church members are invited, this party can start at lunch time, in the afternoon or in the evenings at 8 pm. Friends, neighbours, family and church members are invited. The priest from the church will also be present and during the course of the celebrations a special prayer will be said for the child, and the child will be blessed. No liquor is served at the church celebration".

4.4.2.2 Ancestral veneration

Opposed to, but also side-by-side with Christianity, ancestral veneration is still practised by a large section of the community. Belief in ancestors and the importance of keeping the ancestors happy and satisfied by adhering to traditional customs and practices were often mentioned, as demonstrated in the following quotations:

"The traditional beer is prepared in some families to inform the ancestors that there is the other one coming to them as ancestor".

"You can also show the ancestors that you remember them by just taking the traditional beer – you pour [the traditional beer] *at that special place".*

"… each and every year they do this traditional beer for the ancestors, to show them they remember. They will do it at the special place".

"… this is the traditional prayer, everything they do, they must tell the ancestors everything. Maybe they bought a car, or a child is born, or you tell the ancestors about the deceased".

Some participants spontaneously admitted that they still follow these practices, while others who belonged to certain church groups were opposed to ancestral veneration and had abandoned these practices long ago. One of the older participants, aged 72 years, indicated that her parents were Christians and that when she was growing up her family did not engage in these practices. In some of the churches, such as the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC), the power of the ancestors and the importance of obeying their wishes are recognised and combined with the religious practices of the church. This is in accordance with the view of Pauw (1974:431,439) that traditional rituals are often combined with Christianity, and in other instances these could be maintained and practised as separate identities.

In every culture, ideology expresses the beliefs of the people and how they ought to behave or conduct themselves as members of a social group (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:89; Fieldhouse,

1995:30). It became clear that the traditional belief and value system was still adhered to by a large number of the participants. Traditional ideology continues to influence the lives of some. In most of these cases, certain traditional customs were faithfully practised. On the other hand, the influence of the church is also strong and the majority of Christian churches require their members to abandon or distance themselves from the traditional beliefs. Christianity and the traditional belief system sometimes seem to stand in contradiction to each other, and in other instances, they tend to operate in accord with each other.

4.4.3 Social organisation

Various social organisations or groups are active in the community such as the women's groups of the different churches, support groups and groups formed by members who belong to a specific burial society. All participants indicated that they belong to, or were involved in one or more of these associations or social groups.

The church, and specifically the women's groups of the different churches, seemed to play a pivotal role in the social organisation of this community and to fulfil an important social function. These groups usually meet once a week. The impression given was that to belong to a women's group, not only provides an opportunity for social interaction, but also brings prestige. Those who belonged to such a group were extremely proud of their membership. To identify to which church they belong, the members of many of these groups wear special *"church clothes*" with a uniform dress code, giving a sense of belonging and good standing, over and above mere group identification and allegiance as a respected member.

4.4.3.1 Support groups

Other important social associations come from the support groups. A support group is formed by a group of female friends, family and or neighbours. Hellmann (1962:411) and Dubb (1974: 466-467) point out that these groups play an important supportive and friendship role in the social lives of black females in South African communities. These women's groups render mutual support and companionship to their group members, in a comparable manner to kinship groups in traditional communities. Pauw (1974:426) and Dubb (1974:461,467) describe this as a replacement function for the loss of kinship relations due to delocalisation and urbanisation.

The participants explained that a support group could function on the same principle as a

stokvel[17]. However, the way it is structured and operates could differ according to the constitution or rules that were formulated when the group was formed. The support groups in this community appeared to be more than a *stokvel* with the supportive role being the most important and central function as their name, 'support group', implies. This view was endorsed during group discussions when they were asked to explain the support group system. One response was:

"Support groups, also called "thusanang", are meant to be giving hands when there is a occasion for members [function or celebration hosted by one of the members of the support group]*. It is only the group that has money and can assist in cooking and catering activities for women".*

It was suggested that a support group could also function as a *stokvel.* In most cases the group members decide how they would work and what would be expected from each member in terms of contributions such as money, ingredients for functions or celebrations, skill or labour in food preparation or the borrowing or supplying of equipment, utensils or crockery. They could, for example, decide that part of the monthly contributions would be set aside to buy items for individual members that they needed or wished to have. Items mentioned were household items, food preparation equipment and small utensils, crockery, cutlery and household linen such as blankets and tablecloths. These items could then be used when they assisted each other at functions and big celebrations. The following quotations clarify the role played by these support groups.

"Each member has to donate money every month. This money can then be used as agreed by the group when the group is formed. They agree what, when and how they are going to support".

"That money is going to be used for burial [funerals]*, weddings, parties - whatever the members of the group have agreed".*

"*Some groups will donate money, others will donate ingredients, others will donate their effort* [skills and labour]".

[17] A *stokvel* according to Du Plessis, Rousseau and Blem (1990:155) "is a means of saving or raising funds. Groups of people get together and pool their financial resources. On a rotating basis each member will benefit from the pool. For a small monthly contribution, a *stokvel* member will at some stage have access to the whole pool."

4.4.3.2 Burial societies

Burial societies could be regarded as formal organisations with the main objective of providing insurance for covering the cost of a funeral. A burial society also assists with funeral arrangements and helps with the catering for the funeral meal. According to Du Plessis *et al.* (1990:155) the membership scheme of a burial society is similar to that of a *stokvel*. Most people belong to a burial society and the importance of belonging to one was emphasised. The majority of burial societies function on the same principle - they all have a constitution and operate in conjunction with the owner of a mortuary. Some burial societies are organised and run by the community in liaison with the owner of the mortuary, or sometimes the owner of the mortuary takes the initiative to form a burial society. People can then join the burial society. They usually pay a monthly subscription fee. It was explained that it would be difficult to arrange a funeral without belonging to a burial society as a family might not have sufficient funds to meet the costs involved. Belonging to a burial society is convenient and saves money. When a member of the immediate family passes away, all one needs to do is to inform the burial society of the death and they then organise the funeral and all the related aspects attached to it.

The society would, for example, arrange for the corpse to be taken to the mortuary and also be responsible for the rest of the funeral procedures. In consultation with the bereaved family, a date for the funeral would be set. The marquee for the *tebello*[18] and all the equipment needed food preparation, such as the tables and chairs, the crockery and cutlery are all supplied by the society. A hearse and the car to transport the family to the cemetery are in most cases also provided. According to their constitution, the society would be actively involved in the purchase and preparation of the food for the funeral meal. In some instances the burial society appoints a group of women to buy the ingredients and organise the preparation of the food. Other societies give a sum of money to the bereaved family who would then decide how much money to spend on the food.

The socio-cultural environment represents the complex interrelationship and interactions that exist among individuals, their culture and society. It thus reflects the behaviour of its society as governed by culture. This applies to the peoples of Mmotla as well. Ideology and social organisation as components of culture are prominent in shaping cultural traditions. They guide, or sometimes even dictate, behaviour in a society or within a specific group, as could happen when either adhering to or abandoning of cultural traditions including the embedded food practices.

[18] The *tebello* is a memorial service and wake held for the deceased during the night before the burial the following morning.

4.5 ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

From the focus groups it was established that a large number of adults were unemployed and those who were employed either travel to Pretoria on a daily basis or other nearby areas, or live near their place of employment during the week and only return home over weekends. It is more often the employed male members of households who live away from home during the week although this is also the case with employed females. Similar to other studies (Walker & Charlton, 2001:39) the older females, mostly the grandmothers in the households, contribute substantially to the financial resources of the household using their old-age pension grants. These elderly females also fulfil the roles of child minders and household mangers in the three-generation households in which they usually live. In the households of their adult working children, in most cases, they are responsible for purchasing the food and sometimes even for its preparation. Some of the participants earned an income or supplemented their pension through the income-generating project mentioned in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.1.2).

4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL FORCES AND FOOD PRACTICES

Where people live has a direct influence on the food they consume (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Bryant *et al*., 2003:11) particularly with regard to aspects such as the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, factors mainly determined by external environmental forces. In this community the physical (natural and man-made) environment has a direct effect on the availability and even the accessibility of food, whilst its affordability is partly due to forces associated with the economic and political spheres and to a lesser degree the socio-cultural environment.

Availability Availability seemed to play a major role in the type of food that could be gathered, cultivated or purchased which, in turn, had a direct influence on the food chosen for consumption. The limited availability of indigenous vegetables and grain products was often mentioned as a reason for not eating these as often as had been the traditional custom. The phrases below illustrate that the lack of water was a big obstacle and the main reason why these crops were not cultivated. The poor soil condition also contributes to the limited availability of indigenous vegetables.

"Then that thing with struggling with the water, because they saw there is no water here to plant the traditional foods".

However, when the rainfall was good, indigenous green leafy vegetables were in abundance in the veld and the gardens, and these would then be gathered in spring and summer, and the excess dried and stored for winter months.

[19] "*Yes you see there is a drought this year, I always make at my place here, my place is very small, but it has always made a lot of morogo".*

It was also mentioned that, when the circumstances are favourable, some people cultivate indigenous crops and these are sold to the community when available:

"… *they sell these things and we eat as in the olden days".*

At times, indigenous vegetables, especially legumes, are available from street vendors or at markets and sometimes these are bought in bulk from farms where they are still cultivated. The participants purchase these with great enthusiasm when they have the opportunity as illustrated below.

"O*ther people bring these things here, you can bring legumes here and we buy it. One, two, three, finish!"*

"Nowadays they buy these, there are some people who will go to the farm to buy in bulk and when they come here they sell to everyone".

The natural environment of the village severely hampers crop production largely due to the state of the soil, the semi-arid climate and lack of water. At the time of the study some households did not even have piped water so water had to be transported in large plastic containers on wheelbarrows from central water points or from neighbours who had boreholes. Moreover, in times of drought wild greens were also not readily available in the veld and could not be gathered. Therefore most of the participants said that they had to rely on what the local food markets had to offer, as illustrated in the following quote:

"The reason why there are more modern foods than in the olden days is because most of the traditional foods that they have eaten in the olden days are scarce".

It became clear that indigenous vegetables are still popular in this community, as is the case in the rest of South Africa and the African continent (Jansen van Rensburg, Van Averbeke,

[19] * Refers to Afrikaans quotations directly translated into English. The interpreter translated quotations in the third person from Tswana to English during the focus groups.

Slabbert, Faber, Van Jaarsveld, Van Heerden, Wenhold & Oelofse, 2007; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Gockowski *et al.,* 2003; Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003). The restricted consumption of some of these items is mainly due to their unavailability. When people came to live in Mmotla they became dependent on what the stores in the area had to offer. They therefore had no option but to adapt their diet and to include the *"modern food items*" that are available in the local stores.

Accessibility Although the basic food commodities were obtainable through these shops and vendors, they were expensive in comparison with the prices asked by shops in Pretoria and the nearby big centre of Mabopane. Some of the participants indicated that they had the means to travel by taxi or with their own transport to purchase some of the non-perishable foods in bulk on a monthly basis at hypermarkets and big supermarkets in either Pretoria or Mabopane. The only items purchased locally were the heavy items such as bags of flour, maize-meal and sugar, and perishable items such as fresh meat, fruit and vegetables. However, those who were not able to travel to the larger shopping centres, had no option but rely solely on the more expensive items offered by the local shops and vendors. D'Haese and Van Huylenbroeck (2005), in their study on the changing expenditure patterns in the Transkei, reported a similar tendency of increased purchasing at supermarkets.

Affordability Another important theme that emerged from the discussions was money and the high food prices. Available money not only determined the kinds of foods that could be bought but also the frequency of purchase. This largely accounted for the fact that the current food pattern on weekend days differed from that of weekdays. During the week, for example, meat was not eaten on a daily basis with the participants indicating that they ate it at the most two to three times a week, because it was too expensive to eat everyday. The less expensive cuts of meat and more often offal products of chicken and beef (that is, of course, reasonably priced), were thus the main items of choice. Crous and Borchardt (1984) and Ladzani *et al.* (1992) report similar trends with regard to meat consumption. Another reason why more bread-based meals were consumed was related to the affordability of relishes. Food prices determined what was eaten with the stiff maize-meal porridge. Bread was often consumed as a meal at lunch because no relish was needed or less expensive accompaniments could be served with it than would be the case when stiff maize-meal porridge was prepared. An elderly informant explained this as follows:

"As now when the things go up [in price] *and become a little bit expensive, we don't have any more money to buy something to eat with the porridge in the morning or in the day* [lunch] *and again in the evening. Then we start to eat bread in the morning and during the day* [lunch]*, and then in the evening we will eat a full meal".*

The reason for the different food and meal patterns over weekends was attributed to the fact that more money was available to spend on food purchases over weekends as most labourers were paid weekly on Fridays.

4.7 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

What people eat is primarily determined by where they live, which implies that the external environments, as part of the context in which food practices take place, have to be taken into account. In this chapter, the external environments of the participants were described to contextualise their food practices. In the case of Mmotla, its geographic location is singularly significant in that, due to a lack of water and intermittent droughts in the area, crop cultivation for household use is severely restricted, with the result that the participants depend on retail outlets as a source of supply for their basic food needs.

Furthermore, to understand and appreciate their food-related behaviour, it was equally important to describe their socio-cultural environment. A noteworthy aspect regarding this environment is the multi-cultural composition of the village which has inevitably come about as a result of continuous first-hand intermingling of the different cultural groups. This, together with close contact with Western-oriented culture, through employment in neighbouring urban and industrial centres, has led to migration, urbanisation, modernisation and acculturation. Other aspects of significance in this environment relate to the religious beliefs of the participants and the nature of the community's social organisation.

The majority of the participants indicated that they were Christians and members of Christian churches. Apart from this, but often side-by-side, ancestral veneration continues to be practised by some. The influence of the church and ancestral veneration on the lives and food practices of some participants emerged as a strong force that either allowed or prohibited the adherence to certain traditions and customs. Some church groups forbid their members to participate in initiation practices, traditional marriage and funeral rites, and some even totally disallow certain traditional food practices such as the brewing or drinking of traditional beer, and eating from the meat of an animal slaughtered for ancestral veneration. On the other hand, ancestral veneration is still practised in the community and belief in ancestors and the importance of obeying and keeping them happy and satisfied, is an essential part of the lives of those who retain these traditional beliefs. Traditional ideology was seen to continue influencing the lives of some participants, those who devotedly follow certain traditional customs.

Both formal and informal organisations, such as the women's groups of the different churches and other support groups, are active in the community. These groups are a vital part of the social life of the participants, as they not only fulfil important supportive and friendship functions but, in many cases, also provide financial security. Membership to such group, depending on its constitution, can, for example, provide financial assistance when members have to host a big social event such as initiation and wedding celebrations or funerals. Apart from financial assistance, other group members also render their services in the form of help and food preparation skills to fellow members, and this enables them to host these big social events.

In the next chapter the everyday food practices of the participants are described.

CHAPTER 5

EVERYDAY FOOD PRACTICES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This second chapter on the findings of the study sets out to give a description of how the participants view and use food. This includes brief reference to the type of foods used in different contexts and serves as background to comprehending and appreciating the food practice characteristics of the study group. Information on everyday food practices includes weekday and weekend food practices, and emphasises the eating patterns (meal patterns and composition) of the participants in these contexts. Attention is also given to other aspects related to food practices such as the acquisition, preparation and storage of food. How these everyday food practices have evolved and changed over time and the factors that have contributed to this development, are explicated. The underlying reasons for and values attached to the contemporary food practices are then placed on record.

5.2 FOOD CATEGORIES

A simple dichotomy emerged during the focus group discussions as the participants spontaneously categorised food as *"traditional foods"* or *"modern foods"*. To the participants *'modern'* meant Western-oriented food that was not part of their accustomed food pattern before the 1960s, and should not be regarded as the period after the Industrial Revolution. This is the participants' perception of how they view, understand and give meaning to foods other than what they regard as "*traditional foods"*.

5.2.1 Traditional foods

It emerged that "*traditional or olden days foods"*, were foods the older participants associated with as familiar to them when they were growing up. These foods were similar to those mentioned as part of traditional eating patterns and represent the food items regularly consumed by the black South African population up to the 1960s (Walker, 1966; Oudkerk, 1965; Ashton, 1939; Bryant, 1939; Osborn & Noriskin, 1937; Turner, 1909). The older participants revealed that, before they came to live in Mmotla, they were able to engage in

agricultural activities on a subsistence level and cultivated their own indigenous and other vegetables, and to a lesser extent, some grain products such as maize and sorghum. They had limited access to commercial products and therefore the range was restricted as was the frequency and quantity of consumption, as the information given in Table 5.1 suggests,.

As described in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.2.4) the South African Sugar Association's nutrition education flash cards as well as pictures of indigenous vegetables were used to identify the food items and dishes prepared from the different items on the cards and pictures. These were then grouped as either "*traditional foods*" or *"modern foods*". In Table 5.1 the food items and associated dishes that were regarded as *"traditional foods"* are listed.

Table 5.1 is supplemented by Addendum C containing the recipes of the traditional dishes that were still being prepared by the participants at the time of the study. To contextualise the use of the dishes, additional information such as the occasions when these dishes were prepared, is also included. The inclusion of the recipes and accompanying descriptions serves a threefold purpose. First, it gives a perspective of the cuisine and the cuisine heritage of the participants which is also regarded as an important aspect of food practices. Second, it portrays part of the material culture; and third, as explained by Leach and Inglis (2003:142), recipes supplied by community groups also reflect "aspects of identity and group formation, and the lives and values of women who are otherwise invisible". Except for a few publications, such as those by Coetzee (1982), Quin (1959) and Bryant (1939), no detailed publication or record of recipes of the South African black groups' traditional dishes could be found. However, two recently published recipe books, the one by Basemzansi (2004) and the other by Dora Sitole (1999), contain recipes of traditional dishes from various South and southern African groups but most of these could be better described as contemporary adaptations or versions of the traditional fare. Even though some of the items listed in Table 5.1 are, strictly speaking, not traditional foods, those participants who associate them with their own childhood food experiences, categorise them as traditional as they feel they come from a bygone era. This view is in accordance with Trichopoulo, Soukara and Vasilopoulou (2007) and other scholars (Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003) who regard traditional foods, as foods that have been an integral part of culture for some time, which is usually more than one generation. Quin (1959:59) mentions that some of the vegetables like tomatoes, sweet potatoes, beetroot and carrots, were already becoming popular with some of the participants in the study he conducted in the late 1950s. This offers an explanation why these vegetables and other food items were categorised as traditional by some.

TABLE 5.1: TRADITIONAL FOODS AND DISHES

*See photographs and recipes in Addendum C

FOOD GROUP	TRADITIONAL FOODS/ DISHES	DESCRIPTION AND USE
Cultivated grains		
Maize (*Zea mays*) **Maize fresh**	*Lephotlho**	Cooked fresh green maize on the cob / Fresh green mealies Fresh just-ripe maize on the cob boiled in salted water Popular as snack also roasted after cooked
Dried maize kernels	*Dikgobe ** *Lekokoro ** *Umphohlo / Inkobe**	Dried whole maize kernels boiled in salted water
	*Imbasha**	Cooked dried maize kernels roasted after cooking
	Samp * *Stampa / Setampa*	Dried, whole or coarsely broken maize kernels. Boiled in salted water
	Xibaswa (Tsonga dish)*	Prepared from soaked, ground dried maize kernels (samp). Boiled in salted water. The consistency of the dish resembles a soft porridge
Maize meal porridges	*Bogobe / Umratha**	Stiff porridge. Usually served for lunch and/or supper Maize-meal boiled in water. Ratio water to meal 1:2 (Coetzee, 1982:133)
	*Puthu / Iphuthu **	Stiff crumbly porridge. Favourite of the Nguni people, served with *amasi.** Ratio water to meal. 1-2:4 (Coetzee, 1982:134)
	*Mdogo / Motogo / Umdoko **	Soft porridge prepared with water as liquid. Usually served for breakfast Ratio water to meal 3-6:1 (Coetzee, 1982:132)
	*Ting **	Soft fermented maize-meal porridge Ratio water to maize-meal 4:1(Coetzee, 1982:140)
	*Isidudu **	Soft maize-meal porridge prepared from sour / fermented water obtained during the beer-making process. Often served as breakfast food (Coetzee, 1982:142). According to McAllister (2003) this was often given as reward to those who helped with the preparation of the beer
	*Mageu**	Non-alcoholic beverage drunk during the day. Prepared from very thin maize-meal porridge fermented for up to 24 hours (Coetzee, 1982:172)
Sorghum (*Sorghum vulgarea*) **Sorghum grains**	Boiled sorghum grains	Traditional staple food served at main meal of the day (Coetzee, 1982:149)
Sorghum beer	*Tlhotlha**	Traditional strong fermented beer. Prepared from malted sorghum and maize-meal
	*Thabalala / Bojalwajwa**	Traditional strong fermented beer. Prepared from malted sorghum
Sorghum meal porridges	*Mabele*	Both thick and thin porridges were traditionally prepared with sorghum meal. Sorghum porridges have an attractive brownish colour (Coetzee, 1982:136). See *Bohobe ba mabele**, *Ting ya mabele** and *Umtsikitlane**
	*Bohobe ba mabele**	Thick sorghum meal porridge
	*Ting ya mabele**	Soft fermented sorghum meal porridge. Coetzee (1982:136) refers to this as a Tswana dish
	*Umtsikitlana / Ingqwangqwa** (Ndebele*), Tlhowa (Pedi)*	Sour porridge prepared from sorghum meal and whey as liquid
Legumes		The two most common legumes used were the *njugo* bean and cowpeas. A variety of dishes prepared from these legumes formed part of the traditional diet (Coetzee, 1982:158; Bryant, 1967:273; Quin, 1959:44,47) and these were often prepared by combining them with cereals to form a number of interesting dishes
Njugo beans (*Vigna subterranea*)	*Ditloo*	Also known as the Bambara nut
	Ditloo marapo	Cooked dried *njugo* beans boiled in water. Salt added to taste (Quin, 1959:44)
	*Irhayi**	Cooked dried bean and maize kernels. According to Coetzee (1982:158), the proportions of maize and beans depended on the occasion
	*Sekgotho**	*Ditloo* and *mabele* (sorghum meal) porridge Similar description given by (Coetzee 1982;160; Quin 1959:47)

TABLE 5.1: TRADITIONAL FOODS AND DISHES – *continued*

FOOD GROUP	TRADITIONAL FOODS/ DISHES	DESCRIPTION AND USE
Cowpeas *(Vigna unguiculata)*	*Dinawa* *Umkhupha** (isiNdebele*)* *Isishwala* (Swazi)	Cowpeas are relatively scarce and commercial dried legumes such as sugar beans are often used as a substitute *Dinawa* cooked to a soft pulp. Maize-meal is added to form a thick porridge-like dish with a firm consistency
Peanuts *(Arachis hypogea)*	*Tokomane*	As ingredient in dishes or as flavouring. See *xigugu**, *tihove** , *timbabe** and *morogo**
	*Xigugu** (Tsonga*)*	Roasted peanut and maize-meal finely sifted. A similar description is given by Coetzee (1982:164)
	*Timbabe** (Swazi)	Roasted peanuts and maize-meal grinded together and flavoured with salt
	*Tihove**	Cooked samp, *njugo* beans and/or cowpeas mixed with cooked peanuts
Cultivated indigenous and other vegetables **Wild melon** *(Citrillus lanatis)*	*Lerotse* *Kgodu*	Cooked as such in salted water (Quin, 1959:52) Melon boiled in water, maize-meal added and flavoured with salt and sugar Basemzansi (2004:63)
Gourd	*Maraka**	Boiled in water with skin on. Served with milk. According to Quin (1959:54), the pear shaped fruit with a warted outer skin is used as vegetable by the Pedi
Pumpkin *(Cucurbita pepo)*		The hard-shelled pumpkin was used extensively by all groups in Africa (Quin, 1959:55). Every part of the pumpkin plant is used. The flowers, young tender leaves, tendrils and pumpkin fruits are cooked together to form a favourite relish (Coetzee, 1982:154-156; Quin, 1959:55 A popular way to prepare pumpkin is to remove only the inner parts and seeds, then cut it into large slices and cooked with the peel on. The pumpkin slices are then served whole (Coetzee, 1982:155).Pumpkin is peeled when prepared with cereal meals. See *isijeza* *and s*emphemphe**
	Isijeza / Semphemphe - pumpkin *mdogo**	Soft pumpkin and maize meal porridge. Used during the first few days of the *ingoma* and *iqude*
	*Tshopi ra makwembe**	Soft pumpkin and maize meal porridge
	*Dithotse**	Roasted pumpkin seeds. Popular snack, also used as relish (Coetzee, 1982:156)
Wild indigenous leafy vegetables	*Morogo / Moroho* *Moroho imbuya** *Moroho thepe** *Moroho mbixama** *Moroho mbolowa**	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables Young tender leaves are used as an ingredient in relishes. Leaves of specific indigenous plants and indigenous legumes, either fresh or dried, are cooked by boiling them in water. Salt and other flavourings are often added During spring and summer the abundant leaves are sun-dried and stored for later use
	Isijabane	Maize-meal is sometimes added to the *moroho* (Coetzee, 1982:153)
Other vegetables Tomato Onion Potato Cabbage Spinach (Swiss chard) Sweet potato		Strictly these were not part of the traditional eating pattern (Quin, 1959:59). It seems as if they have been introduced gradually over the past century. Tomatoes, onions and potatoes are nowadays often added in the preparation of some of the traditional relishes
Fruit Apricot Apple Orange Naartjie Peach		Enjoyed as fresh fruit between meals as snack

TABLE 5.1: TRADITIONAL FOODS AND DISHES – *continued*

FOOD GROUP	TRADITIONAL FOODS/ DISHES	DESCRIPTION AND USE
Meat **Beef** *Bos Taurus*		Traditionally the whole carcass of the animal was used. This includes the stomach, intestines, head and feet. Cattle were only slaughtered for festivities and all the meat was usually eaten on such occasions (Coetzee, 1982:165) The general cooking method was by boiling the meat in water with limited salt, if any, added as flavouring. Roasting was also a popular cooking method
	*Umqwebu**	Dried meat. Meat was preserved by sun-drying strips of meat
	*Seswayi**	Meat relish prepared from cooked, finely ground meat flavoured with peanuts
	*Nyama shikaya**	Traditional boiled meat, served at home
	Braised brisket	Traditional braised meat dish
	*Idombolo Mathambo**	Dumplings and meat bones. Dumplings prepared from flour steamed on boiled shin (soup meat) bones
	*Mogodu **	Boiled ox tripe. Prepared on weekdays
Mutton		Whole carcass used as meat including intestines, head and feet Slaughtered for festivities
Cevon	*Pudi*	Whole carcass used as meat including intestines, head and feet Sacrificial animal slaughtered for special occasions
Chicken		Whole carcass used as meat including giblets, intestines, head and feet
Caterpillars	*Masonja**	Dried whole, rehydrated mopani worms are boiled in water and flavoured with ground peanuts
Milk and products Fresh milk		Served with soft porridge at breakfast. Used in tea and coffee
	*Amasi**	Sour milk. Curds used as relish with *phutu** or as such. Whey can be used to prepare dishes such as *umtsikitlana**
Butter		Used in food preparation when available
Breads	*Dombolo**	Steamed bread. Bread dough steamed in container or plastic bag in a pot of water. Popular everyday dish and on special occasions
	*Isiphaphathi**	Fried flat bread
	*Borotho**	Pot bread or home-baked bread
	*#Amaskons**	Home-baked scones. See baked products Table 5.2
	#Vetkoek*	See baked products Table 5.2
Purchased / commercial items # Cake flour # Bread flour # Sugar # Salt # Yeast # Jam # Syrup # Tea / coffee # Tinned fish # Dried legumes e.g. sugar beans, butter beans		

Items regarded as traditional by some of the informants as these items have been part of their eating patterns since childhood.

5.2.2 Modern foods

Modern foods, on the other hand, are foods and dishes associated with a Western-oriented eating pattern, similar to the food items and dishes consumed by white South Africans. The food items identified as *"modern foods"* are given in Table 5.2

TABLE 5.2: MODERN FOODS AND ASSOCIATED DISHES

*See photographs and recipes in Addendum D

FOOD GROUP	FOOD ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND USE
Cereal, grain and pasta products	Corn flakes	As breakfast cereal
	Mealie rice*	This is regarded as a new addition to African food sources (Coetzee, 1982:129). Commercially available finely ground dried maize kernels the size of rice grains is cooked in salted water. Ratio mealie rice to water 1:2
	Samp*	Regarded by some as a modern dish as samp is now commercially processed and readily available. The whole or coarsely ground dried maize kernels are cooked in salted water. Ratio of samp to water 1:2
	Oats	Served as soft porridge for breakfast mostly over weekends
	Rice (white and brown)*	Popular starch dish. Served at main meal on Sundays or during the week and for special occasions
	Macaroni	Cooked as salad ingredient or in soups See macaroni salad*
	Spaghetti Tinned spaghetti in tomato sauce	Cooked as ingredient in soup and *Spikos** Ingredient in *Spikos**
	Popcorn	Popular snack eaten by school children
Meat, processed meat and texturised vegetable protein products	Minced meat	Savoury mince and as ingredient in meat-based relishes
	Vienna sausages	Ingredient in *Spikos**
	Russian sausage	Purchased from fast food outlets with French fries or b*ogobe*
	Boerewors	Popular South African sausage. A coarse, loose textured beef and pork sausage flavoured with spices such as coriander, cloves, nutmeg and all spice (Van Wyk & Barton, 2007:54; Smit & Fulton, 1983:47)
	French polony	As such or on bread. Ingredient in *Spatlho** and *Spikos**
	Corned beef tinned	Ingredient in gravy-type relishes
	Knorrox, Soya mince	Ingredient in gravy-type relishes. See gravy*
Offal products Chicken offal (feet, head, liver, intestines and giblets)	Chicken *Malana**	Chicken intestines. Served at lunch or for supper on weekdays
	*Maotwana**	Chicken feet. Popular dish served at lunch or supper on weekdays
	*Walkie talkies**	Chicken feet and heads. Popular dish served at lunch and supper on weekdays
Beef offal (head, lungs, liver, heart, spleen, intestines and stomach)	*Mogodu**	Boiled ox tripe. Popular dish at lunch or supper on weekdays
	*Mala mogodu**	Boiled small intestines. Popular dish at lunch or supper on weekdays
Fish	Frozen hake fillets	Fried fish in batter
	Tinned pilchards	Used as accompaniment to bread or as ingredient in fish cakes or salads. See macaroni salad*
	Fried fish and chips	Purchased at fast food outlets
Dairy products	Fresh milk	Tea, coffee, breakfast cereals and porridge
	Long-life milk (UHT)	As above or when travelling
	Condensed milk	Used in tea and coffee
	Powdered milk	Food preparation
	Butter	Ingredient in baking
	Cream	Food preparation and baking
	Cheese	As accompaniment to bread mostly over weekends
	Yoghurt	As snack food
	Yogisip	A popular commercial dairy beverage
	Dairy fruit beverages	Popular commercial beverages also for special occasions
	Ice cream	Dessert on Sundays and on special occasions
	Processed cheese	Used as bread spread

TABLE 5.2: MODERN FOODS AND ASSOCIATED DISHES – *continued*

FOOD GROUP	FOOD ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND USE
Vegetables	Beetroot	Popular vegetable and salad ingredient. Served at main meal on Sundays and on special occasions. See various beetroot recipes* and photos
	Cabbage	Popular ingredient in salads, relishes, stews and stir-fries. See coleslaw* and fried cabbage* recipes and photos*
	Carrots	Ingredient in salads, relishes and stews. See coleslaw*, green bean salad*, stew* and *chakalaka**
	Cucumber	Ingredient in mixed salad
	Green beans	Ingredient in stews, salads and relishes. See green bean salad*
	Green peas	Ingredient in salads, stews
	Green pepper	Ingredient in salads, relishes and stews. See chutney beetroot*, stew meat* and fried cabbage*
	Lettuce	Ingredient in mixed salad
	Tinned mixed vegetables	Ingredient in salads. See mixed vegetable salad*
	Onions	Ingredient in salads, relishes and stews
	Potatoes	Ingredient in salads, relishes and stews. Also popular as French fries and mashed potatoes. See potato salad*
	Pumpkin	Cooked as vegetable and ingredient in traditional porridges.
	Spinach	*Morogo* spinach. Substitute for indigenous green leafy vegetables. Ingredient in relishes and stir-fries
	Sweet corn, tinned	Ingredient in salads, stews and breads
	Tomatoes	Ingredient in salads, relishes and stews. Also sliced on bread
Legumes	Tinned beans (baked beans, butter beans)	Ingredient in salads and relishes. See three bean salad*
	Commercially dried sugar, kidney, butter beans	Ingredients in salads and relishes. Substitute for indigenous legumes in traditional dishes. See *umkhupha**
Fruit	Apples	Eaten as such
	Bananas	Eaten as such. Ingredient in baked products. See Banana bread*
	Figs	Eaten as such
	Granadilla	Eaten as such
	Grapes	Eaten as such
	Guava(fresh and tinned)	Eaten as such or tinned as popular dessert
	Lemon	Eaten as such. Ingredient in food preparation
	Naartjie (Mandarin)	Eaten as such
	Oranges	Eaten as such
	Paw-paw	Eaten as such
	Peaches (fresh and tinned)	Eaten fresh or tinned as popular dessert
	Pears (fresh and tinned)	Eaten fresh or tinned as popular dessert
	Pineapple	Eaten as such. Ingredient in salads
	Quinces	Eaten as such
Baked products	Biscuits	Served on special occasions
	Bread, commercially baked	Popular menu item at breakfast and lunch. Served with spreads such as jam, peanut butter or relishes
	Bread, home-baked	Baked as special treat over weekends. See *borotho** and *dombola**
	Buns and bread rolls	Popular as snack and for lunch
	Cakes	Served on special occasions
	*Dikuku**	Baked biscuits. Served on special occasions
	*Dombola**	Steamed bread. Served on special occasions and over weekends or a special treat
	Pies	Popular as snack and for lunch
	Queen cakes*	Served on special occasions
	Scones*	Served on special occasions and over weekends or as a special treat
	*Vetkoek**	Deep fat fried bread dough. Served on special occasions and over weekends or as a special treat

TABLE 5.2: MODERN FOODS AND ASSOCIATED DISHES – *continued*

Desserts and sweets	Candies	Served on special occasions. Used as decoration for traditional dishes such as s*dudu** and *timbabe**
	Custard powder	Ingredient for custard sauce and baked products
	Custard sauce	Served with tinned fruit and /or jelly
	Chocolates	Served on special occasions
	Jelly powder	Ingredient to prepare jelly
Fats and oils	Salad/cooking oil	Used in food preparation
	Margarine (brick and tub)	Used as bread spread and in baking
	Mayonnaise	Ingredient in salads. See various salad recipes*
	Salad dressing	Ingredient in salads
	Holsum	Hydrogenated vegetable fat. Used in food preparation and baking
Flavourings	Aromat	Food flavouring
	Beef stock cubes	Flavouring in stews, relishes and meat dishes
	Salt, fine	Food flavouring
	Flavoured salts	Food flavouring
	Powdered instant soups	Flavouring in stews, relishes and meat dishes
	Curry powder	Flavouring in stews, relishes and meat dishes
	Spices	Food flavouring
Bread spreads	Achaar	Bread spread or relish with *bogobe**. Ingredient in *spatlho**
	Anchovette	Bread spread
	Cheese spread	Bread spread
	Jam	Bread spread
	Marmite	Bread spread
	Peanut butter	Bread spread and flavouring in some relishes. See spinach*
Other	Instant dried yeast	Ingredient in baking
	Commercial malt	Ingredient in traditional beer brewing
	Vanilla essence	Ingredient in baking
	Cream of tartar	Ingredient in baking
	Tartaric acid	Ingredient in baking
	Food colours	Ingredient in baking
	Baking powder	Ingredient in baking
Beverages	Tea	Popular beverage at breakfast and in-between meals
	Coffee	Beverage at breakfast and in-between meals
	Cordials	Beverage in-between meals over weekends and on special occasions
	Concentrated juice mixtures	Beverage in-between meals over weekends and on special occasions
	Soft fizzy drinks	Popular beverage in-between meals when affordable

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 portray how the participants categorised their foods and reflect how they understand the cultural meaning in terms of traditional and modern food. It is such an understanding that guides people in their decisions on food, because people base their decisions on what they know from their own cultural experience. Furthermore, it helps them to simplify and make sense of the world (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Anderson, 2005:113; Fieldhouse, 1995:37, 49). At the same time it also shows how values are assigned to food.

Elements of fusion[20] cuisine is reflected in some of the modern recipes (see Addendum D). For example, some recipes portray new ways in which traditional ingredients are used, while others indicate new and innovative ways in which the participants use and often substitute

[20] Fusion cuisine refers to a "style of cooking that combines the traditions of two or more regions, such as French and Chinese (in Cambodian cuisine, for example)" (Riely, 2003:118). This tends to happen when people become familiar with the ingredients and food preparation techniques from different parts of the world or other cultures and begin to combine them in their own culinary heritage.

commercially available ingredients in traditional recipes. Satia-Abouta *et al*. (2002) indicated similar findings in their study on Korean-Americans.

5.3 EATING PATTERNS

An eating pattern is the recurring practice in which individuals or groups of individuals choose, prepare and consume food from that which is available and acceptable for a specific meal or snack and how these activities are distributed through the day. Eating patterns therefore describe the composition or specific combination of foods that are used as a meal or snack, and include the pattern or distribution of the meals or snacks consumed by an individual or a group (Meiselman, 2008; Mäkelä, 2000:7-10; Oltersdorf *et al*., 1999; Diehl & Leitzman, 1985:8). To appreciate and understand the existing eating patterns of the study group and to contextualise them, a review of the traditional eating patterns (meal patterns and composition) of the black South African population and how they have tended to change over the last century, as gleaned from existing literature sources, is given.

The reason for relying on the available literature to provide this background is ascribed to the fact that the older participants were only able to recall the eating patterns which applied at the time when they were growing up. However, their accounts of the traditional eating patterns during the 1950s and 1960s correspond to the documentation consulted. During this time indications of the process of dietary acculturation was already evident (Walker, 1966; Quin, 1959).

5.3.1 Traditional eating patterns

The available literature on the eating patterns reveals that the meal patterns and the type of food consumed were very similar for all the different ethnic groups, although minor or subtle local traditional differences were noted. People lived on what the environment had to offer. The most important staple cereals were sorghum (*Andropogon sorghum*), together with millet (*Pennissetum spicatum*) and later maize (*Zea mays*). Sugar cane (*Sorghum vulgarus)*, peas, beans and groundnuts, sweet potatoes and different species of the cucurbit (melon and pumpkin) family were also cultivated. Although cattle, goats and sheep were kept, these animals were only slaughtered on ceremonial occasions and for ancestral veneration purposes. Cattle were considered a symbol of wealth and not a food resource. Meat was therefore not part of the daily diet (Coetzee, 1982:67-88; Bryant, 1939:2-3).

The general pattern followed by all the groups reported in publications up to 1939 was that two meals a day were the norm (Ashton, 1939; Bryant, 1939; Osborn & Noriskin, 1937;

Turner, 1909:6). The first meal was enjoyed late morning between 11:00 and 12:00, while the second meal of the day was served after sunset from 17:00 to 20:00. These meals consisted of the ground staple grain maize, prepared as a stiff porridge served with a relish or side-dish. Researchers are not certain when exactly maize became the principal staple food, but it can be assumed that it must have been after the early 1900s, by which time Turner (1909:6) was already mentioning it as an important staple grain. Other grain sources such as sorghum and millet were, however, still eaten extensively (Bryant, 1967:271-272; Schapera & Goodwin, 1962:131). The type of relish eaten with the stiff porridge was either milk (fresh or sour), or a vegetable relish or legume serving. The meal pattern and composition of these meals during the week and over weekends were similar.

The same meal pattern and composition seems to have continued up to the mid-1950s among most groups after which period changes were beginning to be reported (White, s.a.; Oudkerk, 1965; Walker, 1966). However, there was some evidence that the traditional pattern was still being followed (Leary, 1969; Mönnig, 1967:188-192; Quin, 1964; Bruwer, 1963:108-111). Reasons for the changes were given as industrialisation and urbanisation, together with increased contact with the Western-oriented ways through missionaries, in schools, through the employment of women as domestic workers in white households and the increased employment opportunities for males in the manufacturing industries in towns and cities (Houghton, 1974: 404-408; White, s.a.; Walker, 1966). The opening of stores in the African reserves was another influencing factor and led to the introduction of Western food items in these remote areas. In this regard, White (s.a.) observed that the Zulu people in the Valley of a Thousand Hills in KwaZulu-Natal opted for three meals a day and that food preparation methods also changed, as spices and more fat were now used in prepared dishes. Moreover, food items such as white flour, white bread, sugar, sweetened condensed milk, sweets, cordials, tea, biscuits, buns and cakes, curry powder and chillies were introduced and there was increased availability of machine ground maize products such as samp, mealie-rice and maize-meal (White, s.a.).

Walker (1966) observed similar trends and admitted that, although information on the dietary aspects of the black population was “relatively scanty” during this time period, some modifications to the traditional diet were noted. The modifications were partly attributed to climatic and agricultural conditions that were often unfavourable as a result of intermittent periods of drought, but were most of all due to increased employment and cash earnings that enabled the people in the reserves and rural areas to purchase Western-type food products. Those residing in urban areas had adapted to a partly Western diet and enjoyed three meals a day. With regard to the composition of these meals, it was reported that, although maize-meal was still very popular, bread had now become one of the major sources of energy in the

diet of the urban black person. An increased consumption of sugar, meat and milk was also noted. Meat was now included in at least one meal a day, if not more. In this comparison between rural and urban people's food consumption practice, Walker (1966) reported that the urban populations consumed more tea, coffee, soft drinks, fat and tinned foods than those in the rural areas.

The influence of urbanisation continued during the next four decades and became more prominent, as recorded in various studies that were done amongst the different ethnic groups. Oudkerk (1965), in a study on the dietary habits of urban black school children in Pretoria, also observed a Western eating pattern during the week, where the consumption of three meals a day was the norm with a different eating pattern over weekends. He recorded that on Saturdays fish and chips were popular for lunch, but on Sundays, some did not have breakfast but indulged in a lunch consisting of meat (usually beef), potatoes, samp or mealie-rice, accompanied by three or four vegetable dishes and a dessert of jelly and custard that was enjoyed. Oudkerk (1965) noted, as did Walker (1966), an increased consumption of milk, the inclusion of meat at least once a day and that brown bread and maize products as well as beverages such as tea and soft drinks were popular. The use of fats and oils in food preparation was indicated as low (Oudkerk, 1965). Manning *et al.* (1974) conducted a study in Guguletu near Cape Town and found similar tendencies with regard to the meal patterns and the kinds of food items included in meals.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the differences in the dietary pattern between the rural and the urban population groups were still noticeable – as reported in the studies by Lubbe (1971) and Crous and Borchardt (1982, 1984, 1986). In the studies of Lubbe (1971) and Crous and Borchardt (1986), it was observed that, in the rural Venda communities, the traditional pattern of two meals a day was still followed. The urban groups' food consumption patterns in the above studies by Lubbe (1971) and Crous and Borchardt (1984), could already be described as "semi-Western". Lubbe reported that two and three meals a day were consumed, while Crous and Borchardt (1984) found that three meals a day was the general norm in Atteridgeville near Pretoria for those who were employed, while those who stayed at home had two meals a day. In both these studies, it was stated that maize-meal was still the staple grain and that meat consumption was considerably higher in comparison to what had previously been the case in rural communities. Although a vegetable-based relish was still enjoyed daily, it now formed a minor part of the meal.

In other rural communities changes were also taking place largely due to the effect of broad environmental changes such as improved infrastructure and different socio-economic circumstances due to expanding employment opportunities in urban areas. The study by

Walker, Walker and Walker (1992) evaluating and comparing the consumption patterns of elderly black women in a community in the Magaliesburg region in the former Western Transvaal (now North West province) in 1969, and again 20 years later in 1989, is probably a good reflection of what was typically happening in other South African black communities. Unfortunately, only the type of food consumed was given in this study and no mention was made of the meal patterns. The diet consisted of maize products as staple grain, brown bread, vegetables and fruit in season, and legumes. Dairy produce was consumed only occasionally and meat was included once or twice a week mainly in the form of intestines, chicken and polony. In comparison to 20 years earlier, it was observed that the consumption of maize products had declined and that there was an increase in bread consumption due to the improved distribution of bread to rural areas and its convenience factor. An increase in fruit and vegetable consumption was noted with, however, the unfortunate decline in the consumption of wild greens and legumes. No reason was given for this decline. Also noted was the increased consumption of sugar and fat. However, the diet of the rural poor blacks seemed to vary little from day to day and everyone ate similar foods. The improved infrastructure and transport system probably contributed to the observed changes, as it became possible to shop more frequently in nearby rural towns.

During the 1990s, a number of studies reported on the dietary intake patterns of the black population in South Africa. Unfortunately, the majority of these studies did not give detailed information on the meal patterns and in most cases revealed only the overall impressions with regard to the consumption of certain food items. The trend of an increase in brown bread consumption, however, came strongly to the fore in a number of independent studies (Jooste, Langenhoven, Wolmarans & Benadè, 1994; Steyn, Badenhorst & Nel,1993; Ladzani, Steyn & Nel, 1992; Steyn, Wicht, Rossouw, Kotze & Laubscher,1990). The conclusion drawn by most researchers is that there was a move towards accepting the Western-oriented diet, characterised by an increased consumption of meat, refined cereal and fat (Labadarios *et al.,* 1996; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996; Bourne *et al.,* 1994; Walker, 1992)

It is clear from the above review that major changes have taken place in the food practices of both the rural and urban black South Africans over the past century largely due to the adoption of Western-oriented food practices, and the trend continues. The influence of social structural changes associated with modernisation, urbanisation and migration is clearly apparent. In an overview of the risk factors related to non-communicable diseases, Bourne *et al.* (2002) confirm that the shift towards Western-oriented food practices among black South Africans has definitely gathered momentum the past half century.

It is concluded from the literature reviewed that, over the past hundred years, the black South African population group has moved from being producers of food to being mostly consumers today. This has resulted not only from changes in the natural environment, such as drought and other limitations to cultivating enough food for their own consumption, but is also mainly due to forced resettlement formalised under *apartheid* rule. In search of employment opportunities in industry, men migrated to large industrial areas, and in later years, large-scale urbanisation followed. The increased contact with the Western-oriented culture and modern technological developments, as well as increased exposure to commercial food products, has enhanced the process of acculturation and stimulated associated changes in food practices.

5.3.2 Contemporary eating patterns

The eating patterns of the participants as manifested at the beginning of the twenty-first century are referred to as contemporary. In juxtaposing the described traditional eating patterns with the eating patterns followed on weekdays and over weekends, the fluidity and ease of moving between of the eating patterns indicates that the patterns are not fixed. This fluidity and ease of moving between a traditional-oriented and a Western-oriented eating pattern seems to be context specific. The changeability between the two types of eating patterns also signifies their dynamic and evolving nature. A description of meal patterns and composition as followed by the Mmotla participants on weekdays and over weekends is given.

5.3.2.1 Weekday meal pattern and composition

The participants revealed that on weekdays they ate three meals a day with in-between meal snacking. The following meal pattern and composition was indicated.

Breakfast This meal could be described as a bread-based meal for most of the participants. Tea and brown bread seemed to be popular. The brown bread was consumed as such or with either margarine, peanut butter, jam, egg or tomato-and-onion relish as spread or accompaniment. Alternatively, a soft porridge prepared from either maize-meal or sorghum meal was enjoyed. This was served with milk and/or sugar.

In-between meals Beverages such as tea, cordials, milk or water were often drunk, and fruit such as oranges and apples were also enjoyed as a snack.

Lunch Some participants indicated that they would again only have bread with an accompaniment, the same pattern as for breakfast. It was explained that most people who work, as well as some of those who stayed at home, had bread for lunch. However, some of those who work, as well as some of those who stayed at home, ate stiff maize-meal porridge with some kind of relish. The relish was either vegetable-based or protein-based. The following vegetable-based relishes were given as examples: *Morogo*[21] (prepared from indigenous or wild greens), spinach, cabbage and potatoes or tomato-and-onion relish or *achaar*[22]. Summer crops, when available, such as *maraka* (an indigenous kind of summer squash) and maize on the cob were also mentioned as items on the summer menu. The most popular protein-based relish was *maotwana* also known as "chicken runners" (a stew prepared from chicken feet). Other relishes prepared from indigenous beans were also mentioned, however, these were only used when available.

Supper Stiff maize-meal porridge, *bogobe,* with either a vegetable and or protein-based relish was served at supper, the main meal of the day. The vegetable-based relishes were similar to those prepared for lunch and this seemed to be the general practice. Offal products from either chicken or beef, mostly intestines, were frequently served on weekdays at this meal. It was reported that meat such as beef or chicken as well as rice or potatoes could be included, although this only happened occasionally on weekdays as this was usually served over weekends. Tea as a beverage was often enjoyed after supper.

5.3.2.2 Weekend meal pattern and composition

Weekends were described as times when families had the opportunity to be together and to relax. This was then celebrated by preparing special meals. Noticeable differences between the meals served on Saturdays and Sundays and those served on weekdays showed a larger variety and inclusion of some more expensive food items. Breakfasts on Saturdays were reported to be similar to those served during the week and were either a bread-based breakfast or a soft porridge prepared from either maize or sorghum meal or oats served with milk and/or sugar. The accompaniments with the bread, however, often included more expensive foods such as cheese and French polony. One participant said that she often baked scones for breakfast on Saturdays as more time was available.

[21] A terminology list containing a description of the indigenous terms used in each chapter is given at the end of each chapter for the convenience of the reader

[22] *Achaar* or Atjar is a hot pickle or relish probably introduced to this country by the Malays. It is made from sliced green fruit and/or vegetables preserved in vegetable oil with red hot chillies and other curry spices (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:215; Van Wyk & Barton, 2007:136; Smit & Fulton, 1983: 6).

Saturdays The kinds of foods served for other meals on Saturdays were different from those consumed on weekdays. The move seemed to be more towards Western-oriented, easy-to-prepare, convenient food items. Some participants said that lighter-type meals were prepared while others included more meat for lunch and/or supper. Others indicated that food that was easier to prepare, such as *pap*[23] and *boerewors*[24], rice and minced meat were regular choices and that often only two meals were prepared instead of three. Chips (French fries) were popular on Saturdays and served with fish or formed part of the popular S*patlho*, a combination of bread, cheese, French polony and *achaar*.

Sundays Sundays were regarded as very special days and this was also reflected in the meals that were served. A similar pattern as indicated for Saturdays and weekdays was followed for breakfast by those who ate breakfast. However, some participants said they did not eat breakfast because of church prescriptions. The elaborate Sunday midday meal could be described as the culinary highlight of the week and this meal received much attention. In most households, rice and or stiff maize-meal porridge was served with chicken or meat, generally beef. At least three different types of vegetables and/or salads were prepared to accompany these. A dessert of either jelly or tinned fruit served with custard sauce or ice cream was usually served. Cold drinks such as cordials were enjoyed after lunch. In some households enough food was prepared for both the midday and evening meals and the leftovers of the midday meal were then served for supper. In other cases a light meal of bread and tea was served.

The limited studies on the eating patterns of the black South African population groups indicated similar trends with regard to the difference in meal pattern and composition on weekdays and over weekends (Viljoen & Gericke, 2001; Walker & Charlton, 2001; Labadarios *et al*., 1996). At present the eating pattern common in the study area could be described as Western-oriented and resembles those reported in other South African studies (Bourne *et al*., 2002; Viljoen & Gericke, 2001; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996; Bourne *et al.,* 1994).

Food intake studies conducted during the latter part of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, offer evidence of signs that people's food consumption habits, in both rural and urban areas, are becoming markedly influenced by the affordability and availability of food. The socio-economic status of the family or household was identified as the key determinant of this development (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002). The eating patterns of the

[23] *Pap* - Afrikaans for stiff maize-meal porridge.
[24] *Boerewors* – A coarse, loose textured beef and pork sausage flavoured with spices such as coriander, cloves, nutmeg and all spice (Van Wyk & Barton, 2007:54; Smit & Fulton, 1983: 47).

Mmotla participants resembled those of the middle class and poor groups as reported by Vorster *et al*. (2005b) and MacIntyre *et al*. (2002).

The descriptions and reasons for the change in food practices as given by the participants, as compared to those reported in the literature reviewed, similarly implied that changes in the physical, economic and socio-cultural environments contributed to the adaptation of food practices. When asked to compare their current eating pattern with that followed when they were children, most of the participants reported that, as children, they also followed a three meal a day meal pattern. A few, however, mentioned that they did have the traditional two meals a day pattern similar to that described by Franz (1971), Quin (1964) and Lestrade (1962) when they were growing up.

Previously meal composition seems to have been far less complicated compared to that which was being practised at the time of collecting the data for this study. The general pattern appeared to be that, at all three meals, maize-meal porridge was consumed. The majority of the participants mentioned a breakfast that contained soft maize-meal porridge and fresh or sour milk. Stiff maize-meal porridge was served at lunch and supper with a relish. Relishes for lunch were either milk or *morogo*, while *morogo* or any other vegetable-based relish, and occasionally meat, was included for supper. The meal patterns and composition over weekends were the same as on weekdays. An elderly participant pertinently expressed this by stating: "… [there was] *no difference if it was Monday, Wednesday or Sunday".*

One of the characteristics of culture is that it involves change, therefore food practices that are regarded as part of culture, are also subject to change. The dynamic nature of food practices is often referred to in literature (Devine, 2005; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:12; Fieldhouse, 1995:2). Researchers attribute the continuous change to changing environments and lifestyles due to new information and technology (Bisogni *et al*., 2007; Anderson, 2005: 165-168; Devine, 2005; Furst *et al.,* 1996). As Fieldhouse (1995:2) explains, these then lead to increased availability, discovery or innovation of food types and also to the diffusion or borrowing of food habits from others. Some changes like those in eating patterns can even appear over a relative short period of time, such as one generation, according to Meiselman (2008).

5.4 ENVIRONMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO CONTEMPORARY FOOD PRACTICES

Participants were prompted to propose reasons why food practices had changed. Important themes that emerged from the transcripts with regard to the reported changes related to the immediate availability and accessibility of food. The availability and accessibility of food is in turn largely controlled by resources pertaining to the physical and economic environments (Bryant *et al*., 2003:11). These emerged as salient contributing factors to the food practices of the study group. Other themes related to the socio-cultural environment. Interaction with white people, convenience, health, social status and education emerged as contributing to the contemporary food practices. The identified themes are presented in accordance with the environmental level they relate to.

5.4.1 Physical environment

The natural environment of Mmotla as part of the physical environment was described in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.1) and the restrictions it posed on crop cultivation explained.

Food chosen for consumption depended, in the first instance, on what was **available** to gather, cultivate or purchase and this directly affected the choices associated with food consumption. The limited availability of indigenous vegetables and grain products were often mentioned as reasons for not consuming these as often as was the traditional custom. It was often stated that the lack of water was a big hurdle to overcome and the main reason why these crops were not cultivated. Statements such as the following were often made: *"Then that thing with struggling with the water, because they saw there is no water here to plant the traditional foods".* Other contributing factors were attributed to ecological factors such as the impoverished soil condition and dry climate. However, when the rainfall was good, indigenous green leafy vegetables would be abundant in the *veld* and the gardens and these would then be gathered in spring and summer and the excess dried and stored for use in the winter months.

When circumstances were favourable, some people cultivated indigenous crops and these would then become available for the community to purchase. At times, indigenous vegetables, especially legumes, were accessed from street vendors or at markets and sometimes these were bought in bulk from farms where they were still being grown. It was explained that these were bought with great enthusiasm when they had the opportunity.

"O*ther people bring these things here, you can bring legumes here and we buy it. One, two, three, finish!"*

"Nowadays they buy these, there are some people who will go to the farm to buy in bulk and when they come here they sell to everyone".

The infrastructure of Mmotla as part of the physical environment was presented in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.2) and the issue of electricity highlighted. In the course of the last decade access to electricity and the subsequent ownership of electrical household appliances appears to have brought about change in the food preparation and preservation methods of the study group. All households in the Mmotla village have access to electricity and the majority have electric stoves. Refrigerators, on the other hand, were owned by some and there were others who did not own one but then often stored some of their perishable commodities at the homes of relatives or neighbours who had refrigerators or deep freezers.

Increased access to electricity makes it possible for more households in previously disadvantaged South African communities to use electricity in food preparation. This tendency was also evident in the studies of both Holtz (1998) and Van Eeden and Gericke (1996). In recent research on young adults' assessment of major household appliances in an urban area, Kachale (2005) confirms this tendency as she found that 95% of the respondents in her investigation owned refrigerators and 98% electrical stoves. Makgopa (2005), who conducted a related study on major household appliances in a newly developed residential area of Temba, a township near Mmotla, reported that all the respondents in her study owned a refrigerator while only 55 % indicated that they owned a stove.

As is the case in other South African communities, food preparation methods used by these research participants have also changed from the traditional to a more modern Western–oriented way. They indicated that previously, before they had electricity, food was cooked on an open fire, coal stove or primus stove. It was explained that the lack of firewood and coal forced people to mainly rely on the paraffin primus as their only cooking appliance. Manning *et al*. (1974) also found that the Guguletu community in the Western Cape had to rely on the primus stove for cooking purposes. Thus restrictive cooking facilities were given as the reason why only two dishes could be prepared for lunch and supper.

When compared to the traditional cooking method of boiling meat and vegetable dishes, many other preparation methods became common practice for those who owned an electric stove. Meat was fried in oil or grilled in the oven and more spices were added. Baked products such as scones, queen cakes, and a small biscuit-type of cake called *"dikuku"* were standard items that were baked and served at all special events and celebrations.

Current food preservation methods fell into two categories. The indigenous and more traditional food items are still preserved according to the traditional methods, whereas the other more modern Western-type food items are prepared, preserved or stored by way of available modern technology.

Although indigenous vegetables were not always readily available due to drought or some other obstacle precluding them from being cultivated, they were still preserved by using the traditional method of sun-drying when they were in abundance. Other vegetables were stored in the refrigerator by those who had access to one. Meat was no longer preserved by drying as was the custom, but was frozen if they had large surplus quantities. However, this was seldom the case.

Ongoing changes taking place in the physical, natural and technological environment, and their impact on the availability and accessibility of food, together with their interconnectedness with the socio-cultural environment, have led to the features of current everyday food practices typical of the Mmotla community.

5.4.2 Economic environment

Another important theme that emerged from the discussions was money and high food prices. The amount of money available not only determined what foods could be purchased, but also the frequency of purchase, hence the fact that the current weekday food pattern differed from that of weekend days, as adjustments had to be made. During the week meat, for example, was not eaten on a daily basis. The participants intimated that they ate it at the most only two to three times a week, because it was too expensive to eat every day. In addition, the less expensive cuts of meat and more often offal products of chicken and beef (that are of course more reasonably priced) were the main items of choice. Various other independent studies reported similar trends with regard to meat consumption (Mbhenyane *et al., 2005.* Vorster *et al.,* 2005a; MacIntyre *et al*., 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001). Another reason why more bread-based meals were the order of the day related to the affordability of relishes. Food prices determined what was eaten with the stiff maize-meal porridge. Bread was often consumed as a meal at lunch-time, because a relish was not needed or less expensive accompaniments could serve the same purpose as would be the case when stiff maize-meal porridge was prepared. This was explained as follows by one of the participants who happened to be a pensioner:

"As now when the things go up [in price] *and become a little bit expensive, we don't have any more money to buy something to eat with the porridge in the morning or in the day*

[lunch] *and again in the evening. Then we start to eat bread in the morning and during the day* [lunch] *and then in the evening we will eat a full meal".*

The reason given for different food and meal patterns over weekends was that more money was available. Most labourers were paid weekly, on Fridays, with the result that more money was available to spend on food purchases over weekends. The following expressions explained the general trend in most households:

"… *even Fridays are special because people get salary and they are happy because they got money and then they can buy anything they want to make them happy".*

"Over weekends people come from work and then they have pay. So that is why they buy more food".

The relationship between availability of money and food purchase is further illustrated in these quotations that refer to more money generally being spent on food over weekends:

"… *even Fridays are special because people get salary and they are happy because they got money and then they can buy anything they want to make them happy".*

"Over weekends people come from work and then they have pay. So that is why they buy more food".

Expensive items such as cheese and French polony were only eaten at breakfast when money was available and in most cases this would be over weekends. Others, who received a monthly pension, or in cases where the breadwinner(s) in the household earned a monthly salary, said that money was purposely set aside to buy extra and/or special food items as weekend treats. They gave the following explanation: "… *during the course of the week there is not enough money, … most of the people who are working, get paid on Fridays. And those who get paid monthly they don't want to waste it on food in the week".*

The number of dishes prepared for the Sunday midday meal was thus determined by the amount of money available to purchase a larger variety of food items. This was confirmed by a number of participants:

"Then on Sundays if I have money left I will buy all the vegetables".

"… *the number of dishes will depend on the available money".*

"… if money is scarce bogobe and morogo will be eaten for Sunday lunch".

Certain items were only prepared and served when they could afford them, such as meat, dessert and cooldrinks. The reason why most special occasions were celebrated over weekends, and why even children's birthday parties were postponed to weekends, was because more money was available to purchase extras and the special foods needed for such events. The trend noted by Manning *et al.* (1974) from information gathered for their study in Cape Town, that weekends were associated with feasts, also seemed to be the case in Mmotla.

Furthermore, it became clear in this study that high food prices severely limited food choice and consumption. Other South African researchers (Mbhenyane, Venter, Vorster & Steyn, 2005; Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002) also mention that what people consume seems to be influenced by the socio-economic status of the household. In this regard, Van Eeden and Gericke (1996) felt strongly that the high cost of certain food items either restricted or even prohibited their consumption in some black South African communities. They concluded that non-consumption of certain food items was explained by their excessive cost, not necessarily because of disliking them or that only preferred items were bought.

5.4.3 Socio-cultural environment

Themes associated with the socio-cultural environment that emerged were contact with white people, convenience, the role of the church, cultural identity, health-related aspects, education and social interaction.

5.4.3.1 Interaction with white people

Another prominent contribution to the observed changes in food practices related to food preparation techniques and this was attributed to women who were employed as domestic workers in white households. In their employment situation they had the opportunity of close interaction with whites. Here they were taught and/or observed certain food preparation techniques and were also introduced to the food eaten by white people. They admitted that they learnt new ways of food preparation as domestic workers in the white households and then copied the food preparation techniques and even taught other relatives and friends the European way of food preparation. Preparation techniques for meat, vegetables, and salads were mentioned as well as the baking of cakes, scones and bread. In this regard, Walker (1992) also mentions the influence of the white employers on the eating habits of black domestic workers. One of the participants who frequently referred to her preparation of

Western-type of dishes admitted that: "… *she was working as a domestic* [worker]. *An old white lady taught her to cook* [the Western way]*".* This elderly lady could recall all the food preparation techniques she was taught while being employed as a domestic worker. She knew how to can fruit, cook jam and make butter and *boerewors*. She was taught how to bake and mentioned that she baked bread, scones and cakes.

Another 71-year-old informant who worked as a domestic worker for more than 35 years, explained how her employment experience influenced her food preparation in her own home.

"… *Changes started when she began working, because she saw how the white people prepared their food on Sundays and then when she was home for weekends once a month she bought some of the food they* [the whites] *were cooking and made it for her family".*

A younger informant, who had never been employed, was taught by her sister how to cook and serve certain dishes. She gave the following account of how she was introduced to the Western-oriented cuisine:

"*… but her sister learnt* [taught] *her a lot, because she used to work as a domestic* [worker]. *Then she learnt how to cook from her in the weekends when she came home. Then in the weekends she* [the sister] *will cook for them and serve the food at the table, and then she said the family must come and sit at the table, and the sister taught them how to use fork and knife".*

Consequently the preparation methods of indigenous vegetables have also been altered to suit the modern palate. In accord with what Bourne *et al.* (1994) and Manning *et al.* (1974) report, increased quantities of oil, spices, tomatoes and onions were also added to dishes prepared from indigenous vegetables. Peanut butter has replaced ground legumes as flavouring in some traditional dishes. The European-type of vegetables are often served raw or cold as vegetable salads with generous quantities of mayonnaise added to some of them (see Addendum D for examples of recipes).

5.4.3.2 Convenience

Certain items have been adopted as an integral part of the Mmotla community's diet for reasons of convenience and especially ready availability. Particularly notable is the high consumption of bread, a finding also reported on in other studies (MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Jooste *et al.,* 1994; Steyn *et al.,* 1993; Ladzani *et al.,* 1992). It was regarded an acceptable alternative to the staple grain porridge that was otherwise served for either breakfast or

lunch. It was quick and easy to prepare and especially when only a few members of a household were present because it was considered too much of an effort to prepare stiff maize-meal porridge for only a small number of household members. The participants stressed the importance that has been placed on convenience due to time constraints with remarks such as:

"Bread and eggs are easier to prepare and quicker as when you have to cook pap".

"If you have things to go with bread you need not make pap".

"… it is easier to prepare [serve] *bread".*

Certain traditional beverages such as *mageu* and ginger beer were not prepared as often or have been replaced by more convenient alternatives such as concentrated fruit drinks or cordials.

"… they change, they prepare things that are quick to prepare".

The preparation methods for meat and vegetables have also changed and it was explained that the traditional preparation method of boiling was too time consuming. Most of the participants therefore fried meat in oil or grilled it in the oven. The same applied to some vegetables where the boiling of vegetables was replaced by stir frying vegetables such as cabbage and spinach and serving others as salads.

5.4.3.3 Role of the church

Apart from the well-known prescriptions and proscriptions with regard to food that were imposed on members of certain religious groups, there were also some churches that strictly prohibited their members from consuming certain traditional foods if they wished to follow the Christian faith. This aspect was described in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.2). In this regard, Schapera and Goodwin (1962:360) as well as Pauw (1974:425), give the example of beer drinking that was strictly forbidden by some churches. The participants mentioned that the preparation and consumption specifically of fermented dishes seemed to be restricted, and gave this as the reason why some do not use traditional beer or sour porridge any more. This was explained as follows:

"There was this discussion at the church where some said that if they are not allowed to drink beer, and then they should also not be allowed to use ting [sour porridge]*".*

Some churches also influenced the meal pattern of their members on Sundays as:

"… they are not allowed to go to church when they eat breakfast because they are not allowed to eat before Holy Communion".

5.4.3.4 Health-related aspects

Some of the older participants pointed out that certain items were included or excluded from their diets for health reasons. Brown bread was an example cited as it was either in their diet if related to a specific illness they had or because it is regarded as being good for one's general health. The local clinic staff, for example, told them that it is healthier to eat brown bread. The following explanations were given for including or excluding specific food items in their diets:

"Most of the reasons are for the high blood [pressure] *where they are restricted to* [prohibited to consume] *most of the food such as sugar, white pap and fish oil".*

"… *so sometimes it is for health reasons that they eat bread".*

"Mabele [Sorghum] *is eaten regularly by some, because this is based on the person's health and own rituals".*

"Coffee is not good for people with high blood [pressure]*".*

On the other hand, certain traditional dishes and beverages were not consumed or prepared anymore by some of the older people because they no longer agreed with them health-wise. One informant told how she loved *mageu* but has stopped making it because it causes heartburn.

5.4.3.5 Education

The older participants were concerned that their children were no longer adhering to traditions. On the other hand, the younger adult participants revealed that they followed the more modern ways as a result of education and social aspirations.

"*Then the other thing we, … new* [younger] *generation, we are educated enough that is why we want to eat more food* [larger variety] *and fancy ones".*

"*The other thing is that our new* [younger] *generation learn a lot about food, there are also schools* [cooking schools] *that teach you how to prepare modern food".*

5.4.3.6 Social interaction

Similar to other cultures, certain foods were also associated with joyous and special occasions (Long, 2000:151; Charles & Kerr, 1988:17). Weekends were regarded as very special, because this was often the only time that a family or members of a household were together. This was emphasised by phrases such as: "*Sundays … it is special, because everybody is at home, that is why they cook this special food".* Over weekends friends and families visit each other and almost all celebrations were scheduled for a weekend. As already noted, more and special foods were purchased and prepared over the weekend than during the week.

The younger adults associated social prestige with following the modern Western-oriented food practices. It seemed to be important to go along with the professional people such as teachers, lawyers and health care workers in the community. This was expressed by explanations such as: *"The changes are because we are now mixed together* [rich and poor, educated and less educated] *so when the rich start to buy rice, vegetables, and the poor then come around, and they will start to buy the same stuff, even if they don't have money".*

Children then often dictated to their parents after they observed how other people behaved. One informant explained that her children told her that to sit on the floor during meal times was not appropriate anymore, and they told her *"… this is an olden days thing, you can't do it anymore".*

Another explained how the manner in which food was served changed because her children wanted it that way.

"Since her children grew up they see the other people, [how] *they serve food and then it changed. But when her husband was still there* [alive] *they used to dish up in two plates".*

The consequences of secondary socialising of the younger generation affect the behaviour of the older generation or parents as portrayed here. Bryant *et al*. (2003:194) also refer to the persuasive efforts of children in introducing new ideas from outside the family unit to the family.

The participants in the Mmotla study indicated that the Western-oriented way of serving all the menu items on one plate and using cutlery to eat the food was the practice followed in most households. This custom is quite different from the traditional way of serving the staple grain in one dish and the side dish or relish in another and eating with fingers. Household members now sit at a table during meals and eat together as a group. The traditional way of serving meals seems to have fallen away, although some still follow the old custom where different age and gender groups enjoy their meals together.

The older generation were seen as more conservative and still valued the traditional customs. They were, for example, trying to preserve the traditional ways of serving and eating meals where the different age and gender groups were served and ate in separate groups. To them the serving of meals to different age and gender groups was a sign of showing respect especially to the older males. The younger more educated group, however, do not want to follow this custom any longer as for them it is associated with uneducated people and low social status.

5.5 VALUES ATTACHED TO FOOD PRACTICES ON WEEKDAYS AND OVER WEEKENDS

The interpretation of contemporary food practices on weekdays and weekends revealed that certain values, norms and standards are attached to each of these two contexts.

5.5.1 Food practices on weekdays

The food practices reported for weekdays revealed a tendency that demonstrated that a less complicated eating pattern was being followed by most households. The weekday meal composition (as described under 5.3.2.1) seemed to offer limited variety and consisted of less expensive items. The impression was given that the type of food served on weekdays and its preparation, was not regarded as important. The food prepared was merely seen as sustenance and associated with being part of the routine during the course of the week although time constraints and convenience (see 5.4.3.2) were also relevant.

A general trend seemed to be to fall back on less expensive food items. Some of these do not require long or involved preparation methods such as relishes prepared from economical types of vegetables such as tomatoes, onions, cabbage, potatoes and spinach. Others consisted mostly of offal products such as *maotwana* (chicken feet stew), *mala mohodu* (small intestines), *chicken malana* (chicken intestines). These affordable and readily

available items were included due to the tight or limited food budget. The reason given for the bread-based lunch was that less expensive accompaniments were required as opposed to those needed for stiff maize-meal porridge. When stiff maize-meal porridge was served for lunch it required a relish as an accompaniment. These relishes prepared with vegetables or offal products, were more expensive and/or took much time and effort to prepare, especially when only a few household members were present for lunch, than was the case with those accompaniments that could be served with bread, such as *achaar*, peanut butter or jam. Thus, apart from being convenient to serve, bread is also more economical in the sense that the accompaniment or spreads are less expensive than some of the relishes that stiff maize-meal porridge would require.

The explanation for this pattern was that the limited food budget forced them to follow this frugal pattern and to consume lower priced food items to make ends meet. Apart from the limited choice, the general tendency was also to fall back on affordable more traditional-type food. Apart from being convenient and less expensive, most of these food items were described as more “traditional”, and included items that were not regarded as food items with a high prestige value. With the exception of maize-meal porridge, these were never mentioned as appropriate food to be served to guests or at celebrations. This association with a tight budget, or the weekly routine could provide an explanation why some of the food items consumed on weekdays were regarded as low prestige foods.

Most households experience time-constraints on weekdays due to the work and school schedules of the different household members. The type of food consumed was therefore adjusted to fit the limited food budget as well as the work and school commitments on weekdays. This explains why convenience was also an important consideration or determining factor in the choice and preparation of certain food items on weekdays.

Except for school for the children and the weekly meetings of the women’s groups at various churches, other social activities taking place outside the household and family circle on weekdays were limited. A large number of employed adults either worked in the nearby towns and returned home late in the evenings or only came home over weekends. Consequently not much attention was given to food and food preparation on weekdays.

5.5.2 Food practices over weekends

The majority of people did not work over weekends and so were then at home. In most households this was the only time that family and household members could be together and spend time with each other. Weekends were therefore regarded as special and were

associated with time for relaxation, being together and to visit family, friends and neighbours. This was given as the reason why a larger variety of dishes and more food was prepared and consumed over weekends. That special and often more expensive foods were consumed during weekends shows the important role that food plays during social interaction.
In contrast to weekdays, the eating patterns over weekends seemed to be closely associated with more money being available to spend on food. Most labourers were remunerated on a weekly basis and paid on Fridays with the result that in most households, money was available for food purchases over weekends. This practice of buying more expensive foods over weekends was also followed by those who earned a monthly salary and by pensioners, who indicated that they deliberately tried to put money aside for special food items over weekends. This clearly reflects the general attitude that this was the time for special mealtime treats respective of expense and a larger variety and more *"modern food"* was prepared and consumed.

The eating patterns on Saturdays were the most varied with some reporting that more Western-oriented fast food was eaten for the sake of convenience. Others used the opportunity to prepare more time-consuming traditional and/or modern dishes such as certain legume dishes, *dombola,* scones or other baked products since doing this was just not possible during the week. Yet there were those who chose to prepare quick and easy menus such as *boerewors* and *pap* or savoury mince or *spatlho* or offer popular menu items, associated with Saturdays, like fish and chips (French fries), either prepared or purchased ready-to-eat, and other fast foods. The meal pattern could also vary, and in some households it changed to two meals. The overall impression given was that the eating pattern on a Saturday was more relaxed and included special treats that were not part of everyday fare because of lack of money and or time.

Emphasis was placed on the Sunday midday meal, a time to offer food in a setting that could be associated with togetherness, joy, relaxation and celebration as explained by one of the participants: *" … and the other thing is, on Sundays it is special, because everybody is at home, this is why we cook this special food".* Family values are reflected here in the importance attached to the strengthening and maintaining of family ties over weekends. Similar findings were reported by Charles and Kerr (1988:18, 25) in their classic study on the food practices of British families. Sundays were associated with the "day of the family" and a great deal of trouble and effort was involved in the preparation of the Sunday midday meal, even in low-income families to celebrate the closeness of families. The most important reason given by the participants as to why this meal was so special, related to family members being together to share a meal, often the only one with all family members present. Bryant *et al*. (2003: 196-197) and Mäkelä (2000:11) also refer to the role of special meals in

"strengthening family ties" and being a symbol of the social unity a family represents. Another reason given was that money was available to purchase and serve out of the ordinary food.

In the Mmotla community, the Sunday midday meal and the preparation of modern food, have become the norm or standard for food provided for special occasions. The description of food suitable for a special celebration was always referred to as *"like on a Sunday"*. The type of food prepared for a Sunday has become the "ideal" food or "gold standard" to serve for special events. This also reflects the value attached to the Sunday midday meal.

The contrast in the food consumption patterns of weekdays and weekend days emphasised that, when there was limited social activity and food was only consumed in the intimate household circle, the less expensive and the more traditional type of food item was included more often. Examples of such dishes were relishes prepared from vegetables and offal products that are less expensive and had a lower prestige value. Modern food items were seen as having more prestige and were regarded as high status food and were then frequently reserved for weekends when most of the social interaction and activities took place.

5.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Insight into how the participants viewed, used and valued food was given. People tend to categorise the objects in their daily lives in an attempt to make sense of their world. Likewise, the people of Mmotla categorised food as part of their material culture as dichotomised groups, traditional and modern. This dichotomy represented, to a large extent, not only how food was perceived and used, but also the two worlds with which they came into contact, and reflected the ease with which the participants moved or switched between these two different worlds.

Traditional foods were those foods that the older participants (older than 50 years of age), associated as the familiar foods that were readily available and consumed when they were growing up. These foods were similar to those reported on in the literature (Coetzee, 1982; Bryant, 1967; Oudkerk, 1965; Quin, 1959) as the most common food items consumed by the South African black population up to the 1960s.The food items regarded as modern food, on the other hand, were those associated with a Western-oriented food pattern. With the exception of the staple grains maize and sorghum, and the indigenous vegetables and legumes, all other foods were classified by the participants as modern food. In most

instances it seemed as if what they regarded as modern food had been introduced, accepted and assimilated into their food practices in the recent past (since the 1960s until the time of the study). This was partly ascribed to what was available and offered by local stores, but more specifically, this trend emerged as a direct result of the exposure of women who were employed as domestic workers in white households where they were introduced to these food items and learnt how to prepare them. When analysing the recipes of the modern dishes (see Addendum D) a strong resemblance to the white South African cuisine is noted. This cuisine, based on influences from the 17th century Dutch, French and Malayan and later the British cuisines is generally referred to as Western-oriented (Van Wyk & Barton, 2007:7; Coetzee, 1977:39-46).

Contemporary food practices, as indulged in on weekdays and over the weekend, were outlined, and the context in which the two food categories were used in the everyday eating patterns of the participants was highlighted, and shed further light on how food was viewed, used and valued. During weekdays the food pattern was governed by the food budget as well as work and school schedules. Although the participants have moved away from the traditional two meals a day pattern, and have adopted the pattern of three meals, the composition of these meals cannot be described as modern or Western-oriented. They seemed to resort to less expensive and more traditional-type of food items as part of their meal composition during weekdays. In comparison to earlier publications, breakfast and lunch have changed for the majority of the participants, and became less complicated bread-based meals instead of meals containing the staple food in the form of maize-meal porridge. This was mainly ascribed to the availability and affordability of suitable relishes to serve with the staple starch and/or time constraints. Supper, the main meal of the day continued to include stiff maize-meal porridge, although rice as alternative starch was occasionally prepared by some. This was served with either vegetable-based or meat-based relishes. Meat-based relishes were included, at most two to three times a week due to budgetary restrictions, therefore less expensive cuts and more often offal products of chicken or beef were used. Supper on weekdays thus resembled a more traditional type of main meal, similar to those reported on in the earlier literature (Crous & Borchardt, 1984; 1982; Oudkerk, 1965). In agreement with other studies (Anderson, 2005:204; Satia-Abouta *et al.*, 2002; Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 1999a; Pan, Dixon, Himburg & Huffman, 1999) these findings similarly confirm that the nature of the main meal seemed to take longer to change in the process of acculturation of meal patterns, and that a Westernised pattern was more likely to be followed for breakfast and lunch.

The meal pattern and composition over weekends, in comparison, differed from those of weekdays, and appeared to have a more modern and contemporary slant, a feature ascribed

to the fact that more money was then available for most households to spend on food. On Saturdays more convenient and easy-to-prepare foods were included by most of the participants. Sundays were regarded as very special, and although breakfast on Sundays followed a similar pattern to Saturdays and weekdays, the main meal prepared for the midday meal reflected that it was the most important meal and culinary highlight of the week, a finding similar to that documented in studies done in other cultures (Charles & Kerr, 1988: 24-25; Goode, Theophano & Curtis, 1984:76). It received a great deal of attention and consisted mainly of Western or modern foods and resembled the typical cooked Sunday main meal of white South Africans.

Once again, the dynamic nature of food practices, attributable to the unwavering and continual interaction between the different environmental levels, was substantiated. The interrelatedness of, and the interaction between, the physical, economic and socio-cultural environments, and how constant changes in each of these impinged on the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, and how this shaped the food practices of the participants at the time of the study, stood out. Changes taking place in the socio-cultural environment and how they enhanced the development and alteration of the food practices within this community, specifically the effect of the ongoing, first-hand contact and interaction with a Western-oriented culture, education and Christianity, as well as the effects of urbanisation and modernisation, emerged. The underlying reasons, values and meanings attached to the varying food practices as followed on weekdays and weekends were interpreted and discussed in the context of these ongoing changes.

In the second section on the findings, the food practices at special occasions are presented. The traditional initiation rites and their celebration, as part of the traditional special occasions, follow in the next chapter.

TERMINOLOGY LIST

achaar	Hot pickle or relish probably introduced to this country by the Malays. It is prepared from sliced green fruit and/or vegetables, preserved in vegetable oil with red chillies and other curry spices
boerewors	A coarse loose textured beef and pork sausage flavoured with spices such as coriander, cloves, nutmeg and all spice
bogobe	Stiff maize-meal porridge
chicken malana	Chicken intestines
dikuku	Popular biscuit type of baked product. See Addendum D
idombolo	Steamed bread
mala mohodu	Intestines and tripe
maotwana	Chicken feet
maraka	Indigenous summer squash
morogo	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables
pap	Afrikaans for stiff maize-meal porridge
spatlho	Popular bread item for lunch, consisting of ¼ loaf of brown bread, cheese, French polony and achaar. See Addendum D.

SECTION 3

FINDINGS ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this second section the research findings of the study on the food practices associated with special occasions are presented. These occasions are social events of a celebratory nature and are associated with rituals and holidays. The social interaction and social behaviour of those participating in such occasions are guided by culture and more specifically their social organisational and ideological components. The celebratory occasions in which the participants partake are those associated with the rites of passage such as initiation, weddings, birthdays, graduations and funerals as well as those associated with holidays such as Christmas, Easter and New Year's Day.

It emerged from the findings that the participants grouped special occasions into two categories, namely traditional and modern. Traditional special occasions were regarded as those that were part of the celebrations of the participants for generations, and included those associated with the rites of passage such as initiation and traditional weddings. Modern special occasions were regarded as those that have become popular during the lifetime of the older participants and were associated with those introduced in the recent past. These were not considered as part of the celebrations when they were growing up. However, they grouped those occasions that had undergone considerable change in format, such as the modern wedding and funerals, as being modern occasions specifically with regard to the food practices, compared to the traditional.

In Chapter 4 (see 4.4.2) the religious beliefs and world views of the participants were briefly described. Some church groups prescribe whether their members are allowed to participate in traditional rites and customs or not, and/or the degree of participation. This is mainly dependent on whether the church group endorses belief in the ancestors and allows participation in ancestral veneration or not. Due to the prescriptions of the various church groups three groups of participants were distinguished. On the one hand there were those who had completely abandoned belief in the ancestors and on the other there were those who still adhere to traditional African religious views in which the ancestor spirits form the foundation of their belief system. In between these two opposite poles there were those

who belong to Christian churches that allow their members to continue to engage in ancestral veneration and the associated rites. This is similar to the viewpoint of Theron (1996:1,45) that, in spite of Westernisation, modernisation and acculturation, traditional religion continues to play a central role in the life of Africans, even in the lives of Christians. This ties in with the finding that, in several cases, both ancestors and the church were equally recognised in a number of the social occasions mentioned by those taking part in this study. This underscores the central role that religion plays in the lives of the participants. The presence of the ancestors and their role in the lives of their descendants are, for example, acknowledged in the important rites of passage celebrations and are an imperative for the future well-being of those undergoing these rites.

The ancestral religious component and the role of the church are addressed and indicated in the description and discussion of the special occasion where it applies. The chapters in this section respectively deal with the following:

Chapter 6: Food practices and their meanings during initiation rites and associated celebrations
Chapter 7: Food practices and their meanings at weddings and other special occasions
Chapter 8: Food practices and their meanings on religious occasions

CHAPTER 6

FOOD PRACTICES AND THEIR MEANINGS DURING INITIATION RITES AND ASSOCIATED CELEBRATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This first chapter on the findings of the food practices at special occasions deals with the traditional rites of passage of initiation and the associated celebrations that were observed by those who still engage in the practice of initiation. Traditional rites are cultural practices and forces from both the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are prominent in the execution of these rites as well as the associated food practices. The interrelatedness and interdependency of these two environments are demonstrated specifically through the ideological component of culture where the beliefs, values, world view and social organisation of those participating in these rites are in interplay. In this chapter the focus thus shifts to the socio-cultural and the socio-psychological environments of the conceptual framework. The two theoretical perspectives closely associated with these two environments, namely the cultural perspective and symbolic interactionism, are mainly used in the explication of the meaning of the food practices.

A fair amount of attention is given to the course of the traditional rites of passage and the associated celebrations, to assist in the contextualisation of the food practices related to them. In the academic literature dealing with the traditional rites of passage of South African cultural groups, the emphasis is often on the ritual procedures with limited attention, if any, being given to the accompanying food practices. It is therefore deemed appropriate to address the related food practices in some detail as they were practised at the time of the study. This chapter is devoted to this theme.

Of all the ethnic groups who participated in the study, the Ndebele group gave the most extensive description of the course of both the male and female initiation process. Known as one of the most conservative South African cultural groups, they continue to practise the traditional customs related to these rites more rigorously than any of the other groups. The different phases of the Ndebele initiation are described and interpreted with attention being paid to the associated food practices. The procedures followed by the other ethnic groups

are then compared to those followed by the Ndebele group to juxtapose the similarities and differences among the different groups.

The traditional rites of passage that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood, is no longer practised by everyone belonging to a cultural group that engages in these rituals. Some churches have been instrumental in campaigning against the custom but whether the custom is still practised in a family or not, has remained their choice. However, those who still engage in this practice follow the traditional procedures as explained by one of the participants: *"It is still the same* [the following of the traditional procedures]. *Some they follow it* [the custom of initiation] *but some have changed and they don't follow them anymore, because of modern churches".*

Different church groups have different viewpoints in this regard. Some allow their members to follow this custom and they then participate in the traditional procedures, while others totally prohibit members from being involved in any way, even to the extent of them being barred from attending the celebrations of family and friends who follow these customs.

The Ndebele male and female initiation is very involved and there are different phases in the process that are demarcated by different celebrations during each phase. It has to be kept in mind that the participants of this study were all females which naturally limited the information with regard to some aspects regarding the male initiation rites. However, the emphasis of the study is on those aspects relating to or applicable to the food practices associated with these rituals and in this regard the female participants were fully enculturated and could provide the needed information.

6.2 COURSE OF THE NDEBELE MALE INITIATION (*INGOMA)*

The *ingoma* (male initiation) was traditionally only performed every four years and males of 20 years and older attended the three-month process during the winter months from May to the end of July (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992: 303; Fourie, 1921:127). The traditional leader had to grant permission for the process to take place and this was acquired before any preparations could start.

Currently the initiation takes place annually instead of once every four years, and the traditional leader's permission is still required. The preparation phase would only start after permission had been granted, and this is usually one month to three weeks before the initiation rite officially begins.

6.2.1 Preparation phase

During the preparation phase the *abasegwabo* (Ndebele boys in preparation for initiation) have already had to abide by rules with regard to their clothing, food, and social interaction with family, friends and the community. They are assembled in a specially prepared enclosure in the yard of one of the fellow initiates, where they are kept under the strict supervision of a specially appointed male. Social restrictions prescribe that they should be isolated and they are not allowed to have any contact with females and are therefore not allowed to visit their girlfriends, family or neighbours. In preparation of the process, specific rules and information are given. Van der Vliet (1974:229) gives a similar account of the time the boys spend together before "the opening of the school".

6.2.2 Departure and seclusion

On the last day of the old moon the older brothers of the *abasegwabo* who have already been initiated would fetch and take them to the traditional leader's residence where they would spend the night together with their fathers. Early the next morning around three o' clock *"when the morning star shines"* they leave the homestead of the traditional leader to be circumcised at a nearby river before sunrise. The two month seclusion period follows directly after this procedure. There are different stages during the seclusion period and the type of food, its consistency and preparation are different in each of these stages. During the course of the seclusion phase the parents of the initiated attend a number of celebrations that coincide with the stages of the seclusion phase.

6.2.3 Home-coming

On their return to the community after the two month seclusion phase there are various celebrations in their honour to welcome the *amasokana* (plural for initiated Ndebele males) back into the community.

Table 6.1 gives an overview of the course of the Ndebele male initiation process. The major events during the different phases and the associated food practices are indicated together with the celebrations associated with each phase.

TABLE 6.1: PHASES OF THE MALE NDEBELE INITIATION AND ASSOCIATED FOOD PRACTICES

Phases	Major event	Associated food practices	Concurrent celebrations at home
Pre-preparation phase Immediate months before preparation phase		Preparation and serving of *bogobe* guided by beliefs	Not applicable
Preparation phase	*Abasegwabo* secluded in preparation for the initiation Depart on the last day of the old moon	Restrictions on fat, oil, eggs, milk, and other fatty foods enforced by male supervisors Each a*basegwabo's* food prepared by his own family	Not applicable
Seclusion phase First 3-6 days	Circumcision. Stay in temporary enclosure during the initial days of severe illness	Pumpkin *umdoko* prepared by grandmother or elderly female	Not applicable
Following weeks (middle period)	*Abakhethwa* move to *mphado* – special initiation enclosure	Only stiff salt-free *umratha* of a specific consistency and water is allowed. Prepared by the individual households of initiates	Fathers celebrate their new status Parents thank traditional leader at *ukungenisa umrhubo*
Last stage (re-introduction)	Mothers celebrate at each home Goat slaughtered at each home	Salt added to *umratha* Meat included. Mothers who celebrate the *igwabo* send meat Tea and *amakuke* left at dancing place	*Iqwabo* celebration of initiates' mothers *Isithwalela* celebration
Home-coming celebrations First visit to traditional leader Celebrations at each individual home Second visit to traditional leader	 Sleep over at traditional leader with fathers Wear traditional attire Inform ancestors Receive new clothes and other presents Ritual cleansing Wear headbands and new clothes	 Only traditional beer and traditional food served Beast slaughtered Traditional beer prepared Traditional and modern food served	
Visit maternal grandparents	Maternal ancestors are informed	Slaughter goat Traditional and modern food served	

A description of the meanings attached to the food practices associated with each of the phases of the male Ndebele's initiation process follows.

6.3 THE MEANINGS OF THE FOOD PRACTICES DURING THE *INGOMA*

From the discussions with the participants and the description of the food practices provided by them on the different phases of the male Ndebele's initiation it is evident that the traditional customs were still adhered to by this group. The male initiation is characterised by a number of rites and ceremonies that take place while the initiate is in seclusion (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:334). These rites are closely associated with the consumption of food, which forms an integral part of the ceremonies and celebrations paralleled by the initiate's family at home (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:350). A description and interpretation of the food practices during each phase and those associated with the celebrations at home is given.

6.3.1 Preparation phase

Even before the *umsegwabo* (singular for Ndebele boy in preparation for initiation) enters the preparation stage certain beliefs dictate the manner in which the staple food, stiff maize-meal porridge, is prepared and served in the households of some of the prospective initiates. It was explained that in the preparation of the porridge, when the additional maize-meal is poured into the cooking pot, the *lefetlho* (stirring stick) has to be removed from it. If it is not removed, it is believed that the boy could get splenalgia when running or participating in hard physical labour. Some also believed an *umsegwabo* should never dish up his own food; it has to be dished up for him. It was also important that his portion of *bogobe* had to be taken from the middle part of the pot, meaning that he should not be served first but also not last. These beliefs with regard to the serving of the staple food relates to the ability to endure the physical demands of the initiation.

The interplay of socio-psychological forces is evident during this preparation phase. It was explained that the *umsegwabo* is considered to be very vulnerable during this time and the above measures are regarded as precautions to prevent him from being harmed or being unable to endure the physical demands that are required during the initiation process. Other groups also seemed to experience a certain degree of anxiety before sending their children to initiation. Van der Vliet (1974:227) gives the example of the Cape Nguni who took certain protective measures against the fear that the boys would become mad or even die during the initiation rites. The fathers of these boys therefore each killed a goat before their sons were sent to initiation. The boys then had to consume the meat from the right foreleg of this goat as protection.

During this first separation phase, the rules with regard to the preparation and serving of the food, as well as to certain food restrictions, were already in place, enforced and strictly

followed. The food for the *umsegwabo* had to be prepared and served separately from the rest of the household's food. In some families the maternal grandmother provided some of the cooking utensils such as the stirring stick and spoon (*lefetlho* and *leso*) and the *amathunga* (the containers used to transport the food from the household to the initiate, previously wooden containers were used, at the time of the study enamel dishes were used) or the mother would purchase additional ones. Other participants said that the father of the *umsegwabo* was responsible for carving the *lefetlho* and *leso* that was to be used for the initiate's food preparation. The separation from his family further reinforces the requirement that the initiate's food to prepared separately and with other special cooking utensils. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:332) confirms this practice of separate food preparation during initiation, and explains that it relates to the physical protection of the initiate who is in a state of ritual uncleanness during initiation. Fourie (1921:126) mentions briefly that the family of the initiate is not allowed to eat of the food prepared for him, but he does not give an explanation for this custom.

Certain food restrictions are also enforced. The *umsegwabo* only receives boiled food, without the addition of salt, fat, oil or other flavourings. All food with a high fat content such as milk, fatty meat, offal and *vetkoek* as well as eggs are thus restricted. He is not allowed to receive the tasty food he has become accustomed to as a young boy. The diet therefore consists mainly of *bogobe* and boiled *morogo* as relish, prepared by his mother or another responsible adult female in the household. If meat is prepared it has to be a very lean cut of meat (according to some participants only steak, with all visible fat trimmed off, is allowed) prepared by either boiling or roasting over the coals to ensure that it does not contain any fat at all. The prepared food is closely scrutinised by the appointed male *(modoto)* who supervises the boys during this preparation phase. Participants could not give reasons why this has to be done and indicated that they just do it this way, because, *"… it was the law* [rules] *of the men".*

Although the participants could not provide a reason for the fat restriction, one possible explanation could relate to the function of fat in food preparation and the role it plays in enhancing taste thereby contributing to the sensory pleasure of food. Alternatively it could be getting the *umsegwabo* accustomed to the food that be will be eating during his forthcoming two month period of seclusion when only a limited variety of bland (salt-free) food is on offer. In this regard Van der Vliet (1974: 230) remarks that "unsavoury food" is part of the many hardships that the initiates have to endure. In the preparation of relish-type of dishes, as explained by Coetzee (1982:122), fat or oil are used extensively. There is a traditional belief that the function of the side dish or relish is to ease the swallowing of the staple food or main dish - the stiff maize-meal porridge. This ties in with the Richard's (1939:172) reasoning that

cooked millet or sorghum porridge is “tasteless and hard to swallow” and that it is difficult to eat any cereal porridge without an accompaniment prepared in the form of a stew. Elizabeth Rozin (2000:138) similarly explains that throughout sub-Saharan Africa a savoury sauce or stew is required to make the porridge balls “slide down the throat”.

The cited restrictions could probably also be associated with certain norms and values while others relate to certain beliefs. The restriction on egg consumption was for example associated with the belief that eggs would lead to an increased desire for sexual relations. The *abasegwabo* were traditionally strictly prohibited from engaging in any sexual activity before undergoing initiation. The sanction on the consumption of eggs prior to initiation could possibly be related to this belief. Another restriction was that meat containing connective tissue, called *umsipha* meat was to be avoided as it was believed its consumption would lead to the *abasegwabo* experiencing problems with circumcision. The participants indicated that these traditional or customary rules were strictly adhered to as it was believed that by complying, misfortune, harm or even death could be prevented. One of the participants explained why these rules had to be followed as follows: *“ … the older people still tell them; you must not eat this, or do this, because the new* [younger] *generation, they don’t follow these rules, and then they have problems at initiation”.* The adherence to these customary rules seemed to serve the psychological purpose of providing the assurance that the initiate would be protected from harm and that the adults involved in the event had contributed or could contribute to his protection by following the prescribed customs regarding his food.

The examples given reflect that meanings are derived from the socio-psychological and socio-cultural environments. According to the cultural perspective, collective values are produced and reproduced through food and its associated practices. In using food as material culture, the following come to light:

(i) The status of the *umsegwabo* in the community is illustrated during this time of separation. He is removed from the community in which he had, up to this point in his life, been regarded as a child. The separation symbolically indicates the end of this phase in his life cycle. The fact that his food is prepared separately further symbolises separation from his family and the community. Although physically separated from his family, the food sent to him still binds him to them and signifies the physical and psychological support of his family and their relationship with him. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:334) draws attention to this spiritual bond that is maintained with the initiate’s family through the food.

(ii) The type of food allowed and the food restrictions are also symbolic of the initiate’s status in the community. He is only allowed *bogobe* and *morogo* during this time of preparation.

Morogo is generally regarded as a low status food, usually associated with poverty and as food suitable for women and children (Jansen van Rensburg *et al*., 2007). The serving of *morogo* during this phase could thus be interpreted as a representation of his current status in the community, namely that of a child. In her study of the dietary habits of the Swazi people, Jones (1963:70) mentions in this regard that although some men consume these vegetable dishes, "the remainder spurn" them.

Enforcing the rules about the type of food and their preparation further illustrates how food is used as mechanism of control and simultaneously serves as a salient code of social relationships between different groups in the community. The enforcement of these rules by the males reflects the degree of social control they exercise over the *abasegwabo* and within the community at large, signifying the strong paternalistic nature associated with the *ingoma.*

From a symbolic interactionism viewpoint, meaning arises during the process of interaction between people. The meaning attached to the type of food served to the boys during the preparation stage, is derived through the people who regulate and participate in the food provisioning, namely the senior males in charge of the initiation and the females responsible for the food preparation.

6.3.2 Seclusion phase

As illustrated in Table 6.1 the type of food eaten during the different stages of the seclusion period varies as does its consistency, variety and method of preparation. The food for each initiate, now referred to as *umkhethwa,* is prepared by the initiate's family for the duration of the seclusion phase. Initially their *abarhugi* (instructors), fetch the food from their families but, at a later stage, it becomes the task of the younger children in the family, to take the food twice daily to a specific spot near the enclosure where the initiates stay, from where they themselves then collect it.

During the first few days when the a*bakhethwa* (initiates) are still ill, they are only allowed a serving of very soft, salt-free pumpkin and maize-meal porridge. Each initiate's grandmother or any elderly female in the family prepares this pumpkin *umdoko.* It was ascertained in this research that only the older females were allowed to prepare the pumpkin *umdoko* for the first couple of days after circumcision. The pumpkin *umdoko* is carried to the *abakhethwa* in a special container called *isixwepa.* The custom to serve the soft pumpkin porridge during the period directly after circumcision and for the first three days is still followed. Both Fourie (1921:130) and Jansen van Vuuren (1992:353) confirm this practice, although the number of days they mention differs from four to six days. In reaction to the question why this specific

dish had to be served, most of the participants could only offer explanations such as that it is *"... a law* [rule] *made by males".* One elderly informant, however, explained that the *abakhethwa* are ill and therefore need soft food.

In the description of this dish in the book on African culinary practices, Coetzee (1982:151) mentions that this pumpkin and maize-meal dish is often prepared during winter months. The soft porridge called *umdoko* was generally regarded as suitable for invalids and thin porridges were served to babies and toddlers (Coetzee, 1982:136; Van der Vliet, 1974:218). The pumpkin *umdoko* served several days after circumcision could be related to the fact that the *umkhwetha* is regarded as an infant in his new life stage as a grown-up man and, apart from this, that he is still ill after the circumcision. Therefore this dish, associated with convalescence, is prepared. Drawing from the principles of semiotics, the pumpkin *umdoko* signifies the *umkhwetha* as an infant and convalescent (Kaiser, 1997:48; MacCannell & MacCannell, 1982:9). Jansen van Vuuren (1992:353) mentions that it is believed that certain foods are "strengthening" (such as the pumpkin *umdoko*) as opposed to others, that could cause the death of the initiates. The provision of the pumpkin *umdoko* is believed to serve another function, namely, that of protection against harm from outside sources. The pumpkin *umdoko* signifies the protection offered the *umkhwetha* who is regarded as an infant.

The explanation for why the grandmother had to prepare the food was that the grandmothers are not sexually active anymore *"... they are grown-up and don't sleep around".* According to cultural customs certain rules that relate to women of childbearing age are no longer applicable to women after the menopause. The latter are not subject to ritual uncleanness any more (Jansen van Vuuren; 1992:349). The *umkhwetha* is believed to be in a very vulnerable state of ritual uncleanness during the period directly after the circumcision and, having his food prepared by somebody who is not subjected to ritual uncleanness, can thus be regarded as a precaution to protect him from harm. These observations not only illustrate how the various forces from the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are in interplay but also how underlying cultural values and beliefs are reflected in the food practices during this stage of the initiation process.

After the initial days of severe illness, the *abakhethwa* move from a temporary enclosure to the *umphadu* (special initiation enclosure) where they would stay for the rest of their two-month seclusion period. Various opinions were given on what is allowed after the three days of soft pumpkin porridge. According to some participants it is replaced with salt-free *bogobe* and only water for the following week, and afterwards other salt-free relishes could be added. Other participants indicated that a salt-free relish of either *morogo* or meat could be included with the salt-free *bogobe* directly after the pumpkin *umdoko* and that this would be consumed

most of the time during the two months. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:353-354), on the other hand, indicates that the *umkhwetha* is allowed to eat the same kind of food as that prepared for his family following the initial pumpkin porridge diet, although he emphasises that large quantities of stiff maize-meal porridge were also consumed. It seems as if what follows on the pumpkin *umdoko* varies, and that there is no set cultural rule or prescription. However, eating salt-free stiff maize-meal porridge seems to be the most common practice.

Although there were various views on what the diet of the *abakhethwa* consisted of directly after the pumpkin *umdoko,* the participants agreed that the consistency of the porridge had to be according to set standards. If it did not comply with the set norm, sticks were placed in the *bogobe* by the instructors and it was not given to the *umkhehtwa* but sent back home. When this happened, it was regarded as a social disgrace. If a household failed to conform to the prescribed consistency, according to some of the participants, compensation was in the form of sacrificing a goat. The father of the *umkhwetha* had to give the animal to the instructors who looked after the initiates in the *veld.* Therefore, great care was taken in the preparation of the food for the *abakhethwa.* Time and again the participants emphasised that strict rules are enforced with regard to the consistency of the *bogobe.* The salt-free porridge with a dry consistency could be seen as part of the hardships and unpleasantness they had to endure during seclusion.

In the limited literature on the Ndebele food practices, the only reference to the consistency of the porridge was in the work of Jansen van Vuuren (1992: 355), who describes that a piece of the stiff porridge was cut from the middle of the porridge and placed on the wooden storage platform where it was delivered by the younger siblings of the *abakhethwa*. The researcher assumes that this could perhaps be related to the testing of the porridge.

As the time of seclusion draws to an end the type of food served, and its preparation, changes, and it seems as if the strict food preparation rules are gradually lifted by the males who supervise the *ingoma*. Other foods can be introduced and served together with the *bogobe*. Some participants indicated that it is only at this stage that meat could be added to their daily menu, and that salt could be used to flavour their food. This would happen during the immediate two weeks prior to their home-coming and concurred with the time of the *igwabo* celebrations that their mothers attended. Meat from the goats slaughtered at each of the *abakhethwa's* homes during the *igwabo* celebrations would be sent to them together with a variety of other foods. According to some participants cooked meat was sent, while others said that it was cooked by the *abakhethwa* themselves.

To sum up, the different stages of the seclusion phase are also defined through the food they receive. The type of food provided typifies the different stages of the seclusion phase. A number of similarities can be drawn between the type of food and the different stages of the seclusion phase. In the beginning, just after circumcision, the *umkhwetha* is regarded as an infant in his new life stage of being an initiated man but also seen as a convalescent. Therefore food associated with infants and invalids is provided. During the next stage (middle period) which could be compared to the childhood stage, the bland stiff maize-meal porridge with limited quantities of any relish could be associated with the food given to children. This signifies the childhood stage in the seclusion phase. They have no freedom and have to submit to the authority of elderly males. Through the type of food offered to them during the last stage of the seclusion period, they are introduced, not only to adulthood, but are also gradually reintroduced into society as adult males. During this stage they are provided with larger quantities of meat on a daily basis, and other special treats such as tea and *amakuke* and other sweet treats are also included.

6.3.3 Celebrations during the seclusion phase

The parents of the *abakhethwa* attend a number of celebrations while their sons are in seclusion. The fathers of the *abakhethwa* who stayed with them for the first three days, attend a celebration at each of the initiates' homes upon their return. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:350) and Fourie (1921:129) give similar descriptions of this joyous welcoming back of the fathers of the initiates. Jansen van Vuuren explains this as a two-fold occasion, first as a celebration of the fathers' new status, as father of an initiated son, and second to give thanks to the ancestors. *Bogobe*, traditional beer and meat from a slaughtered animal are served on these happy occasions attended by the males. The Mmotla participants indicated that this is a celebration attended exclusively by male relatives and friends of the father of the initiated. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:351) describes the participation of both males and females in this celebration that he refers to as *ukungenisa umrhubo* (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:350).

At some stage during the first month of their sons' seclusion, the parents of the initiates attend a celebration at the home of the traditional leader to thank him for granting permission so that the initiation could take place. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:364-366) gives a detailed account of this celebration and explains a two-fold reason for this celebration. It is not only to thank the traditional leader, but simultaneously an opportunity for the parents of the initiates to express their gratitude to all who participated in the organisation of the initiation. Towards the end of the seclusion period, in preparation to the home-coming of the *abakhethwa,* the *amagwabo* and the *isithwalela* celebrations are held.

Igwabo celebrations During the last week or two before the initiates return home their mothers attend the *igwabo* celebrations at the home of each of the initiates to celebrate the anticipated homecoming of their sons. This celebration is marked by the slaughter of a goat together with merry singing and dancing. The procedures for the *igwabo* celebrations as given by the Mmotla participants are similar to those Jansen van Vuuren (1992:370) describes for the Manala Ndebele.

The participants interpreted the goat slaughtered at each home as a symbol of the mother's joy that her son had attended initiation and would be home soon. An elderly informant compared this goat to the goat slaughtered at the first celebration of the *iqude,* and explained that it is of similar significance as the goat slaughtered at the first *iqude* celebration for the girl (see 6.6.3). *"This goat is equal in importance as the umhlonyani, however, in the case of the boys, it is called igwabo".*

Another meaning attached to the goat agrees with the interpretation given by Jansen van Vuuren (1992:366). He explains the *igwabo* celebration as a rite of integrating or reuniting the unclean initiates with their relatives at home, although this reunion is temporary and no physical contact takes place. The Mmotla initiates participate in these celebrations by dancing in the *veld* some distance away from the village during these celebrations. Part of the slaughtered goat is then sent raw to the initiates who roast the meat at their enclosure. They share the meat from the same goat as their mothers, and through this act the reunion with their families is symbolised.

6.3.4 *Isithwalela* celebration

The *isithwalela* celebration takes place during the last week of seclusion and is associated with joy and fun**.** During this time the *abakhethwa* are often seen dancing at a distance from the village to express their joy of coming home soon. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:370) gives a complete description of the dances and the *isithwalela* (closure) of the seclusion period. Some of the participants associated this celebration as the celebration where the young girls afterwards go out and sing and dance in the *veld,* and then leave special treats such as tea and cake for the *abakhethwa*.

The clay oxen moulded by each *umkhwetha*, and sent to the girl he chooses to become his girlfriend, is an example of the fun experienced during this time period. The *umrhugi* (instructor) hands the clay oxen to the family of each initiate and gives them the name of the chosen girl. The clay oxen, together with a bowl of *umthombo* (sorghum grains) and traditional beer, is then taken by each initiate's family to the family of the girl. The participants

offered the following interpretation for this. The clay oxen serves as symbol of the *lobolo* cattle and signifies that the *abakhethwa* are now adult men, ready to be married. The sorghum grains and traditional beer symbolise a gesture of friendship, and serve to strengthen the social relations between the two families. Fourie (1921:133) also mentions this practice, and describes it as a mockery of the *lobolo* procedures**.**

6.3.5 Home-coming celebrations

On their return to the community the initiated are now referred to as *amasokana*. There are a series of homecoming celebrations to welcome them back into the community. At these celebrations their re-introduction as adult men into the community is celebrated and therefore they wear the traditional attire of a young initiated male. The first of these celebrations is held at the traditional leader's residence and is exclusively for the *amasokana* and their fathers. They have to stay over at the traditional leader's house the first night for this important celebration. Only traditional food, mainly meat, traditional beer and *bogobe,* brought along by the families of the *amasokana,* is consumed. If the traditional leader has the financial means he could slaughter a beast for the occasion.

6.3.6 Individual celebrations at the homes of the *amasokana*

The account of the home-coming celebrations given by the Mmotla participants differs from that which Jansen van Vuuren (1992: 373-376) describes. According to them, the following day the *amasokana* form groups according to their surnames[25], and then over the next couple of days they visit each member of the group's families according to the ranking of the surnames. They move from house to house in their groups and overnight at each member's home, and thus participate in the celebrations at each home as a group. At each family a big celebration is held where a beast is slaughtered. The procedures at the individual celebrations portray a strong interaction with the socio-cultural environment. This is reflected in the manner in which the customary Ndebele procedures and even the food practices associated with these celebrations are still adhered to. For example, the traditional prescriptions, such as the visits to each *isonkana's* family, which has to be according to the traditional hierarchical ranking of the surnames, and the traditional attire that has to be worn for the next month while the celebrations are attended, serve as examples. Contrary to Jansen van Vuuren (1992:376), who states that the individual celebrations were no longer part of the homecoming celebrations, it is still celebrated by the participants of this study.

[25] Jansen van Vuuren (1992:337) gives a full explanation of this ranking, which is according to seniority in terms of the clan names. This is not discussed further as it falls outside the scope of this study.

Another example of how powerful the forces from the socio-cultural environment are, relates to adhering to the prescriptions regarding the traditional food that must be served during the individual celebrations. It was emphasised that it was compulsory to slaughter a beast and serve *ting mabele* (fermented sorghum porridge)*, bogobe, tlhabalala* (traditional beer) and the meat from the slaughtered beast. It was explained that the elderly males insisted that these traditional dishes be prepared. The explanation for adhering to these customary norms probably lies in the fact that at these celebrations the ancestors of the *amasokana* are informed of their homecoming. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:333) explains that slaughtering and communication with the ancestors took place as an integral part of the various rites performed throughout the entire initiation period and even thereafter. The participants emphasised that traditional food had to be prepared on occasions where communication with the ancestors took place because they demanded that traditions be observed. Transgression of these prescriptions could result in the wrath of the ancestors. The cultural perspective indicates that collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms. In the above example the traditional food as cultural form, signifies the collective values. Honouring and obeying the ancestors through adhering to traditions and customs are symbolised by means of the traditional food provided.

According to custom, certain parts of the slaughtered animal are allocated to specific family members. The *isifunzi* part of the slaughtered beast must for example be handed over to the maternal grandparents (see Figure 6.1). This has symbolic meaning. The *isifunzi* is part of the back section (sirloin) of the slaughtered beast and is given to the maternal grandparents at this celebration as a symbol of gratitude for what the maternal grandparents have done for the *isokana*. The grandmother would have carried him on her back as an infant. Some participants even regard grandmothers as being the backbone of the family. The *isifunzi* symbolises the back of the grandmother, but it also signifies the social relationship of the grandparents and specifically the grandmother, with the *isokana*. According to symbolic interactionism, meaning arises in the process of interaction between people and symbols are often used to define or represent these meanings. In this instance the grandmother carried her grandson on her back. The back of the grandmother is associated with caring and comforting. The *isifunzi* also serves as a symbol of this intimate bond with a caring and nurturing grandmother. From the cultural perspective point of view, culture often provides abstract pictures or representations of social life. Here the *isifunzi* illustrates the social relationship between the grandmother and her grandson.

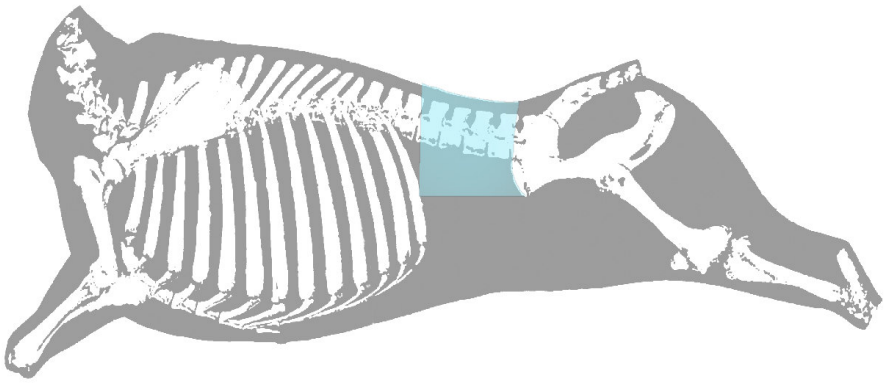

FIGURE 6.1: *ISIFUNZI* PART OF THE SLAUGHTERED BEAST

Side by side with the traditional dishes, modern food[26] was always indicated as important menu items served on these occasions. The variety of modern food served, depended on the money that the specific family had available. However, it was emphasised that it is of the utmost importance to also prepare modern food. This yet again portrays how traditional and modern foods are juxtaposed. On the one hand, traditions need to be honoured by demonstrating obedience and respect to the ancestors through the traditions that are still in place, thereby indicating that the ancestors are respected. On the other hand, influences from the socio-psychological environment in terms of what is currently (at the time of the study) the social norm, namely to be regarded as educated, is also an important consideration in terms of the prestige and status value that is attached to the serving of modern food. Salient forces from both the socio-cultural and the socio-psychological environments are reflected in these food practices.

6.3.7 Second visit to the traditional leader

After they have visited each family, the *amasokana* return to the chief's house. During this visit they undergo the ritual cleansing and officially take off their traditional attire. They then wear the new clothes they received as presents from their families together with the traditional headband as a sign that they are now grown-up men. During the first month after the *isokana* has returned home from initiation he is not allowed to touch girls or enter the kitchen if cow dung was used on the floor. These prescriptions are enforced for as long as he wears the headband. The reason for this taboo is given by Fourie (1921:136) who explains that he is still in a state of uncleanness, although Landgraf (1974:76) similarly refers to this state of uncleanness, she also mentions the fear that existed that if a woman touched the initiated or even his clothes, she might become sterile or even die.

[26] "modern food" is the phrase used by the participants when referring to Western-oriented food or dishes as illustrated in Table 5.2.

6.3.8 Celebration at the maternal grandparents

After the second visit to the traditional leader, the last in the series of homecoming celebrations follows. This is the visit the *isokana* has to pay to his maternal grandparents. During this visit the maternal ancestors have to be informed that their grandson is now an adult man and a goat is slaughtered. A friend of the *isokana* or the whole group could accompany him to this celebration (this depends on the funds that the grandparents have available for the celebration). The food prepared at this celebration is once again a combination of traditional and modern food. Apart from the meat of the slaughtered animal, *tlhabalala, bogobe* and *ting mabele* have to be prepared. The grandmother of the *isokana* usually receives the *amathunga* and the *lefhetlo* that were used for his food preparation while at initiation, as presents. These are handed over to her at this visit.

This visit as part of the home-coming celebrations again reflects the importance attached to obeying customs. The important role that the ancestors continue to play, including the underlying beliefs, is again highlighted. To ensure the continued goodwill of the ancestors it was regarded as essential to inform them of all the major incidents in the lives of their descendants, and specifically of the major life-stage transitions as, for example, initiation.

6.4 INITIATION AMONG THE DIFFERENT MALE INITIATION GROUPS

In Table 6.2 the Ndebele male initiation is compared to the other cultural groups in the Mmotla who still practise it.

TABLE 6.2: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT MALE INITIATION GROUPS IN MMOTLA

	NDEBELE	NORTH SOTHO	TSONGA
Time of year and period	Winter months From May up to the end of July Previously only every 4 years	Winter months From May up to the first week in August	Winter months From May up to end of July or first week in August
Age	Males of 20 years and older	Males of 20 years and older	Males 16 years and older
Preparation for initiation	Special traditional dress (short trousers, *"umtjhotjho"* – headgear and knobkierie) Males are called *abasegwabo*	No special preparation or dress Called *bagwera*	No special preparation or dress
Food restrictions	No fat allowed in food preparation. Consumption of fat, vetkoek, eggs, fatty meat and milk forbidden	No food restrictions	No food restrictions
Social restrictions	Not allowed to visit friends, relatives or girlfriends	No restrictions	No restrictions
Visit to maternal grandparents	Gifts exchanged with grandparents He receives a blanket and cooking utensils for his food preparation	None mentioned	None mentioned
Departure for initiation	Fetched by older brothers who have attended initiation Overnight at traditional leader's house Leave early next morning No rules mentioned	Gather at traditional leader's house from where they leave in a group at sunset All the women and children must be indoors – they are not allowed to see them leave Rules for parents – they are not allowed to attend any social functions during the time that their son is at initiation such as funerals or weddings	No rules mentioned
Food preparation and serving procedures during seclusion	Paternal grandmother prepares *isijeza* for the first three days Food is prepared by own family Food is fetched by the *abarhugi* in special containers *izixwepa* during the first part of the seclusion After some time younger siblings take the food to a special collection point .	Food is prepared by own family without salt Food is fetched by the *baditi* of the initiate	*Bogobe* is prepared by own family *Batapi* fetches food in special containers

TABLE 6.2: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT MALE INITIATION GROUPS IN MMOTLA – *continued*

	NDEBELE	NORTH SOTHO	TSONGA
Celebrations during seclusion phase	Parents celebrate and thank traditional leader for initiation. Mothers wear a thin headband *umkhala* as sign that sons are attending initiation. A number of celebrations are held during the last month. ***Igwabo* celebration** Initiates are now called *abakhethwa* Goat slaughtered at each home ***Isithwalelo* celebration** Fun celebration. During the week before the *abakhethwa* come home.	No celebration during this phase. Parents of initiates not allowed to attend any social functions.	*Hondolela* celebration after first month. This celebration will take place on the Friday night Families take the special dish *tihove* and traditional beer to the boys in the veld. The Saturday the boys dance in the distance.
Celebrations to mark home-coming **First visit to traditional leader**	The group as a whole attend the first big celebration at the home of the traditional leader. They wear traditional attire. Traditional food is prepared by families – *ting mabele*, *bogobe* and traditional beer. After this celebration they are called *isokana*	The initiates wear traditional attire. A big celebration is held at the home of the traditional leader. A beast is slaughtered for the initiates now called *badikana.* The *badikana* return home with their parents after this celebration and no other celebration is held at home. Each family informs their ancestors one week before the boys leave for initiation and again when they return home.	Only one big celebration at the end. On the last Saturday everything is burnt down where the initiation school was. A big celebration called *botshwele* is held. Blankets and scotch skirts are bought and worn by the initiates – this must have red in. The big celebration will be held at the home of the traditional healer. The mothers of the initiates cook the food *Bogobe*, meat and traditional beer will be served.

TABLE 6.2: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT MALE INITIATION GROUPS IN MMOTLA – *continued*

	NDEBELE	NORTH SOTHO	TSONGA
Celebrations at the home of each initiate	**Groups are formed according to the surnames. The group as a whole attend the celebration at the home of each *isokana*.**	None mentioned	None mentioned
Food	A beast is slaughtered at each family and the meat is prepared together with *umratha, ting mabele* and traditional beer. This is regarded as compulsory food at this celebration. "Modern food" is also served.		
Second visit to traditional leader	After every *isokana's* family has been visited they return to the traditional leader They undergo the ritual cleansing and henceforth don't wear the traditional attire anymore. They however, still wear the headband – as a sign of a grown-up man.		
Visit to maternal grandparents	The maternal grandparents are visited after the last visit to the traditional leader. The maternal ancestors are informed that the *isokana* returned from initiation and is now a grown-up. A goat is slaughtered and traditional and "modern food" is prepared.	None mentioned	None mentioned

From the comparison given in Table 6.2, the initiation rites of the North Sotho and Tsonga appear less complex than those of the Ndebele group. However, a number of similarities and differences in the procedures followed by each group are highlighted. All groups indicated that the initiation takes place during the winter months and the males attend initiation in groups from the age of 16 years or older. Only the Ndebele group had specific phases such as a preparation phase, characterised by an initial separation from the family, associated with a special dress code and food restrictions that are strictly imposed. They were the only group that had different stages for the seclusion phase with food practices that changed between the stages. The food preparations for all three groups took place at the family homes of the initiated. The food was then carried by their younger siblings to an specified collecting point near the enclosure from where it is collected. The home-coming celebration of the North Sotho and Tsonga is marked by one big celebration whereas the Ndebele group have a number of celebrations to mark the home-coming and re-introduction of the initiates into society. It is evident, that, when compared to the other ethnic groups, the Ndebele group has conserved and adhered to their customs more strictly than the others have done. The same tendency was noted by Jansen van Vuuren (1992:378).

Forces from the socio-cultural and psychological environments are reflected in the food practices of the Ndebele group during the initiation rites and the celebrations associated with it. The traditional customs of this group are honoured and continued by those who practise them. The paternal nature of the initiation rites contributes to ensuring that this happens. The control exercised by senior males during initiation rites, such as the insistence on traditional food practices, contributes to their preservation. This is understandable because, as explained by Turner (1967:7), the purpose of the male initiation is, amongst other aspects, primarily to inculcate tribal values. In this regard, Jansen van Vuuren (1992:389) concludes that initiation contributes to the establishment of a cultural identity with the Ndebele. From the accounts given by the Ndebele participants in Mmotla, it can be concluded that adhering to the traditional food practices associated with the male initiation, contributes to this sense of cultural identity.

6.5 COURSE OF THE NDEBELE FEMALE INITIATION (*IQUDE)*

In contrast to the Ndebele males who undergo initiation in a group, the Ndebele female attends the *iqude* (initiation) on her own. The *iqude* takes place after the second or third time that the girl menstruates and this is similar to the information given by other researchers (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:380; Trollip, 1991:153; Jansen van Rensburg 1987:189; Fourie, 1921:139). Some participants indicated that the *iqude* used to take place during the winter

months, at the same time when the males attended initiation; while others were of the opinion that there was no fixed time and a girl could go anytime of the year after she started menstruating. In Mmotla, girls, however, usually attended the *iqude* during the long summer school holidays during December/January, and the reason given was to prevent interference with school. With the exception of the people of the senior lineage, the *iqude* nowadays only lasts four weeks and it starts on a Friday. For members of the senior lineage[27] it takes two months, due to their strict observance of the traditional customs. A girl from the senior lineage has to go into seclusion a month before the first *iqude* celebration takes place, and then stays in seclusion thereafter for another four weeks. Similar information is reported by Jansen van Vuuren (1992:392, 405) and Jansen van Rensburg (1987:189). The account of the *iqude* given by Trollip (1991:154-156) resembles the process of members of a senior lineage. The participants in her study were all relatives of the traditional leader, which explains the difference in the course of the *iqude* recorded by her.

Another important feature of the Ndebele female initiation is that the big celebration is held during the first weekend when the *iqude* commences. The main phases and events in the course of the *iqude* are given in Table 6.3 to highlight the food practices associated with each. A brief description of each phase is given first, followed by a description of the associated food practices during the *iqude*.

[27] In the South Ndebele the Mahlangu lineage for example, as one of the senior clans or lineages are regarded as the custodians of the traditional customs of the Ndzundza-Ndebele. Due to this function and their seniority in the lineage they continue to strictly adhere to the initiation rites as customary practice. See Jansen van Vuuren (1992: 225-238 and 348-349) for a complete description regarding the importance and role of lineages in traditional rites among the Ndebele.

TABLE 6.3: PHASES OF THE NDEBELE FEMALE INITIATION AND ASSOCIATED FOOD PRACTICES

PHASE	MAJOR EVENT	ASSOCIATED FOOD PRACTICES
Preparation phase		
Soon after first menses	Food restrictions enforced	Eggs, milk, fat and oil restricted by some
	Selection of *abangenisi*	
	Inform ancestors that the girl referred to as *umthombi* is ready to undergo the initiation rite	Preparation of traditional beer during week before *iqude* commences
Seclusion phase		
Ipuku stage (1st weekend)	Beginning of the seclusion for the girl, now referred to as the *isigoyi*	Appointed *abangenisi* prepares the *isigoyi's* food
	***Iqude* celebration**	
	Friday Celebration for females Girl goes into seclusion at the house of her paternal grandmother	Father of *isigoyi* slaughters the *umhlonyani* goat
	Saturday Ritual cleansing of initiate Males join in the celebrations *Isigoyi* and her family receive gifts from guests	*Iqude* beast is slaughtered Mainly traditional food and traditional beer are served with meat
	Sunday Celebrations continue Highlight of the celebrations as more guests join to celebrate	Large variety of modern food prepared and served with meat Bread and red jam served to females to indicate closure of weekend's celebrations
Next four weeks	*Isigoyi* secluded in her mother's house	Mother and sisters of the *isigoyi* prepare her food
Completion of initiation	***Ukuhlubula* celebration** Girl comes out of seclusion and is welcomed back into the family as a young initiated woman	Small family celebration Modern food and traditional beer served
	***Ukuhlabisa* celebration** Young woman visits maternal grandparents Maternal ancestors are informed	Slaughter goat

6.5.1 Preparation phase

After the first menstruation the mother of the girl informs the father and the matter is discussed with the elders in the family to decide if the girl is ready to undergo the process of the *iqude.* Jansen van Vuuren (1992:380) explains that physical, psychological and cultural

aspects determine the readiness of the girl. Certain food restrictions are imposed on the girl after the first menstruation.

The mother of the girl starts with the preparation as soon as it is agreed that the girl should now attend *iqude*. She looks for two suitable girls to be the girl's *abangenisi* (instructors) during the *iqude*. According to Trollip (1991:154) these girls are carefully selected by the mothers and must already have undergone the *iqude*. Apart from their role as instructors the *abangenisi* are also responsible for the food preparation of the *isigoyi* (girl undergoing initiation) during the first four days of the girl's seclusion and to assist in the food preparation for the big celebration during the first weekend of the *iqude*.

Before the *iqude* begins, it is imperative that the paternal ancestors be informed that the girl *"… is now big and going through the process of iqude".* Therefore the preparation of the traditional beer begins during the week before the celebration. The beer is used to inform the ancestors that the girl is now "*grown-up"* and that she would be undergoing *iqude.* Jansen van Rensburg (1987:188) gives a similar account of the communication with the ancestors before the *iqude* commences.

6.5.2 Celebrations during *iqude*

There are three celebrations associated with the *iqude*. The first is the big celebration held during the first weekend of the *iqude*, and guests are invited to this important occasion in life of the girl and her family. The other two smaller celebrations are, one that marks the end of the seclusion period, called *umhlubulo,* and the other is the celebration hosted by the maternal grandparents thereafter, referred to by some as *ukuhlabisa*.

6.6 THE MEANING OF THE FOOD PRACTICES DURING THE *IQUDE*

From the discussions it emerged that the food practices employed during the female initiation rites, specifically those associated with restricting food, have become more relaxed in Mmotla.

6.6.1 The preparation phase

Some participants said that food restrictions were no longer enforced during the *iqude*, while others stated that certain food restrictions were in place once the girl started menstruating. It was mentioned that eggs, milk, fat, oil and a certain hard part of the intestines of a beast,

were disallowed prior to undergoing the process of *iqude*. The reason for the egg, fat and oil prohibition was related to the belief that these foods would awaken sexual desires in the girl and she was not allowed to participate in any sexual activities until after the initiation. The participants' concerns were illustrated as they gave the following reasons for these restrictions: *"… girls will lust after men"* and *"… you will have feelings for boys …".* In other studies (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:382; Trollip, 1991:156) similar reasons for these food restrictions were offered. Responses from the Ndebele group of Mmotla led to similar findings as reported on in the studies by Trollip (1991: 156) and Jansen van Rensburg (1987:190). It is still regarded as a disgrace if a girl fell pregnant before attending the *iqude.* Therefore some families continued to enforce these food restrictions before and during the rite of *iqude*.

No acceptable explanation for the milk restriction could be given, except that *"… it is just a rule that she should not eat it".* This again serves as to illustrate how some cultural beliefs are perpetuated and that some practices are deeply ingrained as part of the cultural customs. Often people do not know the reason for following a practice and simply accept it as the way things should be done and continue with the practice without questioning it. The symbolic interactionism assumption about society applies in this instance. The symbolic interactionism recognises that individuals and small groups are influenced by larger cultural and societal processes. This implies, according to LaRossa and Reitzes (1993:144), that people's behaviour is constrained by societal norms and values and hence they fit their own doings in some way or other, into the actions of others without questioning them.

Although various studies (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:394; Jansen van Rensburg, 1987:135; Landgraf, 1974:71; Fourie, 1921:140) refer to the restriction of milk during the first phase of the *iqude*, only Jansen van Rensburg (1987:135,138) explains it. One idea is that an unclean person is prohibited from consuming milk because this could cause harm to the cattle in the sense that cows in calf would abort. Another relates to the belief that, if a menstruating woman drinks milk, it would cause the cows to stop giving milk. This relates to the traditional belief of the cattle-owning tribes, such as the Nguni, that menstruating women were in a state of uncleanness and thus a "source of danger". It was believed that harm could be done by such women to the cattle in the form of misfortune or illness (Kohler, 1933:15).

The examples given concerning the continuation of the food restrictions portray the prominence and interplay of the idea system (as part of the socio-psychological environment) on the food practices of some members of this group, who still believe that food enhances or could cause adverse effects on humans and cattle.

6.6.2 The seclusion of the *isigoyi*

On the Friday of the first celebration the *isigoyi* (girl undergoing initiation) goes into seclusion and stays at the house of her paternal grandmother during this first weekend of her *iqude* celebrations. She is therefore not seen at this celebration and only the *abangenisi* (female instructor of the *isigoyi)* and some of her friends are initially allowed near her. When she has to move outside she is covered in the *umbhalo*-blanket (striped Ndebele blanket) and surrounded by her friends, and is not visible to anyone. The explanation for this practice could be found in the custom that unclean persons have to be secluded for a certain time period. A female could be in the state of uncleanness during menstruation, when undergoing the process of initiation and when giving birth or after the death her husband (Jansen van Rensburg, 1987:132; Landgraf, 1974:91; Van der Vliet, 1974:214).

The reason why the *abangenisi* are responsible for food preparation of the *isigoyi* during the initial stages of her seclusion is related to this state of uncleanness. The participants explained that the *isigoyi* is regarded as an infant in her new life phase and therefore her mother is not allowed to be involved in her food preparation during these first few days. Mothers of newborn babies were customarily not involved in food preparation directly after childbirth because of their unclean state after childbirth (Van der Vliet, 1974:214). The relationship between the mother and her daughter undergoing the *iqude* is symbolised through these practices related to the preparation of food. The *isigoyi* is regarded as an infant in her new life-phase and her mother is therefore associated with a woman who gave birth.

The mother is, however, allowed to be involved in the food preparation for her daughter after the *ipuku* stage. This is when the *isigoyi* is secluded in her mother's house for the four week period after the first weekend of the celebration that marked the beginning of the *iqude*. Traditionally the *isigoyi* was only allowed to eat *bogobe, morogo* and *dinawa* (cowpeas) and only salt was used to flavour food. Nowadays the *isigoyi* can eat practically any type of food she wishes and fat, oil and other flavourings are generously used in her food preparation. It was explained that some adaptations had to be made. The *iqude* is not only restricted to the winter months, as was the custom before. The result was that it was not possible to prepare some food items, such as certain legume dishes, that were previously closely associated with the *iqude*, throughout the year, due to the seasonal unavailability of certain indigenous ingredients such as *morogo* and cowpeas. Another reason for the adaptation related to the inability to produce these crops due to the natural environment of Mmotla as explained in Chapter 4 (see 4.3.1). Changes in food acceptability and preferences of the younger

generation due to acculturation and modernisation were other reasons given for the lifting of the food restrictions.

The girl remains in seclusion for four weeks, and during this period her mother and sisters are responsible for the preparation of her food (the *abangenisi* returned home after the first weekend). The *abangenisi* visit the *isigoyi* from time to time during the seclusion period and their task is *"… to give her the rules of being a woman".* Various sources (Trollip, 1991:154-155; Jansen van Rensburg, 1987:188; Landgraf, 1974:75; Fourie, 1921:140) indicate that the *isigoyi* receives instruction and, as was the case in these studies, the Mmotla participants were also reluctant to give more information on exactly what is taught. Both Jansen van Rensburg (1987:117) and Landgraf (1974:75), however, suggest that the instruction given relates to issues regarding women's relationships with men, especially with regard to *hlonipha*[28]*,* sexual relations and childbirth, although instruction on housekeeping and motherhood are also addressed. Turner (1967:7) similarly indicates that the purpose of the female initiation is to prepare a girl for marriage.

The meanings attached to the food practices associated with each of the three celebrations associated with the *iqude* are now discussed.

6.6.3 The first *iqude* celebration

This celebration is held during the first weekend when the *isigoyi* goes into seclusion. The celebrations start on Friday and continue to Sunday and officially mark the beginning of the *iqude* for a girl.

Young girls usually start the proceedings by singing and requesting the goat that has to be slaughtered as part of the rituals associated with the celebration on Friday. This celebration is exclusively for females and even girls who have not undergone the *iqude* are allowed to attend the celebration on Friday when the *umhlonyani* goat is slaughtered. The festivities and singing continue throughout the night and the meat from the slaughtered goat is prepared and served to the guests, followed by tea and *vetkoekies* (fat cakes) later in the evening.

The significance of slaughtering this *umhlonyani* goat was emphasised by phrases such as:

"Thank you that you have grown up and went to initiation, ...".

[28] *Hlonipha* means showing respect towards someone or to treat someone respectfully (Landgraf, 1974:81; Fourie, 1921:164).

" It is tradition to slaughter a goat, it is compulsory".

" It will be a mistake if it is not done".

" … but there must be a goat, if there is not a goat, something terrible can happen to the girl, maybe she cannot have children, and then you find that there was a mistake, they didn't slaughter a goat".

The reasons given why the *umhlonyani* goat is slaughtered are closely related to the ideology and specifically the belief system of this group. During the slaughtering process the ancestors of the girl are informed that the girl is undergoing the rite of initiation. A similar account of this part of the procedures is also described by Jansen van Vuuren (1992:395). This is an important procedure, whereby it is ensured that the ancestors would not negatively influence the fertility of the girl or cause the girl to bear disabled children. This relates to the belief that this act expresses respect and recognition of the ancestors. In doing so the ancestors are kept happy and satisfied and this ensures a prosperous and good life for the descendants of the ancestors. It was emphasised that to keep the ancestors satisfied, customs have to be followed. If these are observed, it directly contributes to the happiness and satisfaction of the ancestors who would then ensure a prosperous future for the girl, of which the most important is related to her fertility. Jansen van Rensburg (1987:189) also mentions the offering made to the ancestors with the request to ensure the girl's fertility.

The slaughtered goat signifies that the ancestors were informed and that the ritual was performed to ensure her fertility, and simultaneously prevent the wrath of the ancestors that could result if this was not done. Collective values are portrayed through the slaughtered goat and the high value that is placed on fertility and can be linked to the belief system of the group. Some participants provided an additional explanation as to why a goat is slaughtered. They said that to slaughter the goat is a sign that the parents and grandparents of the girl had reached consensus that she was no longer a child, but was now becoming a woman and the goat therefore signified this agreement.. Both Jansen van Vuuren (1992:380) and Fourie (1921:139-140) too mention certain physical, psychological and cultural criteria that have to be met before a person is allowed to undergo intitiation. Yet another explanation given was that the goat is slaughtered for the girl to symbolise her good behaviour for not being sexually active and falling pregnant before undergoing the *iqude* as described (see 6.6.1). The goat thus also serves here as a code that she may now engage in sexual relationships and would be allowed to marry, if she wishes to do so, after the initiation, and the following explanations were given:

"It is to show now she can be married, to say thank you that she didn't sleep around with boys".

"… then it is now the time, if you want to be married".

In this regard Jansen van Rensburg (1987:190) similarly refers to the permission that is granted to the *isigoyi* to have boyfriends and to get married after the *iqude*.

The celebration continues on Saturday, and *amacebelengwana* (small steamed breads) are served together with the rest of the goat meat for breakfast on Saturday. During Saturday morning the *isigoyi*, accompanied by her a*bangenisi* and friends, traditionally went to the river to wash. Various sources refer to this ritual cleansing of the *isigoyi* on Saturday morning (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:395; Jansen van Rensburg, 1987: 131-136; Fourie, 1921:140). Because there is no river near the Mmotla village, water and a basin to wash in is placed in the *veld* near the girl's home where she is then able to wash. Although the participants of this study were unable to give reasons why the girl had to wash, this ritual of washing with water probably relates to the removal of her uncleanness as explained by Jansen van Rensburg (1987:134).

The girl and her *abangenisi* would then wait there in the *veld* until her father is ready to slaughter the beast for her *iqude* celebration. It could take some time before they are called back home and therefore food is taken along. This usually consists of the left-over goat meat from the previous day and *amacebelengwana* (small steamed breads). Before the beast could be slaughtered all the goat meat **had to** be consumed. Therefore, any remaining goat meat had to be eaten by the older women. The goat was slaughtered for the *isigoyi* at the women's celebration and therefore the meat should be finished before the *iqude*-beast was slaughtered and the males joined in. No reason could be given for this rule.

Upon their return from the river the father of the *isigoyi* slaughters the beast for her *iqude* celebration and the presents from her family, friends and neighbours are handed over to her family. The handing over of the presents could take place on the Sunday afternoon according to Jansen van Vuuren's observations. A detailed description of this part of the celebrations is given in his study (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992: 399-404).

The food prepared for Saturday's festivities for the invited and uninvited guests, who drop by during the day, was described as mainly traditional. According to the older participants certain traditional dishes are closely associated with the *iqude* celebrations and should, where practically possible, be prepared for Saturday's festivities. These include meat from

the slaughtered beast, *tlhabalala* (traditional beer), *ting mabele*, *idombolo*, *bogobe, isidudu* and *irhayi*. It seemed as though the food prepared for the Saturday of the *iqude* complements the traditional customs and rituals that are performed. A possible explanation for mainly serving traditional food relates to the fact that the ancestors are honoured during this part of the celebration through the slaughter of the *iqude* beast for the girl. As explained under the home-coming celebrations after the *ingoma* (see 6.3.6), only traditional food is served when communication with the ancestors takes place. This also serves as evidence to the ancestors that traditions are honoured even with regard to the type of food that is served. It further emphasises that traditions are still followed and above all *"… shows to the ancestors that they still remember them".* The powerful influence of the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments is again evident.

Certain parts of the slaughtered beast are allocated to specific persons. These people all have a close association with the *isigoyi,* and the part handed to each represents either their relationship with her, or their position within her kinship group. The older women are served meat from the rib cage of the beast and the two *abangenisi* receive a front leg that they share. The maternal grandmother of the girl receives the *isifunzi* (see Figure 6.1) as interpreted under the home-coming celebrations of the *amasokana* (see 6.3.6) this symbolises that the maternal grandmother is the backbone of the family who carried and comforted her granddaughter on her back. It also symbolises the close relationship of the grandmother and her granddaughter. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:397-398) includes a brief description of the slaughter and division of the meat of the beast. According to his observations the back section was given to the maternal uncle of the *isigoyi*. The Mmotla participants explained that this is the procedure if the maternal grandmother could not be present at the celebrations. The uncle is then responsible for taking this section of the meat to her.

According to symbolic interactionism perspective, it is through social interaction that individuals work out the details of their social structure (Blumer 1969:6-7). Through the sharing of the meat, kinship and family ties are confirmed and strengthened thus simultaneously portraying aspects of their recognition of relationships and social organisation. During the interaction resulting from the allocation of certain parts of the *iqude* beast to specific persons close to the *isigoyi* her relationship with them and her position in the social structure of the group is confirmed.

The joyous celebrations continue on Sunday, and more guests join to participate in the feast which is considered the highlight of the weekend's celebrations. The type of food that is served on Sunday includes, apart from traditional dishes, a large variety and quantity of

modern dishes. The preparation of these modern dishes is often made possible through the help of the support group to which the mother of the *isigoyi* belongs. Breakfast consists of *bogobe* and meat, while the lunch typically includes dishes associated with the Sunday midday meal as described in Chapter 5 (see 5.3.2.2), with the exception, that the variety of dishes would be larger. The importance and special attention given to the food served on Sunday of the *iqude* is reflected in the following quotations:

"Sunday they will cook extra [food such as rice, salads, dessert]*, this will depend on the available money".*

"On Sunday everyone will be there. On Sunday the celebration is special – the celebration is over the whole weekend and the cake and dessert will only be [served] *on Sunday".*

"Ja, even now they got a lot of modern food, but in the olden days it was mealies [maize]*, the cow* [beast] *and the goat and jam, but now – modern food, rice and everything on Sunday".*

The importance of the celebrations on Sunday and the special food prepared for lunch on Sunday was also briefly referred to in other studies (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992: 385, 399; Trollip, 1991:155). Both studies give descriptions of Western-oriented menus. The status and prestige value attached to being a generous host is often measured in the ability to serve a large variety of modern food and much emphasis is placed on these dishes. The nature of the food provided often confirms the social group to which the initiate's family belongs, or even may aspire to belong.

An important "dish" closely associated with the *iqude* celebration is the bread and jam served on Sunday afternoon after lunch. It has become an accepted symbol of this event in recent times and tins of red jam[29] are collected before the *iqude*. When this is served on the Sunday afternoon it is a sign that the weekend's celebration was drawing to a close. The older participants remarked that this had become a special treat at the *iqude* celebrations when they were young. However, it was not served then in such large quantities as it was a scarce and expensive commodity. The older women expect this treat to be served and, in wealthy families, each female guest with a daughter who has already gone through the *iqude*, receives a tin of red jam at the end of the celebrations as a departure gift to take home. It was mentioned that it was important to serve this, because," … *there must be bread and jam, because jam is special. Ja, jam is very special in the Ndebele tradition".* The importance of serving bread and jam on the Sunday afternoon has even become a yardstick to measure

[29] Red jam refers to mixed fruit jam available in the retail in 450g and 900g tins.

how enjoyable the food was. It was aptly explained in Afrikaans by one informant that when jam is not served at the party, it was not regarded as a nice party.

" … as hy nie jam het nie, daardie 'party' van jou was nie lekker nie".

[30] *"… if there is not jam, that party of yours was not enjoyable".*

Some participants had a different version about the serving of the jam. According to them the family of the girl had to collect large quantities of tins of jam (several hundreds were mentioned) before the *iqude* celebrations. This information differs slightly from Jansen van Vuuren's (1992: 386), who observed the practice of giving guests tins of jam and loaves of bread to the guests on their departure after the weekend's celebrations. The number of tins of jam recorded by Jansen van Vuuren (1992: 385) was 240. It seemed as if a prestige value is also attached to the ability to hand these tins of jam and bread to the guests on departure (Jansen van Vuuren, 1992:400-401). It was explained that the tins of jam were given to the guests as compensation for the gifts and money received from them.

The presentation of bread and jam to each of the female guests who attended the celebrations symbolises the host's gratitude to them for having attended the celebration, rendering support and giving gifts to the family of the initiate. At the same time the gesture can be regarded as a status symbol of hosts who are in a position to extend their hospitality to each guest by giving them this special treat to take home. The sharing of food from the celebration thus actually extends the *iqude* festivities. The bread and jam has therefore become a means to evaluate the celebration and the hospitality of the hosts. Also represented here is the aspect of female unity – the participants in this study emphasised that the tin of jam was only handed to those women who already had an initiated daughter. This ties in with Jansen van Vuuren's (1992:408) interpretation that both the *ingoma* and *iqude* celebrations are opportunities to strengthen kinship ties and to form or solidify social relationships with neighbours and friends.

Underlying forces from both the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are clearly instrumental in directing not only the *iqude* customs and traditions, but also the nature of the celebrations and their characteristic food practices as experienced on the first weekend. These are reflected in the importance attached to the slaughter of the *umhlonyani* goat and the practice of informing the ancestors, as well as nurturing kinship, family and other social relationships.

[30] Quotation translated directly from Afrikaans.

6.6.4 Celebrations at the end of *iqude*

The second celebration associated with the *iqude,* is the small celebration that marks the end of the four-week seclusion period and the *"coming out of the girl".* This smaller celebration, called *umhlubulo* does not receive the same attention when compared to the first. The reason for this is limited funds and only a small celebration is held to mark this occasion. The celebration takes place after the girl has performed the ritual cleansing of washing. She is then dressed in the traditional attire of a young initiated woman. Depending on the money available, a beast, goat or chicken(s) is slaughtered or meat is purchased and mainly modern food is prepared. The participants mentioned that traditional beer is always prepared for this occasion. Jansen van Vuuren (1992:405) gives a similar description of this second celebration to mark the end of the *iqude.* He, however, indicates that a goat is slaughtered in honour of the ancestors, whereas the Mmotla participants made no mention of the fact that the animal was slaughtered to communicate with or inform the ancestors.

Celebration at the maternal grandparents At the end of the festivities the girl has to visit her maternal grandparents, to inform them that she is now a young woman and that the process of the *iqude* has been completed. Reasons for this visit and the small celebration called *ukuhlabisa* (to slaughter),were similar to those explained for the males (see 6.3.8). During this important visit to the maternal grandparents, the maternal ancestors have to be informed that the grandchild has undergone the process of *iqude* and is now a grown woman. The ancestors want to know what has happened to the child, therefore *"… they must know".* If the maternal grandparents cannot slaughter a goat (due to a lack of funds), at the time the girl comes out of initiation, it has to be done at a later stage, but they **must** do it. It was explained that the goat has to be slaughtered for the maternal ancestors to enable them *"… to witness and agree with the family that the girl has grown up".* If this goat is not slaughtered the ancestors would be unhappy, because they were not notified. Again ideological aspects are reflected through the beliefs expressed during this celebration. The importance attached to it was expressed by the following phrase: *"… it will be a mistake if it is not done".*

Apart from being used to inform the ancestors, the goat also symbolises gratitude. The maternal grandparents slaughter the goat to thank their daughter and the family of the father of the granddaughter that they adhered to the traditional customs and initiated her in an appropriate manner. This is explained in the following quotations:

"Then the symbol of slaughtering the goat on the side of the grandparents of the child, is to give thanks to the child, and to the family that they have brought up the child very well [according to traditional customs]*".*

"They are thanked that they have brought up the child very well [according to traditional customs]*, and that the child is now grown-up and can be married".*

The importance and values attached to the traditional rites and customs are also expressed here. The maternal grandparents are grateful and proud that the customs of the group were taught to their grandchild and that the traditions were honoured. Conveyed here are the notions that not only is the adherence to traditions and customs important to this group, but also the value attached to maintaining their cultural identity through the continuation of the process. This is similar to the conclusion made by Jansen van Vuuren (1992:409-411) regarding the Ndebele's cultural identity.

In Table 6.4 the procedures followed during the Ndebele female initiation is compared to those of the North Sotho and Tsonga.

TABLE 6.4: COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT FEMALE INITIATION GROUPS IN MMOTLA

	NDEBELE	NORTH SOTHO	TSONGA
Time of year	July or December school holidays	June-August	July or December school holidays
Duration	One month	One month	1-3 months
Age	After first menstruation	Before menarg starts	After first menstruation
Group or individually	Goes on her own	Attends in group or alone	Goes on her own
Place	At home	At chief's house	At home
Preparation	Mother chooses two a*bangenisi*	None mentioned	A "boyfriend" is chosen Dish containing maize-meal, egg and seeds sent to boy's family
Food restrictions	Eggs, milk, fat and oil (for some)	No food restrictions	No food restrictions
Food preparation	*Abangenisi* prepares food during first weekend for *isigoyi* Thereafter mother and/or sisters prepares her food	Food prepared by *mogokane* (instructor of initiate)	*Motapi* is chosen to cook and care for the girl
Type of food	Previously only *bogobe, dinawa* and *morogo* Currently anything except those restricted	No restrictions	Special dish "*semphemphe*" prepared on first day
Celebrations	Three celebrations	Only one big celebration to mark the end of the rite	Two celebrations towards the end of the rite
Time of celebrations	***Iqude* celebration during first weekend of seclusion** *Friday* – goat slaughtered *Saturday* – beast slaughtered and traditional dishes prepared *Sunday* – special celebration modern food and some traditional served. Bread and red jam to signal the end of the celebration **Second celebration** Celebration at end of seclusion period Beer prepared during 4th week Friday ritual cleansing Dresses in traditional attire Small celebration depends on available money Chicken or goat is slaughtered or meat is purchased If money is available a beast is slaughtered	**Single celebration at end of rite** Beast is slaughtered at the chief's house *Bogobe,* meat and traditional beer is served Nowadays modern food also included	***Bokoro* celebration** Celebration, before the girl completes initiation The chosen boyfriend's family hands over a whole set of new clothes for the girl to her family A chicken is slaughtered Traditional beer is served together with *bogobe* and tea **Second celebration** The last celebration takes place on the last weekend and the main celebration called *mojelejele* is on Saturday On Friday the girl is taken to a secret hiding place in the *veld* A small celebration called the *kerekere* is celebrated in the *veld* Young woman is smeared with pig fat and red oxide, and only returns home the Saturday evening
Visit to maternal grandparents	Important last part of celebrations Grandparents will slaughter a goat or beast to inform the maternal ancestors that the girl is now grown-up and attended the *iqude*	Not done	Not done

Again the similarities and differences in the procedures followed by the Ndebele and the other two groups are compared. The time when the initiation takes place varies. The North Sotho group indicated that the process takes place during the winter months, whereas the Ndebele and Tsonga are initiated during the longer July or December school holidays. The Ndebele and Tsonga girls go through the process individually while the North Sotho female

initiation takes place in a group at the homestead of the chief's wife. Unlike the Ndebele there are no food restrictions enforced on the North Sotho and Tsonga girls before and during the process. It was, however, revealed that the Tsonga prepare a special dish for the initiate on the first day called *semphemphe,* that is similar to the pumpkin and maize-meal dish, *isijeza,* served to the Ndebele males during the first days of their seclusion. The North Sotho have only one celebration associated with the female initiation, namely that to mark the end of the process, whereas the Ndebele and Tsonga celebrate on two occasions. The Ndebele place more emphasis on the celebration to mark the beginning of the process, followed by a smaller celebration at the end to celebrate the coming-out of the girl. The Tsonga have two celebrations to mark the end of the process, namely one where the chosen boyfriend's family presents the set of new clothes to the family of the girl and the other one during the last weekend when the girl has completed the process. Only the Ndebele group pays a visit to the maternal grandparents for a celebration to honour the maternal ancestors.

The traditional food practices during the *iqude* have become more relaxed and even the food restrictions have been adapted, or are not enforced as strictly as before. Even though a high premium is placed on adhering to traditional customs, traditional food practices were only adhered to when ancestral veneration took place. The values of the Ndebele group are portrayed through these practices. On the one hand, status and prestige are reflected through the hosting of the celebration, and in offering the variety and quantity of modern food to the guests. On the other hand, the importance of honouring and adhering to cultural traditions is most striking through the practice of preparing and serving traditional food when the ancestral veneration takes place. Again, the importance of the juxtaposition of the traditional and modern in their lives is clearly evident. Both facets of their real life world are continuously accommodated and accepted, and fitting adjustments have been made.

6.7 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The most salient finding that emerged was that the Ndebele group, regarded as one of the most conservative South African cultural groups, continues to practise most of the traditional customs related to male and female initiation rites when compared to other population groups. The male initiation process closely resembles that described nearly a century ago by Fourie (1921). This phenomenon endorses the value this group attaches to preserving traditional customs, a feature also reflected in the food practices followed during the various phases of the initiation process. How forces from both the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments interplay and effect food practices, and specifically the role of food as symbol of material culture, and how it is used in the male initiation process, is of

significance. Moreover, the role of food as material culture in the perpetuation of traditional customs is particularly noteworthy. During the entire male initiation process the type of food prepared, including how and by whom it is prepared, serves as being salient to traditional codes of communication, and to signify and symbolise aspects of the beliefs, values, world view and the social organisation of the Ndebele. The interrelatedness of the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments in creating meaning amongst members of this group is thus illustrated through their food practices.

That the eating of certain foods is prohibited, and the way in which those that are allowed to be eaten are prepared during the pre-preparation and seclusion phases, are examples of measures taken in the belief that it will not only protect the *abasegwabo* from harm, but also strengthen and equip them to physically endure the demands of the process. Through the enforcement of these protective measures important features of the social organisation come to the fore simultaneously to denote cultural identity. Through the enforcement of these food preparation rules by senior males, the social control they exercise over the *abasegwabo* and in the community is signified, as is the strong paternalistic nature of *ingoma*.

The type and consistency of the food prepared during the seclusion phase not only characterises the stages of this phase, but is also symbolic of the different “life stages” the *abakhethwa* go through up to the time when they are regarded as adult males and ready to be re-introduced into the community as such. Again food is used during this phase not only to portray symbolic meaning, but it also simultaneously reflects some of the beliefs and values and world views of those participating in the event.

The pivotal role of ancestral veneration in the adherence to traditional food practices, during certain stages in the initiation procedures and celebrations is significant. During the celebrations at the specific time when communication with the ancestors takes place, it is regarded as compulsory to serve traditional food. It is specifically stipulated that traditional beer, the meat from a sacrificial slaughtered animal and other traditional dishes be served.

Conversely, the food practices associated with female initiation seem to have become more relaxed, in the sense that food restrictions were not as rigid or not enforced at all. Even though the food practices associated with female initiation were regarded as being more lenient than before, traditional food practices, however, continued to be closely adhered to, when ancestral rituals were performed as part of the process. The effects of acculturation and modernisation were more implicit in the food practices and celebrations associated with the Ndebele female initiation, in contrast to the male initiation where the senior males enforced and regulated the continuation of the traditional food practices (see 6.5). The

change in food preparation practices was ascribed specifically to the food preferences and food tastes of the younger generation, which were changing due to modernisation, urbanisation and acculturation. Apart from modernisation and acculturation, the changing food practices were also attributed to changes in the natural environment in that certain indigenous food items were no longer available. Compared to the Ndebele group, the initiation process and associated food practices of the other cultural groups were not as involved and have been adapted to suit the people's current way of life.

The next chapter deals with the findings associated with the other important rite of passage, namely, marriage. As the traditional and modern wedding are both celebrated by most people living in Mmotla, the main events and associated food practices and their meanings for both wedding formats are given. Other special occasions that have gained popularity, such as birthday celebrations and a number of other smaller celebrations are included in the discussion on modern special occasions.

TERMINOLOGY LIST

abakhethwa	Plural for initiates during the seclusion phase of the male Ndebele initiation
abangenisi	Chosen female instructor for the girl undergoing the *iqude*
abarhugi	Instructor during the seclusion phase of the male Ndebele initiation
abasegwabo	Plural for Ndebele boys in the preparation phase for initiation
amacebelengwana	Small steamed breads (plural). See Addendum C
amakuke	IsiNdebele for *dikuku*
amahlubulo celebration	Celebration to mark the end of the seclusion phase of the *iqude*
amasokana	Plural for initiated Ndebele male
amathunga	Containers to carry food from the household to the initiate
badikana	North Sotho for initiate
bagwera	North Sotho boy preparing for initiation
bogobe/umratha	Stiff maize-meal porridge
dikuku/amakuke	Popular biscuit-type baked product. See Addendum D
dinawa	Cowpeas
hlonipha	*Hlonipha* means showing respect towards someone or to treat someone respectfully
idombolo	Steamed bread
Irhayi	Dish prepared from dried maize and cowpeas. See Addendum C
ingoma	Ndebele male initiation
ipuku	Seclusion phase of the Ndebele female undergoing initiation
iqude	Ndebele female initiation
igwabo	Celebrations attended by the mothers of the Ndebele initiates during the last (re-introduction) phase of the *ingoma*
isidudu	Soft maize-meal porridge prepared from the discarded water during the beer brewing process. See Addendum C
isifunzi	Sirloin section of the beef carcass. See Figure 6.1
isigoyi	Ndebele girl undergoing initiation
isijeza	Soft pumpkin and maize-meal porridge. See Addendum C
isithwalelo	Celebration during the last week of the seclusion phase of the Ndebele male initiation
isokana	Singular for initiated Ndebele male
icebelengwana	Small steamed bread (singular)
lefetlho	Stirring stick used in the preparation of stiff maize-meal porridge
leso	Wooden spoon used in the preparation of stiff maize-meal porridge
lobolo	Bridal wealth
umratha	isiNdebele for stiff maise-meal porridge.
modoto	Appointed male who supervises the Ndebele boys during the preparation phase of the male initiation
morogo /umrorho	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables
semphemphe	Tsonga name for soft pumpkin and maize-meal porridge. See also *isijeza* in Addendum C
tihove	Popular dish prepared from samp, jugo beans and peanuts. See Addendum C
ting mabele	Soft fermented sorghum porridge
tlhabalala	Ndebele for traditional sorghum beer
ukuhlabisa(to slaughter) celebration	Celebration held by maternal grandparents after completion of the *iqude*
umbhalo blanket	Striped Ndebele blanket
umdoko	IsiNdebele for soft porridge
umhlonyani goat	Goat slaughtered for the Ndebele girl undergoing the *iqude* on the first Friday of the *iqude* to ensure her future well-being and fertility
umkhwetha	Name for initiate during the seclusion phase of the male Ndebele initiation
umsipha meat	Meat containing large quantities of connective tissue
umthombo	Sorghum grains
umsegwabo	Singular for Ndebele boy in the preparation phase for initiation
veld	Field
vetkoek	Doughnut-like nuts of bread dough deep-fried in hot oil until golden-brown. See Addendum D

CHAPTER 7

FOOD PRACTICES AND THEIR MEANINGS AT WEDDINGS AND OTHER SPECIAL OCCASIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this second chapter on the findings related to food practices on special occasions, another important celebration in a person's life, namely marriage, is described. Marriage rituals of black South Africans have undergone considerable change over the past 150 years (Wilson, 1972:192) and not only have new ritual characteristics emerged, but alongside these the associated food practices have also changed and developed due to acculturation, the influence of Christianity and modernisation. It has become common practice in black South African communities to have two weddings.

The second wedding, popularly referred to as a *"modern*" or "*white*" wedding is regarded as a prestigious occasion. It is called a white wedding because the bride wears a white gown. To have a modern or "*white wedding"* is the choice of the bride and the groom, and this second wedding only takes place after the traditional wedding and after the full amount for the *lobolo* has been delivered. It was emphasised that the traditional wedding procedures have to precede this wedding, because the traditional wedding is regarded as "…*the core wedding*" and *"… you can't just go to the white wedding."* Although the modern "*white wedding*" has become popular among the younger generation, the traditional wedding is still the norm in the Mmotla community, and people are first married according to traditional procedures and only afterwards does the white wedding follow, if they have the financial resources.

It emerged that the Ndebele group continued to follow their intricate traditional wedding procedures prior to the modern wedding, with minor adjustments. This was mainly determined by how strong the influence of the church to which they belonged was. Although the procedures could differ slightly from family to family, the main events in the traditional Ndebele wedding and the associated procedures were still binding. The traditional Ndebele wedding procedures are described in order to contextualise the associated food practices and the meanings attached to them.

This is followed by a description of the modern wedding and other celebrations that have gained popularity such as birthdays and New Year's celebrations and a few others that could be linked to either a particular stage of life or celebrated as cyclical events are included. These were classified by the participants as modern celebrations and have gained considerable popularity in recent times. The associated food practices of these celebrations all have a similar format and are comparable to the Sunday midday meal.

7.2 THE TRADITIONAL NDEBELE WEDDING AND THE MEANINGS OF THE FOOD PRACTICES

In Figure 7.1 the main events of the traditional Ndebele wedding are summarised. This includes the *lobolo* (bridal wealth) negotiations and first years of marriage with which a number of food-related practices are associated. However, food practices are not part of the *lobolo* negotiations that take place in preparation for the marriage. In this section only the main events in which food practices form an integral part of the wedding procedures are described, from the time of the *isimanje* to after the first years of marriage when the strictest *hlonipha*[31] rules are lifted.

[31] *Hlonipha* means showing respect to someone or treating someone respectfully (Landgraf, 1974:81; Fourie, 1921:164). After her marriage, the young bride has to follow the strict *hlonipha* rules. In practice, the *hlonipha* refers to the respect shown by the bride towards her in-laws and specifically to her father-in-law. In showing respect towards the father-in-law, the bride has to avoid him. She may not look at him, speak to him directly or even to mention his name. Above all her upper body (breasts and back) has to be covered.

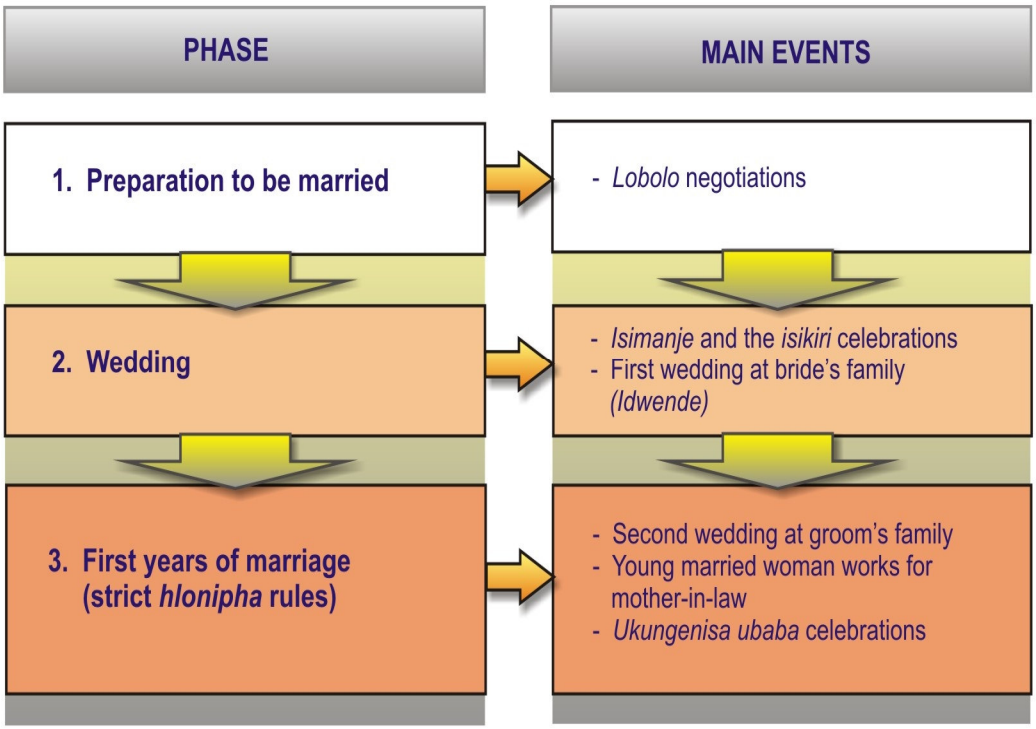

FIGURE 7.1: FLOW DIAGRAM OF THE MAIN EVENTS IN THE TRADITIONAL NDEBELE WEDDING

The influence of powerful forces from within the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments on the food practices are again prominent, as observed in the initiation rites (Chapter 6). Food plays an important symbolic role throughout the different stages of the wedding celebrations. Where applicable, influences from the two environments, as it manifest during the different stages of the wedding procedures, are discussed and interpreted.

7.2.1 The *isimanje*

The *isimanje* refers to the couple of days that the bride spends at the home of the bridegroom in preparation for her marriage into his family. The *isimanje* only takes place once the groom's family have the *lobolo* ready. In the week before the full delivery of the *lobolo* is made, the groom *"steals the bride"* and takes her to his parents' home for the *isimanje.* This usually happens on the Wednesday at dusk.

The bride is then secluded inside a specially prepared part of the house of her future in-laws screened off with *umseme* (woven grass mats) that are strung together to form an enclosure for her. During her stay, certain procedures would take place on specific days. On the first

morning after the bride arrives at her future in-laws' house, a messenger from the groom's family, usually an uncle, is sent to the bride's family to inform them that she is with them. When the parents of the bride raise no objections to her getting married, they reach the stage where they grant their final consent to the marriage to the uncle of the groom. Only then can the groom's family proceed with the *isimanje.* When the uncle returns from the bride's home and the news that her parents have agreed to the marriage, she is first taken to the river to wash as part of the ritual cleansing. Thereafter the ancestors of the groom's family would be informed that the marriage was going to take place.

It is important that the bride be properly covered with a blanket during the *isimanje* to ensure that nobody sees her face as a sign of respect towards her future in-laws. It was explained: "*You are going to hide with the blanket, they must not see you. So if you hide yourself it means that you respect them"*. According to Fourie (1921:111), the covering of the bride's face is the beginning of the *hlonipha* practice for the bride.

On the second day of the *isimanje* (on the Thursday) the older women from the groom's family come and *"… give the Makoti the rules".* At this point they inform her of the rules that apply to the family into which she is marrying. These rules concern household chores and the specific traditions and customs of the groom's family, including the respect she has to show to the kith and kin of her future in-laws.

During the *isimanje* forces from both socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are present in the food practices and often reflect the social relationships of the bride and her future in-laws. The first social interaction where food comes into play is during the first stage of the *isimanje,* after the bride has arrived at the home of her future in-laws. A first she is not supposed to do anything there, unless permission to do so is given, and this even applies to eating. She would therefore initially not eat anything and only eat after permission to do so is granted to her. Offering food to her, together with a sum of money, serves as a sign that she is now allowed to eat. The participants could not give an explanation as to why she is not allowed to eat anything unless money is given, and only stated simply that *"… it is tradition, she must not eat it."*

A possible explanation could perhaps relate to the Zulu custom of the bride paying a betrothal visit to her future husband's homestead. Kohler (1933: 49) explains that the Zulu bride and her companions were not allowed to consume any food there until a goat, called the *"indlakudla*", had been slaughtered for them. This is a sign that they were given permission to consume food at this homestead and the meat of the goat was prepared for them. Kohler (1933: 49) further indicates that the eating of *amasi* was strictly taboo at the

homesteads of strangers, even though the bride was marrying into this family. Jones (1963:75) gives a similar explanation for the Swazi, who are only allowed to eat *amasi* at the home of people belonging to their own clan and may not consume *amasi* at the home of the family into which they are marrying.

It was customary to hand money to the bride as a sign that she could consume the food offered. This custom has been in practice for some time. An elderly participant, who had been married for over 50 years, also indicated that, at the time of her first visit to her in-laws, a sum of money was given to her for this purpose. The meaning attached to the refusal to eat any food by the bride has symbolic meaning and could relate to the *hlonipha*. Out of respect for her future in-laws she refrains from eating anything until a sign from them is received, that indicates that they accept her as a guest. Her refusal to eat any food until she receives money should not be interpreted as a sign of hostility or rejection of their hospitality or kindness, as would be the case under other circumstances or in other cultures when a guest refuses the food offered, as explained by Bryant *et al*. (2003:191).

The *nomyezani* (a future sister-in-law, usually the wife of the brother older than the groom) is responsible for taking care of the bride and cooking for her during the *isimanje*. She prepares special tasty dishes for the bride similar to what normally would be prepared for important guests, to express the hospitality and goodwill of the groom's family. They want to impress the bride, and ordinary food would therefore not be prepared. This was made clear by statements such as:

"… they don't cook umrorho [indigenous green leafy vegetables]*, because they want to show you that they like you".*

"They cook anything but not umrorho".

"… [no] it is just to show that they like you, they don't give you umrorho".

Therefore dishes such as *isidudu* with jam or sugar is served to her, or when *bogobe* is served for breakfast, sugar is added. *Isidudu* is regarded as a special dish that is served to family members or the in-laws when they are visiting. Other tasty treats included tea and *vetkoek* or bread. Some of the older participants confirmed that *"…the bride had to be treated nicely …"*, therefore special food was served to her.

It was important to make a good impression on guests and demonstrate hospitality through the serving of special foods and treats, as illustrated here. Emphasis was placed on

preparing and serving speciality dishes and those that were regarded as special treats. Therefore, low status food such as, for example, *umrorho* would not be considered for guests. Indigenous wild vegetables are regarded as having a low status as opposed to the cultivated, more expensive vegetables available in the retail trade and regarded as the only ones appropriate to serve to guests. Jones (1963:70) similarly describes that the Swazi "scorned" wild vegetables and "lauded" what she described as "foreign" vegetables such as potatoes, carrots and cabbage. In a recent publication Jansen van Rensburg *et al*. (2007) confirm that this perception with regard to indigenous vegetables continues to exist in South Africa even today.

The cultural perspective spells out that collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms (Kaiser, 1997:49). In other words, certain material artefacts represent shared values within a culture. In this chapter this is demonstrated through how food as a cultural or/and material good is used during the i*simanje*. The collective value of showing respect to her future in-laws is symbolised in the refusal of the bride to eat any of the food offered before permission is granted to do so. Once this has been done, she is accepted as a guest. Moreover, the type of food and how it is prepared signifies that she is honoured as a guest through the speciality dishes prepared for her. These gestures reflect not only the hospitality and goodwill of the future in-laws but also the collective values of how to treat a guest.

Symbolic interactionism suggests that individuals work out the details of social structure through their social interaction in everyday situations (Blumer, 1969:6-7). How the bride and her future in-laws act toward each other during the *isimanje* represents the social structure as it prevails at this stage of their relationship. Through her initial refusal to eat, she not only shows respect but acknowledges her own social position, namely that of a stranger. The act of giving her money is a sign that she may eat and is accepted as a guest. Her position as an honoured guest is further emphasised through the type of food served to her.

7.2.2 The *isikiri* celebration

The *isikiri* as the last stage of the *isimanje* takes place on the Friday evening. Married couples, who are the friends and family of the groom, come to spend the evening with the bride and the groom. This is a significant occasion for the bride, as she becomes a married woman during the night of the *isikiri* celebration. On this occasion, a goat has to be slaughtered in her honour to mark her passage from girlhood to being a married woman. It was emphasised by various participants that it is of the utmost importance that *"… the goat must be there".* In this regard, Van Warmelo (1930:39) refers to what he calls the *isikaria*

goat as "that meat killed for the bride." Only after the goat is slaughtered for her, is the groom's family entitled to dress her in the bridal attire prepared for her.

This goat is cooked inside the *imiseme* hut and the bride and groom serve each other from the *amanganga* (breast section) or brisket as indicated in the purple part of Figure 7.2 below. The bride also has to sip traditional beer during the night after she has eaten goat meat and *bogobe.* On this occasion, other prepared foods include traditional beer, *ting mabele, isidudu*, and *bogobe.* According to the participants, the other married couples give the bride and groom sex education, and leave them afterwards. Early the next morning, before anyone else wakes up, the groom has to burn the bones of the goat.

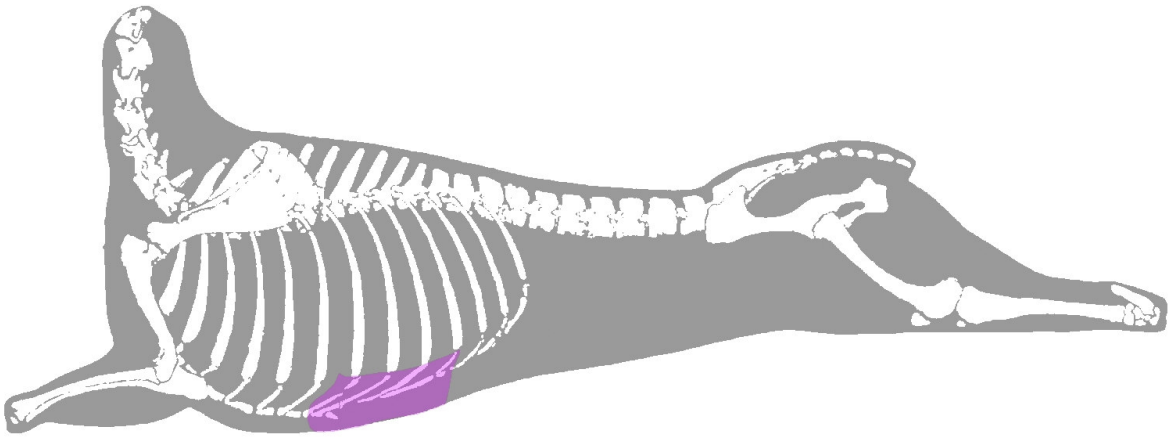

FIGURE 7.2: BREAST SECTION OF THE *ISIKIRI* GOAT

The *isikiri* celebration as mentioned is a significant celebration for the bride. Her change in status from being a young woman to a married woman is symbolised by the goat meat and traditional beer she consumes. The importance of the *isikiri* goat was emphasised by various participants. The slaughtered goat seemed to have various meanings. The consumption of the *amanganga* by the bride and groom symbolises, according to some, the unity of marriage, and this was supported by statements such as:

"… it stands for they are going to be united in marriage".

"… the reason why they eat the breast part is they bind themselves, - somewhere in the Bible it stands that you are the bones of my bones and the rib" (referring to the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam - Genesis 2:23)

"… to bind themselves "

This ties in with the symbolic interactionism point of view that humans react to things on the basis of the meanings that they have for them, as explained by Blumer (1969:2-3). In this process of interaction, symbols define and represent meanings on the basis of how individuals understand and respond to them (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:7). The obvious meaning is that through the act of eating together from the rib section of the goat, unity is represented, but more specifically the unity in marriage.

Another interpretation given is that it shows that the bride is welcome in the family of the groom and some participants referred to the *isikiri* goat as:

"… it is just a symbol that she is welcome at the in-laws".

The *isikiri* goat not only denotes the unification of the two in marriage, but also the acceptance of the bride by the groom's family. To symbolise that the bride is about to become a married woman, she not only has to eat from the goat meat, but has to sip from the traditional beer prepared for the *isikiri* as well. Sipping traditional beer during the night signifies that *"… she is now a woman …"* and also shows *"… that she is no more a girl or a teenager …"* In other words, her changing status from that of a girl to a married woman is celebrated, because: *"At the day of the isikiri, then they are husband and wife."* The beer the bride drinks has symbolic meaning. McAllister (2003), in his description of the different occasions where beer drinking takes place in the Xhosa culture, refers to the beer drinking ritual that is linked to a change in a woman's status. The examples he gives relate to the change in status of a woman either after the death of her husband or when a married woman's position from a junior to a senior wife changes.

Some participants interpreted the beer sipping as a reminder that one of her future duties as a married woman is to make beer for her husband. The beer therefore symbolises an obligation she has to fulfil and it was explained that the beer is given to her to become acquainted with the taste of properly prepared beer.

Apart from the goat meat and traditional beer, which serve important functions at this celebration, other traditional foods such as *bogobe* and *ting mabele* are always prepared for the celebration together with a number of modern dishes. The reason given for the preparation of modern dishes, such as *amakuke*, cooldrinks and *vetkoekies,* was that these dishes were prepared in honour of the bride by the *nomyezani* who is responsible for the food preparation at this celebration. The invited guests are also served from the rest of the goat meat and the prepared dishes.

There are also certain beliefs as to why the *isikiri* goat has to be slaughtered. An elderly participant explained: *"… it is compulsory to slaughter the goat, because if it is not done before the bride has children, there will be bad luck associated with this".* The example of her sister who had a paralysed child was given. The child was only healed after the in-laws slaughtered a goat for her sister, which they had not done at the time of the wedding. Reflected here is the strong belief of the participants that, if the ancestors are not appeased by honouring them by adhering to customs, such as, for example, informing them of important changes of life stages of their descendants, adversity is likely to follow.

The values and beliefs of the group are reflected in the importance attached to following traditional customs. In doing so, the ancestors are pleased and it is communicated to the guests that this family still honours traditions. However, on the other hand, it is also important to portray that they are modern, educated and successful. The inclusion of modern food is not solely to please the bride, but also to impress and show hospitality to her and the other guests. The dualism of following the traditional prescriptions on the one hand, and then on the other, to ensure the image of being modern, educated and in a favourable financial position is portrayed here. The importance attached to both these worlds they live in, is once again reflected in the traditional and modern food that is prepared and served.

The influence from the socio-psychological environment is not only evident through the belief that, if certain customs are not adhered to, *"bad luck"* would follow. It is further illustrated by the belief that the groom has to burn the leftover bones of the *isikiri* goat early the next morning to erase all evidence of what had happened there the previous night. One of the two explanations given for this was that the bones are burnt out of *"tradition*", and the other explanation dealt with the belief that if the bones were not burnt, someone could come and cause harm to the couple through practising witchcraft with these bones. Bones were therefore burnt to avoid witchcraft thus ensuring that no-one could come and harm the bridal couple. Once again, this illustrates the strong psychic influence of the belief system and the fear of harm that could be bestowed upon people through witchcraft.

The belief system is not only connected to the fear of witchcraft but also to the importance of following the correct traditional procedures and, in doing so, the ancestors would be kept satisfied and not punish the married couple by causing them to be infertile. The importance of slaughtering the *isikiri* goat for the bride is again confirmed by the emphasis that is placed on taking along a part of the goat to the bride's family the following day. This serves as evidence that her future in-laws have accepted and welcomed her into their family, and have followed the correct procedures and informed their ancestors of the marriage. Her family

needs this assurance that the future son-in-law's ancestors would not bestow ill fortune on the marriage like infertility or having a paralysed or malformed child.

7.2.3 First wedding celebration

The following day she returns to her parents' home with the groom accompanied by friends and relatives of the groom for the first of the traditional wedding celebrations. The groom's relatives take along the outstanding *lobolo* (this could be money or cattle) as well as presents for the bride's family. Apart from the *lobolo* cattle, another beast is taken along for slaughtering and exchange during the celebration at the home of the bride's parents. It is also required that the bride take a part of the *isikiri* goat that was slaughtered in her honour back to her family.

When the wedding party arrives at the gate of the bride's family home, the next phase in the marriage procedure takes place with the finalisation of the *lobolo*, which is delivered and accepted by the bride's family. Similar to the previous phases, food again features prominently and certain meanings and symbolisms are attached to it to convey specific messages. Meanings attached to food not only have symbolic significance but also serve as codes or signs that certain customs were followed.

The people from the groom's family, who accompanied the bride, do not enter, but wait outside. The bride's brother comes to greet her at the gate and she enters the home with the *"arm of the goat"* slaughtered in her honour the previous day. This is given to the older female relatives of her family, who are the only persons allowed to eat the meat. This part could be either a front leg of the goat, referred to as the *"arm of the goat"* or a section of the rib cage. When the rib cage is taken, bread is also included and this is then referred to as *amavenge* (the rib section and bread). In Figure 7.3 the sections that could be taken are indicated.

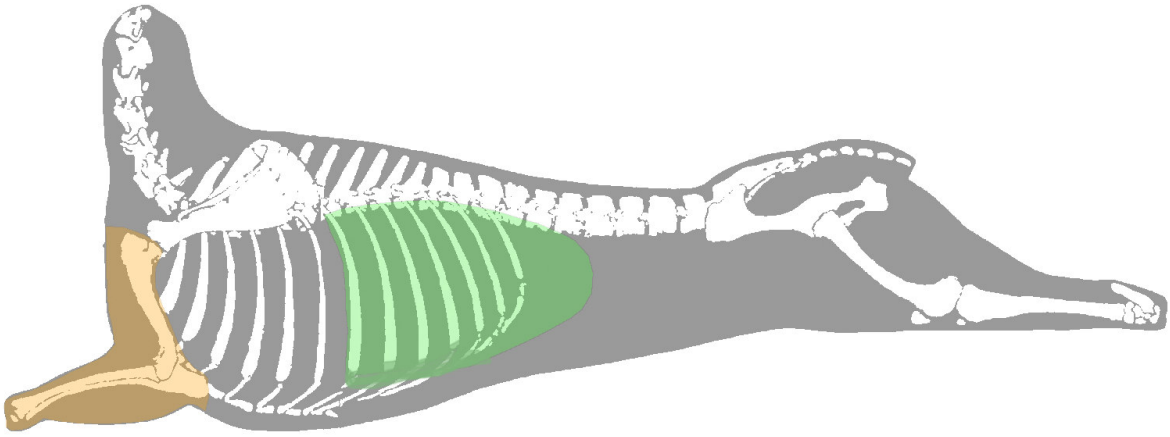

FIGURE 7.3: PARTS OF GOAT TO BE TAKEN TO BRIDE'S FAMILY

Some of the older participants were of the opinion that traditionally it was the *amavenge* that was taken as *isibiko* (evidence) and that the *"… arm of the goat is a modern thing*". They also stated that some people would take the *amavenge* and the *"arm of the goat",* while others take only the *"arm of the goat"*.

The *"arm of the goat"* (or the *amavenge*) of the *isikiri* goat is therefore significant to the bride's family as it proves to them that her future in-laws did slaughter the *isikiri* goat for her. It is regarded important to have evidence that the goat was slaughtered. As explained there are numerous meanings attached to slaughter the *isikiri* goat. The *"arm of the goat"* not only serves as a sign that the ancestors of the in-laws have been informed of the marriage, but also that the groom's family did dress the bride in their traditional bridal attire, thereby recognising that she is accepted by the groom's family. This was explained as follows: *, "… it is just a symbol that she is welcome at the in-laws. It is also a symbol that they have dressed her".* The "*arm of the goat*" is therefore a salient traditional code that communicates to the bride's family not only that the traditional procedures were followed and that the traditional customs were honoured, but also that their daughter is accepted and welcome in the family of her future in-laws.

Meanwhile the rest of the procedures, including the finalisation of the *lobolo,* take place at the gate. The groom's family are still outside the gate and they cannot talk without *"taking off the dust".* This means they need something to drink. Two female relatives of the bride (usually two aunts) then serve traditional beer.

The people who accompanied the bride (the *idwende*) have to wait at the gate and can only enter after they have been served traditional beer. Traditional etiquette rules requires that guests wait at the gate until invited inside (Coetzee,1982:61). The serving of the traditional

beer not only signifies to the groom's family that they are welcome, but also that they are accepted as guests. The relationship between the two families through the marriage is simultaneously acknowledged through this act. Only after the bride's family is satisfied that the agreed *lobolo* is there, is the groom's party allowed inside the yard.

7.2.4 The *idwende*

Once the groom's family enters the yard and the bride's family have confirmed that the *lobolo* is satisfactorily dealt with, can the next phase, called the *idwende,* begin. The *umhlambiso* (slaughter) could also take place at the *idwende"*, but this, however, only happens if the bride's family has all the *umhlambiso* presents ready – otherwise it is done later. If they have the presents ready, they hand them over either before or after the slaughter of the beasts. The *umhlambiso* is a very complicated and involved process and is not reported here, as it falls outside the scope of the study.

During the *idwende* a number of goats and two beasts are slaughtered. Some parts of these animals are handed over as a symbol that certain procedures have been completed to the satisfaction of the other party. Other parts of the carcass are given to specific people with whom there are close kinship ties.

After they have agreed that the *lobolo* has been delivered and everyone is satisfied, the bride's family welcomes the groom's family. A goat, the *umseme* goat, is handed over to the older men of the groom's family as a token that they are welcome. The *umseme* goat is slaughtered early the next morning at 03:00 and the meat cooked and served with *bogobe* before sunrise to the groom's family. The one front leg of the *umseme* goat is taken back to the father of the groom (who does not attend this celebration). Drawing from the principles of semiotics this leg of the goat has a number of meanings. It is a sign that the groom's family is welcome at the family of the bride, and it also provides evidence to the groom's father that the *lobolo* has been delivered and that the bride's family agrees to it and is satisfied. The leg of the slaughtered goat is a salient traditional code, namely, that the correct procedures have been followed, and that both parties have agreed and are satisfied with the *lobolo* transaction.

The wedding celebration officially starts with the slaughter of two beasts, one from each family. The beast from the bride's family is slaughtered first, and then the bride's family would slaughter a goat, sheep or beast for the groom, depending on the size of the *lobolo* delivered. In most cases, it would be a goat, and this goat is known as *imvu yabayenyana.* A sheep or beast is, however, slaughtered in those cases where the *lobolo* is larger than usual.

The number of *lobolo* cattle handed over is reflected through the slaughter of a goat, sheep or beast for the groom by the bride's family. The kind of animal slaughtered is thus a sign of the number of *lobolo* cattle that was given and could serve as a subtle indication of the wealth and social status of the two families.

Next the beast from the groom's family is slaughtered. As mentioned above, the groom's family brings a special beast to be slaughtered during this part of the wedding celebration together with the *lobolo* beasts. The part of the ceremony where the beasts are slaughtered is called *umhlambiso*. Certain parts of these beasts slaughtered by the bride and groom's family, are then exchanged between the families with half being swapped. It was explained that it was compulsory for the two halves to be exchanged, serving as an acknowledgement by both families that the marriage had taken place. The exchanged halves are divided between certain members of both the groom and the bride's families and are not eaten at the wedding celebrations. The other two halves that were not exchanged are used as meat for the celebration. A family who could not provide a beast was in debt with the other family.

Figure 7.4 indicates the various parts of the two carcasses that are allocated to specific people from both the groom and bride's families as discussed below.

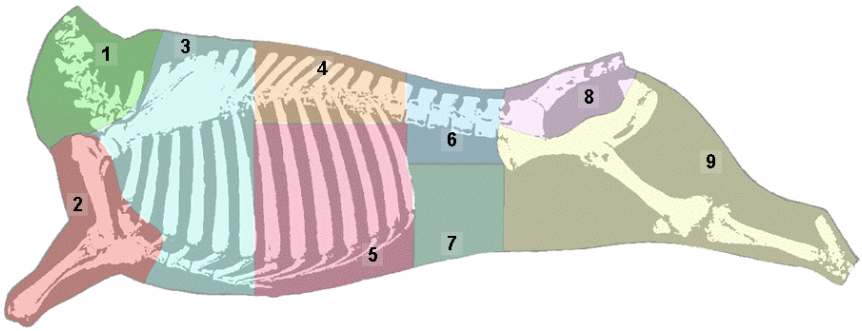

FIGURE 7.4: ALLOCATED PARTS OF SLAUGHTERED BEASTS

After the head and neck have been cut off, each of the two carcasses is divided in two along the spine. The two families then exchange the following parts from the one half: the front leg (part 2), the hind leg part (part 9) and the middle section marked parts 4, 5 and 6 and each of the two families would then have a complete carcass again. Certain parts from each carcass are allocated to specific family members from each of the families of the bride and the groom, who receive these parts from the beasts to take home. The head, neck and part of the hump (part 1) from each beast is allocated to the fathers or other males in each of the families of the bridal couple (the groom's party take the head, neck section and skin of the beast slaughtered back to the father of the groom as evidence that the beast was

slaughtered). The head and neck are consumed at home by the male family members of the groom on their return from the wedding. Quin (1959:97) gives a similar account for the Pedi, where the head was taken back by the male family members of the groom to serve as evidence that they had attended the wedding. Similarly Manning *et al*. (1974:490) and Bryant (1967:266) point out that the head of a beast is considered to be the meat of adult males in a family. The front leg (part 2) goes to a younger brother of the father. The hind leg section (marked 8 and 9) goes to a brother older than the father. The middle section (marked 4, 5 and 6) goes to a sister of the father. According to some participants, it is for *ukghari* (eldest sister) of the father; others indicated that it could be or all the father's sisters. These parts represent the brisket, part of the flat rib and the prime rib.

The participants gave various accounts about the allocation of the middle part of the carcass. According to some, the whole section marked 4, 5 and 6 was given to the eldest sister of the father. Others were of the opinion that part 6, also referred to as *isifunzi,* was given to the grandmothers of both families. This is in accordance with Quin's (1959:97) statement that the spinal column and tail section is reserved for the senior women. It was indicated that part 4 was given to the other sisters of the father and that the eldest sister only received the rib section of the part marked 5. This is similar to what Bryant (1967:267) says, namely, that the sirloin part of a ritually slaughtered animal belongs to the daughters in a family. Some mentioned that the rib part of the beast from the bride's family is given to those aunts of the bride who were responsible for serving the beer during the ceremony at the gate and during the night. It seems as if the allocation of this middle section varied and also depended on the number of female siblings the father had, which could explain the different comments given by the participants.

The entire hind leg section marked 8 and 9 (these are cuts from the hindquarter up to the rump and includes the shin, silverside, topside, aitchbone and thick flank section) is given to the brother older than the father in each family. In the groom's family this section of the other side goes to the oldest brother of the groom's mother (his oldest maternal uncle) with the proviso that he had contributed one of the required *lobolo* beasts. The maternal uncle then has to give the *setlhana* (whole rump) of this hind leg section to the groom's maternal grandparents. Some participants, however, indicated that it is only the part marked 8 in Figure 7.4 whereas others indicated that it is the whole rump section as illustrated in Figure 7.5 below. Another comment was that part 8 from the beast of the bride's family was given to the maternal grandparents of the bride. The meat allocated to the specific family members is received raw, and this is then taken home for later consumption in their individual households.

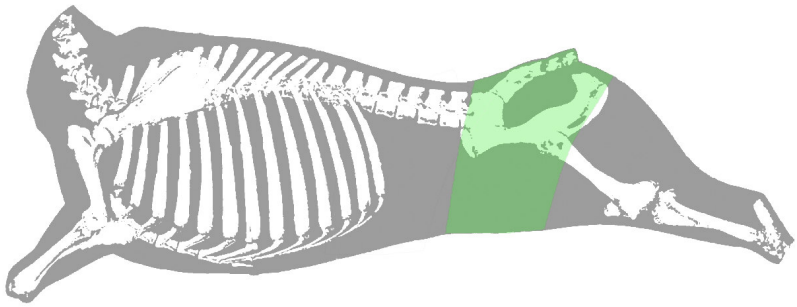

FIGURE 7.5: THE RUMP SECTION - *SETLHANA*

The *amathumbu* (intestines) and *umrhori* (tripe) from the beast of the groom's family are given to the family of the bride. It was explained that this is a symbol of respect shown to the bride's family by the groom's family. The *amathumbu* from this beast is divided amongst the siblings of the bride. The *umrhori* from the beast slaughtered by the bride's family is given to her grandparents. Quin (1959:97) similarly indicates that the *umrhori (mogodu)* goes to the elderly family members.

According to some participants, the section marked 3 in Figure 7.4 of one side of the carcass is kept by the bride's family from their carcass, this is to be consumed later by the bride's family. The section marked 3 of the other side of the carcass from the beast of the bride's family, is prepared for the wedding guests together with these sections from the beast of the groom's family (this part according to some was then specifically for the male guests). This means that three sides of the section marked 3 in Figure 7.4 are prepared for consumption by the male guests. Some participants intimated that the other foreleg from the carcass of the bride's family is prepared for the male members of her family. The part marked 7 is prepared for the female guests. With the exception of this part for the female guests, the rest of the meat prepared for the guests comes from the front quarters of the slaughtered animals. This is similar to the account by Sekhukuhune (1993:68) who states that in the Pedi culture "haunch and flank were not shared with commoners"; this thus implies that the hind sections were reserved for the immediate family members. The allocation of the meat as described above is in agreement with that given by Quin (1959: 97-98) who also reports that the hind sections of the ritually slaughtered beast were given to the immediate family. These parts usually include the prime or softer cuts of meat.

It should be noted that the above account of how the beasts were divided and the meat allocated, is according to how it is done by the majority of those participants who still engage in the traditional wedding procedures. Variations on how the division was done did seem to exist. There were some who said that the whole beast was exchanged between the two

families and the whole carcass was then divided between members of the family. They said that the meat from these beasts was not used as meat for the wedding celebrations. Others stated that one half of each beast was exchanged and divided as described above, and the two halves that were not exchanged, were prepared for the wedding feast.

The exchange of parts of the slaughtered beasts between the two families has symbolic meaning, as it represents the consummation of the marriage and unification of the two families through this marriage. It is therefore compulsory for both families to give a beast for slaughter. The participants expressed the importance of both families having to provide a beast to slaughter as follows: *"… it stands that the two families are now binded* [bound] *together"* and *"…as an announcement for both families that the wedding is done* [consummated]".

In this regard, Fourie (1921:115) refers to a blood covenant that is formed through the act of killing these beasts and mentions a custom where the bride and groom had to lick the blood from the assegai that killed the beasts provided by each of the other family. Richards (1932:185) explains that the sacrifice of these beasts at the wedding feast serves to "demand the co-operation of the family spirits" in the complicated marriage contract that is formed by the two families. The sacrifice to the ancestors on the occasion of marriage binds them to observe this tie. Without the offering of a sacrifice from the relatives of the bride to the spirits of the bridegroom's family, the marriage is in some cases incomplete. Richards (1932:186) further explains that, through this act, the ancestors are publicly included: "... to the marriage contract of their earthly children, and can revenge the violation of this tie." The slaughter and sharing of the sacrifice bind them with their living descendants and could, according to her, be regarded as a "replica of the family meal" that the ancestors share with their lineage on this occasion.

According to the participants, a family who could not do this, would be indebted to the other family. At the time of the study, the family of one of the participant's daughter-in-law had only recently gathered enough money to slaughter their beast, and they were preparing to complete this part of the wedding celebration. The *isikiri* had taken place the previous year and the *lobolo* was then also paid in full. The family of the participant (the groom's family) had slaughtered their beast the previous year at the *idwende* celebration. It therefore appeared as if the traditional wedding procedures could be done in phases over a period of time. The time that it takes to complete the process seemed to depend on the availability of money.

In the first place, the slaughter and exchange of meat from the slaughtered animals serves as symbol of the acceptance and acknowledgement of the new social ties that are formed between the two families as a result of the marriage. Second, it provides evidence that the *lobolo* transaction was completed to the satisfaction of both parties concerned. In the third instance, the allocation of specific parts of the slaughtered animal to certain family members solidifies the kinship ties between these members and the families of the groom and the bride. That this was done according to established rules and prescribed allocation of specific parts to certain family members reflected the social relationship of the recipients with the person who provided the animal (Sekhukhune, 1993; Manning *et al.* 1974: 490; Bryant, 1967:266-267). And, then in the fourth place it also acknowledges the importance of informing and involving the ancestors in the wedding celebration.

Meanings associated with the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are clearly in interplay here. From a semiotic point of view the slaughter of the beasts symbolises that the *lobolo* transaction had been completed to the satisfaction of all concerned. Drawing on the cultural perspective, cultural forms produce and reproduce collective values. In using the two slaughtered beasts as material culture, the value and importance of having sound social and kinship ties is portrayed through the act of their slaughter, exchange and division. The new social ties formed between the families of the bride and groom are publicly acknowledged and accepted by both families through the slaughter and exchange of parts of the slaughtered beasts. The high premium placed on cherishing and strengthening family and kinship ties is reflected in the allotment of the meat amongst the immediate family members in both families.

Through the slaughter of the beasts to inform and include the ancestors in the wedding process, cultural beliefs and values are perpetuated. From a symbolic interactionism point of view, meaning arises in the process of interaction between people. The meaning attached to the act of slaughter, exchange and sharing of the meat from the animals is derived through those who participate in these traditional wedding celebrations.

The food served at the *idwende* phase of the celebrations includes meat from the slaughtered beasts, traditional beer, *bogobe* and *ting mabele*. Some mentioned that a traditional legume dish *"irhayi"* is also part of the traditional food prepared at wedding feasts. At the time of the study when a traditional wedding was celebrated, chicken or goat meat was served together with the meat from the slaughtered beasts. Rice, vegetables and salads were also part of the menu together with the traditional dishes mentioned and traditional beer.

After the celebration, the family and friends of the groom return home. On their departure, the ladies from the groom's family who accompanied the bride to her parents' home the previous day, receive a dish of *umkhupha* from the bride's family. It was explained that the *umkhupha* was not only given as *"something for the road"*, but also signifies an extension of their hospitality, as well as the bride's parents' gratitude that they took care of their daughter and brought her back home.

Traditionally the bride had to wait at her parents' home until her own house at her husband's family was ready, because, according to the *hlonipha* rules, she was not allowed to live in the same house as her father-in-law (Jansen Van Rensburg, 1987: 80). At the time of this study, not everybody followed this custom, because some couples nowadays preferred to have their own homes and do not reside on the same premises as the husband's family anymore.

It is still customary for the bride to take a basket of food to her in-laws during the first week after the first wedding celebration, while she waits for her house to be completed. If she already has her own home, she will still give them a basket of food. This basket contains treats such as tea, sugar, cookies and even beer to express her gratitude to the in-laws for taking care of her during the *"isimanje".* It was explained that the basket of food was not only a *"… symbol for thanking the in-laws for looking after her at the isimanje …",* but was also used to make a good impression on the in-laws with the decorated basket containing special and nicely prepared treats. The participants in the study by Trollip (1991:160) also described this practice and mentioned the *isekwa* (bread and beer) that had to be delivered by the bride to her in-laws. Furthermore, this basket of food serves to smooth the social relations between the bride and her in-laws, and to solidify the ties between them.

7.2.5 The second wedding celebration

The second wedding celebration takes place at the house of the groom's family only when the house of the young married couple is ready. On the bride's arrival at the in-laws, she waits at the gate until the goat that is slaughtered in her honour is shown to her. It was explained that this goat, slaughtered in her honour, is a symbol to welcome her to her new home. Some participants indicated that an amount of money is also given to the bride before she enters the premises of the in-laws. The food served on this occasion is similar to that served at the first celebration at the bride's family. The festivities and celebrations also take place in different phases.

If the *umhlambiso* has not taken place during the celebrations at the bride's parents it could take place at this stage, or it could even be later. During the *umhlambiso* the bride hands

over her presents to her in-laws. These presents, apart from household articles and clothing, include various woven grass items that are given to the mother-in-law. Amongst these is the same number of *imiseme* as were used for the *imiseme* hut during the *isimanje*. Some of the traditional grass items, apart from the *imiseme,* include brooms, *isithebe*, beer sieves and baskets. The bride also brings along traditional beer from her own family for this celebration, when it takes place. These grass items symbolise the bride's gratitude that the in-laws have given *lobolo* to her family as bridal wealth for her.

As a sign that the bride could move into her house, the *nomyezana* and other female relatives of the groom and bride would start to build the *lapa*[32] of her house. This is an indication of the beginning of the next phase in the life of the young married woman where she then also has to work for her mother-in-law. Some participants mentioned that the traditional dish *irhayi* is associated with this occasion and it is served together with traditional beer. With regard to *irhayi,* the following explanation was given: *"This dish is also to show that the makoti can now come and stay in her house".*

7.2.6 The first years of marriage

During the first part of her married life the young newly wed woman has to behave according to certain prescribed rules as dictated by the *hlonipha.* The *hlonipha* not only impinges on her behaviour with regard to her language usage and how she dresses, but also on what she is allowed to eat. In this regard, she is, for example, forbidden to eat eggs and *amasi* (sour milk) at the homestead of the in-laws. She also has to perform certain household tasks for her mother-in-law such as cooking and cleaning.

The reason given for the food restriction is that *"girls and young women who eat milk and eggs will have more feelings for men".* Another reason given is that the bride does not eat these items as a way of showing her respect for the in-laws. It was explained that *"… it was a shame if you eat it".* A married woman could therefore only use milk at her husband's family home after her father-in-law had given her milk. This only happens after the birth of her first child and after the celebration where she is allowed to invite her father-in-law to her house. It was explained that the milk and egg restrictions of the young married woman only applied at the home of the in-laws, and that she is allowed to have these at her own parents' home.

She is also not allowed to eat *molatsa* (the previous day's *bogobe* or other leftovers). Permission to do so is granted by handing over money together with the leftover food. This was explained as: "*She would also get money to eat molatsa*". The participants explained

[32] Small un-thatched reed enclosure at the back of the house.

that the permission to eat *molatsa* symbolises her acceptance by the in-laws. From then on she is regarded as their own child when in the house of the in-laws and allowed to eat leftover food.

Cooking for the mother-in-law is one of the main responsibilities she has to fulfil. If she is employed elsewhere, she usually has to work for the mother-in-law over weekends and during holidays. At the time of the study, it seems as if this practice is not followed by all families anymore.

Working for her mother-in-law reflects the young married woman's social position in the family of her in-laws as well as the social relationship between her and her mother-in-law. She demonstrates her respect and submission to her in-laws by working for the mother-in-law, avoiding her father-in-law and through adhering to the food restrictions that are imposed on her as part of the *hlonipha* practices. The cultural values of respect and submission of the younger person to the authority of the elders, as well as the social position of the young married female in her new family, is established through these actions. Symbolic interactionism contends that it is through social interaction in everyday situations that the individual works out the details of social structure. Blumer (1969: 6-7) explains that social structure is represented, amongst others, by social position, roles and authority. Social structure thus emerges from how people act toward each other during social interaction. Symbolic interactionism emphasises that structure is an ongoing dynamic process.

According to the participants the mother-in-law, however, has to give an indication to her daughter-in-law when she no longer needs to cook for her, after which she will only cook for her own household. This *"announcement"* must come as a surprise to the young woman. Therefore, the mother-in-law comes unexpectedly and *"… messes the cooking place up…*" by spilling cooked *mabele* grains, maize or beans in the cooking place. The spilling of the food serves as sign to indicate that permission has been granted to dismiss her from working for the mother-in-law.

After this "*announcement"* by the mother-in-law, a small celebration, called the *"hlanza maseko"* takes place. The young married woman has to provide the bread and traditional beer for this celebration, and her in-laws the *bogobe* and relish (usually something is slaughtered, although it is not compulsory to slaughter). Guests are invited to this celebration and, as a rule, she is not present at this celebration, but visits her own parents and then returns in the evening after the celebration. From this celebration onwards, she then no longer needs to cook for her mother-in-law.

According to one of the older participants, this is the last of the series of celebrations associated with the traditional wedding. Van Warmelo (1930:44) also mentions that the traditional wedding celebrations end on this occasion.

At the time when the young married woman is dismissed from performing certain tasks for her mother-in-law she is usually also granted permission to *"take the blanket off"* in her own home. This is the blanket she had to wear over her shoulders as sign of respect for the ancestors of her husband's family. A goat is slaughtered as a symbol that she has received permission to no longer wear the blanket that covers her arms and shoulders in her own house. It is only after this that she is allowed to invite her father-in-law to her house. He is not allowed to come into her house before this *"blanket off procedure"* has taken place. According to Trollip (1991:161), this occasion signifies that her in-laws now acknowledge her as a fully-fledged married woman.

7.2.7 Ukungenisa ubaba

After the bride has been granted permission to "*take the blanket off"*, she is in the position to invite her father-in-law to her house for the celebration of *ukungenisa ubaba.* The *hlonipha* prevented the young married woman from talking to her father-in-law. Therefore, an official celebration has to take place to indicate that she is now allowed to speak to him. This is a very important compulsory celebration given to the father-in-law by the young married couple. It is compulsory, because if this is not done the woman is not allowed to host any other traditional celebrations in the future, such as initiations or weddings.

The father-in-law is invited to her house and he comes with a goat. Before he enters the premises, the daughter-in-law has to make an announcement to indicate that she also has a goat for the father-in-law. He then enters and declares that he too has a goat for her. The goats are slaughtered and the *imiseme* arranged. Each sits on their own *umseme*. The daughter-in-law then greets her father-in-law, and this is the first time she greets and talks to him. This greeting serves as sign that she accepts him in her house. In some families, the young woman gives presents to her in-laws on this occasion. Some participants mentioned that the restriction of drinking milk at the home of the in-laws could be lifted on the occasion when she invites her father-in-law to her house.

The celebration takes place over the whole weekend and starts on Saturday morning and continues until Sunday. On Saturday the meat from the daughter-in-law's goat is cooked and on Sunday that from the father-in-law's goat. The meals prepared for the celebrations over the weekend include tea and *amakuke* or *umtsikitlana* (sour porridge) for breakfast; and

lunch and supper would consist of meat from one of the slaughtered goats and *bogobe*. On Sunday a variety of modern dishes are also served with the meat and *bogobe* for lunch and supper, such as rice, vegetables and salads. Traditional beer and "modern" beer (commercial beer) are also served on Sunday.

Another part of this celebration is the *"umgubani*" that takes place on Sunday afternoon from 13:00 to 16:00. During this part of the celebration, the daughter-in-law and the father-in-law both go outside and dance in the open yard. Two calabashes of traditional beer are consumed during this dancing ceremony. One is poured on the ground for the ancestors and the families of the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law drinks the other calabash of beer.

After this celebration, the young woman does not have to avoid her father-in-law anymore, she can greet him and talk to him and need not avoid him by, for example, walking another way when she sees him coming in her direction. The cultural perspective proposes that people use codes to decipher the meaning of cultural representations of social life. This celebration serves as a code to communicate to the community that she is from then on allowed to have a closer relationship with her father-in-law and some of the strict *hlonipha* rules are more relaxed. The beer that is shared between the daughter-in-law's and her father-in-law's families symbolises this new union and more intimate relationship between the two families. The beer poured for the ancestors serves to inform them of the relaxation of the strict *hlonipha* rules.

Similar to the findings given by Trollip (1991:162), the participants of this study indicated that these traditional wedding procedures are, to a large extent, still followed by the majority of the Ndebele people in the Mmotla community. Sometimes the completion of all the different phases could take months, and in some cases even years, because it is highly dependent on money being available to host certain parts of the procedures, especially those where the slaughtering of beasts or goats is required. Contrary to the account given by Trollip (1991:162, 163), it was emphasised by the participants of this study that the traditional wedding is a prerequisite for the modern wedding. The traditional wedding will therefore always precede the modern or white wedding, and not vice versa.

7.3 THE MODERN WEDDING

The modern wedding, as explained, is an optional celebration and depends on whether the couple have enough money available to host the event. This was emphasised by phrases such as:

"The modern wedding is there, if they have enough money, so that they can do both. But before you do the modern wedding you must do the traditional wedding".

"The fact that people have the modern wedding is that it is something that will come after the traditional wedding, if you have enough money, and it is not compulsory, and it is to show people that now we are married".

It emerged during discussions with the participants that traditional customs are important to the people and thus are honoured. That the prerequisites for the modern wedding had to be met before the arrangements for the modern wedding could even begin to be made was repeatedly stressed. To respect traditional customs was required by the ancestors and given as the reason why the traditional wedding had to precede the modern wedding, as explained in this quotation:

"Sometimes if you only have a white wedding, maybe the ancestors will come - you will dream - they will show you this blanket, this blanket with the stripes called mokwetwaya - so if they show you this blanket, they show you something is wrong, you must follow the tradition. So that is why you must start with the traditional wedding".

On the other hand, the younger generation is eager to demonstrate that they are modern, educated and successful people. The hosting of the *"white"* wedding celebration is regarded as a sign that the couple are modern and educated and have (or pretend to have) the financial means to do so. To be regarded as a modern, educated person is important because it gives that person status in the community, implying achievement. It also became apparent that to create the impression that you have money and are financially well off, was an equally important consideration and reason to have a modern wedding. However, apart from displaying wealth it seemed as if the association of being modern or Westernised was equally important as portrayed by the following impressions expressed by some of the participants:

"… if you make two weddings it is just that you want to show the people that you want to be modern".

"… the reason is that most of the people now take the white culture".

In her study on the Ndzundza-Ndebele in the Nebo district, Trollip (1991:162-163) similarly reports that a modern Western-oriented wedding has high status value attached to it. The

effect of urbanisation and acculturation is given as the reason why this tendency has developed.

It thus became clear that to host a modern wedding celebration was regarded as a prestigious occasion in the Mmotla community. Another motive for having a modern wedding is that the couple do not want to be left out when their friends have a modern wedding. The parallel was drawn to the rule of who is allowed to attend the *isikiri* celebration at the traditional Ndebele wedding (see 7.2.1.1). Some regarded the "white/modern" wedding as a replacement for the *isikiri* celebration, and they were afraid that they would be barred from going to others' modern wedding celebrations if their own had not been a modern wedding. One participant explained this as follows:

"She thinks the thing that makes us to have a modern wedding, is because when they do the isikiri, other people who are not married are not allowed to go there. So they think there are certain secrets at the white wedding that is why they want to qualify by making a white wedding, so that if maybe there is a white wedding from other friends, they must be included. They want to make the white wedding so that if someone has the white wedding, they will be invited".

Another interpretation of why the modern wedding is popular has historical significance. Various churches were instrumental in influencing their members to be married according to the Christian tradition (Pauw, 1974:429; Schapera, 1962:360, 382). They encouraged the implementation of the modern wedding ceremony with or without adaptations to the traditional wedding format. It seems as if certain parts of the traditional wedding procedures have remained and are still followed by those who belong to certain churches. One of the participants explained it as follows:

"What she sees is that most people still follow the traditional wedding, but according to their beliefs they don't follow the whole procedures of the traditional wedding. Some they took out magadi [lobolo] and they don't do the nomyezani stuff and everything, so it is only the magadi and there after the modern wedding".

In this regard, Wilson (1972:192-193) points out that often old rites did not vanish altogether as in the case of the Christian Nguni people in the Eastern Cape who continued with the *lobolo* practice although they are married in Christian churches.

The planning and preparation for a modern wedding could take up to a year. The bride and groom make all the arrangements for this Western-oriented event that includes organising for

the different kinds of wedding outfits worn during the celebrations, the catering for the wedding feast, wedding cake(s) and photograph sessions.

7.4 MAIN EVENTS AND MEANINGS OF THE FOOD PRACTICES AT THE MODERN WEDDING

As the time of the wedding approaches, a white flag (it is sometimes beautifully embroidered) would in some cases be raised on the roof of the house as a signal that a wedding was coming up. This could be up to a month or a week before the wedding. Sometimes the wedding celebrations were spread over a period of three weeks. It could start with the *"ring-wearing ceremony"*, followed by the legal wedding before the magistrate or a marriage commissioner (officer) the following week and the wedding festivities would then take place the week thereafter. Alternatively, some couples would have the *"ring-wearing ceremony"* on the same day as the legal marriage which takes place at the magistrate's office, or it could be on the Saturday morning at the church or at the home of the bride's parents. After the church service, photographs of the bridal couple together with the bridesmaids and groomsmen are taken in a park. It was emphasised that the celebrations could only take place after the *"ring-wearing ceremony"* had been completed.

7.4.1 The first wedding celebration

A rented marquee tent is erected in the yard of the bride's parents' home to accommodate the guests (mainly family, friends and neighbours of the bride's family). The tent and the tables inside the tent are decorated in a colour scheme that usually matches the colours of the dresses of the bridesmaids. The celebrations start on the Saturday morning at the home of the bride's parents when the bride is dressed in a white wedding gown and the groom in a black suit. They usually wear these until after the midday meal, when the first change of clothes would take place. For the first change of clothes, the bride wears a two-piece suit and the groom another suit and they parade in front of the guests and photographs are taken. Some time later they change again, and this time they wear what is referred to as "modern traditional" clothes[33]. Some couples, however, only wear the white gown and black suit and the "modern traditional" clothes. After they have changed into the "*modern traditional"* clothes, the family and friends hand over the presents they have for the bridal couple.

In Addendum E photographs obtained from the participants' family albums are included to illustrate and capture some of the highlights of the modern wedding celebrations.

[33] Refers to Western clothes made from fabric with an ethnic print. See Addendum E.

7.4.2 The second wedding celebration

Late Saturday afternoon or early on Saturday evening the bridal couple and party leave for the groom's parents' home. When the bride leaves her parents' home, she is covered with a blanket and her head with a towel similar to traditional wedding practice. This, however, differs as some participants revealed that it would depend on family customs. On arriving at the in-laws, the bride would wait at the gate and only enter the premises after she receives money to do so. On Sunday the celebration at the groom's family takes place and the same procedures as followed at the bride's family, are repeated with the exception of the church service or ring-wearing ceremony. The guests at this celebration are the groom's family, friends and neighbours. The food is similar to that prepared for the bride's family and the wedding cake(s) are brought along from the celebration at the bride's family to the second celebration at the groom's family.

If a white flag had been put on the roof of the house when the preparations for the wedding started, it would be ceremoniously taken down some time after the wedding celebrations. There seems to be no specific length of time for which it has to be up. Depending on the amount of money available and family traditions, some people even prepare traditional beer for this occasion.

7.4.3 Food practices and their meanings

Apart from clothing, another important measure of the social status of the bridal couple is the nature of the food served at the two wedding celebrations. Like other modern celebrations, the norm is to serve modern food similar to that associated with the Sunday midday meal. However, the impression given was that a larger variety and quantity of food is prepared, especially meat, information that was clearly emphasised. A beast is sometimes slaughtered and could be supplemented by large quantities of mutton, goat meat and chicken. The variety of other types of dishes, such as the vegetable dishes and salads, is also extensive, as well as other specialities such as desserts, cakes, snacks and soft drinks. It seems as though the food, together with the serving of generous quantities of hard liquor apart from the traditional beer, ginger beer, soft drinks and commercial beer, contributes to the expense incurred and, consequently, to the status of the occasion.

The food served at the two wedding meals is important and contributes to the prestige of the occasion, and great care is taken in its planning and preparation. In some instances, two menus are prepared for each of the wedding meals. The menu prepared for the bridal table, is mainly modern food, and would differ from that served to the guests, and is regarded as

special. It is special because it consists of expensive dishes that are prepared separately from more expensive ingredients and/or by special preparation methods. Meat for example, is roasted instead of just boiled and examples of expensive foods were special salads *"… that you can't make for everybody …"* such as lettuce and cucumber. Other examples of expensive items were juices, champagne and snacks such as potato crisps, peanuts and cheese curls. A family member, or sometimes a contracted caterer, is appointed to prepare the food for the bridal table. The specialness of the food for the bridal table was illustrated by phrases such as:

"Because it is a special day, you must eat something special".

"The food for the wedding table will be expensive and special foods, because there are so many other people invited, it would be too expensive to give the special food to everybody".

Also reflected in this quotation is the large quantity of food that needs to be prepared and the importance attached to offering hospitality to everybody in the community. This was supported by an elderly participant, who gave the following explanation why this is an expensive celebration: *"… because we Africans, we invite the family and each and everyone".* That a large number of guests attend (both invited and uninvited) could, however, also be attributed to the white flag that was put on the roof as signal that a wedding feast would be held in the near future. This could be interpreted as a salient modern code signifying an upcoming celebration to let all know in a subtle way that the bridal couple are modern and in a position to host a modern wedding celebration.

The food preparation for the large number of wedding guests is often organised and prepared by the support group. The food for the wedding guests is usually a combination of traditional and modern dishes. It was pointed out that *bogobe, ting mabele* and traditional beer are always prepared and served together with a larger variety of modern dishes than usual.

7.4.4 The wedding cake(s)

Participants said that they associated a modern wedding with a wedding cake, because it was always conspicuously part of the celebration. From the limited literature available on the Western-oriented wedding celebrations in black South African communities, it seems as if the wedding cake became a popular item about 50 years ago. One of the older participants (72 years of age) could recollect and explained in detail what her wedding cake looked like more than 40 years ago. Wilson (1972:195-196) comments on the increased popularity of

wedding cakes at the Christian wedding celebrations of the Nguni and ascribes this to the constant interaction with whites and their Western-oriented wedding practices that were replicated as "… a copy so far as resources permitted of white patterns of display."

The cake(s) has(ve) definitely become the centre of attraction at the wedding feast as is seen by the prominent place it is given on the bridal table. Moreover, the wedding cake(s) would be always be transported with care from the one celebration to the next and placed where it would be seen by all, endorses the view that it is indeed a very important item. Photographic records too bear testimony to this assumption[34]. Wedding cakes even match the colour scheme of the dresses of the bridal party and should have at least two to three tiers depending on the money available. Contrary to the customs of the Nguni groups in the Eastern Cape (Wilson, 1972:194), where two separate wedding cakes were provided, one by the bride's family and the other by the groom's family, the participants in this study indicated that the wedding cake is purchased by the bridal couple and used at both the celebrations at the bride's as well as the groom's family gathering. Some couples have a rich fruit cake as a wedding cake as well as a sponge cake replica. The wedding cake and its replica are taken from the bride's family to the groom's family celebration. In some cases, the wedding cake is not cut at either of these events. This depends on the type of cake, and how long it keeps. A rich fruit cake could be cut and eaten later on.

It became evident that various salient modern codes and meanings are represented by the wedding cake. The number of tiers or the size of the cake is a symbol of prestige. A three tiered cake seemed to be the norm. Some of the participants explained that the goat at the *isikiri* of the traditional Ndebele wedding is replaced by the wedding cake at the modern wedding celebrations and is a recently acquired notion. The wedding cake symbolises that the bride and the groom are now a married couple as explained in the following phrases:

"She said the wedding cake is like the goat at the isikiri, because there won't be a traditional wedding without the goat at the isikiri".

"So if they [bride and groom] *eat the wedding cake, it also symbolises that they are now together".*

Different versions about the cutting of the wedding cake were given by the participants. In most cases the cake is displayed at both the bride and the groom's family homes during the celebrations at each of these venues. It is then cut at the second celebration (at the groom's family) or soon after the celebration, if the cake would not keep. If it could be kept for some

[34] See Addendum E for photographs

time, the cutting of the cake could be done at a later stage. Some couples even have a special wedding cake cutting celebration. Friends, family and the rest of the bridal party are invited to this small celebration, which could be in the form of a *"braai"* (barbeque).

The cutting and eating of the wedding cake has become closely associated with ideological aspects that tie in with the belief system closely related to fertility and the *hlonipha*. Wilson (1972:188) also mentions that the "proper division and consumption of the cakes" seem to be associated with the future health and fertility of the bride.

The time when the wedding cake is cut, seemed to differ from family to family. Some participants, as described above, indicated that it could be at the celebration with the groom's family, while others said that this would only be the case if the bride already has a child. Some couples choose to cut the cake after the wedding celebrations and then have a separate celebration at a later date after the wedding. This varies and could be as soon as a week after the wedding or up to two to three months or even a year after the wedding. In some instances the cutting of the wedding cake only takes place after the birth of the first child, a common custom. The belief is that the cutting of the cake before the birth of the first child could render the bride childless. This was explained as follows:

"… it does stand for something, because some won't cut the cake if they want children".

" … so they will say that you must cut the cake after you have had the child. So then they see if you cut the cake before you had a child, then it is sort of not right. So you must wait until you have had a child".

In some families one of the tiers or a part of the wedding cake could be sent back to the bride's family. This practice is in line with Wilson's (1972:195) observation that the Nguni Christians divide the bottom layer of the cake between the families of both the groom and bride, and the mothers of the bridal couple then distribute these to close relatives who were not able to attend the wedding.

The Mmotla participants drew a parallel between the eating of the wedding cake and the eating of the *isikiri* goat. The meat from the *isikiri* goat is only eaten by the guests attending the *isikiri* celebration. These guests are the married friends of the bridal couple. The part of this goat that is taken back as evidence to the bride's family is eaten only by certain older female relatives of the bride (see 7.2.3). The reason for this relates to the taboo on the sharing of food between relatives-in-law; that strictly forbid the son-in-law and his mother-in-law, including her sisters to eat together (Richards, 1932:191; Fourie, 1921:165). This

explains why certain female relatives of the bride are not allowed to eat from the wedding cake, namely her mother and maternal aunts. The participants explained that the wedding cake is equivalent to the meat of the *isikiri* goat, and they were customarily not allowed to eat from this meat, as a sign of respect to the groom.

Unmarried young girls of 15 years and older are also not allowed to eat from the wedding cake. It is believed that these girls will *"…fail in their own marriages…"* if they eat from the cake before being married.

Charsley (1987a; 1987b), in his discussion on the interpretation and meaning of wedding cakes, notes that a number of meanings and symbols are attached to the wedding cake. However, it seems as though the precise meaning of the wedding cake is unknown, and that people often attach their own meaning, symbolism and metaphors to it, its cutting and distribution. This also seemed to be the case with the study group.

Forces from both the socio-cultural and social-psychological environments are in interplay and evident in the food practices characteristic of the modern wedding. Again, the dualism of the two worlds in which the participants live is illustrated in how they accommodate the social demands set by each of these to ensure their acceptance in both the traditional and the modern Western-oriented world. It is also exemplified in ways in which the two weddings, both the traditional and the modern, are celebrated. The general feeling is that it is important to be accepted in each of these worlds and, that in accommodating or pleasing both worlds, one is not forced to make a choice between either of the two. In other words, both are regarded as equally important. On the one hand, there is the fear of offending the ancestors by not adhering to the prescribed customs of the traditional wedding. Therefore in following these customs the cultural values and beliefs are honoured and the wrath of the ancestors averted. On the other hand, it is equally important to be regarded as part of the modern Western–oriented world and be included in the social activities associated with the peer or social group to which one belongs or aspires to belong. The hosting of a modern wedding seems to ensure the preservation of important social relationships within the chosen social group and to prevent social isolation from it.

Also illustrated here is how certain practices and aspects that represent the material culture of the Western-oriented wedding are taken or borrowed and how these are then bent, adapted or re-interpreted to fit into the modern wedding as part of the black South African life world. At the same time certain practices from the traditional wedding are brought in and skilfully combined with aspects of the Western-oriented wedding. In this process new procedures and associated symbols and meanings are created, resembling neither the old

nor the new. As suggested by the cultural perspective, people have the potential to transform their own realities by manipulating the objects in their cultural world (Kaiser, 1997:51). This implies that objects, ideas and images provided by culture could be used in imaginative ways. They may even be reorganised or combined in new ways. Through this, cultural conventions may be applied in new ways, may be broken or bent to help the individual make sense of reality. An excellent example is seen here in the parallel of the wedding cake and the *isikiri* goat and, to a lesser extent, in the two separate celebrations held with the bride's family as well as at the groom's home that resemble practices of the traditional wedding.

7.5 OTHER SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Other celebrations that have gained popularity in the Mmotla community are birthday and New Year's Day celebrations. These are observed by the majority of the participants. A number of other celebrations were mentioned that seemed to be becoming popular although these were recognised by only a few at the time of the study and include graduation parties, family reunions and celebrations to honour or thank parents or grandparents.

7.5.1 Birthdays

Birthday celebrations have become popular and important occasions for both adults and children. In the limited literature available on the food practices of the black South African population, birthday celebrations are not mentioned and it seems as if birthdays could be regarded as one of the new or added celebrations in the personal celebration category. This could be partly attributed to the legislation enforcing the registration of all births in South Africa on the one hand in terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Department of Home Affairs, 1992), and on the other hand to the fact that all children from age of seven years have to attend formal schooling (South African Schools Act of 1996). These measures could possibly have led to increased awareness of a person's birth date and the significance of celebrating it. The older participants in this study confirmed that when they were growing up, birthdays were certainly not specially celebrated but they had noticed that this was now happening more frequently than before. The increased frequency and popularity of birthday celebrations seems to relate to a degree of prestige attached to it, and as one of the older participants remarked:

"… it is fashionable to have birthday parties."

Guests invited to birthday celebrations include family members, friends, neighbours and church members. Everyone who is invited brings a present for the person who is having the birthday. Most birthday celebrations are held over weekends when everybody is at home and free to participate and also because more money is likely to be available for a celebration to enable them to purchase additional and special food items for the occasion. To be *"fashionable"* means one is able to host a celebration where more and *"modern food"* is served, and to be in the position to purchase a birthday cake, referred to as *khekhe.* The importance and centrality that the birthday cake enjoys in birthday celebrations of both old and young is illustrated in the photos obtained from family photograph albums of the participants (see Addendum E). To be able to purchase a nicely decorated birthday cake conveyed the financial position of the family. Even when the hostess was in a position to bake a cake, the birthday cake was always purchased. This was explained by the following quotation:

"There are the ones that they bake themselves, but the big one, the special one for the birthday, they will buy it from the shops."

When the birthday of a person falls on a weekday, and there is sufficient money available, the food prepared for the family meal can include something special such as rice, meat (chicken in most cases), vegetables and salads, a dessert such as ice cream and cooldrinks.

The birthday celebrations for children and adults are discussed separately, because they differ according to the type of food served.

7.5.1.1 Birthday celebrations for children

The celebration for pre-school children could typically either be at home or at the pre-school. When the celebration is at the pre-school the purchased birthday cake is taken to school with the rest of the treats and the party is held at the pre-school with the friends of the child. The celebration for school-going children takes place on either a Saturday or Sunday. The centre of attraction, the colourful iced, purchased birthday cake with candles, is placed on a big table covered with a tablecloth and decorated with flowers. The invited friends of the child are seated around the table. They sing and enjoy themselves. Other party treats include *dikhekhe*, potato crisps, peanuts, *romantics* (a type of pink candy), cooldrinks, juice and dessert such as jelly, canned fruit and custard sauce.

7.5.1.2 Birthday celebrations for adults

The birthday celebrations for adults are in most cases over weekends, due to the fact that families and friends are at home and it is more likely that they then have money and time available for the celebration. Birthday parties are often organised by the children or grandchildren of an elderly person in the form of a surprise birthday party.

The type food prepared depends on the money available and in most cases more meat is served. A sheep can, for example, be slaughtered, or purchased from the butchery. In the case of a big celebration a beast is slaughtered. In most instances modern food is served and these include meat dishes (beef and chicken), rice, vegetables and salads, cooldrinks, beer (traditional and commercial) and stiff maize-meal porridge. Guests are also served *dikhekhe* (purchased, iced birthday cakes) and *dikuku* (small scone-type of home-baked cakes without icing).

A *braaivleis* seemed to be a very popular way to celebrate adults' birthdays in this community. Meat such as beef and *boerewors* are roasted over the coals. Other food and beverages include *bogobe*, rice, vegetables and salads together with traditional and commercial beer. The purchased iced birthday cake is usually served as part of the variety of sweets for dessert.

7.5.1.3 The 21st birthday celebration

This is a very popular celebration and is regarded as one of the more modern, high status, celebrations in the community. It was admitted that the celebration is borrowed from the white people, as the black people traditionally did not have such a celebration. There are, however, certain conditions attached to whether this celebration is held for a person or not. The person turning twenty-one must have undergone the initiation process (where applicable), and must not have had a child. The celebration is then given in honour of the person turning twenty-one by their parents as a gesture to thank them for behaving well by not having a child before being married. The 21st birthday celebration can take various formats. It can be in the form of an informal dance party at home, or it can be a formal celebration with a fixed programme and even have a master of ceremonies. Those who have close ties with the church indicated that this celebration could be held in collaboration with the church. In this instance the pastor or priest opens the celebrations with a prayer and during the course of the function a special prayer is said for the person turning twenty-one. No liquor is served at such a celebration.

The food served at 21st birthday celebrations consists of modern food, similar to that prepared for a Sunday midday meal, although a larger variety of food is prepared. Several meat dishes; such as fried chicken, mutton and or beef stew, meatballs, and a variety of vegetable dishes, salads and desserts are prepared. A special birthday cake with '21' iced on it and 21 candles is purchased. Other food and beverages could include items such as snacks (peanuts, potato crisps, sweets) *dikuku*, ginger beer, commercial beer and cooldrinks. Some traditional foods such as *bogobe*, *ting mabele* and traditional beer could also be served.

Forces from both the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are prominent in the manner in which birthday celebrations are conducted. The prestige attached to hosting a birthday party is reflected in the special invitation to the guests to attend the celebration. The kind of food offered and the manner in which it is presented serves as another example. Apart from a larger variety of modern food the emphasis placed on the display and serving of a beautifully iced birthday cake and decorated table with tablecloth, crockery, cutlery and flowers all indicate that birthday parties are very special occasions. Hosting a birthday party with all the trimmings shows that the host is keeping up with the changing times, and is a modern and educated person, having a certain economic standing. The emphasis is on social relationships and this is evident in the importance that is placed on sharing it with others, through the invitations extended to friends, family neighbours and other church members.

7.5.2 New Year's Day celebration

A New Year's Day celebration is described as a happy and joyous occasion and, similar to Christmas, church services are attended on New Year's Eve or on New Year's Day. Apart from the religious emphasis, being together with family and friends is regarded as important and this day is set aside for family and visiting others.

The food served was described as similar to that which is prepared for Christmas or a Sunday and consists mainly of modern food items combined with favourite traditional dishes associated with special occasions and celebrations. The following were specially mentioned: rice, chicken and salads, *idombolo*, vegetables, dessert, cooldrinks and cakes such as the home-baked *dikuku* and biscuits. Other favourite dishes include *idombolo* and chicken, and one participant described a special complicated dish of ground *mabele* and *umrorho* that she prepares for her family on New Year's Day.

Some revealed that they enjoy an outdoor celebration and have a *braaivleis* or picnic on New Year's Day. At a *braaivleis* they have meat (beef, *boerewors*, mutton and chicken) and *bogobe.* For a picnic, food is prepared and packed at home and taken along to a museum or park elsewhere. The prepared food could include items such as scones, bread rolls, buns, lettuce and tomato. Some would even *braai* at the picnic and the *bogobe* is then prepared at home and taken along.

Apart from birthday and New Year's Day celebrations a few participants revealed that they hosted and/or participated in graduation celebrations, family reunions and celebrations to honour parents or grandparents.

7.5.3 Graduation celebrations

This celebration is held in honour of a graduate (mainly from a tertiary educational institution) and hosted by the parents, provided they have the money available for such a celebration. Friends, family and neighbours would be invited, as well as the friends of the graduate who then all wear their academic gowns and caps. The purpose of the celebration is to give the parents of the graduate the opportunity to express their gratitude to their child, because: *"the parents will show how grateful they are"*. At the celebration the graduate also makes a speech to thank the parents.

The type of celebration depends on the money available. It could vary from being a small informal get-together to a very elaborate formal occasion. A formal celebration would, for example, take place at a special venue or in a marquee tent erected in the yard of the family hosting the celebration. A master of ceremonies (programme director) and a set programme would be part of a formal function. The food served at graduate celebrations is mainly modern food and includes various meat dishes (a beast, sheep or chickens can be slaughtered), rice, vegetables, salads and desserts. Beverages such as traditional and commercial beer are served together with soft drinks.

7.5.4 Family reunions

It seemed as if this occasion is important to some families from the Ndebele group. Family reunions are usually held once or twice a year during the Christmas holidays and/or during the winter months. It was explained that family reunions were essential, because people live apart and don't have enough contact with each other to know their relatives and who they are: *"Because nowadays families are scattered …"* It also serves as a precaution to guard against children from the same family marrying each other.

On this occasion the ancestors would also be informed that the family is now together, and traditional beer is prepared. It was emphasised that families and/or individuals in a family should not be in conflict with each other, and if they experience conflict it has to be resolved before the gathering takes place. The importance of harmonious relationships between family members at such an occasion was emphasised. The reason why this is important was that the ancestors *"… will not pour good luck to you, because our ancestors are the same, …"* This again illustrates the high premium that this group places on having good relationships with family members and the belief that such good behaviour ensures the goodwill of the ancestors.

Modern and traditional food is prepared and the individual families who attend the reunion all contribute to cover the expenses for the food. The date for the next reunion is then usually determined as the whole family is together.

7.5.5 Celebration to honour or thank parents / grandparents

This is another of the newly added special occasions, celebrated by some. It is described as a celebration to honour of parents or grandparents and thank them for what they have done and meant in the lives of their children and/or grandchildren. This celebration is held at any time when the family feel that they want to organise such an event. Friends and family of the parents/grandparents are invited as well as the members of the church. A church service is first attended and the person honoured also receives presents. A beast could be slaughtered and modern food is prepared for this celebration.

7.5.6 Meanings of the food practices at other special occasions

The food practices and the meanings attached to the modern special occasions all follow the same pattern and mainly modern food, similar to the Sunday midday meal, is served. Favourite traditional dishes such as *bogobe, ting mabele* and traditional beer are included, however, the focus in on the large quantities and variety of modern or Western-oriented dishes. This serves to indicate that those who host these modern special occasions are modern and educated people who have the financial means to do so.

7.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Marriage rituals of black South Africans have changed over the course of time, and so have the food practices associated with wedding celebrations. It emerged that, although the

modern wedding has gained considerable popularity amongst the Mmotla participants, both traditional and modern wedding formats are celebrated, for the reason that the traditional wedding is set as a precondition for the modern wedding. In most cases people nowadays only follow the traditional wedding procedures up to the delivery of the bridal wealth. Depending on the church group they belong to, most of the Ndebele participants indicated that they continue to follow their elaborate traditional wedding procedures. To contextualise and understand the two wedding formats as celebrated by the Ndebele, both the traditional and modern wedding celebrations were given.

An outstanding feature of the traditional Ndebele wedding is that the food practices associated with the main events have special meanings and reflect that food, as material culture, is employed in the process to fulfil specific roles and functions. Throughout the entire process, forces from the socio-cultural and the socio-psychological environments are present and are represented in the food practices. During the *isimanje,* for example, food is used to communicate important messages with regard to the social relationship between the bride and her future in-laws. Out of respect to them, she initially refuses to eat the food offered to her, and only after the sum of money is handed to her as sign that she is accepted as guest, does she eat from the food prepared for her as a special and honoured guest. The *isikiri* goat slaughtered for the bride and specific parts of this goat have a number of symbolic meanings that embody not only the cultural values and beliefs of the groom's family, but also include concern for the social relationship between the bride and the family of the groom. As symbol of the traditional Ndebele wedding, its importance and centrality is further highlighted by taking part of a foreleg back to the bride's family, to serve as a relevant traditional code or as evidence that traditional customs were followed.

The slaughter of the two beasts and the exchange of the meat between the two families during the *idwende*, likewise, have symbolic meaning. The exchange of the meat and the allocation of certain parts to specific family members represent the new social ties that are formed and convey specific messages about the event thereby acknowledging the social obligations within each family. In addition, the exchange of the meat from the slaughtered animals, symbolises the acknowledgement of the new social relationship arising from the marriage and that both families are in agreement that the *lobolo* transaction has been completed to the satisfaction of each family. The allocation of certain parts of the beast to specific family members is an additional sign of the strengthening and cherishing of family ties.

That traditional wedding procedures continue to exist reflects dedication, indicating that traditional customs are not only valued, but also that due recognition is being given to the

ancestors. Adhering to cultural traditions shows that they are honoured, acknowledged and remembered, as exemplified in the practice of following ritual procedures such as informing the ancestors of the event and the slaughtering of the *isikiri* goat and the beasts at the *indwende*. Deep-seated cultural values and beliefs contribute to the entrenchment of these traditional procedures.

The modern wedding on the other hand, has become popular mainly because of the prestige and social status attached to it. It has become important to be recognised as a modern, educated and successful person and one who has the financial means to host a modern wedding celebration. This again illustrates the dualism of the two worlds that the participants are in contact with and in which they live.

Again, food as material culture has symbolic meaning and conveys messages. Of special interest is how certain Western-oriented practices have been borrowed, bent to serve a different purpose or re-interpreted. Through this process new meanings and modern codes are created. The parallel drawn between the *isikiri* goat and the wedding cake serves as an example of how the participants gave their own meaning to the wedding cake in an imaginative way. New and modern codes with regard to the cutting and eating of the wedding cake were developed and, in keeping with the traditional significance of the *isikiri* goat, these related to aspects concerning the future fertility of the bride and the *hlonipha.*

In the last part of this chapter attention was given to a number of recently introduced special occasions that have gained popularity such as birthdays and New Year's Day celebrations. These are observed by the majority of the participants, and even those celebrated by only a few of them, were also highlighted. These celebrations are popularly referred to as modern special occasions, and they all follow similar patterns with regard to food practices. Emphasis is placed on the provision of a variety of modern food dishes in large quantities to represent the socio-economic status of the host, or that to which is aspired. Birthday celebrations in particular seemed to have gained popularity and have become prestigious occasions celebrated by both young and old.

The following chapter deals with food practices associated with religious occasions.

TERMINOLOGY LIST

amanganga	Breast section of the *isikiri* goat. See Figure 7.2
amasi	Sour milk
amathumbu	IsiNdebele for intestine
amavenge	Front leg part of the *iskiri* goat taken to the bride's family as evidence that the goat was slaughtered for her. See Figure 7.3
boerewors	A coarse loose textured beef and pork sausage flavoured with spices such as coriander, cloves, nutmeg and all spice
bogobe	Stiff maize-meal porridge
braaivleis / braai	Afrikaans for barbeque
dikhekhe	Plural for purchased iced cakes. Singular *khekhe*
dikuku/ amakuke	Popular scone-type of baked product without icing. See Addendum D
hlonipha	Showing respect towards someone or to treat someone respectfully
idwende	The second wedding celebration in the traditional Ndebele wedding procedures
irhayi	Dish prepared from dried maize and cowpeas. See Addendum C
isidudu	Soft maize-meal porridge prepared from the discarded during the beer brewing process. See Addendum C
isifunzi	Back section of the slaughtered beast. See Figure 7.4 part 6
isikiri	Last phase of the *isimanje*. First wedding celebration at the groom's parents' home
isimanje	The couple of days that the bride spends at the home of the groom's parents in preparation for her marriage into the family
isithebe	Woven grass mat to receive the grinded grain from the grinding stone
imvu yabayenyana	Goat slaughtered for groom at the second wedding celebration at the bride's family
lobolo	Bridal wealth
makoti	Bride
mala	Intestines
mogodu	Tripe
molatsa	Left-over food or *bogobe*
morogo	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables
nomyezani	Future sister-in-law of the bride, usually the wife of the brother older than the groom
setlhana	Rump section of the slaughtered beast. See Figure 7.5
ting mabele	Fermented soft sorghum porridge. See Addendum C
ukghari	Eldest sister of the father
ukugenisa ubaba	Celebration where the young married woman invites her father-in-law to her home for the first time after the strictest *hlonipha* rules have been lifted
umhlambiso	Part of the second wedding celebration where the beasts are slaughtered and the bride hands over the gifts to the groom's family
umkhupha	Maize-meal and legume dish. See Addendum C
umrorho	isiNdebele for indigenous green leafy vegetables
umseme	Woven grass sleeping mats. Plural *imiseme*
umtsikitlana	isiNdebele for sour porridge

CHAPTER 8

FOOD PRACTICES AND THEIR MEANINGS ON RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The religious beliefs and world views of the participants form part of, and often steer, the format of a special occasion, including its food practices, to either the traditional or modern Western-oriented side. As mentioned in the introduction to this section on the findings of special occasions, the church groups to which people belong have been instrumental in persuading them to either abandon or accommodate belief in the ancestral spirits. Two types of religious occasions exist, namely those linked to ancestral devotion and Christianity.

Ancestral veneration and the associated rituals continue to play an important role in the lives of those who still adhere to the traditional African religion where the foundation of the belief system rests on the belief in the ancestors. This became clear through the emphasis placed on the strict adherence to traditional customs, following the prescriptions of the ancestors and honouring and informing them of all celebrations associated with the rites of passage such as initiation, weddings and funerals. On the other hand, through the continued contact with religious institutions, churches and the Western-oriented culture, Christian religious occasions and their associated celebrations have also been taken up in this community, as has happened in many other black South African communities. Christmas and Easter are regarded as the most significant Christian celebrations in South Africa and have thus become equally important celebrations in black South African communities (Pauw, 1974:415).

In this chapter food practices relating to ancestral ritual venerations are given first, followed by those of funerals. Funerals, as the last rite of passage, are regarded as religious occasions and the procedures, including food practices, and meanings attached to them are discussed. The chapter concludes with an account of food practices that feature at Christian religious events.

8.2 ANCESTRAL RITUAL OCCASIONS AND THE MEANINGS OF THE FOOD PRACTICES

The participants who continued to engage in ancestral veneration often emphasised the importance of regular communication with the ancestors. They regarded it of the utmost importance to remember the ancestors and to inform them of what was happening to their descendants that they had left behind here on earth. They were expected to demonstrate this to the ancestors in a tangible way such as through the blood of a slaughtered animal and traditional beer. If not done to the satisfaction of the ancestors, it is believed that misfortune and unhappiness could follow and only be rectified by performing other specific ritual procedures at a specially arranged occasion for the ancestors. In this regard, Pauw (1974:440) too comments that it was necessary that the ancestors be honoured on a continuous basis.

As described in Chapters 6 and 7, communication with the ancestors takes place at all major events in a person's life, from birth to death and burial and even thereafter at the unveiling of the tombstone. Apart from being informed about the important milestones in the lives of their descendants, they should also know about other important incidents such as moving from one area of residence to another, purchasing a new car or home, or finding new employment. The reason for this is because the ancestors *"… must know what happens to their family members."* It is believed that people have misfortunes such as becoming ill or unemployed, or experience problems in personal relations when the ancestors are not honoured and remembered. One of the participants emphasised this in the following quotation:

"… all these factors make families to worship their ancestors to inform them of their problems as well as their accomplishments."

Some families even have a special occasion in honour of their ancestors once a year to ensure good relations with their ancestors and amongst each other, as described under family reunions (see 7.5.4). When remembering and honouring ancestors, it is believed that good fortune and prosperity is guaranteed.

It can also happen that the ancestors indicate that they need to be remembered by communicating this through dreams or other signs such as illness or when misfortunes are experienced. In these instances, a traditional healer is consulted who then interprets the dream, sign or reason for the illness or misfortune. According to the participants, in most cases, the traditional healer's interpretation is that the ancestors are unhappy or feel

neglected, and that they want to be remembered because, *"…the ancestors want you to think of them*". The traditional healer usually points out that a ritual celebration has to be performed in honour of the ancestors. This ritual is called *"go phasa*" and the traditional healer would specify the procedure for the occasion called *"mphaso".* The traditional healer gives a detailed directive of what needs to be slaughtered, such as the colour and gender of the animal.

There are a number of places where ancestral communication could take place. It could be at a special place in the yard next to the house that is specifically reserved for the ancestors or sometimes at the grave of family members when communicating with a specific ancestor. During the slaughtering process and communication with the ancestors the family members are seated in a circle. Blood, beer and snuff are used in ancestral communication. The animal, usually a goat or chicken is slaughtered first and it is essential that the blood of the sacrificed animal be used. In this regard, Hammond-Tooke (1974:352) refers to "the blood sacrifice" in the rituals performed by the Nguni, Tsonga and some Sotho-groups. The participants explained that: *"You are going to serve the ancestor with the blood."* This is followed by the traditional beer and snuff. The older family members sip from the traditional beer first, and then the younger generation follows. The sipped beer is then spewed out on the ground, snuff is taken and, while sprinkling the snuff on the spewed-out beer, the communication takes place. The snuff goes hand in hand with the traditional beer and it was explained that *"…you can't have the beer and not the snuff"*.

Certain rules apply for the preparation and serving of the traditional beer for ancestral communication. The beer must be prepared by a relative of the ancestor and family members are not allowed to drink from this beer before it has been served to the ancestors. The ancestors request the beer and it is specifically prepared for them, therefore they should be the first to receive and enjoy it. The beer for the ancestors is not sieved and the malted solid sorghum parts known as *"serobe*", are regarded as *"food for the ancestors*". Only after the beer has been served or poured for the ancestors is it sieved and enjoyed by the rest of the family.

A number of reasons were given why the beer for the ancestors is not sieved. The Ndebele group explained that the traditional beer *unotlabalala* was used for ancestral communication and traditionally it was not sieved. The solid particles in it were compared to *bogobe* and regarded as the most important part of the beer because of the belief that it has strength and thus regarded as food or nourishment. The liquid part was not considered important. The beer was prepared specifically for the ancestors and they required all the ingredients in the beer, because it is their celebration. Others were of the opinion that to sieve, or not to sieve,

the beer depends on family traditions and on the information received from their ancestors via the interpretation of the traditional healer. The traditional healers know how the beer should be and, since they do not sieve it, the example of the traditional healers is followed when preparing traditional beer for the ancestors.

The central theme at ancestral occasions is to demonstrate to the ancestors that they are still remembered, honoured and respected. The *hlonipha* principle is not only demonstrated through performing ancestral rituals, but is also simultaneously symbolised in a tangible manner through the food eaten during these rituals and the festivities that follow.

The blood of the slaughtered animal and the solid particles of the traditional sorghum beer are the most essential food components associated with the ritual of ancestral communication and both are seen as nourishment required by the ancestors. Sorghum was once the most important and widely used staple food on the African continent but has been replaced by maize as staple food in the daily diet of most of southern African ethnic groups (Labadarios *et al*., 1996; Quin, 1959:24-25). The importance of sorghum and the cultural value attached to it is demonstrated through the central position it still holds in these religious traditions. It continues to be the grain of choice in religious rituals offered the ancestors. In the well-known classification system of food by Jelliffe (1967), staple foods that are involved in religious rituals are referred to as cultural super-foods. Sorghum therefore continues to hold the superior position of being a cultural super-food.

When money is not available for slaughtering the required animal, a maize-meal and water mixture could be used as an emergency substitute. This is, for example, acceptable when the ancestors request a specific animal and there isn't money to purchase it. Maize-meal and water can then be used instead of the slaughtered animal or traditional beer. An apology must, however, be made to the ancestors, with an explanation that there is no money and that their request will be obeyed as soon as it is available. Maize-meal has thus obtained a similar status as sorghum, as it is used in emergency situations as substitute for traditional beer, which is also meaningful. Hereby maize-meal is similarly acknowledged as a cultural super-food according to the classification system by Jelliffe (1967).

Communication with the ancestors either takes place late in the afternoon or early in the morning around four o'clock. The meat of the slaughtered animal is then put out for the ancestors by leaving it for a certain period of time, such as overnight or for the whole day. This allows the ancestors to see what was slaughtered for them, before it is cooked and eaten by their descendants. The meat, together with traditional beer and a jug or basin of water, is left at a specific place in the house to give the ancestors the opportunity to enjoy the

food they requested. Hammond–Tooke (1974:353) also refers to this practice where the ancestors are given their share first, before the rest of the family is allowed to eat from the meat.

After the ancestors have had the opportunity to see what was slaughtered for them, the meat of the animal is prepared as part of the menu for the family to celebrate the communication that took place. This is usually done the day after the communication took place or late in the afternoon if the animal was slaughtered early in the morning. According to an elderly participant, the family is not allowed to eat from the meat on the day that the communication with the ancestors took place. She explained it as follows:

" … *when they talk to the ancestors they are not supposed to eat anything, when they do like this* [abstain from eating], *they want the ancestors to eat and drink, it is* ***their*** *food. So they give the ancestors the whole day to eat and drink."*

Some were of the opinion that the meat from the sacrificed animals tasted different, *"… the meat, it does not taste nice. You can just feel it is for the ancestors, it is not for us people to eat."* They intimated that they could taste that the strength had been taken out of the meat because of the ancestors who had consumed from the meat. Fourie (1921:69-70) offers a similar description as provided by one of his participants who explained that "De abezimu nemen de kracht, de kracht is wegelopen, het vlees is licht".

Hlonipha is not only demonstrated through the slaughter of the animal, but also in the acknowledgement of the seniority of the ancestors by giving them the opportunity to be the first to enjoy the meat and the beer. Hammond-Tooke (1974:360) explains that the killing of the animal for the ancestors is a symbolic act of respect for the deceased seniors. Their seniority and the associated respect is further symbolised through the recognition that is given to them as seniors, in the social organisation of the family, even after their death, as explained by Richards (1932:183). The family meal that is prepared after the ancestors had had the opportunity to enjoy their food, likewise has symbolic meaning attached to it. The family enjoys the same food as the ancestors and, in doing so, the unity of the family is symbolised. Hammond-Tooke (1974:353) describes this as "a communion meal which symbolically unites the living and the dead."

The emphasis placed on the preparation and serving of traditional food at the celebration that follows reflects another aspect of respect and hospitality, namely, taking into consideration the type of food prepared. Traditional food is prepared in honour of the ancestors. No modern food is prepared and the reason given was that the ancestors do not want modern

food, because: *"It is tradition they must have their traditional food".* The participants explained that the ancestors are only familiar with traditional food, and it is assumed that they prefer it to modern food. They are honoured through this feast and, as one honours guests by serving them their preferred food, so it should be done for the ancestors, hence the serving of traditional food for them.

The ancestors require that customs are pursued and it is believed that they are pleased and satisfied when their descendants do so. To please the ancestors on these occasions is regarded as being of the utmost importance in order to win their favour. This explains why traditional food is always served when communication with the ancestors takes place. The provision of traditional food is seen as adhering to customs and ensures that the ancestors are satisfied. The importance attached to preserving and honouring traditional food customs at ritual communication ceremonies, is further contextualised through the traditional equipment and utensils that are used when presenting food to the ancestors.

During ancestral communication meanings associated with the socio-psychological and socio-cultural environments are in interplay. The cultural perspective indicates that collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms (Kaiser, 1997:49). Traditional food, as a form of culture, fulfils a central role in ancestral communication and, as material artefact, represents the shared values that are linked to the belief and value systems of the participants. Traditional food, on the one hand, symbolises the principal values of respect and honour towards the ancestors in a tangible manner and, on the other hand, the belief that the ancestors would be content and bestow good fortune on their descendants.

8.3 FUNERAL PROCEDURES

To contextualise the modern funeral, the course of the traditional funeral as told by the older participants is briefly described first. This facilitates the comparison of the current and traditional funeral practices. The account given by the participants is similar to that described by Eiselen and Schapera (1962:248).

8.3.1 Traditional funerals

Only the older people were informed when someone passed away. As far as children were concerned, it was kept as a secret and they were not told that a person had passed away. People were buried on the same day they passed away, usually at night. The older participants remembered that there were separate burial places for men and women. Men

were buried in the cattle *kraal* (cattle pen) and women in the *lapa*, a small, unthatched *"verandah*" at the back of the house. This information concurs with the work done by Eiselen and Schapera (1962:248) who document the absence of cemeteries and communal burial places and state that men were buried in the cattle *kraal* or near its fence and women and children behind or inside the hut. The ancestors were informed of the death through maize-meal, water, ash and snuff because there was not enough time to prepare traditional beer (maize-meal, water, ash and snuff were used as an emergency substitute for traditional beer). A beast was usually slaughtered. The Ndebele participants, however, indicated that both a beast and a goat were slaughtered. The skin of the beast was used to cover the body, and the skin of the goat was used as a vest *"iporiyana"* for a male and as *"imbeleko"* (blanket) for a female.

There were certain rules and restrictions with regard to the attendance and food preparation at funerals and for a widow directly after the death of her husband. Only people older than fifty were allowed to attend the burial ceremony. A daughter-in-law was not allowed to attend the funeral of her father-in-law, and a son-in-law was not allowed to attend the funeral of his mother-in-law due to the prescribed *hlonipha* rules.

Only meat and *bogobe* were prepared for the funeral. The meat, called *"mogoga"* in Setswana and *"umthuso"* in isiNdebele, was prepared outside the house in a special place in the yard called *"ibandla"* or *"khoro"* (family gathering place) by the older men of the family. Only men from the immediate family of the deceased were allowed to prepare the meat. According to some participants, only widowed persons were allowed to eat the food prepared for the funeral, while others indicated that it was only the older people who were allowed to eat at funerals. Fourie (1921:143) adds to this view saying that the meat was eaten only by those who dug the grave (these were the male relatives of the deceased) and older women; nobody else was allowed to eat from it. The funeral meat was prepared without salt and the *bogobe* was not made at the house where the person died, but was prepared by the neighbours and friends and then brought to the funeral. The two main reasons given for this was that they did not want the children to know what had happened and, in the second place, they were in shock because of the death of their relative and therefore did not have the strength to prepare the food. According to some of the participants, the daughters-in-law of a family prepared the *bogobe* for the funeral, brought it to the funeral, but had to return home immediately because they were not allowed to attend the funeral or eat from the food. The rule with regard to the preparation of the *bogobe* appears to have changed over time, as some participants indicated that women were now starting to prepare the *bogobe*, although they were not allowed to attend the funeral. At the time of the study, the men were still responsible for the meat preparation at funerals.

With regard to preparing and serving food for a newly widowed person, rules were clearly in place but there were different views about how long after the funeral these rules applied. According to some, another widow prepared the food for the newly widowed person for the first two to three days after the funeral, others were of the opinion that it was only for one day. Another older participant indicated that traditionally when a woman's husband passed away, these rules applied only up to the funeral and that after the funeral the widow was allowed to eat with other family members again.

8.3.2 Modern funerals and meanings attached to the food practices

Funeral procedures including some of the rules attached to them have changed over the past years. These changes relate to the funeral arrangements and procedures, the attendance at funerals and the food, its preparation, serving and eating.

The burial societies, to whom most people belong, fulfil an important role by assisting with the arrangements for the modern funeral. When a family member passes away, the death is immediately reported to the burial society to which the family belongs. The body is taken to the mortuary to be prepared for burial. The family, in consultation with the burial society decides on the date for the funeral that would usually take place over a weekend, on the Saturday. This is a practical arrangement to enable people who work, as well as those who have to travel, to attend it (it can therefore take a week or even two weeks before a person is buried after he/she passed away).

The course of the modern funeral is depicted in the flow diagram presented in Figure 8.1.

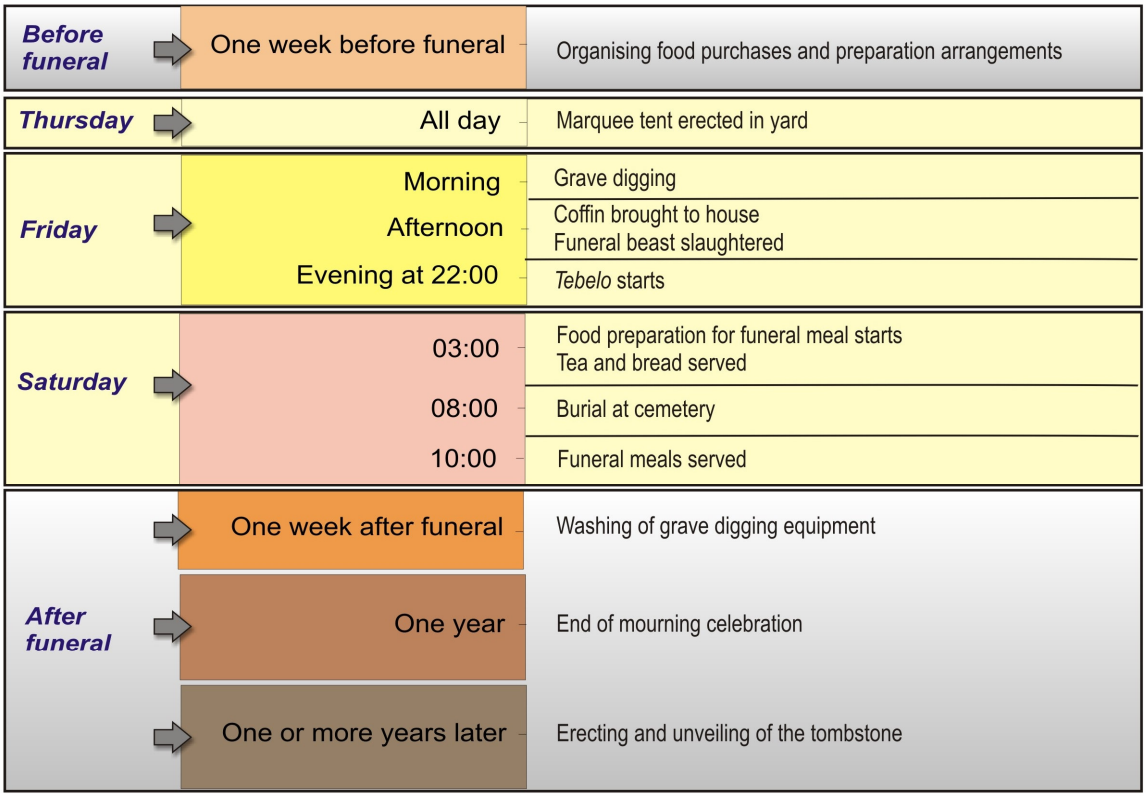

FIGURE 8.1: THE COURSE OF THE MODERN FUNERAL

During the week before the funeral, neighbours and friends come to comfort the bereaved family. Tea and *dikuku* could be served to them, and sometimes meals consisting of *bogobe*, *maotwana* (chicken feet) and cabbage are offered. A big marquee tent is erected in the yard of the bereaved family on the Thursday before the funeral, to accommodate the mourners who attend the funeral service on Friday night and the burial on Saturday morning.

The programme for the funeral starts on Friday with the digging of the grave when the *diphiri* (gravediggers) dig the grave at the cemetery. The gravediggers could either be male neighbours or relatives. In some sections in the Mmotla village there are special teams who are paid for these services. The gravediggers first come to the house as a relative of the deceased must accompany them and be present at the cemetery.

The coffin with the deceased is brought back to the house late on Friday afternoon. The coffin is placed in a specific room in the house from whence it is taken on Saturday morning to the cemetery for the burial. Some of the family members of the deceased keep vigil at the coffin during the night.

In some families the beast that is slaughtered as funeral meat, would only be slaughtered after the coffin had arrived at the house, while some participants indicated that the beast could be slaughtered before the coffin arrives. It seems as if this depends on the family traditions of the bereaved family. In the Ndebele group, the skin of this beast is buried with the deceased and the tradition to use the skin of the animal to cover the body is still followed by some. Other families, however, fold the skin and put it on top of the coffin. It appears that the slaughter of a beast is still regarded as an important part of the funeral procedures of the Ndebele group. It was emphasised that, when money is not available to slaughter a beast, it still has to be done some time later, then the skin is buried at the grave.

On Friday night, the memorial service, the *"tebello"* is held. Priests/*Baruti* (there can be up to five) from different churches in the community, lead the *tebello* service. The *tebello* starts at 22:00 on Friday evening and continues through the night until early on Saturday morning. On Saturday morning the mourners first attend a church service at the church before the burial takes place at the cemetery. The owner of the mortuary provides a hearse and family car to transport the coffin and the family to the church and cemetery on Saturday morning. The burial usually takes place between 8:00 and 10:00.

The custom of informing the ancestors of what had happened to the deceased as part of the funeral proceedings, was still adhered to by some at the time of the study. The ancestors would be informed when the funeral procession leaves the house of the deceased for the burial, or at the graveside. Traditional beer is used in this communication with the ancestors. The following quotations illustrate the role of traditional beer and the importance of communicating major events to the ancestors:

"Some, when the coffin goes to the graveyard the family will pour the traditional beer to inform the ancestors".

"In the morning of the day of the funeral, before they go to the burial, they will tell the ancestors, here we are, this one is coming to you; they must know this. The traditional beer is prepared in some families to inform the ancestors that there is this one coming to them as ancestor".

The pouring of the traditional beer serves as a salient traditional code to define the act of communication with the ancestors. Not only is the communication with the ancestors represented through this act, but it is simultaneously symbolic of the ideological beliefs associated with the rite of passage from this world to that of the ancestors.

On returning to the home of the bereaved family, the mourners wash their hands in a basin of water placed at the gate to the yard and the funeral meal is served in the marquee tent. The hand washing relates to the custom of getting rid of the pollution associated with death, as described by Eiselen and Schapera (1962:249). Those who attend a funeral have to be "ceremonially cleansed".

People of any age may attend a funeral and most of them are allowed to eat the funeral meal. Participants from the Ndebele group, however, mentioned exceptions. According to them, in some families daughters-in-law are still not allowed to attend the funeral of their father-in-law, and sons-in-law the funeral of their mother-in-law, while others indicated that they could. Attendance of the funeral by the children-in-law was, however, subject to certain strict rules that they had to follow. They were not allowed near the coffin and when the coffin came out of the house to the tent the Saturday morning they were not allowed in the tent. They could go to the burial at the cemetery but were not allowed near the coffin. They were also not allowed to eat the funeral meat if a beast had been slaughtered.

A description and interpretation of the food and food practices associated with the modern funeral is given in the next sections.

8.3.2.1 Food preparation

At the time of the study most funerals were held over weekends to enable people who are employed to attend. Family and friends of the deceased often have to travel far to attend the funeral that begins on Friday evening and continues throughout the night until the next morning as explained above. It was emphasised that these people "… *are not allowed to go back hungry".* This was given as reason why a large quantity of food has to be prepared for the mourners who attend the funeral.

In contrast to the traditional funeral, more attention is given to the food prepared at the modern funeral than was previously the case. Funerals have become important social events in most black South African communities and understandably much emphasis is placed on the food. A large variety of food is prepared, and people of all ages are nowadays allowed to attend funerals due to the lifting of the age restriction for attendance, with the result that it has become an expensive occasion.

The food preparation for the funeral meal is organised by the burial society and/or support group. Depending on the constitution of the society, they either give money to purchase the

food for the bereaved family, or the society decides what to prepare and someone is appointed to purchase the required ingredients.

The food preparation for the funeral meal starts very early on the Saturday morning at about 03:00. A male member from the bereaved family prepares the meat. Members from the support group and/or burial society prepare the rest of the dishes. This, however, largely depends on the constitution of the support group/burial society. Early on Saturday morning before the mourners go to the cemetery, tea and bread and/or *dikuku* is served to all who attended the *tebello* service during the night.

Although the menu prepared at funerals could be described as consisting mainly of modern food, certain traditional dishes are always prepared. These dishes include, apart from the meat of the slaughtered beast, *bogobe, ting ya mabele* and beverages such as *gemere* (ginger beer), juice and in some cases traditional beer. Once again traditional food is served side-by-side with modern food. However, it needs to be pointed out that traditional beer is only served by those who are not forbidden by their church to do so (see 4.4.2).

The traditional practice of preparing the food without salt is still followed by some, while others add salt and even use modern condiments such as spices and seasoning salts. Another change observed by the participants was that some years ago only tea and bread was served to the mourners before the burial early on the Saturday morning, and that, at the time of the study, cake and *dikuku* would often be served instead of bread with the tea.

It seems as if the food is used as a gauge of the social status of the bereaved family and that the opinion of others in evaluating the event has become important. The funeral meal therefore receives a great deal of attention. An elderly participant even compared a funeral to a wedding when the food served at the modern funeral was compared to the practices followed previously. She stated that:

"… they cook now like the wedding, just like the wedding. It has to be discussed".

The reason for this comparison related to the large quantities of meat and salads that were served at funerals that added to the cost. She explained that the food served at funerals has become so extravagant that most people cannot afford it but still go to a great deal of trouble and expense, and even get into debt, to supply food to the mourners who attend the funeral. Examples were given of families who were not in a position to purchase even basic food items after a funeral due to the debt incurred as a result of providing for a funeral. This is aptly illustrated in the following quotation as shared by one of the participants:

"If you cook rice and this modern food, they say oee, I see you are from today – we can't understand you – beetroot and pumpkin and Kentucky [fried chicken]. *And then after the funeral you will find that they have no food in the house, because they have spent a lot of money at the funeral to buy modern food".*

It has also become a general trend to flavour food with salt and other condiments for the funeral meal, as opposed to the traditional custom of preparing it without salt. According to the older participants this trend has become more specifically important for the younger generation. They strive to impress others by serving a large variety of tasty food rather than adhering to customs, as illustrated in the following quotations:

"In the olden days at funerals there were only pap [stiff maize-meal porridge] *and meat and it was prepared without salt, but nowadays there are no more rules at funerals, and we prepare every meal* [meaning all kinds of dishes], *and you use salt and curry. Nowadays it depends on the family if they can use salt and prepare whatever they got".*

"We [younger generation] *pour* [add] *salt".*

"Maar party mense ek sien hulle wil nie sout hê nie, maar hierdie jong mense hulle gooi sout, peper en al die goete by die vleis, hulle braai hom mooi, dat hy all right is."

[35] *"But some people I see they don't want salt, but these young people they add salt, pepper and all those things to the meat, they fry it nicely so that it can be all right".*

Clearly portrayed here are the forces from the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments and the importance attached to including modern food to reflect the social standing and financial position of the bereaved family. Social prestige and status have become important determinants in the food practices of the modern funeral, and rules with regard to food preparation have been adapted or discarded. On the one hand, it is important to serve modern food, as it illustrates your social standing as well as showing that you are a modern, educated person who keeps on track with the times. However, on the other hand, a high premium is placed on honouring the cultural norms and rules. To overcome the predicament of choosing between the traditional and the modern, some rules and customs are bent or adapted and/or aspects from both are combined in a new manner. Modern tasty food is served to win the favour of those who attend the funeral and are served together with the ritually slaughtered meat and selected traditional dishes as custom requires. These examples reflect how food, as a cultural object, is manipulated. As spelt out by exponents of

[35] Direct translation from Afrikaans.

the cultural perspective, people have this potential to transform their own realities by manipulating the objects in their cultural world in an attempt to help them make sense of reality (Kaiser, 1997:51).

8.3.2.2 Food serving procedures

After the burial and hand washing, the funeral meal is served in the marquee tent. The mourners form a queue, men and women together, and they also eat together. Although the same food is served to everybody there are some groups of mourners who are served separately from the rest, like the family members, the gravediggers and the priests/*baruti*. The formation of these groups seemed to be based on ideological and social organisational grounds.

The family members who participated in the wake are served in the room where the coffin was kept. Although the rest of the family could be served separately, they sometimes queue with the other mourners and take their turn to be served. They, however, do not eat with the other mourners, because they are in a state of ritual uncleanness after the death of their relative and have not yet undergone the ritual cleansing procedures that follow within a few days after the funeral (Eiselen & Schapera, 1962:249). This could, therefore, be a practical arrangement to avoid direct contact between those who are regarded as ritually unclean and others. The same reason would apply to the grave diggers who are served separately and would eat on their own and are not allowed contact with the rest of the mourners. The description by Fourie (1921:142-143) that, traditionally, nobody was allowed to return home from a funeral until they had eaten from the meat prepared for the funeral and were given medicine by the *nyanga* (traditional practitioner), could serve as possible reason for the current practices observed regarding the serving of the funeral meal.

The priests/*baruti* also do not queue with the mourners but are served and eat at the tables from where they conducted the *tebello* service. This is done out of respect for the social status and position they hold in the community as leaders in the different churches, as explained in the following quotations:

"They are served separately to show respect for their position as leaders in the church".

"They won't have to go and stand in the queue for their food. The reason why they are served separately is out of respect for their position".

8.3.2.3 The funeral beast

Although the funeral procedures have undergone changes in comparison to the traditional funeral, cultural values and beliefs are still prominent in the modern funeral procedures, as reflected in the importance and underlying meanings attached to the slaughter of a beast at the funeral.

The slaughter of a beast, as part of the funeral procedures on the Friday before the burial takes place, is still regarded as important in some families, and specifically those belonging to the Ndebele group. This beast not only provides meat for the funeral meal, but certain ideological reasons are closely associated with its slaughter. First, the skin of the slaughtered animal is sometimes placed in or on top of the coffin. Aspects of the belief system of those who follow this practice are communicated through this act. It was explained that, if an animal was not slaughtered, the ancestors would be dissatisfied and express their unhappiness by troubling the family through dreams and illness as explained in the following quotation:

"So if they did not put the skin there, maybe someone would dream of maybe if someone is ill, they will go to the traditional healer. They [the traditional healer] *will tell you the father or the grandmother or the one who has passed away,* [for whom] *they did not put the skin, is not satisfied and they want the blanket to wear. So they will slaughter that cow and put that skin to the grave".*

Pauw (1974:436) gives a similar account of Christians belonging to orthodox churches "who believed that their ancestors would send misfortune if they neglected certain important traditional duties or customs".

If money is not available to slaughter a beast at the time of the funeral, this has to be done later (even if it is months or years afterwards), because it is compulsory that the skin of the slaughtered beast be buried at the grave according to the Ndebele tradition. It is believed that, when someone passes away, he or she is not dead, but only sleeping. So, when the deceased wakes up, he/she must have something to wear. If this is not done, the deceased would appear in one of the family member's dreams or as a vision, to demand the skin. When this happens, a beast must be slaughtered and they have to *"… put the skin to the grave"*. Therefore in the Ndebele group, it is regarded as compulsory, *"… because of ancestral demands, the family has to do that ritual, because the skin serves as blanket, because the deceased will be shivering".*

At the time of the study blankets were used to cover the coffin instead of skins. In such an instance, a certain part of the intestines of this slaughtered beast, called *ummoru*, is placed in the grave and the skin of the animal is not used to cover the body or coffin. It was explained that the *ummoru* is a symbol of death and by placing it in the grave it serves as *"isibiko"* (evidence) to the ancestors that a beast has been slaughtered for the deceased.

The second reason given for the slaughter of the animal has practical merit because it provides meat for the funeral meal. It was, however, emphasised that there are a number of strict rules that relate to who is allowed to eat from this meat. Not everybody eats, or is allowed to eat from the meat of this slaughtered beast. For some, the restriction ties in with their cultural beliefs, while for others it is at the insistence of certain church groups. The culturally induced restrictions relate to the *hlonipha* that is expected from a daughter-in-law as well as from a son-in-law as indicated in the following quotations:

"… this is to show respect – hlonipha. They are also not allowed to eat the meat from the slaughtered cow".

"Married women were not allowed to eat from the meat of the cow that was slaughtered for their father-in-law's funeral".

Although the daughters-in-law may nowadays attend the funeral of their fathers-in-law, and the sons-in-law the funerals of their mothers-in-law, the *hlonipha* is still enforced through the restriction placed on the meat consumption by these persons. In this regard, Richards (1932:191) similarly refers to the taboo on the sharing of food between different individuals in a community on occasions when it could be considered dangerous or unsuitable and specifically mentions the sharing of food between relatives-in-law. The participants emphasised that this rule relates to all the brothers of the father-in-law as well, as intimated in the following quotation:

" … if maybe the father-in-law passed away then the daughters-in-law must not see the coffin, also they must not eat the meat that they slaughtered for the funeral. Also with the uncle of the husband it is the same".

The participants gave the following reason as explanation. The beast was slaughtered in honour of the deceased in-law. It is regarded as disrespectful towards the father-in-law or the mother-in-law to eat from the meat of the slaughtered beast. This serves to show how strongly ingrained showing respect is as part of the cultural value system, and is still

enforced by some groups in this community. Abstaining from eating this meat serves as a salient traditional code that demonstrates respect.

Some families slaughter another goat for the daughters-in-law to eat at the funeral of the father-in-law to compensate for this restriction. This is acceptable because the animal is not slaughtered for or on behalf of the deceased in-law.

Certain churches, apart from the restriction on traditional beer, also prohibit their members to slaughter a beast for a funeral or to consume meat at funerals where a beast was slaughtered for the funeral. They are, however, allowed to eat meat at a funeral when the meat is purchased. The reason given for this restriction on the slaughter and consumption of the meat is given in the quotation below:

"They are also not allowed to eat slaughtered cows at the funeral, but can eat it at the wedding or other celebrations. The reason is when they are eating it, it is like they are eating the person who is dead".

This explains why the ritual killing of a beast for the deceased is only performed by families who are not restricted by the church to which they belong. One of the participants explained that *" … based on her church beliefs a cow is no longer slaughtered but the meat is bought from the butcher to cook a stew for the funeral".*

This could serve as an explanation why the custom of dividing the meat of the slaughtered animal according to age, gender and the relationship with the deceased is no longer practised as mentioned by Eiselen and Schapera (1962:257). Only one of the participants could recall that the *isifunzi* part of the slaughtered animal was traditionally allocated to the maternal grandmother at a funeral. Other participants were unaware of this practice.

According to custom, the preparation of meat for the funeral meal has to be done by a male member of the bereaved family. It seems as if this custom is not strictly followed by everyone but has become more flexible with adaptations being made according to the specific circumstances of the bereaved family. The preparation of the meat could be in collaboration with the burial society or the members from the support group. This seems to depend on the constitution of the burial society or the support group although family customs of the bereaved family are also taken into consideration. One of the participants explained that in her family *"… it is still like that, the men are the ones who are responsible for the meat, but if maybe there are going to be stew and chicken, this is the women's work".*

8.3.3 Other funeral related procedures their associated food practices and meanings

Death is associated with ritual uncleanness (Eiselen & Schapera, 1962:249; Hellmann, 1962:423). People have a fear of being contaminated by others who are in this state of uncleanness. A number of procedures need to be performed that are closely associated with the prevention or removal of the uncleanness associated with death. This once again serves to portray the centrality of certain beliefs about death and magic. The hand washing ritual upon returning from the graveyard is part of the cleansing ritual to wash off the contamination associated with death (Pauw, 1974: 436; Eiselen & Schapera, 1962: 249; Hellmann, 1962: 423). Apart from the hand washing and the separate serving of the funeral meal to some family members of the deceased and the grave diggers, there are other procedures that have to be observed in some families. These include the washing of the grave-digging implements, food preparation for the widow and the celebration to indicate the end of the mourning period.

8.3.3.1 The "washing of the spades"

The *bjalwa bja digarafo* (beer of the spades) or *"washing of the spades"* refers to the procedure where the grave diggers come together at the house of the mourning family a week to ten days after the funeral. On this occasion all the implements used to dig the grave are washed. Traditional beer is prepared and used to cleanse the implements. This procedure seems to be related to the cleansing rituals associated with a funeral as described by Fourie (1921:142). Meat and *bogobe* are served with traditional beer to these men at this function. The participants in this study, however, did not interpret this as part of the cleansing procedures, but associated it as a symbolic occasion to express the bereaved family's gratitude towards the grave diggers for the services that they rendered the previous week by digging the grave.

This procedure is not followed in all families. The reason being that some churches forbid this procedure, because: *"… it is the law of the church".*

8.3.3.2 Preparation and serving of the widow's food

According to some participants, the same rules with regard to the food preparation, serving and eating of the food, are applicable to the widowed person as described in the section on the traditional funeral procedures (see 8.3.1). The general trend is that, for a certain period after the death of a spouse, more specifically in the case of widows, there are strict rules to be followed regarding the preparation, serving and eating of her food. These are

precautionary because, as Hellmann (1962: 424) describes "… the concept of death casts a shadow of pollution over the survivors that persists. Until this dark shadow has been removed by the conclusion of the mourning ceremonies …". This again reflects the contribution of a belief system where it is believed that the widow is in a position to harm her relatives through an illness that is related to the passing away of her husband. These practices relate to her food preparation and serve as salient code to indicate her state of uncleanness. The rules with regard to the serving and eating of meals seem to have become more complicated and stricter when compared to the traditional customs.

The rules pertaining to the preparation and serving of her food and the people with whom she is allowed to eat, could thus be regarded as precautions that are taken to avoid this contamination. The participants revealed that the widow has to stay in her room for the first two to three days after the funeral. The widow herself and the widow appointed to prepare her food eat separately from the rest of the family in her room. The reason for this was that, if a new widow touched anybody, they would become ill, so the immediate family never prepared the food for a newly widowed person for fear that they would get the disease called *"makhome".*

After the funeral it is the custom for the traditional healer to give specific medicine to the widow and, after this, the traditional healer would assure the family that nothing would happen to them if they prepared and served her the same food as prepared for the rest of the family/household. In other cases, the traditional healer would indicate that the widowed person's food had to be served first before the rest of the household could be served, while in other families no such rule applied. The participants indicated that in certain families there are rules with regard to the food that is leftover on her plate. This is not to be eaten and must be thrown away; however, another widow is allowed to eat it. In other families the only rules applicable to the widow is that she has to eat separately and is not allowed to eat with her right hand. If she eats with her right hand it could cause "illness".

Others in the study group pointed out that, in some families, it has become a modern custom to have the widowed person's food prepared by another widow for the first year after the death of a spouse; and for the widowed person to receive medicine from the traditional healer after the funeral. In some churches such as the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) and Apostolic Church, the *moruti* gives the medicine and therefore the appointed widow only has to prepare the food for the new widow for a period of six months. After this, the widowed person goes back to the traditional healer, who then performs certain traditional acts, after which she could eat the same food as the rest of the household. In some cases, the medicine has to be taken for a year while others need to take it for shorter periods that vary

between one to six months or even a year. In some families, the appointed widow only prepares the food for the new widow up to the funeral. After the funeral she could eat from the same food as the rest of the family. Different time periods were thus indicated, for the food preparation by another widow that varied from a month up to a year after the death of the husband.

Besides not preparing food for herself, the widow had to eat alone, and no one was allowed to eat the leftover food from her plate. This could be enforced for a period of six months up to a year after the death of a spouse. Eiselen and Schapera (1962:249) as well as Pauw (1974:436) refer to the restrictions that were forced on widowed persons. However, views differed from group to group and between families, and variations in the time periods depended on beliefs and practices of the individual, family or church.

The participants referred to two other important celebrations that mark the end of the official mourning period. The one happens when the widow is granted permission to stop wearing black clothes, a convention linked to bereavement, and the other is associated with the erection and unveiling of the tombstone.

8.3.3.3 Celebration to mark the end of mourning

The *ditlhobolo,* popularly known as *"taking off of the black"* takes place at the end of the mourning period. It is a particularly significant occasion for the widow, as she can then discard the practice of wearing the black clothes of mourning. The length of the mourning period varies, and is usually a year for adults when a spouse has passed away. In the case of a widow, she would have worn black clothing for the past six months to a year. In the case of males, a black strip of fabric would be worn around the sleeve of the left arm. Hellmann (1962: 424) states that the reason for the observance of the mourning ceremonies relates to the belief that a person would not be successful in any new venture undertaken before the conclusion of the mourning ceremonies. This explains why the celebration to mark the end of mourning because the grieving widow is only entitled to resume her normal life after the actual celebration has taken place.

The *ditlhobolo* is regarded as a very special, joyous occasion for the widow and festivities take place over a whole weekend, starting on Friday morning when the black clothes of mourning are replaced by a whole set of new colourful clothes, after which the black mourning clothes are then burnt. The importance attached to symbolically marking the end of mourning by way of celebration is reflected in the following comments:

"The taking off of the black especially for the widow or widower, it is a special day, there will be a big celebration".

"This is a special day, it is a big celebration".

A service, called the *moletelo*, similar in format to the *tebello* service held at the funeral, usually takes place throughout Saturday night. On Sunday all invited guests bring presents for the widow. As explained, these presents are given *"… for soothing the feelings …"* to help her forget the past, especially the dark time of mourning (see Addendum E, photograph from family album). Eiselen and Schapera (1962:249) similarly describe what they refer to as the "final purification" after which the widowed person may again take up the former activities in which she was engaged.

On Sunday, a big meal is served to all the guests attending the celebration. Family, friends, church members or the support group are responsible for the preparation of the meal and typical special occasion fare is served. A modern celebration would have a combination of traditional and modern food. The quantity and variety of food would once again, be determined by available funds as illustrated in the next quotation:

"Pap, ntini, rice, salads. It is not compulsory to slaughter something, so meat will be bought – beef, chicken. This will depend on the available funds of the family and the support that you have".

The entire weekend is a joyous time marking this new beginning after the period of mourning and, neither the dishes prepared, nor the way they are served, have any special underlying meaning, This celebration, as well as unveiling of the tombstone, receive a great deal of attention and both are enjoyed by all.

8.3.3.4 The unveiling of the tombstone

The unveiling of the tombstone has become a prestigious occasion, reflecting the socio-economic status of a family. The celebration at the unveiling of the tombstone is one of the modern celebrations that have been introduced in the recent past. Apart from Pauw (1974:436) who briefly mentions that a meal is served to those who attend the ceremony, no other information on the food practices could be found in the academic literature reviewed. It is, therefore, deemed necessary to provide some background on this celebration and to include a brief description of the course of the events that take place at this celebration as given by the participants of this study.

Some of the older participants explained that tombstones were not placed on graves in the olden days. According to them, this practice started when people had to be buried in graveyards because "… *the white people ordered them to do so*". They then began to follow this practice of the white people. Previously, stones were only placed on graves to mark them. The eating plates and utensils of the deceased were used to indicate whose grave it was (see photograph, Addendum E). Some participants associated the tombstone with a pillow, after a verse in the Bible or a hymn, and explained that they only began to put tombstones on graves after they started reading the Bible. A tombstone is seen as a remembrance. Tombstones with names on are erected, as it is important to know where one's ancestors are buried, because the tombstone is *"… a memorial figure for communicating with the ancestors in future, future generations must know their ancestors".*

The unveiling of the tombstone is a big occasion and it is described as an important celebration *"… like maybe a wedding celebration".* After the grave has settled (it could be any time from a year or more after the funeral), the tombstone is placed on the grave, provided that money is available. It is then covered with either sheets of plastic or paper. During the week before the unveiling ceremony this would be replaced with *"… a nice cloth*". The unveiling would take place over a weekend, on either the Saturday or Sunday morning. Friends, family, neighbours, the support group and church members are invited to this occasion.

Similar to other big events, a marquee tent is erected in the yard of the family hosting the celebration. The night before the unveiling, a *"church service",* called the *moletelo,* like the *tebello* at the funeral, is held. Several priests/*baruti* lead the service that lasts throughout the night with singing, praying and reading from the Scriptures. The following morning everybody attends the unveiling at the cemetery (see photograph, Addendum E). Upon their return from the cemetery, food is served to the invited guests.

Family members and/or the support group are responsible for the food preparation; that consists mainly of modern food and a selection of traditional dishes. Some families slaughter a beast and, apart from the meat, *bogobe*, rice, vegetables and salads are served, together with traditional beer and ginger beer. The same serving procedures as described for the funeral are followed (see 8.3.2.1). The priests/*baruti* and family members are served separately.

The widow and family also receive presents from the guests *"…to show that they are happy for the family for putting the tombstone on the grave of a loved one".* It was explained that the presents were given to console the widow. Some explained that the presents serve as a

symbol of gratitude *"… it is a symbol of thanksgiving that you have putted a pillow for one of your family members".*

The ancestors are informed of the unveiling, usually the week before the unveiling when the preparation of the traditional beer begins. The beer takes approximately one week to mature and when it is ready it is used to communicate with the ancestors. The ancestors could be informed before the family leaves for the graveyard, while some use traditional beer at the grave to inform the ancestors that they are coming to finish the burial process with the unveiling of the tombstone. The procedures within families therefore differ, as some inform the ancestors at the grave, by pouring traditional beer over the structure, whereas others from the younger generation said that they *"… even smash two bottles of wine on the tombstone."* Other participants explained that they go to the grave before the actual unveiling to inform the ancestors that they *"… are now coming to finish – to unveil the tombstone and to pour the beer".* Another group mentioned that the ancestors are informed on Friday, followed by the church service led by the priests on Saturday night, and then the unveiling takes place on Sunday morning.

The erecting and unveiling of a tombstone on the grave of a family member has various meanings for the participants. It is regarded as symbol of remembering the deceased and honouring the ancestors, but also subtly serves as a status marker. By doing this, the family indicates that they have the financial means to erect the tombstone thus following the modern more educated way, whilst conforming to the traditional prescription to remember; inform and honour the ancestors is also attended to through this act as expressed in the following account:

"The tombstone is a remembrance [memorial]*. You must know where your ancestors are buried, so that you know where to go. The tombstone represents the memorial figure for communicating with the ancestors in the future, so that family members and generations to come must know their ancestors".*

It was explained that to be in a position to erect a tombstone was regarded as a remarkable achievement and it seemed as though it was important to communicate this to others. Hence the expression of joy and happiness that is then shared with everyone throughout this entire celebration. The food prepared and served during the weekend long celebration is similar to the other more modern celebrations and consists mainly of modern food, accompanied by certain traditional dishes as described before. In the following recorded comments the importance attached to the food at this celebration is reflected:

"Just like a wedding. Modern food, and also traditional food will be prepared. So pap and meat will be there and traditional beer".

" [The] *food will be a cow* [beast] *that is slaughtered. Rice, vegetables, salads, jelly and custard and even a cake with icing. In some cases the cake will have a symbol of a coffin on top".*

The large component of modern food is an indication of the financial means of the family who hosts the celebration. It also reflects that they are modern and educated people. Pauw (1974:436) also refers to "a dinner in Western style" that is given to those who attend the unveiling ceremony.

Cultural values and beliefs are, however, symbolised through the traditional beer that plays a prominent role during the procedures and celebration. The traditional beer is used to inform the ancestors that the tombstone has been erected, and that the unveiling ceremony is going to take place. The ancestors could be informed at the family home and/or at the grave during the course of the procedures that take place over the weekend. Traditional beer is then also served to the invited guests.

Although Pauw (1974:436) states that the Xhosas regard the erection and unveiling of the tombstone as a substitute for the traditional sacrifice "to bring back" the dead, the participants of the present study, however, did not associate this celebration with this viewpoint. According to them, it takes place before the tombstone is erected on another occasion when only family members are present.

Through the erecting and unveiling of the tombstone, social approval is also ensured. This is illustrated in a tangible manner through the gifts given to the widow and/or family as a symbol of the joy that they share with them. This was explained as follows when asked why gifts are given to the family who erected the tombstone:

"To support you and to show that they are happy for you for having done this".

"A symbol of thanksgiving to have done or put a pillow [tombstone] *for one of the family members".*

The modern funeral and the procedures and practices associated with it have become more involved in comparison to the traditional funeral procedures. Many changes in the social, cultural and economic environments can be attributed to Christianity, urbanisation and

modernisation and these have been instrumental in giving rise to new ways of doing things Religion and social status could be regarded as the central forces that drive some of these procedures and associated food practices. On the one hand, modern churches dictate and prescribe the practices that their members are allowed to engage in, while on the other hand, the traditional belief of honouring and satisfying the ancestors' needs and wishes have to be accommodated as well. The result is that some of the practices have been either adapted or changed or new ones have been invented.

8.4 CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS

Religious celebrations associated with Christianity have only become part of the celebrations of black people over the past 150 years (Pauw, 1974:415). The participants revealed that, at the time of the study, almost everyone celebrated Christmas and Easter. Baptism and confirmation, although closely associated as part of the Easter celebrations by most, were included as special occasions.

8.4.1 Christmas

Christmas is regarded as a special celebration because families are together and everybody is at home. Christmas falls within the summer holidays in South Africa and most people who are employed get their annual leave or part of it during the last part of December and often receive their annual bonus during this month. This was clearly explained by one of the older participants who stated: *"They make enough food, there is a larger variety of dishes, because they got bonus."* During this time most families have the opportunity to be together and *"… everybody is at home and not working."*

Attending church services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day has become important and central to the festivities of those who belong to Christian churches. Special food is prepared and the emphasis is on a larger variety and quantity of food, similar to that prepared on a Sunday. Greater quantities of meat are prepared and popular choices are mutton, beef or chicken. This is served together with rice, vegetables and salads. Jelly and custard sauce is a popular dessert. Other special treats include snacks, fruit, sweets and baked products such as *dikuku* and these are eaten in between meals. The older participants associated cake and dessert with Christmas because when they were younger these were only served at Christmas time. A variety of beverages such as soft drinks or cordials, homemade ginger beer and other alcoholic beverages and traditional beer are also enjoyed.

Eating is associated with joy and togetherness and, because more money is available, the greater is the pleasure, there is more food and expensive and special food is also included. This is similar to that reported in other cultures (Kittler & Sucher, 2008: 151-152,166-167,188-189).

Although the emphasis falls on the provision of a larger variety and quantity of modern food, specific traditional dishes are also prominent. Certain dishes are available on request, or according to family members' food preferences. Dishes mentioned in this instance include *bogobe, ting ya mabele,* traditional beer, samp and beans, *morogo* and peanuts. These are prepared as a special treat for those from the urban areas. It seemed as if some of these traditional foods, as explained by Bryant *et al.* (2003:236), provide a "feeling of belonging and comfort". On the other hand, it was explained that some of these traditional dishes are prepared for practical reasons, such as the keeping quality without refrigeration. Some of the dishes, for example *ting ya mabele* and traditional beer, are of such a nature that they can be kept without refrigeration for a couple of days.

8.4.2 Easter

In contrast to Christmas where the emphasis is on the family and being together as a family, the Easter weekend is celebrated at church and associated with church gatherings. As explained by one participant: *"Good Friday means conferences."* Conferences take place from Good Friday until Easter Sunday. Some churches also combine these with baptism and/or confirmation ceremonies. The food prepared seemed to depend on what happens at the church venue. Some churches prepare food for members who attend the meetings, and these members then have to *"… donate money for the food."* In other cases, the members provide for themselves and they usually take their own provisions for the weekend. This is the case with members of the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) attending their celebrations at Moria near Polokwane. They explained that items that keep well when travelling, such as *idombolo*, chicken and Ultra-milk (Ultra Heat Treated milk) are popular and taken along.

At conferences where food is provided, it is prepared by a group of women appointed by the church. Although mainly modern food is served, some traditional items are included on the menu, such as *bogobe*, *mageu* and *idombolo.* Baked products and tea are also served. The general tendency followed seemed to be to celebrate Easter as a church group instead of as a family or household.

Festivities over Easter can thus be described as communal festivities based at the church itself where church conferences are held during the Easter weekend. As pointed out by Pauw

(1974:426), the major religious festivals in black South African communities have strong social overtones and are usually occasions for communal meals. This specifically seemed to be the case during Easter. Church members either bring along their own food to be consumed together with other members, according to the "bring and share" concept, or alternatively, these meals are in the form of each sharing the expenses of the meal prepared by the women's group. The emphasis seemed to be on commensality[36] and social togetherness. Occasions such as church picnics and potluck suppers are held to solidify a religious group (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:230; Sobal, 2000:123-125), which was also the underlying reason given here.

Modern food is prepared and consumed in most cases, and the central position of modern food is attributed to two factors. The first reason is of a practical nature, it is easier to prepare modern dishes for such a large group. The second reason relates to the restrictions imposed by some churches on the consumption of certain traditional dishes, specifically those containing fermented grains as described in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.2). Similar to the Christmas and Easter celebrations in the Protestant tradition, food is also important in these celebrations and the kind of food consumed is mainly determined by "family, ethnicity and preference rather than religious rite" (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:95). This was also the case in the food choices mentioned by some of the participants of this study.

Food proscriptions of certain churches are, however, followed during this time such as fasting or abstaining from certain food items by some. Members of the Roman Catholic Church for example, indicated that they followed the general prescription of abstaining from meat on Good Friday. They explained that: *"The Roman Catholics do not eat meat on Good Friday, because Christ has died and His blood represents the meat."* Members belonging to other church groups such as the Apostolic Churches indicated that they often fast during the last week of Lent up to Good Friday.

8.4.3 Baptism and confirmation

Baptism and confirmation celebrations form part of the Easter celebrations of certain churches while others have these as separate events. The age of baptism varies among the different church groups and some do not have confirmation and only perform baptism on adults, such as the Apostolic Church and the National Baptist Church.

[36] According to Sobal (2000:123) commensality includes "many levels and types of sharing food and is governed by a cultural code that provides a moral order for guiding food exchange and eating patterns …"

The kind of celebration also varies according to the customs of the church group. There are two kinds of celebrations. Some church groups have the celebrations at the church and all members of the congregation then participate in all the activities. This is usually the case in churches where group baptism takes place. Other churches perform individual baptism for babies and, in some cases, the family of the child then have a celebration at their home to which friends, family and neighbours are invited. Others have a celebration at the church in the form of a communal meal for the congregation. The kind of food served at both types of celebrations is modern food similar to that prepared for a Sunday midday meal. A variety of baked items such as cake and *dikuku* are served with tea. The kind and variety of modern dishes prepared depends on the amount of money available

At baptism and confirmation celebrations the same reasons that justify the serving of modern or Western-oriented food at other occasions are applicable, namely the prestige value attached to serving these, to communicate belonging to the Christian faith and being educated. Modern food has become closely associated with Christianity. The serving of traditional dishes at events associated with the Christian faith could, in some instances, portray the wrong impression of not being a devout Christian. The explanation for this is related to the opposition of the church to participation in traditional rituals and the consumption of certain traditional food items.

8.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This chapter deals with the food practices and their meanings at the two kinds of religious occasions in which the participants engage, namely, those linked to ancestral devotion and those associated with Christianity. Traditional African religion continues to play a significant role in the lives of many of the participants and the extent of clinging to, or abandoning, belief in the ancestor spirits, is principally guided by the church group to which a person belongs. The religious beliefs and world views of the participants and the guidance from the church consequently often steer the format of a special occasion, including the food practices, to either the traditional or modern Western-oriented side. However, some participants often combine traditional food, which is compulsory according to the prescriptions of the ancestors, in a skilful manner with modern food, at some of these celebrations, in order to adhere to the social requirements set for being regarded as a successful, modern and educated person.

Ancestral devotion requires the demonstration of obedience and respect towards the ancestors. This is done by abiding by their prescriptions and by honouring traditional customs through informing them of all major life events of their descendants. This has

implications for the food practices at special events, such as the rite of the passage celebrations of initiation, marriage and at funerals. In order to conform to traditional customs, it is essential to follow the prescriptions and wishes of the ancestors at a certain stage of the ritual. It is then compulsory that traditional foods, specifically through the blood and meat of a sacrificial animal and traditional beer, are used in a tangible way as part of the ancestral veneration. In performing these rites the ancestors are included, not only through informing them of what is happening to their descendants, but also by making their preferred traditional food available to them for enjoyment.

The serving of the sacrificial meat and traditional beer during these celebrations thus represents the collective values, beliefs and world views of the family hosting the celebration. This not only symbolises family unity and their bond with the ancestors, but is also an expression of obedience showing respect towards them. The preservation of certain traditional food practices such as the ritual slaughtering of an animal and the brewing of traditional beer can thus be directly linked to the preservation of ancestral veneration.

Funeral ceremonies, as the last rite of passage, are regarded as religious occasions and the procedures, including the food practices and meanings attached to them, were discussed. When compared to the traditional funeral, modern funeral arrangements and procedures, including food practices and their meaning, have undergone considerable change. Modern funerals are regarded as important social events, and understandably food receives much attention. Most funerals are held over weekends for practical reasons, and therefore begin on the Friday evening and continue throughout the night, with the burial taking place early on Saturday morning followed by an elaborate funeral meal.

Similar to other modern celebrations, the food served is used as a measure of the social status of the bereaved family, and to provide large quantities of tasty modern food has become the norm. In order to accommodate the requirements of both modern trends and traditional customs, food as cultural object is manipulated and used in new or adapted ways. In many instances modern food is served side-by-side with the ritually slaughtered meat, traditional beer and other traditional dishes to overcome the predicament of adhering to the requirements of both the traditional and modern ways of life. Again, this is skilfully accommodated through the inclusion of both on the menu of the funeral meal. Cultural values and beliefs are reflected by those who regard it important to slaughter and inform the ancestors of the passing on of a family member. However, social recognition by others is equally important. Modern food and a variety of other meat dishes are therefore included not only to portray or give an impression of the economic and social status of the bereaved family, but also to provide for those who are not allowed to eat from the ritually slaughtered

meat due to church proscriptions. In the process of adhering to both the modern social needs and traditional customs, considerable expenses are incurred.

Certain procedures after the funeral are observed by some families. These are linked to the removal of the uncleanness associated with death, such as the *"washing of the spades"* and the preparation and serving a widow food after the death of her husband. Most participants, however, indicated that they celebrate the end of the mourning period and the unveiling of the tombstone approximately one year after the death of a family member. Both these celebrations have become modern and prestigious events where the emphasis is placed on providing a variety of modern foods in large quantities. The erection of a tombstone is regarded as a remarkable achievement that needs to be shared and communicated to others. The importance attached to erecting and unveiling the tombstone is not only for the social approval of others, but also in the meanings conveyed through this happening. The deceased is remembered, and according to some, the ancestors are honoured through this act. In addition, important messages regarding the social status of the family are conveyed. Not only is their financial position of being able to erect the tombstone demonstrated, but it is also seen that they still honour their ancestors even though they are modern and educated. This impression is then extended by providing both modern and traditional foods in large quantities after the unveiling ceremony.

The Christian religious celebrations of Christmas and Easter are indulged in by most participants, and modern food is served as part of the festivities. Christmas celebrations are associated with having more money, enjoying annual leave and the opportunity of being together with family. As more money is likely to be available during the festive season, large quantities of special food, both modern and traditional are included. Easter weekend is the time for church activities. In most churches Easter celebrations are combined with church conferences, baptisms and or confirmation services and are of a communal nature where the emphasis is on serving modern food.

TERMINOLOGY LIST

baruti	Priests or clergy. Plural for *moruti*
bogobe	Stiff maize-meal porridge
dikuku	Popular scone-type of baked product. See Addendum D
diphiri	Gravediggers
ditlhobolo	Celebration to indicate the end of mourning
gemere	Homemade ginger beer. See Addendum D
hlonipha	Showing respect towards someone or to treat someone respectfully
ibandla	Family gathering place outside the home
idombolo	Steamed bread. See Addendum C
isibiko	Evidence
isifunzi	Sirloin section of the beef carcass. See Figure 6.1
kraal	Cattle pen or fold
mageu	Fermented maize-meal beverage
maotwana	Chicken feet
mogoga	Setswana for funeral meat. Traditionally no salt was added
moletelo	Church service held during the night as part of the procedures to mark the end of mourning or before the unveiling of the tombstone
morogo	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables
moruti	Singular for *baruti*
ntini	isiNdebele for soft sour porridge. See Addendum C
pap	Afrikaans for maize-meal porridge
tebelllo	Memorial service held during the Friday night before the burial ceremony takes place on Saturday morning
ting ya mabele	Fermented, soft sorghum porridge. See Addendum C
ummoru	Section/part of intestines of the beast slaughtered for the funeral, that is placed in the grave of the deceased

SECTION 4

CENTRAL THEMES AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this last section the penultimate and final chapters respectively present the central themes that emerged during the selective coding and the conclusions derived from the main findings.

A number of themes relating to the use, meaning and symbolism of food came to the fore from the findings. This crystalised out into two categories that were respectively named the “pliancy of food use” and “polysemic food”. The themes associated with the “pliancy of food use” category portray how the participants adjusted their food practices in specific contexts. The numerous symbolic meanings that could be attached to a food item in a specific context, is represented in the”polysemic food” category. These are presented in Chapter 9 by means of developed conceptual models to illustrate the relation between the identified themes.

Chapter 10 as the final chapter of the thesis presents the main findings, conclusions, advances and contributions of this study on the food practices and their meanings within the South African context.

The following chapters are included:

Chapter 9: The meaning of food and food practices

Chapter 10: Conclusions, reflections and recommendations

CHAPTER 9

THE MEANINGS OF FOOD AND FOOD PRACTICES

9.1 INTRODUCTION

A grounded theory approach to data analysis was followed to understand and describe the food practices of the Mmotla community and the meanings attached to them through the narratives, descriptions and opinions of the participants in this study. Grounded theory methods are systematic, inductive guidelines for analysing data to build theoretical frameworks and models that explain the data by focusing the analysis on emergent categories (Charmanz, 2000: 509). This in itself requires a holistic approach where the context of all aspects that have bearing on the topic of food practices had to be understood as well. Therefore, a detailed description and interpretation of everyday food practices, and those applicable to special occasions, together with their historical backgrounds were given in previous chapters to contextualise these practices.

A large number of themes relating to the use, meaning and symbolism attached to food emerged from the findings. Each was placed in one of the two main core categories, "pliancy of food use" and "polysemic food". The "pliancy of food use" category exposed meanings the participants attached to food in different contexts. The symbolic meanings attached to food in a specific context, fell into the "polysemic food" category. In this penultimate chapter, the steps of the analytical process leading to the development, refinement and interrelation of concepts are given, together with discussion on the explanatory frameworks that were compiled to illustrate the relationships between the categories of concepts.

The first core category of themes entitled "pliancy of food use" portrays how the study group adjusted their food practices in different contexts. Other conceptual themes closely related to the core category "pliancy of food use" are food content, food context and the acculturation response. The second core category, labelled "polysemic food", reflects the numerous symbolic meanings that a food item can convey in a specific context. How these conceptual themes and the core category relate to one another is illustrated as conceptual models that show the relationship between the identified categories. Food content, a conceptual theme

under the “pliancy of food use” core category, is discussed first, followed by the other two themes, food context and acculturation response.

9.2 FOOD CONTENT

Participants’ spontaneous conceptualisation and categorisation of food into the dichotomised grouping of traditional and modern food, as described in Chapter 5 (see 5.2) again come to the fore. Although these two food categories are two diametrically opposed culinary poles, there seems to be an ease or fluidity of movement between them, and food items from each are often used side-by-side. How, and when, food from each category is used varies, largely depending on the context in which it is used and the meaning attached to it. First, the use and meanings of traditional and modern food categories is described followed by a discussion of the different contexts in which they are used in order to explicate the different associations and meanings of each of them.

9.2.1 The use and meanings of traditional food

Most traditional dishes (see 5.2.1) are not served on a daily basis anymore, although some seemed to be prepared fairly often in the majority of households. The decline in the consumption of traditional dishes by the people of Mmotla could be attributed to changes in the physical (natural and technological) and socio-cultural environments as explained in Chapters 4 and 5 (see 4.3, 4.4 and 5.5). This has resulted not only in a reduction in availability, accessibility and the affordability of traditional food in general, but also contributed to its decreased familiarity and acceptability by the younger generation. However, in spite of this tendency the consumption of certain traditional food items and dishes continues.

In this study, specific traditional dishes eaten regularly are *bogobe, ting mabele* and traditional sorghum beer with maize-meal porridges (both soft and stiff) still included in the diet of most of the participants on a daily basis. Stiff maize-meal porridge, *bogobe,* as well as other traditional dishes prepared from sorghum (*ting mabele* and traditional beer) are frequently added as favourites to the menu on special occasions. When communication with the ancestors takes place, the preparation and consumption of traditional food continues to be strictly enforced by those who participate in these rituals. Various reasons for the continuation of the use of traditional foods emerged and these vary according to the context in which it is used, as described below.

Maize-meal continues to be the most important staple food as reflected in the daily meal patterns on weekdays. Soft maize-meal porridge is prepared for breakfast by some, and *bogobe* (stiff maize-meal porridge) is eaten with a relish for lunch and/or supper. The frequency of preparation of certain dishes depends, in the first place, on the amount of money available for food and, and secondly, on the size of the household. Most households are often on a tight food budget during the week, and then frequently resort to the inclusion of more "traditionally-oriented" dishes. The participants indicated that in these instances the *bogobe* would be served with low-cost protein- and vegetable-based relishes. Examples of low-cost protein-based relishes are *maotwana* (chicken legs), chicken *mala* (intestines), *mogodu* (ox tripe) and *morogo,* spinach or cabbage are examples of low-cost vegetable-based relishes. Those who have more money available are inclined to prepare modern food such as rice, meat or chicken and Western-style vegetable dishes for supper more frequently than those with a limited food budget. The degree to which traditional food is included on a daily basis on weekdays, therefore depends primarily on the affordability of modern food. In general, the tendency is to only include more food that is modern if money is available to do so.

For special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and New Year's celebrations, favourite traditional dishes are, however, often prepared, and in most cases these are served side-by-side with the modern dishes as revealed in explanations such as:

"The food will be rice, vegetables, salads, gemere, dikuku, traditional and modern [commercial] *beer, ting mabele, pap* [*bogobe*] *and beef, chicken, mutton – there will be more than one kind of meat. Dessert will be custard and jelly."*

Bogobe, ting mabele, and traditional beer were always mentioned as part of the menu on special occasions. The inclusion of these traditional dishes together with modern dishes indicates that they have become special dishes for celebrations. In the case of *ting mabele,* traditional beer and some of the legume-based dishes, the ingredients required for their preparation have become scarce and/or too expensive to include on a daily or more regular basis. Another reason is that some of these traditional dishes require involved and/or long preparation methods as, for example, *ting mabele* and traditional beer.

On special occasions where it is regarded as essential to communicate with the ancestors, traditional food is prepared exclusively as described in Chapter 8 (see 8.2). This happens on those days when the ritual slaughter and communication take place during the rite of passage celebrations such as initiation, weddings and funerals. According to the ancestors' prescriptions, only traditional food is to be served, as confirmed by the following quotations:

"With the ancestral worshipping they say they don't prepare modern food, only traditional food."

"*They say the ancestors don't want to eat modern food. It is tradition they must have their food."*

"Ja, they want traditional food. They are not fond of modern food."

From the study findings it became apparent that the traditional dishes prepared from maize and sorghum were frequently included. The reasons for their continued use reflect the importance that is attached to these two staple grains. They are still regarded as core or staple food in the daily diet and at special celebrations. The cultural importance of dishes prepared from these two grains is underscored in the discussion of each that follows.

9.2.1.1 Maize

For most of South Africa's ethnic groups maize seemed to have gained widespread popularity and replaced sorghum as staple grain since the late 1800s (Quin,1959:34). Various studies done in the latter decades of the twentieth century confirm the popularity of maize as a staple grain reporting that was being eaten on a daily basis mainly as stiff and/or soft maize meal porridges (Mbhenyane *et al*., 2005; Viljoen & Gericke, 2001; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996; Steyn, *et al*.,1990 & 1993; Manning, *et al.,* 1974).

Bogobe (stiff maize-meal porridge) continues to be regarded as the staple or core food by the majority of the participants. This staple starch is eaten at least once a day and at all special occasions as part of the menu. The inclusion of maize in the daily diet as well as at special events, demonstrates the central role and importance still attached to *bogobe* as a staple food. This is due, not only to its availability and affordability but also to the values, beliefs, emotional and symbolic meanings it represents.

Maize-meal was one of the most affordable and accessible traditional foods available to the participants and, in the first place, this has contributed to the continuation of *bogobe* as a staple or core food. Furthermore, it is widely regarded as an essential and nourishing food. Some participants view it as the food vital for sustaining life as it provides energy and therefore has to be included on a daily basis. Participants explained this as follows:

"Pap [*bogobe*] *is energy – krag* [strength]*. When she thinks about pap it is the food that gives someone energy."*

"… some people will say, mabele is the food that I must eat, it gives me strength, but other people will also say, mealie meal or bogobe."

Another participant similarly stated that, in her opinion, modern food does not provide the same degree of nourishment to sustain life, when compared to traditional food such as maize. Her statement in Afrikaans is:

"…ons eet nie meer daardie kos wat ons lang tyd gehad het. Ons eet net die gemors; die kos van hierdie tyd, dit word nie strength nie."

[37] *"… we do not eat the food that we had long ago. We only eat junk; the current food* [modern food] *does not provide strength."*

Familiarity and taste preferences are other reasons why stiff maize-meal porridge is popular. The taste preference for maize-meal dishes is closely associated with its familiarity, an idea that is illustrated in the following phrases:

" … there are older people who still like the traditional food, like her husband when it is Sunday, then she will have to cook pap [*bogobe*] *for him. He doesn't enjoy rice."*

"She likes bogobe"

Another reason given relates to its satiety value. It was explained that in comparison with modern food, it has a higher satiety value and therefore it has to be included on the menu on special occasions. This was explained by statements such as:

"this modern food they don't stay long [have a low satiety value]*"*

It was explained that the reason why stiff maize-meal porridge is preferred by males is because it is more filling and therefore satisfying.

"The other thing is most men like traditional food, they don't like rice, they like pap.

In this regard, Jones (1963:85) confirms that food is appreciated for its satiety value and this is particularly important for those people who often only have two meals a day. What is more, when entertaining on special occasions, feeling satisfied pleases the guests and this is an indication that the host has extended an appropriate degree of hospitality. In response to the

[37] Quotation directly translated from Afrikaans

question why *bogobe* has to be included on the menu of special occasions it was emphatically stated that:

"… but pap [stiff maize-meal porridge] *and meat* ***must*** *be there, because it is tradition."*

"It is the staple food that is the whole thing."

The emotional importance and cultural value attached to *bogobe* is reflected here. It was often mentioned that the older generation often requested traditional food items at celebrations and therefore it is included on the menu together with modern food.

Illustrated by these examples of people who insist on the inclusion of *bogobe* in their daily diets and even on special occasions, is what Passin and Bennett (1943:113) explain as a reaction of emotional resistance that is attached to a change of a core or staple food. In a certain sense, these reactions also portray that *bogobe* is regarded as a comfort food as it is experienced as a familiar and satisfying food, yet it simultaneously serves as marker for personal and social identity, following the description of comfort food by Kittler & Sucher (2008:4) and by Lochner, Yoels, Maurer and Van Ells (2005). The insistence on the inclusion of *bogobe* at special celebrations also ties in with the explanation by Long (2000:154), that, when a staple food is used on special occasions, it serves as an "intensification of the everyday menu" and thus indirectly emphasises its importance. She gives the example of meat and potatoes that are regarded as staples in the American diet, and illustrates their focal position in the Thanksgiving meal.

The degree of importance attached to maize-meal is further indicated in its use as a substitute or emergency medium to communicate with the ancestors in those cases when traditional beer is not available. Such a situation could arise in the case of an unexpected death of someone and/or when communication with the ancestors becomes a matter of urgency and there is neither time nor the means to brew traditional beer. Maize-meal, water and ash are then used as substitute for traditional beer. The water and maize-meal mixture serves as a symbolic replacement of the traditional beer and becomes a sacrificial food. McAllister (1993:74) confirms that an unfermented mixture of grain and water can be used as symbolic beer in an emergency. Following Jellife's (1967) classification, maize-meal is a cultural super-food. In his well-known classification system, he defines a cultural super-food as a dominant staple food that is the main source of energy in the diet. This food often has "semi-divine status and is interwoven into local religion, mythology, and history".

Although maize has replaced sorghum as the staple food, sorghum is still used extensively in dishes reserved for special occasions and as a special treat in the everyday diet of those who can afford it.

9.2.1.2 Sorghum

Sorghum is one of the oldest cultivated crop plants in Africa (Raschke & Cheema, 2007; Bryant, 1967:271; Quin, 1959: 24-26). This drought resistant crop was widely cultivated throughout Africa, and large parts of the continent, including South Africa, relied on it as staple food. The large variety of dishes prepared by the different indigenous groups is testimony to the importance of this crop in the diet of previous generations as suggested by Bryant (1967:271-272), Quin (1959:24), and Junod (1927II:11). Quin (1959:29) gives examples of more than 25 dishes that contained sorghum as part of the traditional Pedi diet. It is therefore understandable that such an important crop was also used in rituals and for ceremonial purposes by the peoples of Africa. Maize has replaced sorghum as staple food (Shaw, 1974:99; Schapera & Goodwin, 1962:131; Quin, 1959:37) and consequently sorghum is not used as extensively as before and, when it is used, it is mainly for brewing traditional beer[38]. The decline in use is because sorghum is not cultivated to the same extent as previously and has become a relatively expensive commodity to purchase. This was frequently emphasised by the participants.

Evidence from the data gathered in this survey supports this documented trend of decreasing consumption of sorghum within black South African communities. The study group still uses sorghum dishes on a limited scale. Even though a small number were aware that this former staple grain is used frequently in the form of *mabele* porridge for breakfast, the majority felt that it was generally infrequent practice and that sorghum is mainly reserved for special occasions in the form of *ting mabele* and traditional sorghum beer. It is therefore still regarded as a special and important grain, although as a direct result of its price, it was now mostly only prepared for special occasions.

Although sorghum changed from a dominant staple food to a secondary core food in terms of the classic classification system of Passin and Bennett (1943:113), it is still extensively used in rituals and ceremonies in this community. It is specifically prepared for those special occasions where communication with the ancestors forms part of the ritual procedures. On these occasions it is an imperative to do this because; *"… mabele* [sorghum] *is ancestral food".* This reaction is similar to that associated with sacrificial or staple food, and is a clear

[38] Since sorghum grains are not readily available anymore, nowadays a malted commercial meal is often used as substitute. See Addendum C for recipes.

indication that sorghum continues to fulfil the role of a "cultural super-food" in the religious rituals of some of the participants.

Testimony of the emotional value and importance attached to this grain is reflected in how and when it is used. Sorghum is mainly served at special and ritual events in the brewing of traditional beer and preparation of speciality dishes such as *ting mabele*. The role and symbolic meaning attached to sorghum porridge, traditional sorghum beer and *ting mabele*, is briefly described to illustrate why it continues to be regarded as an important grain by the participants.

- **Sorghum porridge**

Some participants regard the consumption of sorghum as a prescription from their ancestors and its consumption serves as a symbolic link between them and their ancestors. One of the participants explained this as follows:

"*In my case I won't eat mealie* [maize] *porridge, only mabele* [sorghum]*. Then the reason is, it is* [a] *spiritual prescription, because my ancestors have eaten mabele* [sorghum]*, so I must follow the same path. Then there is no way that I can eat white pap* [maize meal porridge], *it doesn't cover my tradition, so I still eat mabele pap* [sorghum porridge]*."*

The continuous influence of the ancestors and the importance of obeying their directives were symbolised through the consumption of sorghum porridge. The importance of obeying and thereby honouring the ancestors was often emphasised, as indicated in statements such as:

"… some ancestors will not get very happy when you eat white pap [maize meal porridge]. "

In the same vein, others regarded the consumption of sorghum as a symbol of cultural identity or guaranteeing its preservation as required by the ancestors. When adhering to these prescriptions, the approval and pleasure of the ancestors is ensured as explained in the following quotations:

"… then they [the ancestors] *can see that you are still following the traditional way."*

"… and also from the ancestors that they won't be happy if you don't eat mabele [sorghum]*, because that was the traditional staple food. That was the food."*

Some participants attached the same value to sorghum as would apply to any important staple grain, where it is believed that the consumption of the staple grain would impart special attributes to those who consume it, such as strength. It was explained that: *"… people will say mabele* [sorghum] *is the food that I must eat, it gives me strength."*

- **Traditional sorghum beer**

Important ideological connotations of sorghum underscore the values and belief systems of the participants through the brewing and use of traditional sorghum beer. McAllister (2003; 1993:72-75) gives an overview of the different traditional roles and uses that sorghum beer fulfilled in the lives of the different ethnic groups in Southern Africa. In his description of the various types of beer-drinking occasions of the Xhosa, he (McAllister, 2003) gives a full account of these events and includes the lexicon associated with traditional beer offered on each of these occasions. The Xhosas brew beer for hospitality, for religious motives, to mark a change in status of a person, to recognise services rendered or work performed and to sell it.

Apart from being a popular everyday beverage, the Mmotla participants also referred to the multiple functions and roles associated with traditional sorghum beer. According to them it is not only prepared as a sought-after drink for special occasions, but it is an important communication medium with the ancestors where it serves as link between the ancestors and their descendants and is food for them. One of the participants explained that *"… traditional beer was not only used for ancestral purposes, it was used for quenching the thirst, for family members and friends of the family and it was also sold."* It emerged that traditional beer continues to be regarded as the most important beverage at celebrations and on special occasions and has numerous symbolic meanings and roles attached to it. For example, it can, symbolise hospitality, cultural identity and ancestral veneration and, in some situations, all three categories of meanings can apply simultaneously. Figure 9.1 represents the various categories of meanings that are represented by serving traditional sorghum beer on special occasions.

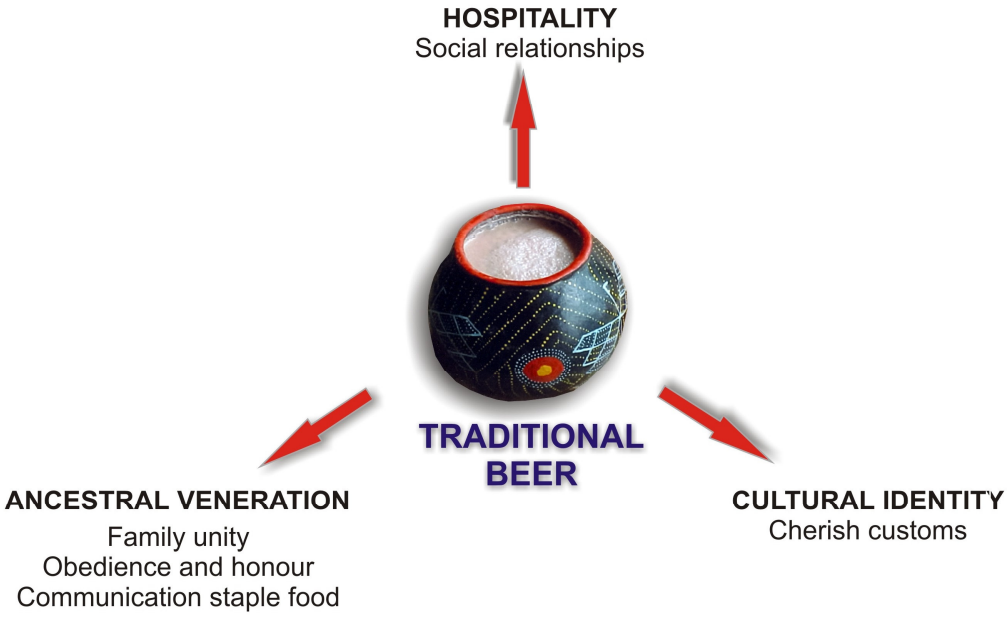

FIGURE 9.1: SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF TRADITIONAL BEER

Traditionally sorghum beer was offered to visitors as a sign of hospitality and this practice continues even today. It is an essential and important item at all special events. In offering traditional beer to visitors, not only hospitality, but friendship and social relationships too are often also implied. This, for example, is illustrated in the procedures when the groom's family and friends arrive at the home of the bride's parents for the wedding celebration (see 7.2.3). According to the rules of etiquette, they were not allowed to enter before they have accepted and drunk the traditional beer offered them. It was explained that *"…they wait outside, they must first get beer, … they want to feel welcomed and they will feel welcome by the fact that the household will offer them beer".* This ties in with the account given by McAllister (1993:75) that traditional beer is seen as a communal food that promotes communal harmony, sociability and neighbourliness. It also symbolises the establishment or re-establishment of friendly relationships.

Traditional beer is further closely associated with cultural identity and the continuation and cherishing of certain traditional customs. It was explained that traditional beer has to be prepared at all these celebrations, because *"… when they grew up there was traditional beer, so they are still following their parents' tradition."* The importance of continuing with this custom is, for example, emphasised in the traditional Ndebele wedding procedures where the bride is given traditional beer to sip during the night of the *isikiri* celebrations. It was explained that this beer is given as a sign to remind the young bride of her future duties to prepare traditional beer for her husband. The preparation and serving of traditional beer on these occasions is essential and symbolises cultural identity and unity with the ancestors.

Apart from the unity with the ancestors that is represented through the offering and sharing of the traditional beer with the ancestors, this act is also a sign of obedience and honouring them.

An important characteristic of the beer used for ancestral veneration is that it is unstrained. Therefore *thabalala,* which is traditionally not strained, is the beer prepared for ancestral veneration. It was explained that the solid part of this beer (the malted sorghum), *"… represents the food of the ancestors."* Because *thabalala* has these *"remnants"* (solid parts), and it represents the staple food. The following quotation summarises this aspect:

"*This part is the most important part of the beer, it has strength. The solid part is seen as food, as nourishment. The liquid is not important."*

The malted sorghum solids symbolises the staple food and, in ensuring that these parts are available to the ancestors, the bond with the ancestors is maintained through the social unity of sharing the staple food. McAllister (1993:74) confirms this view in his account of the important part that beer plays in Nguni rituals. He uses the example of the Zulu who also refer to beer as "the food for men" where men include both the living and dead. Although Sekhukhune (1993) also mentions that unstrained beer is used as sacrificial medium for the ancestors, the reason for using unstrained beer given by him differed. His reason relates to the fear that might exist, that strained beer "has already been interfered with and might, therefore, be without lush."

The importance of keeping the ancestors informed of what happens to those they have left behind was repeatedly emphasised. Therefore traditional beer needs to be prepared for the various rites of passage celebrations where this communication is compulsory as described during initiation, wedding celebrations (see 6.3.6, 6.6.3, 6.6.4 and 7.2.2) and at funerals (see 8.3.2).

To remember and honour the ancestors, traditional beer needs to be poured on the ground at the special place, allocated as ancestral shrine in the yard. Communication with the ancestors is demonstrated by means of the traditional beer as explained in the following quotation:

"You can show the ancestors that you remember them by just taking the traditional beer to pour at that special place."

This act is also symbolic of the social and family unity with the ancestors, as the traditional beer becomes the binding factor between the living and the deceased ancestors. The ancestors are, for example, informed when the family is together for a special occasion such as an initiation, wedding, funeral or family reunion. This was illustrated in the following phrase:

"Traditional beer will be prepared and the ancestors will be informed that the family is together."

Landgraf (1974:22) mentions that a married Manala Ndebele woman only participated in beer drinking when her relatives came to visit and traditional beer was offered to the ancestors.

- **Ting mabele**

Another traditional sorghum dish that features prominently at all special occasions is *ting mabele*. *Ting mabele* is associated only with important events, and has been elevated to the status of a speciality and dish mainly reserved for special occasions due to the price of sorghum meal. This is in contrast to *ting* prepared from maize-meal that is looked upon as an ordinary dish suitable for daily consumption. *Ting mabele* is a speciality because it is tastier than *ting* prepared from maize-meal. One of the other reasons why it is a special dish relates to its long and involved preparation method. To make it is regarded an art and only skilled people can prepare *ting mabele* properly, specifically when large quantities are required such as for initiation and wedding celebrations and for funerals. *Ting mabele* must have a specific consistency to hold its form when served and therefore not be runny (see Addendum C). Another reason for the popularity of this dish at special celebratory events is its good keeping quality. It can be kept for a few days and needs no refrigeration.

9.2.1.3 Indigenous leafy vegetables and legumes

Apart from maize and sorghum dishes, other traditional foods that were used occasionally were those prepared from indigenous leafy vegetables and legumes. The participants revealed that they only resorted to indigenous leafy vegetables when they are in abundance during spring and early summer. This was the case during weekdays when they had limited or no money available to purchase other vegetables to be used for the vegetable relish. Kepe (2008) and Jansen van Rensburg *et al.* (2007) confirm that the consumption patterns of indigenous leafy vegetables are variable and suggest that poverty status, the degree of urbanisation, and time of the year are factors that determine consumption. The practice of

having these on the weekday menu of the household when the male members are often not at home due to work commitments, implies that leafy vegetables is food for women and children. Associating leafy vegetables with female food and poverty unfortunately continues to exist in South Africa (Kepe, 2008; Jansen van Rensburg *et al.,* 2007; Maunder & Meaker, 2007) as well as in other African countries (Flyman & Afolayan, 2006; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Prasad, 1998) and contributes to the low status attached to these nutrient-rich vegetables.

Certain legume-based dishes such as *irhayi* and *umkhupha* were often mentioned as popular menu items for special occasions (see Addendum C for recipes and descriptions). These are currently, however, mostly prepared from dried sugar, kidney or butter beans due to the unavailability or cost of the indigenous legumes traditionally used in their preparation.

From the analysis of the findings related to traditional foods, a number of reasons emerged for their continued use. The meanings attached to the use of traditional food varied according to the context in which it was used, once again confirming that various meanings can be attached to a specific food. The constant inclusion of the familiar staple food *bogobe* in the diet of the majority on a daily basis, and the request for it on special occasions by the elderly and males, reflects the security and comfort that *bogobe* as staple food provides. In the case of traditional beer, for example, it is a beverage served as a sign of hospitality, friendship and family unity, as communication medium with the ancestors and honouring them, and at the same time cultural identity is mirrored. Some traditional dishes such as traditional beer, *ting mabele* and certain traditional legume dishes, for example, *irhayi* and *umkhupha* have acquired prestige value because they are prepared from ingredients such as sorghum and indigenous legumes that have become scarce and/or expensive, and have involved preparation procedures.

9.2.2 The use and meanings of modern food

As explained in Chapter 5 (see 5.5) various factors contributed to the change from a traditional to a more Western-oriented food practice. Modern food is regarded as special and it has become closely associated with weekends and special occasions. It emerged that the consumption of modern food has a number of underlying meanings attached to it. A number of meanings are also associated with the person who uses and consumes modern food. Figure 9.2 represents the various symbolic meanings that the participants associated with modern food.

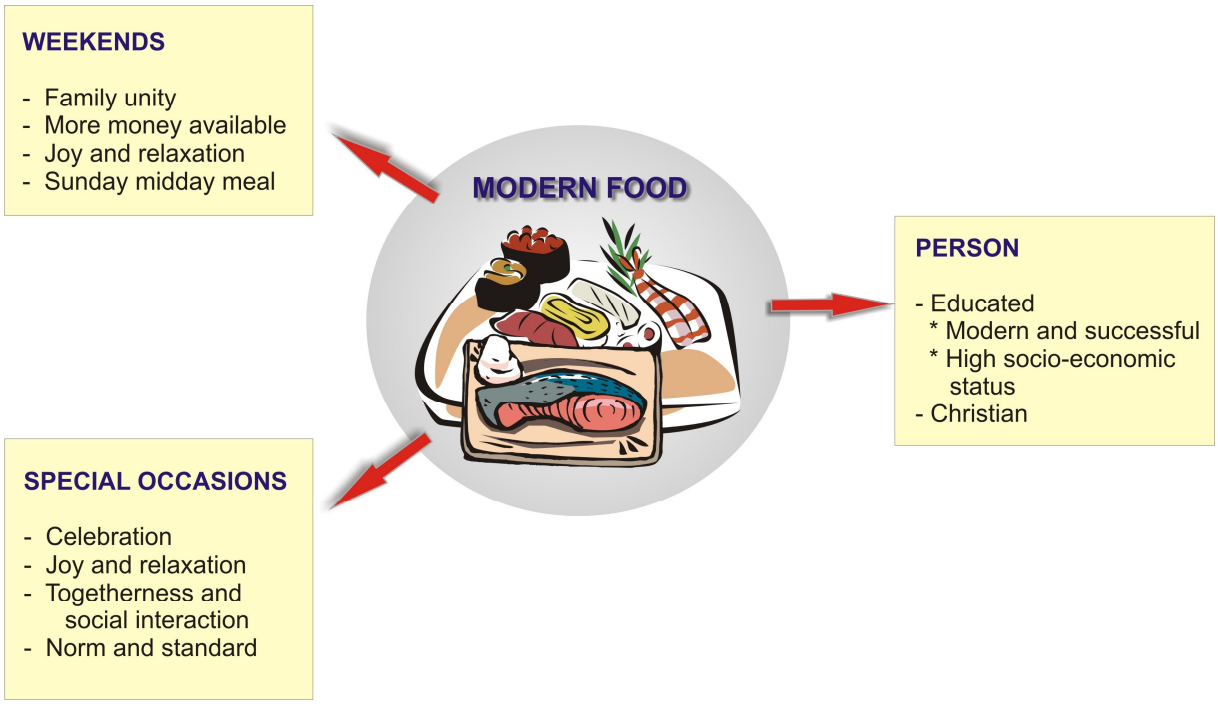

FIGURE 9.2: SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF MODERN FOOD

Modern food is regarded as special, because it is associated with weekends and more specifically the Sunday midday meal. In this context, it represents family unity as family members are often not together during the week due to work commitments. Comments such as "… *on Sundays it is special because everybody is at home, that is why they cook this special food"* illustrate how food is used here to celebrate and symbolise family unity. Modern food has not only become associated with weekends but also become a sign to distinguish between a tight food budget with meals prepared on weekdays and more money being available, or even set aside, for food purchases over weekends. This is illustrated by explanations such as:

"The reason why food eaten on Sundays is different, is that during the course of the week there is not enough money, and the other thing is that most people who are working get paid on Fridays. And those who get paid monthly don't want to waste it on food during the week."

Over the past few decades, new meaning has thus become attached to the Sunday midday meal. It is now viewed as a high status meal with an underlying inference to the socio-economic status of those who consume it. As indicated in the above quotation the participants were willing to sacrifice certain foods during the week to enable them to have money available to purchase special food for the Sunday midday meal. A trade-off between the food eaten during the week and weekends has taken place. This further reflects the value attached to the Sunday midday meal in comparison to the weekday meals, as well as the

strategies and priorities of the participants to meet these salient values associated with the Sunday midday meal. People often use strategies such as prioritising and balancing in their food choice process (Connors, Bisogni, Sobal & Devine, 2001; Furst *et al.,* 1996). The food prepared for the Sunday midday meal has thus become the ideal and it has such a high prestige value attached to it that it has become the norm for the type of food that should be served at all special events. The participants always mentioned that food *"like on a Sunday"* has to be prepared for special occasions.

Modern food has therefore become synonymous with food suitable for a special occasion. It is closely associated with celebrations, joy, relaxation and being together with family and friends. Social occasions and all big celebrations are scheduled for weekends when most people would be able to attend the festivities. The importance and prestige attached to modern food for social occasions was often emphasised, and it was emphatically stated that *"…there* ***must*** *be modern food."* It is also regarded as a social disgrace if it was not available and people would gossip if it was not served. *" … if it* [modern food] *is not there, it will be talked around."* It emerged that a great deal of attention and social recognition is given to the use of modern food, similar to the viewpoint of Fieldhouse (1995:83) who states that the "importance of prestige food lies in how much social recognition it confers", a comment that also seems to be applicable here.

The high status attached to modern food portrays various meanings of which the most important are being educated, successful, and "*from today*". It has become important to be regarded as an educated person and someone with enough money who can afford to purchase certain food items. A person who is well informed in these changing times and adheres to modern lifestyle trends usually consumes modern food. Modern food, as is the case with clothing, conveys conspicuous consumption[39] that displays financial success or earning power, often motivated by possibly wanting to create the envy of others. This tendency is referred to in a study on retailing in South Africa, where Cant and Brink (1999) reveal that black consumers are very conscious of their choice of products. They explain that consumer goods are used to reflect the "right" social class that black consumers wish to be categorised by their friends and peers. Odhiambo (2008) endorses that conspicuous and public display of material goods have become important indicators of social class in the post-*apartheid* South African context.

[39] The term conspicuous consumption was coined by Veblen to refer to people's desire to provide prominent visible evidence of their ability to afford luxury goods (Solomon, 2007:474).

The importance and prestige attached to modern food was clearly illustrated in the reaction to a question about the food to be prepared at a funeral, and in attaining such a goal. It was stated:

"If you cook rice and this modern food, they say ooee, I see you are from today …"

This is typical of invidious consumption practices (Solomon, 2007:474) where products are used intentionally to display wealth and/or to generate envy by signifying that they have improved their situation. Social status was associated with following the modern Western-oriented food practices as the following quotation suggests:

"Then the other thing we, … new [younger] *generation, we are educated enough that is why we want to eat more food* [larger variety] *and fancy ones".*

On the other hand, the younger generation associated traditional food as food consumed by old-fashioned, uneducated people or those who have low social status. Traditional food was often referred to as *"olden days foods".* It therefore seems important for the younger generation to follow the example of educated people such as teachers, lawyers and health-care workers. Clearly, contact with these groups has contributed to some of the changes that have taken place in food practice. One of the younger participants stated that:

"The changes are because we are now mixed together [rich and poor, educated and less educated], *so when the rich start to buy rice, vegetables, and the poor then come around* [will follow]*, they will start to buy the same stuff - even if they don't have money".*

It was explained that the rich people were regarded as people who were employed as teachers, nurses, lawyers and business people *"… because they earn more money they buy everything, so they copy from them".* Educated people and those who earn money were seen as role models or a reference group and their example was followed with regard to what they bought and how they prepared their food. According to the description by Schiffman and Kanuk (2007:312), such a reference group is a comparative reference group. People use the behaviour of others to serve as a benchmark for specific or narrowly defined behaviour, and strive to follow suit. In the given example, the context is the specific food choice of the reference group. This usually occurs when people have direct face-to-face contact with the reference group (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:313).

A driving force behind the importance of serving modern food at social functions relates to the fear of the consequent shame that is associated with gossip that takes place afterwards if

these social standards are not met. Reflected here is the normative influence[40] of the reference group. Modern food is thus a status symbol to communicate a desired social class and can be described as pecuniary emulation. Bagwell and Bernheim (1996:350) explain that pecuniary emulation occurs when people consume conspicuously to create the impression of being a member of a higher class to increase their social standing.

The Mmotla participants can be compared to the strivers in the VALS™ system[41]. Strivers are people for whom money defines success, but they themselves do not necessarily have enough of it and emulate people who have greater material wealth. The reference group of the participants (those employed as teachers, nurses, lawyers and business people) can be compared to the achievers in the VALS™ system (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010:439-442). Achievement motivates both the strivers and achievers in that they both aim for a clear social position and are strongly influenced by the actions, approval, and opinions of others, being inclined to purchase status symbols. In fact, the Mmotla people often incur enormous debt to provide the appropriate food for a funeral or wedding, as large numbers of guests are customarily present on these occasions. Solomon (2007:466) ascribes spending behaviour to people's appreciation of social class differences in their world view. The environments and world view of the working or lower-middle class are, for example more closed and restricted which results in their immediate needs tending to dictate their buying behaviour. This is contrary to people of a higher class who are inclined to focus more on long-term financial goals such as to own a house and secure their children's education, for example. It is thus understandable that the immediate needs as incurred by a special occasion, such as a wedding, funeral or other celebration, is so important to the participants that they would direct their spending behaviour to this end. This assumption is demonstrated by the fact that wedding celebrations are often postponed to enable the hosts to save or collect enough money. Not only is social importance attached to providing sufficient quantities of the appropriate kind of food, but so too are the psychosocial consequences to provide food that is socially accepted, important as these define a person's social position or aspired social position in society (Solomon, 2007:474, 477; Peter, Olson & Grunert, 1999:66). To a certain extent, the support group provides "financial security and social security" to enable its members to be in the position to gracefully host big celebrations such as initiations, weddings and funerals or any big social event. The support group not only assists financially, but also

[40] Normative influence occurs when an individual fulfils group expectations to gain a direct reward or to avoid a sanction. This is usually the strongest when individuals have close ties with the group, and when the product involved is socially conspicuous (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010:234).

[41] The VALS™ provides a systematic classification of American adults into eight distinct consumer segments based on enduring psychosocial characteristics that correlate with purchase patterns (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010:439).

offers their labour and skills to make it possible for the appropriate food to be provided on these social occasions.

Practical reasons were also given for the increased popularity and consumption of modern Western-oriented food. Increased availability and access, together with the relative ease and convenience in the preparation of modern food, especially for large numbers of people, contributes to making things easier. Most traditional dishes, apart from the ingredients that were often scarce and expensive, have long, involved and tedious preparation methods. It is therefore impractical to cater adequately for the large number of guests who normally attend initiation, wedding celebrations and funerals. Therefore, modern food tends to be prepared because it is not so complicated to prepare, as is explained in the following quotation:

"… it would be much easier if everything was modern food, it would be less trouble".

Another contributing factor is that the younger generation have neither the knowledge nor the skills to prepare these traditional dishes, which also explains the decline in the preparation of traditional dishes at large celebrations.

The serving of modern food was also not purely by choice. Certain churches and religious groups condemn some of the traditional rituals and ceremonial procedures and consequently the food practices associated with these have declined or fallen into disuse. Some of the participants frequently indicated that their church prohibited them, for example, from brewing or consuming traditional beer, because it is associated with ancestral veneration. Similarly, the consumption of the meat of a ritually slaughtered beast is prohibited at funerals. The explanation given was that the meat was slaughtered for the deceased person. Consuming this meat is associated with the eating of the person for whom the beast was slaughtered. The serving of modern food has largely become associated with being a Christian or, put in another way, devoted Christians abstain from certain traditional food.

Food content can thus be viewed as two opposite poles where the two food categories (i.e. traditional food and modern food), each represents a "culinary pole". A dynamic movement on the food use continuum between these two poles emerged from the findings as represented in Figure 9.3.

FIGURE 9.3: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FOOD AS TWO OPPOSING CULINARY POLES ON THE FOOD USE CONTINUUM

The ease of movement or switch between these two "culinary poles" is determined by the context or situation in which the food is used. In turn, this is closely guided by the response to acculturation. These two factors account for the position of a food on the food content continuum between the traditional or modern poles. How and when each of the above food categories is used, thus depends both on the food context and the level of the acculturation response.

9.3 FOOD CONTEXT

Food context refers to the situation in which food consumption takes place. Three food contexts namely, those of weekdays, weekends and special occasions were identified, and it emerged that these food contexts dictate how the two food categories of traditional and modern are used. The fluidity or movement between these two opposite culinary poles contributes to the importance attached to the different environmental determinants that are in interplay in a given food context. These determinants from the economic, social-cultural and socio-psychological environments become the driving forces that are instrumental in guiding and, in some instances, even dictating the extent to which each of the two food categories is used in a situation. In some instances the determinants from the various environments are viewed as competing forces that guide or dictate the degree to which each food category is used. These competing forces shift and, in some cases, even move or draw the food content in the direction of a specific culinary pole. The various food contexts of weekdays, weekends and special occasions, and their food content as found in this study, are illustrated and interpreted.

9.3.1 Weekday food context

The food content of meals on weekdays as determined by the food context is given in Figure 9.4.

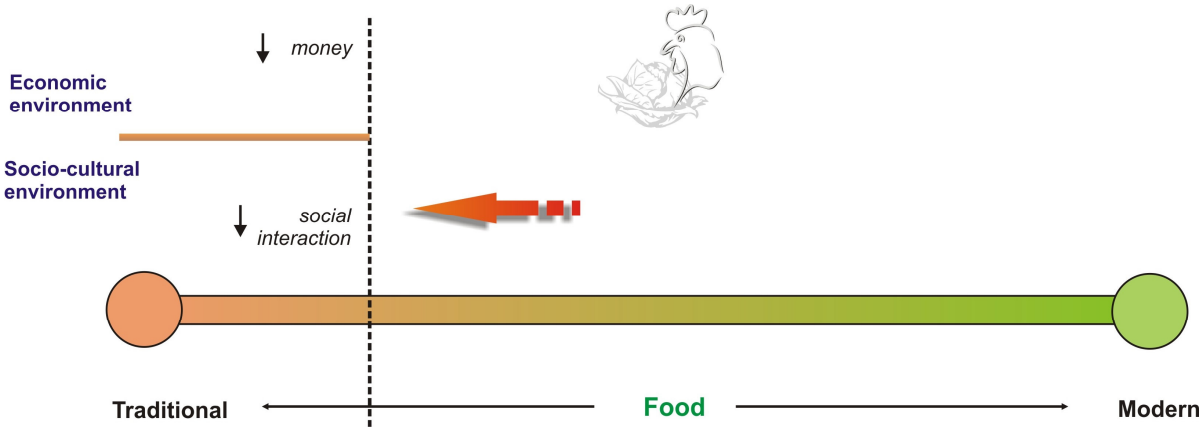

FIGURE 9.4: FOOD CONTENT DURING WEEKDAYS

In the majority of the households, the food content on weekdays shifts more toward the traditional-type of food category as illustrated in Figure 9.4. Traditional-type dishes such as chicken offal, *mogodu* (ox tripe), *morogo* or cabbage are served as relishes with *bogobe,* and meat was seldom or infrequently on offer. A large portion of the money available for food purchases in households was used over weekends. This, and similar statements, confirm this finding:

"… during the course of the week there is not enough money …"

The limited money available during the week can be attributed to the fact that larger quantities of special and expensive foods were served (see 5.3.2.2) to enhance the enjoyable, social nature of food consumption over weekends. The tight or restricted food allowance left for the rest of the week (or month) then forces people to include more affordable traditional-type of dishes, and this could even be the case over weekends for some. It was explained by one of the participants that:

"On Sundays when they don't have money they will have bogobe and morogo for lunch."

Affordability and the consequent accessibility to food are strong forces that determine what is consumed. It seemed as if people easily fall back on less expensive relishes that can be served with the stiff maize-meal porridge, specifically for weekday supper.

Another force relates to the level of social interaction and who participates in the interaction, as this also determines the kind of food that is prepared. Often the breadwinners in a household are away from home and only return to their families over weekends. Over weekends, the togetherness of the family is celebrated in the preparation and consumption of a larger variety, and often more expensive and/or special food (as described in Chapter 5 (see 5.3.2.2), in comparison to weekdays. Information given by the participants endorses the finding that, due to work and school commitments of some members in their households, the same attention to food preparation and specifically the kind of food that is prepared, is different from that prepared and consumed over weekends. .

9.3.2 Weekend food context

It emerged that the food content over weekends differs from that eaten during the week. In the majority of households it shifts towards the modern category and is depicted in Figure 9.5.

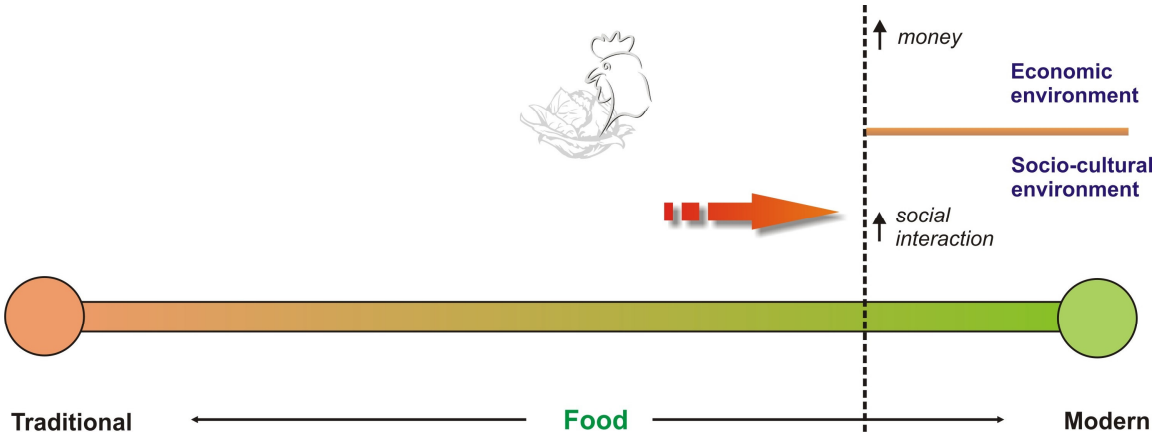

FIGURE 9.5: FOOD CONTENT DURING WEEKENDS

The shift towards modern food content is because more money is available or even set aside for more expensive and special food purchases in most households. An elderly pensioner explained that she often saved money for weekends to purchase more vegetables.

"*Then for Sundays if I have money* [set money aside]. *I buy all* [a larger variety of] *the vegetables*."

Most of the men employed as labourers are home over weekends and receive their weekly wages on Fridays. This was explained as follows:

"… over weekends people come from work and then they have pay. So that is why they buy more food."

"Ja, they eat more meat over weekends."

The Sunday midday meal has become the culinary highlight of the week for the participants. The kind of food prepared for the Sunday midday meal has become the norm for the kind of food associated with celebrations and special occasions (see 5.5.2). The food content on special occasions is therefore similar to that of weekends (see 9.2.2).

9.3.3 Food context on special occasions

At most special occasion events the general practice followed is to serve food similar to that prepared for the Sunday midday meal. It emerged as the norm or expected standard for the type of food that should be offered for a special occasion function. Participants always used the description *"food, like on a Sunday"* when talking about food for special occasions. Although both traditional and modern food categories are represented at these celebrations, the emphasis is on the inclusion of modern food. However, when ancestral veneration requires the ritual slaughter and communication with the ancestors, there was consensus that traditional food had to be served. Those who still engage in traditional rituals associated with the rites of passage, strictly follow these prescriptions. Food content then moves over to the traditional pole during those stages of the celebrations where communication with the ancestors is compulsory. It should be noted that at other stages of these traditional celebrations (before and after the communication with the ancestors), modern food is enjoyed by those present. Those who continue in the practice of celebrating these traditional rites thus move with ease between the modern and traditional food categories and accept food from both. At modern celebrations such as modern weddings and birthdays, the food content leans over to the modern food category, although favourite traditional dishes are part of the menu.

As described in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.2) some Christian churches on the other hand, force and continue to influence their members to move away from the traditional fare towards the modern, and even forbid them from consuming certain traditional dishes. Christian churches were also instrumental in enforcing the process of acculturation on their members and this has not only contributed to the adjustment in the format of programmes for occasions such as wedding celebrations and funerals, but also affected the kind of food that may be eaten on these occasions. A clear indication has emerged that the food category used on special occasions is context-dependent as illustrated in Figure 9.6.

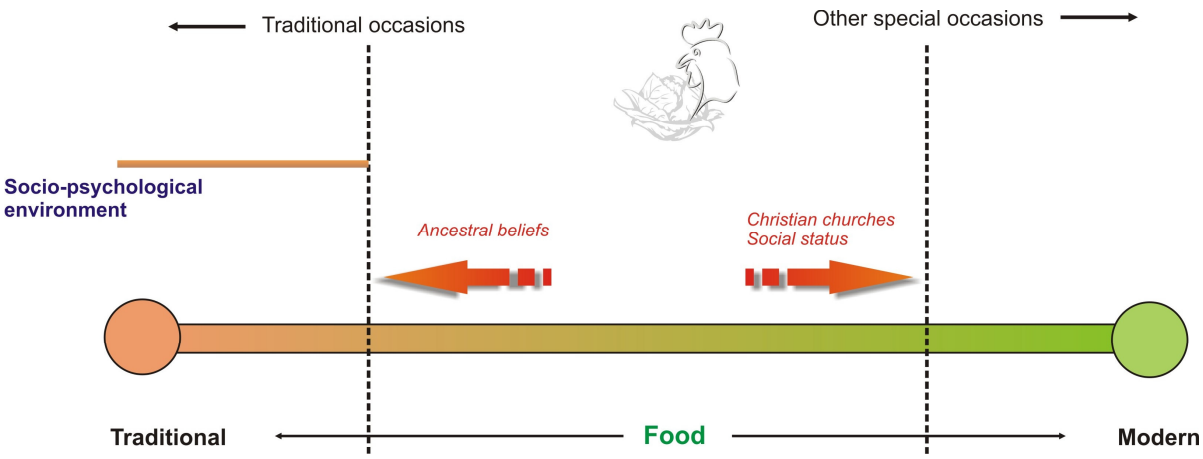

FIGURE 9.6: FOOD CONTENT ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

In conclusion, a number of interrelated factors, from different environments, are closely associated with the above three food contexts. These factors or determinants act as driving forces that are often simultaneously responsible for steering or guiding the movement between the two food categories. The same food type can occupy different positions on the continuum between the traditional and modern food categories. The position on this continuum is largely dependent on the food context, and on the strength of the driving forces from the particular external or internal environments of a specific community, in this case, Mmotla

9.4 ACCULTURATION RESPONSE

The conceptual category described as the acculturation response refers to the position on the food content continuum that extends from the traditional to the modern food categories. Affordability, religious beliefs, cultural identity, prestige and social status, including the norms and standards associated with the specific food context, emerged as the most prominent driving forces that steers the acculturation response. The conceptual framework of the acculturation response that emerged from the analysis portrays these driving forces. It is presented in Figure 9.7.

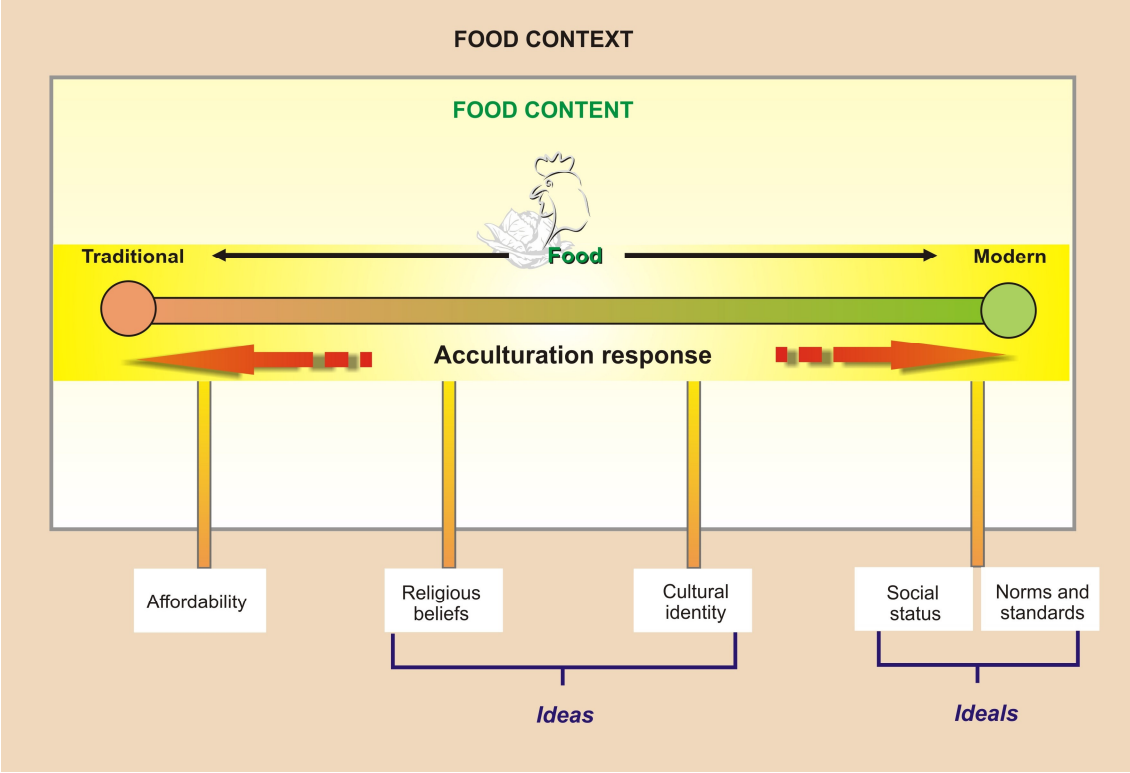

FIGURE 9.7: PLIANCY OF FOOD USE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework depicts the notion that food content is not only embedded in or interdependent on the specific food context but also shows that a number of interacting driving forces are steering the acculturation response either towards the traditional or the modern food category poles. The dominant driving forces are briefly discussed.

9.4.1 Affordability

Although the general tendency is to include more food from the modern food category, this depends on the money available for food purchases. Hence affordability becomes the determining force of where on the continuum, between traditional and modern food, the food content will be on weekdays. The majority of the participants resorted to low-cost food items as relishes to accompany the staple food of either maize-meal porridge or bread, due to a very limited food budget. Those who have more money have meat with one or two meals during the week and/or separate vegetable dishes prepared from cultivated vegetables.

Over weekends, the shift inclines towards the modern food category as a large number of convenient and/or fast food items are consumed in the majority of households, specifically on Saturdays (see 5.3.2.2). Expensive special treats such as cheese, French polony, baked products, sweets and soft drinks are often part of the eating pattern for Saturdays and

Sundays. Affordability is thus instrumental that eases the movement between these two culinary poles on weekdays and over weekends.

As special occasions are celebrated over weekends, money is more likely to be available. The caring and supportive role rendered by the social network and support group as described in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.3) and explained under paragraph 9.2.2 above, however, contributes significantly to the affordability of hosting such a special occasion according to the ideals set by the participants.

9.4.2 Religious beliefs

Another strong force that determined the acculturation response is that of the religious beliefs of the participants. The two opposing forces of Christianity and belief in ancestors are at work here and, in some instances, such as on special occasions, these two forces compete to drive the acculturation response toward one or the other of the two culinary poles. Again, a dualism is noted. There is a strong tendency to lean more toward the modern pole for special occasions. However, those who still participate in ancestral veneration, strictly follow traditional prescriptions and continue to prepare and consume traditional food on those occasions or at appropriate stages of ritual ceremonies when ancestral veneration takes place. Adhering to the traditional customs, as prescribed for ancestral veneration, means that the food content is forced toward the traditional food end of the continuum. Opposed to this, some Christian churches dictate and/or influence their members to abstain from traditional food (see 4.4.2), and thereby force the food content to the opposite modern food pole.

9.4.3 Cultural identity

Closely associated with the acculturation force of religious beliefs is the conceptual category of cultural identity. Food is a powerful marker of cultural identity (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:235; Crouch & O'Neill, 2000; Fischler, 1988) and this also emerged from the analysis of the findings of this research. It is reflected in the emphasis placed on adhering to traditional customs such as the regular communication with the ancestors and obeying their prescriptions with regard to honouring traditions, such as the serving of traditional food that is required during certain ritual procedures as described previously (see 9.4.2). Food is further used as a symbol of cultural identity by the inclusion of traditional dishes such as traditional beer, *ting mabele,* favourite legume dishes and *bogobe* on the menu of all special occasions.

9.4.4 Prestige and social status

The use and meaning of modern food is closely linked to prestige and social status and this has become associated with the ability to serve a large variety of foods from the modern food category on special occasions as previously explained (see 9.3). Food is often used as a symbol of prestige to indicate the social status and economic standing of the person using, sharing or giving food (Kittler & Sucher, 2008: 4; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:202; Fieldhouse, 1995:85). It has become important to impress others by preparing and serving large varieties of modern food for special celebrations. This was not only regarded as a hallmark of being modern and educated but also a subtle way to reveal the financial means and social standing or aspired social class of the host. This was conveyed in phrases such as *"we are from today"* to emphasise the importance attached to being regarded as someone who has kept abreast of changes in the social environment.

9.4.5 Norms and standards

Closely interrelated with prestige and social status are the norms and standards set for a specific food context. Norms and standards are culturally learned through socialisation and acculturation and are "normative gauges" or guidelines and rules that humans use when making food choices (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:5; Devine *et al.,* 1999; Furst *et al.,* 1996). It emerged that certain norms and standards were set for special occasions. As explained (see 9.3), the format and content of the Sunday midday meal has become the ultimate standard for the type of food associated with special occasions together with the emphasis on a larger variety and quantities of modern food.

The core category of "pliancy of food use" reveals that the acculturation response varies according to the food context and that the food content is adapted with ease as required by the specific situation in which the food is used. Apart from affordability, the food ideology of the participants, as represented by their ideas and ideals, is portrayed by how these two food categories of traditional and modern food fuse.

9.5 DISCUSSION ON THE PLIANCY OF FOOD USE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis sought to advance understanding of the situational or contextual nature of the food practices including the choice and use of food and meanings attached to food in general. The inductively developed pliancy of food use conceptual framework reflects how the people of Mmotla engage in food choice and use. It can be used to examine the flexibility

of food choice and use, as experienced during the week, over weekends and on special occasions.

The strength of the proposed framework is that it is grounded in the participants' own descriptions of their personal food choices and use in the different contexts in which they are engaged. The findings are important for understanding the needs of the black South African food consumer and to contribute to the theory related to the eating patterns of this group. To date, these issues have not been well addressed from a theoretical point of view. However, they are central to studies on the nutrition transition in South Africa and other food and nutrition studies focusing on nutrition intervention and food security (MacKeown *et al.,* 2007; Labadarios, Steyn, Maunder, MacIntyre, Gericke, Swart, Huskisson, Dannhauser, Vorster, Nesamvuni & Nel, 2005; Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Labadarios *et al*., 1996). This study, in the first instance, presents insights into the meanings that the people of Mmotla themselves attach to a specific food context in a holistic and contextual manner. In the second instance, its approach enhances in-depth understanding of all the interrelated and interdependent factors that contribute to the food practices of a specific food context. A holistic presentation of all the facets of their food practices as explicated, leads to an enriched appreciation and better understanding of the meanings attached to these practices and thus contributes to the theoretical underpinnings of food practices in a South African context.

Food practices are dynamic and constantly evolving. The pliancy of food use framework illustrates the adjustable nature of food practices described by the study group and confirms that the process of change with regard to food practices is an ongoing and evolving process. This view is consistent with other descriptions of food choice concepts and processes as portrayed in the food choice process model designed by Sobal *et al.* (2006) and Furst *et al.* (1996).

Acculturation, according to the developmental model of food culture (see 2.3.4.1), is one of the food culture changes that contributes to changing food practices that result from socio-cultural processes such as migration, urbanisation and modernisation. These in turn lead to changes not only in the physical environment of those participating in these societal changes, but also their impact on their socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments as well. These are then manifested in the altered beliefs, values, norms and standards concerning food practices. This framework is supported by the acculturation model of Segall (1979:186-188) and the dietary acculturation model of Saita-Abouta *et al.* (2002).

Due to developments such as modernisation, urbanisation and migration, changes in both the external and internal environments of the Mmotla participants took place. As proposed in the developmental model of food culture (see 2.3.4.1) these changes in society are analogous to changed trends in food usage and behaviour that are the direct result of the type of food that becomes available and accessible (Raschke & Cheema, 2007; D'Haese & Van Huylenbroek, 2005; Weatherspoon & Reardon, 2003; Walker, 1992; Walker *et al.,* 1992). It emerged from the findings that, over the past four decades, more Western-oriented and other newly developed foods were introduced to and have become available and accessible to the people of Mmotla, and gradually became part of their culinary repertoire and eating patterns. Simultaneously new uses and meanings are now associated with these food items.

The overriding themes in the proposed pliancy of food use framework are **acculturation response** and **context.** The framework portrays that the acculturation response drives the extent of acculturation, including the degree of acceptance of certain foods in a particular food context. It emerged that three separate sets of interrelated thematic dimensions (affordability, ideas and ideals) are instrumental in guiding or driving the acculturation response of a specific food context towards either one of the culinary poles or any position between them. These dimensions are not only consistent with the contextual or situational factors reported on by other researchers (Marshall & Bell, 2003; Connors *et al.,* 2001; Devine *et al*., 1999; Furst *et al.,* 1996), but also provide valuable insights into the food choice and use of the participants.

Affordability is defined as having the financial resources available for the needed or desired food purchases. Sobal *et al*. (2006:6) point out that individuals construct their food choices by being aware of their available or accessible resources and in the process exclude those foods that are not within their financial means. As the participants are forced to purchase most of their food, the price of food and their financial ability largely determine what category of food can be purchased and consumed during the week and over weekends.

Ideas represent the ideation component of culture. Culture guides societal members about the way they should think, feel and act, and this means that "culture designates the socially standardized activities of people" (Axelson, 1986:345). Through their customs, which includes all food-related activities, people depict the learned and shared meanings of their culture.

In the food choice process model of Furst *et al.* (1996) and the extended model by Sobal *et al.* (2006), ideals include the standards or normative measures that individuals use to guide

their food choices. These are learnt through socialisation and acculturation, which indicate their cultural grounding (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:5). What is acceptable and preferable for consumption is determined by cultural and sub-cultural norms and individuals then see these as ideals in food selection. A number of studies confirm that the ideals that individuals have about proper meals, appropriate manners and what is suitable for a specific food event, direct their food choice (Bisogni *et al*., 2005; Bisogni *et al*., 2002; Furst *et al.,* 1996; Charles & Kerr, 1988).

Apart from these three dimensions, the food context (i.e. on weekdays, during weekends and on special occasions), and who participates in the social interaction, also steers the acculturation response towards a specific pole and contributes to the underlying meanings attached to the food. In the proposed framework, the fluidity or movement between the two "culinary poles" confirms that **context** is an important determinant of food choice and use. This is consistent with other research findings (Marshall & Bell, 2003; Connors *et al.,* 2001; Devine *et al*., 1999; Furst *et al.,* 1996) and, in a recent study, Blake *et al*. (2007) confirm that people's conceptualisation and categorisation of food depends on the food context. This again underscores the importance of food context to understand human food choice and use.

The findings on food choice and use of the participants in the various contexts, further contribute to the theory of the eating patterns of the black South African food consumer. Apart from the meal patterns and meal cycles that serve as an indication of the number of eating events, eating patterns in addition, give an account of the meal composition and the social organisation associated with the meal (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:9; Connors *et al.,* 2001; Mäkelä, 2000:10; Oltersdorf *et al*., 1999). Valuable information emerged on how the food context and the social organisation associated with it, guide, and in some instances even dictate, the food content or meal composition of a food event in this South African community.

The underlying meanings and messages that the participants attach to food can also be inferred from how food is used as symbol, sign or code and is part of an intricate symbol system that conveys cultural meanings (Roth, 2001; Counihan, 2000:1516-1517). This is not only illustrated in the "pliancy of food use" core category, but also in the other core category, "polysemic food" that specifies that several symbolic meanings can be attached to a specific food or category of foods.

9.6 POLYSEMIC FOOD

Polysemic means that many symbolic meanings can be simultaneously attached to an item (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:223) which, in this case, is food. Included under the collective category "polysemic food", are two examples that emerged from the findings. The meanings attached to the sacrificial goat by the Ndebele and the bread and red jam served at the *iqude* celebration are given to illustrate their polysemic meanings.

9.6.1 "The polysemic goat"

From the data collated, it came to light that the Ndebele participants attach a number of symbolic meanings to the sacrificial goat, or specific parts of it, that are context related. The sacrificial goat, or certain parts of it, mainly symbolised either ideological meanings or meanings related to the social organisation of the group. In certain instances, both groups of meanings are simultaneously represented in a specific context. Three contexts emerged where the sacrificial goat or parts of it, symbolised various meanings. Because ancestral veneration is central to the world view of these participants it is dealt with as the first context in the discussion on the symbolic meanings attached to the sacrificial goat. The meanings symbolised by the sacrificial goat at the *iqude* and during the traditional Ndebele wedding procedures are presented as the second and third contexts respectively. To support the discussion, Figure 9.8 depicts these three contexts and the symbolic meanings attached to the sacrificial goat in each.

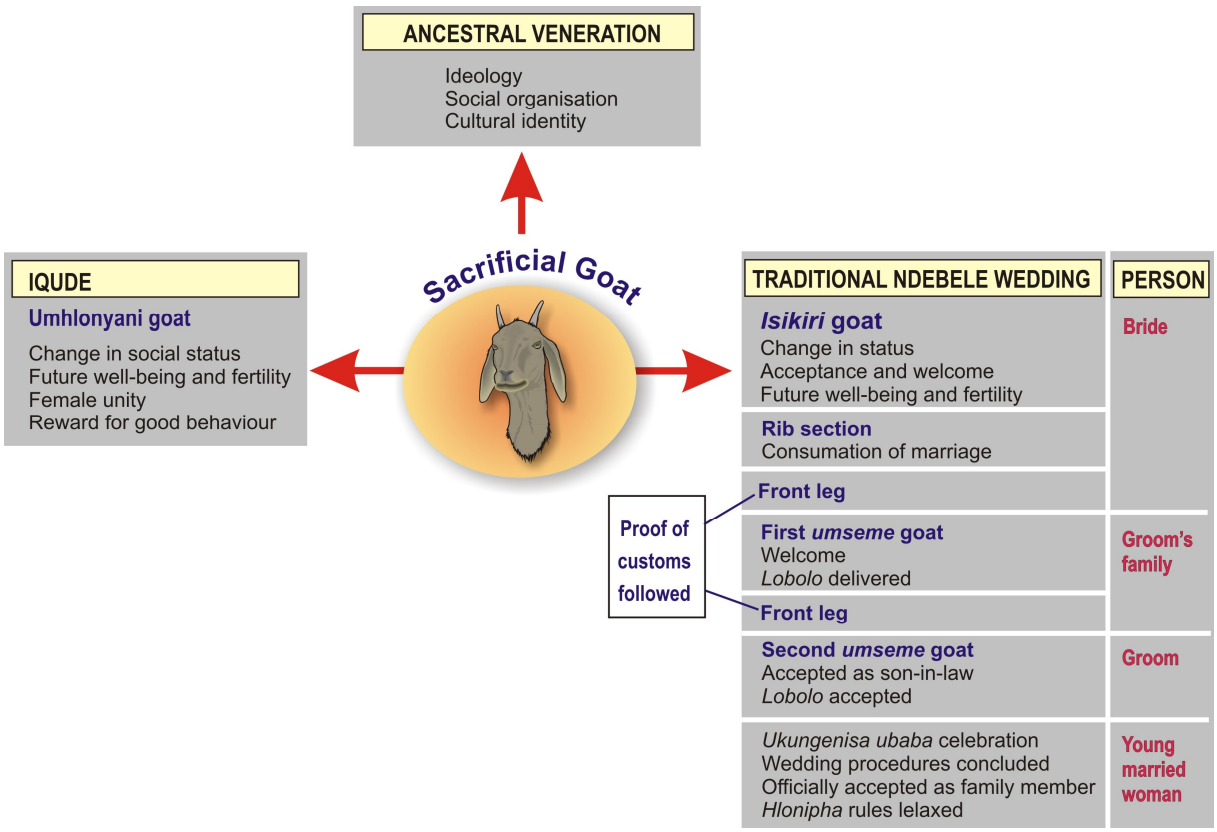

FIGURE 9.8: SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF THE SACRIFICIAL GOAT

9.6.1.1 Ancestral veneration

The ritually slaughtered goat represents important underlying facets of the **ideology** of the participants and specifically their beliefs, values and world view. The sacrificial slaughter of a goat symbolises, in the first instance, belief in the ancestors, and simultaneously obedience is symbolised through the act of veneration and informing them of the major events and milestones in the lives of those they left behind (see 8.2.). This signifies that the deceased are remembered, honoured and respected members of the kinship group. In paying tribute to the ancestors, they are not only openly honoured and acknowledged but the consequences of obeying the prescribed customs they demand, is emphasised. At the same time, this is a sign of aspects of the participants' world view. Through veneration, important information is passed on to the ancestors. It was explained that the ancestors expect to be informed of what has become of their descendants in order to be able to ensure and guard their well-being.

Important meanings regarding the **social organisation** of the group are also portrayed through such an act. The ancestors are acknowledged and honoured as elders and as such, they continue to be treated and respected as part of the kinship group that needs to be informed and consulted on grounds of their seniority (Theron, 1996:29-33; Hammond-Tooke,

1974:325; Eiselen & Schapera, 1962:254). The reward for adhering to the traditions and customs ancestors prescribe is well-being in the form of future prosperity and fertility. The deep-seated belief that the ancestors are directly instrumental in the welfare and procreation of descendants is emphasised in the importance and even anxiousness associated with the ritual to slaughter a goat at both the male and female initiation ceremonies and at traditional weddings. The sacrificial goat, for example, becomes a symbolic guarantee for future prosperity and fertility of a female as effected in the slaughter of the goat at the *iqude,* and *isikiri* celebrations (see 6.6.3 and 7.2.2). It is believed that adherence to and strictly following the prescriptions of the ancestors, namely to keep them informed, ensures the future success and continuation of the family lineage.

Apart from recognising their seniority in the kinship group, performing these rituals inculcates values of obedience and respect for the ancestors through honouring traditions and customs. At the same time, **cultural identity** is reflected through adhering to the prescribed initiation and traditional wedding customs. On these occasions the sacrificial goat also signifies other aspects of **social organisation** related to social and kinship relationships as well as to social status, cultural identity and the religious beliefs of those who participate in the event.

During the rite of passage celebrations such as those for initiation and marriage, for example, the slaughtered goat symbolises a change in status within the family and society of the females undergoing the process. The goat slaughtered at the *iqude,* for example, serves as symbol that the girl is now fully grown and ready (physically and emotionally) to undergo the process of *iqude*. The goat becomes a symbol of the mutual agreement among family members on the status of the girl in society who is about to change from a girl to that of a nubile young woman, as illustrated in the following quotations:

"It is to show that she is no longer a child, but is a teenager."

"She goes to the grandparents [maternal grandparents] *so that they can say thank you that she has grown up and to inform the ancestors. The grandmother will slaughter a goat just to inform the ancestors that the girl has now grown up."*

Similarly, the *isikiri* goat represents the young woman's transition to the married state. This goat symbolises that the bride is henceforth regarded as a married woman as explained in the following quotation:

"… when you go to your in-laws [for the *isimanje* process]*, then they must slaughter a goat to show that now you are a woman. You are no longer a girl…"*

The second context where the sacrificial goat signifies several symbolic meanings is at the *iqude*.

9.6.1.2 *Iqude*

The *umhlonyani* goat slaughtered on the Friday at the beginning of the *iqude* of a girl, has various symbolic meanings attached to it. By informing the ancestors of the process the girl is about to undergo, her **future well-being** is ensured because the ancestors have knowledge of what is happening to her. This is important, as explained before, because it serves as a precaution to ensure that the future fertility of the girl is not negatively influenced by disgruntled ancestors. It is strongly believed that the goat has to be slaughtered to ensure the girl's ability to bear children. This is illustrated by the emphasis placed on this goat as indicated in the following statements:

"The goat must be slaughtered. It is also for the ancestors, even if they don't speak with the ancestors. But the ancestors will see and agree with you that the girl has grown up. If the goat is not slaughtered the ancestors will be unhappy."

"… but there must be a goat, if there is not a goat, something terrible can happen to the girl, maybe she cannot have children, and then you find that there was a mistake, they didn't slaughter a goat."

The *umhlonyani* goat is specifically for the females attending this celebration and only females are allowed to eat the meat from this goat. The sharing of the meat from this goat is a symbol of **female unity** and it was emphasised that the entire goat has to be consumed by the females at this celebration. It was explained the elderly women and the young girls often have to finish the rest of the meat, if any was left, before the beast could be slaughtered for the *iqude* celebrations on Saturday.

The slaughter of the goat was also viewed by some as a symbol of the girl's good behaviour of not being sexually active and falling pregnant before the *iqude*. The goat thus epitmises her good behaviour and its slaughter confirms that the norms of society were followed. Thus the goat is also regarded as a **reward** for her good behaviour, simultaneously indicating that the goat acknowledges her new status in society, namely that of a nubile female. The following quotation endorses this interpretation:

"It is to show now she can be married to say thank you that she didn't sleep around with boys. … then it is now the time if you want to be [get] *married*."

The traditional Ndebele wedding is the third context where the sacrificial goat and certain parts of it, signify a number of symbolic meanings.

9.6.1.3 Traditional Ndebele wedding

The first goat slaughtered during the wedding procedures is at the *isikiri* celebration, and similarly the *isikiri* goat has various symbolic meanings attached to it. It was explained that when the goat is slaughtered the ancestors of the groom's family are again informed of the important event in the life of one of their male descendants.

The importance attached to the slaughtering of this goat was illustrated by one of the elderly participants who gave an account of a personal experience referring to the example of her sister's wedding. At the time of the wedding the in-laws of her sister failed to slaughter the *isikiri* goat for her and the ancestors of her brother-in-law were thus not informed that the marriage was going to take place. The participant's sister then had a child who was paralysed and this condition of the child was believed to be a direct result of the fact that the paternal ancestors of the child were not informed of the marriage through the sacrificial goat. The child was only healed after the prescribed goat was slaughtered.

Apart from symbolising that her status in society changes from that of an unmarried young woman to that of a married woman, the goat denotes that the bride is **accepted** in the groom's family through the slaughter of the goat and informing the ancestors that a marriage is going to take place. Some participants regarded the slaughtered goat as sign of being **welcomed** into the family of the groom. This was revealed by statements such as the following:

"*The goat that they slaughter for the makoti* [bride] *is to show her that they welcome her in the new family."*

"It is just a symbol that she is welcome at the in-laws."

A similar reason was offered to explain why the goats were slaughtered at the wedding celebration at the bride's family. Here the goats represent that the groom and his family and friends are **welcome** at the bride's family. During these celebrations at the bride's family, apart from the two beasts that are slaughtered, two goats are slaughtered as well (see 7.2.4). These goats symbolise not only hospitality and acceptance of the male members of the groom's family, but also serve as a sign of agreement that the *lobolo* transaction was completed to the satisfaction of both parties concerned. The first goat is slaughtered in

honour of the father of the groom (who is not present at the celebrations at the home of the bride's parents) and for the men who accompanied the *lobolo* cattle or handed over the *lobolo* as the representatives of the father of the groom. The second goat is slaughtered in honour of the groom. The first goat is a sign of the acceptance on the part of the bride's family that they agree with the *lobolo* delivered and are **satisfied** with it. The family of the bride slaughters the *umseme* goat as sign of the **acceptance** of the *lobolo* and that the groom's wedding party is welcome at the family of the bride. This was explained as follows:

"The goat is for the umseme. Before they can sit down the makoti's family must slaughter these. Before they can say you are welcome, sit down."

"… it is before they can sit down, before they can allow them to sit they will slaughter them a goat."

The front leg of a slaughtered goat is used to communicate proof to the other family that a procedure was performed according to the prescribed custom. As described above, a number of goats are slaughtered at the different stages of the traditional Ndebele wedding at the family homes of either the groom or the bride. At certain stages it is required that the ancestors be duly informed. The family members who are not present require proof that the in-laws of their child have performed the prescribed rituals. Part of the slaughtered goat is then taken back to the other family as evidence that a goat was slaughtered as part of the ritual and/or that ancestral veneration took place if it was required. Evidence of this is required in the following cases, namely, when the bride returns from the groom's family after the *isimanje* for the wedding celebrations at her parents' home, when the representatives from the groom's father return to him (the father of the groom) after delivering the *lobolo* cattle, and after the birth of a child.

The bride will take one of the forelegs of the *isikiri* goat that was slaughtered for her, back to her family when she returns the next day for the wedding procedures at her parents' home. This "*arm of the goat*" serves as sign to the bride's family that the prescribed ritual procedures were followed and that the ancestors of the groom's family have been notified of the marriage and that she is accepted as a daughter-in-law in the family. This evidence reassures the bride's family that the groom's family have followed the customary rituals and thereby ensures that the ancestors of the groom would not be offended and punish their daughter by causing her to be infertile or to bear disabled children.

The other instance where the *"arm of the goat"* is used as proof of the performance of a customary procedure is where it is used as sign to the father of the groom that the *lobolo*

transaction took place to the satisfaction of all concerned. In this case, the foreleg of the goat, slaughtered in honour of the groom's father and as sign that the men who represented him were welcome at the bride's family, is taken to him as proof that the *lobolo* cattle were delivered and that both parties agreed and that the transaction took place. The foreleg of the goat becomes a symbol of the transaction that was settled.

The last goat slaughtered as part of the traditional Ndebele wedding procedures honours the young married woman some time after the wedding (it could be after two or more years) when the in-laws slaughter a goat. This not only signifies that the long and involved traditional Ndebele wedding process has reached its concluding stage, but also that the young woman is now fully accepted and acknowledged as part of her husband's family. Once the young married woman has been fully accepted into the grooms' family, she is traditionally allowed to drink milk at the home of her in-laws and to talk to her father-in-law as described in Chapter 7 (see 7.2.7). At the time of the study, this part of the procedure was still regarded as essential although emphasis on the milk consumption has fallen away as people do not own herds anymore. Some families, however, continue to enforce this restriction together with restricting the consumption of eggs. The symbolic meanings attached to this procedure still apply as it is closely related to the *hlonipha.* Here the slaughtered goats have, once again, a number of meanings.

The goat slaughtered by the father-in-law symbolises that his daughter-in-law is now officially accepted and regarded as part of the family. By being accepted, some of the strict *hlonipha* rules to which a married woman is bound, are relaxed. For example, she is now allowed to drink milk at the home of her in-laws, and to talk to her father-in-law and receive him and his brothers as guests at her house, which was not permissible before.

"They only slaughter a goat and then they say now we release [lift the restriction on milk consumption] *you, you can eat milk."*

The bread and red jam served at the *iqude* celebration, similar to the sacrificial goat, also symbolises a number of meanings that are context-dependent, and serves as another example of a polysemic food.

9.6.2 Bread and red jam as symbol of the *iqude*

In Chapter 6 (see 6.6.3) the procedures and food practices associated with the first *iqude* celebration were described. The importance and meanings of serving bread and red jam on Sunday afternoon after lunch was highlighted. The bread and red jam has become symbolic

of the *iqude* celebrations in recent times. Figure 9.9 gives a diagrammatic representation of these symbolic meanings attached to the bread and red jam.

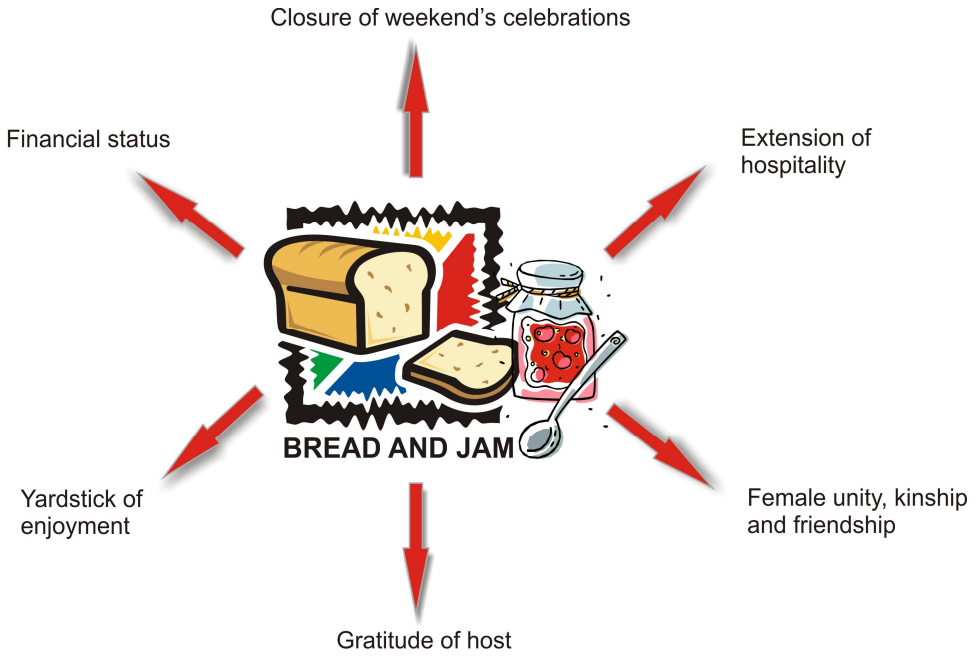

FIGURE 9.9: SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF THE BREAD AND RED JAM AT THE IQUDE

When bread and red jam is served, it signals that the weekend's celebrations are drawing to a close. As a symbol of the extension of the hospitality of the hosts, this special treat at the *iqude* is given to each female with a daughter who has already undergone the *iqude*. Here it serves as symbol of female unity and simultaneously of kinship and friendship ties that are strengthened through this celebration. According to Jansen van Vuuren's (1992:386) observations, this is given in reciprocity for the gifts received from the guests on their departure on Sunday afternoon and thus symbolises the gratitude of the host as well. To be in the position to hand a loaf of bread and tin of red jam to each female guest symbolises the financial status of the host and the gesture has prestige value attached to it as well. Some participants even regarded it as a yardstick to measure enjoyment and the success of the celebrations according to the extent to which the bread and red jam was given.

The symbolism attached to the bread and red jam at the *iqude* mainly represents the prestige and status of the family who hosts the celebration.

9.7 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In following the grounded theory approach to data analysis two core categories emerged from the findings. The first core category was “the pliancy of food use” and three aspects closely related to it, namely food content, food context and acculturation response were identified. This core category illustrated the use and meanings that the participants attached to traditional and modern food as well as the fluidity and ease with which the participants used food from each of these two extreme culinary poles depending on the context in which the food is used. Through discussion on the use of both the traditional and modern food categories, the food ideology of the participants was portrayed as a reflection of their beliefs, values, attitudes, world view and cultural identity with evidence that related to how each food category was used.

The second core category concerned “polysemic food” that revealed the numerous symbolic meanings that were attached to specific foods or a food category in a specific context. The symbolic meanings attached to traditional beer, modern food, the sacrificial goat, and the bread and red jam at the first *iqude* celebration by the Ndebele group, were identified as themes under this core category. Aspects of the food ideology of the participants were reflected through the multiple symbolic meanings attached to the sacrificial goat and traditional beer, whereas the symbolism attached to modern food and the bread and red jam at the *iqude* mostly related to prestige and status.

TERMINOLOGY LIST

bogobe	Stiff maize-meal porridge
chicken mala	Chicken intestines
gemere	Ginger beer. See Addendum D
hlonipha	Showing respect or treating someone respectfully
iqude	Ndebele female initiation
irhayi	Dish prepared from dried maize and cowpeas. See Addendum C
isikiri	Last phase of the *isimanje* and first wedding celebration at the groom's parents' home
isimanje	The couple of days that the bride spends at the home of the groom's parents in preparation for her marriage into the family
mabele	Sorghum
makoti	Pedi for bride
maotwana	Chicken feet
mogodu	Ox tripe
morogo	Collective name for indigenous green leafy vegetables
ting ya mabele	Fermented sorghum meal porridge
thabalala	Alcoholic beverage prepared from malted sorghum
umhlonyani goat	Goat slaughtered for the girl undergoing the *iqude*
umkhupha	Maize-meal and legume dish. See Addendum C
umseme	Woven grass sleeping mat

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Why people eat as they do is indeed an intricate phenomenon to unravel. Many influences from different environments shape human food practices and the embedded food choice process (Bryant *et al*., 2003:2; Story *et al*., 2002; Schifferstein *et al.,* 2001:5-6; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:1; Sobal *et al.,* 1998). Any food consumption event, be it an ordinary weekday meal, a snack or a meal prepared for a special occasion, is guided by a number of interrelated issues emanating from a variety of sources. These result in a composite matrix of factors and environments that are involved in the food practice process (see Chapter 2).

Not only do multiple factors contribute to the creation of food practices in a complex manner but, as part of culture, the development of food practices too is an ongoing and dynamic process that continues to evolve as a result of active large-scale socio-cultural processes as spelt out in the developmental model of food culture (see 2.3.4.1). Some of the mentioned socio-cultural processes explicated in this model have been identified as accounting for the changes noted in the lifestyle and food practices of black South African population groups (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne, *et al*., 2002; MacIntyre, *et al.,* 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001; Labadarios, *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995; Bourne *et al*., 1993). Existing literature reports on these changes, and acknowledges South Africa's nutritional transition. However, describing the food practices in place at the turn of the twenty-first century, explaining the meanings attached to them and accounting for the changes that took place, were not addressed at all. This research accommodates these issues and some of its findings do confirm changes reported in the literature on the nutrition transition in South Africa (Mackeown *et al.,* 2007; Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Vorster, Bourne, Venter & Oosthuizen, 1999; Labadarios *et al.,* 1996). However, it seems to be the first time that a holistic and contextual approach to studying the food practices of a South African black community has been undertaken.

The aim of this study was thus not only to give a comprehensive description of the food practices of a black South African community at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but

also to gain an understanding of **why** these practices are followed and **what** meanings are attached to them including **how** and **why** the changes took place. This in itself necessitated that the underlying factors that contributed to the observed development and change be included in such an investigation.

Against this background the overarching goal of the research was to describe and understand how meanings emerged from the context and how these could be used to construe the food practices of the peoples living in Mmotla. This goal was realised through the following objectives:

- To describe and interpret the food practices in this community and **how** the food practices developed over time.
- To describe and interpret how the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environmental forces manifest in their food practices during social interaction and **what meanings** are associated with these food practices during social interaction.
- To identify the **salient codes** (both modern and traditional) and the meanings that are in interplay when food practices are negotiated to define situations, interpret meanings or assign new meanings to facilitate effective communication.

With the three theoretical perspectives and the theoretical framework presented in Figure 2.1 as point of departure, the main findings, conclusions, advances and contributions of this research on the food practices and their meanings, are drawn together. This is to illustrate how the findings augment the theory on the development of food practices and their associated meanings in a South African context. Some of this research's findings do confirm changes in eating patterns and reasons why changes occurred as reported in the extant literature. These results advance and enhance existing work as they add a new depth of understanding of the food practices of this South African community. Furthermore, this research contributes additional knowledge that arises from these findings derived from investigating the everyday food practices and those applicable to special occasions, including the meanings attached to them in each context.

10.2 CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE MAIN FINDINGS

A holistic and contextual understanding of human food practices necessitated that all the environmental levels and their embedded factors be taken into account (Rozin, 2007:8; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:3; Story *et al.,* 2002; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). How the food practices of the Mmotla people were shaped by factors from their socio-cultural

and socio-psychological environments during social interaction was of significance for an in-depth understanding of their food practices and their associated meanings. Although the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments were particularly important, contributions from the other environmental levels are also acknowledged. Contemporary food practices and their meanings were thus interpreted against the multifaceted matrix that developed through the interrelationships and interdependency of the various environments in which these people lived and were in contact with on a daily basis. The human ecological perspective, used as principle theoretical framework for this study, and supported by the cultural perspective and the tenets of symbolic interactionism, afforded the opportunity to secure a holistic and contextual understanding as justified in Chapter 2 (see 2.3).

Figure 2.1 (see Chapter 2) illustrated not only the contribution of the various environmental levels to the food choice process as part of food practices, but also sought to portray the interrelatedness and interdependency between these environmental levels including the reciprocal interaction between humans and their environments.

10.2.1 Development of contemporary food practices

An expansion of the model given in Figure 2.1 is now used to show how factors at the various environmental levels interplay in the formation of the contemporary food practices of the Mmotla people. The contribution of the three theoretical perspectives to achieve a contextual approach added new depth to the understanding of the food practices of this South African community and contributed to refining the theory related to issues of significance in the South African context. This was specifically achieved through the insights obtained when interrogating **how** and **why** changes had taken place, thereby enhancing the understanding of the meanings they attached to them.

The basic premise of the human ecological perspective deals with the way in which humans interact with their surrounding environments and emphasises a reciprocity and interrelatedness between humans and their environments, noting that they co-exist as a unity (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:2; Story *et al.,* 2002; Sobal *et al.,* 1998; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993: 425; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). Food practices, and the underlying food choice process, form part of human behaviour and are steered by the various environments with which they interact. **What** people eat is in the first place, determined by **where** people live, this implies that not only the physical environment but all the other environments such as the economic and political as well as the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments are involved and contribute to the food choice process (Rozin, 2007: 10-15; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:10; Sobal *et al.,* 1998).

The human ecological perspective was a suitable avenue through which to explore, interpret and understand the development of the food practices of the Mmotla people and the various contexts in which food is used. The dynamic nature of this perspective acknowledges that adaptations and changes in any one of the environments impinge on the other interlinked environments, and this contributed to a successful holistic understanding of their food practices. Contemporary food practices of the peoples in Mmotla were shaped, and continue to be shaped, by a series of adaptations and changes to the physical and social environments in that each has a reciprocal causation effect on all the other interrelated environments and factors embedded in them as depicted in Figure 10.1.

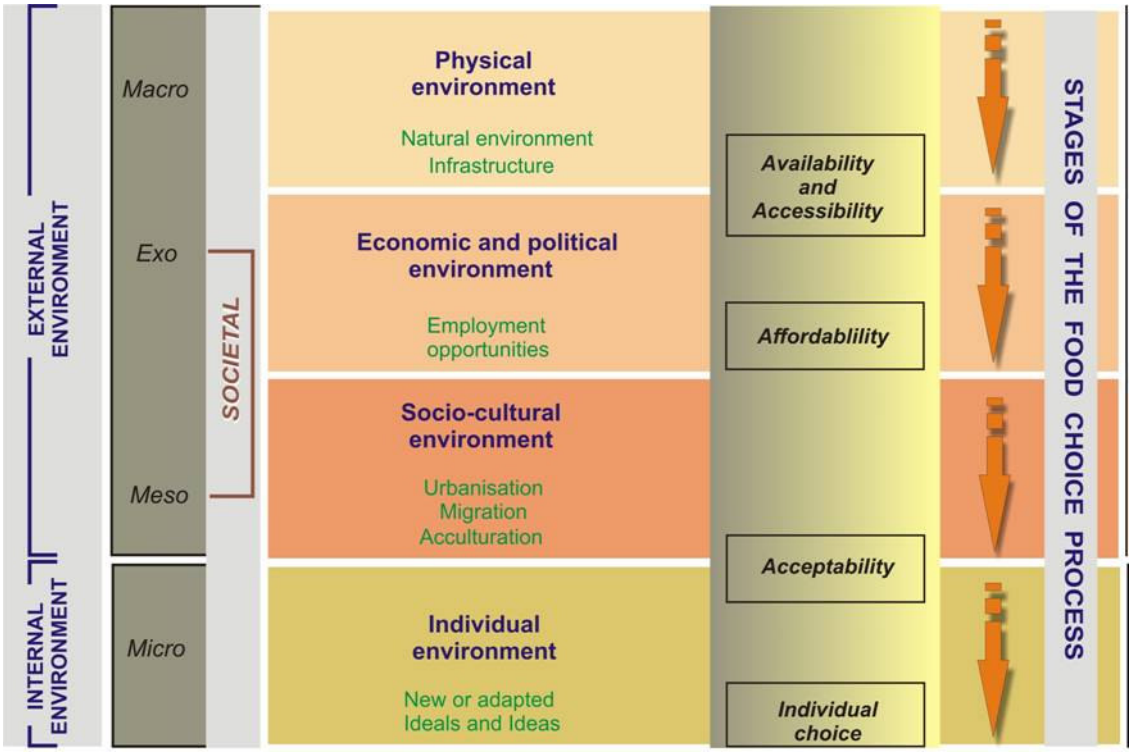

FIGURE 10.1: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONTEMPORARY FOOD PRACTICES

Figure 10.1[42] portrays the most salient factors from each ecological environmental level that contributed to the contemporary food practices of the Mmotla community. This includes the stages in the food choice process where they are significant. These are indicated in black. How the contemporary food practices developed over the past four decades is linked to these factors, as they had a direct bearing on food availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability. The **availability** of food was, in the first instance, determined by the physical

[42] The conceptual framework of the study was based on Figure 2.1 and presented in the traditional circle format characteristic of human ecological models. In order to obtain a more legible model the rectangular format of Figure 2.1 is used in this chapter to illustrate the development of the final conceptual framework of the study.

environment of Mmotla. A detailed description of this environment is given in Chapter 4 (see 4.2 and 4.3). The restrictions of the natural environment curtailed the opportunity to cultivate food for household consumption and forced them to resort to commercially available food products. They not only became dependent on the retail sector to provide for their basic food needs, but they also needed money to obtain these food commodities. The location and infrastructure of the village was another factor associated with the physical environment that contributed to how readily food products were **available** and **accessible**. Typical of such small villages, the few stores located there often supplied only basic food items and other bare necessities, usually at a higher price compared to what was charged in larger stores and supermarkets. Similar to other black South African communities the **affordability** of food became a major hurdle in the **accessibility** of food (D'Haese & Van Huylenbroeck, 2005; Labadarios *et al.*, 2005; Rose & Charlton, 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001). This situation further entrenched the need to have a disposable income and cash available to purchase even the most basic of food items. Limited **employment opportunities** in Mmotla led to an increased urge to seek employment in the nearby border industrial areas and urban areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg. This meant that those who had employment in these cities had to commute between their place of residence and where they worked. Considerable cost and time is involved in commuting between 50 and 100 km, and in some instances even more than 100 km.

Humans respond to and change, develop or modify their environments that often pose constraints, yet they also offer opportunities (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:10; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993: 433). The limited availability of and accessibility to traditional food and the inability to cultivate any crops for household consumption, forced the people of Mmotla to adapt and make changes in their food choices. They did this through the inclusion of the available commercial Western-oriented foods in their food patterns. In order to make these adjustments in response to the constraints of the physical and economic environments, necessitated employment in the nearby urban and industrial areas to earn an income. Inevitably, this led to a continuous movement between place of employment and residence. **Migration** and **urbanisation** were thus accelerated through this need to have a disposable income. Through migration and urbanisation increased contact and interaction with people from other cultures and ethnic groups were established. This created and contributed to a chain of reciprocal responses in the various environments of the study group. The most common and rapid way of responding to environmental changes that humans make, is by means of socio-cultural adaptations (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:12; Pelto *et al.*, 2000:3).

Employment in white households and in industry brought them not only in closer contact with the white culture and the Western-oriented urban lifestyle, but also with other black cultural

groups in the workplace and larger society. Apart from the close contact that was established with other cultural groups in the workplace, the immediate residential environment of the participants simultaneously enhanced cross-cultural interaction. As a direct result of the political agenda of the past, the forced eviction of groups of people from nearby urban areas and farms, and the relocation to this village and the neighbouring township of Soshanguve, contributed to the creation of this village and its multi-cultural character. The increased exposure and interaction with the Western-oriented culture and money economy, the contact and interaction with people from other cultural groups in the workplace and community, all led to **acculturation** and **modernisation**. This, together with the emphasis on education and training in order to secure better employment to improve earning power, as well as the conversion to the Christian religion, further contributed to the increased and continuous exposure to other cultures including their world views, beliefs, values and attitudes. In response to this exposure, adaptations and change in the social and cultural environments followed. This resulted in changes in each of the three components of culture where it became visible in their food usage and food-related behaviour. In his model of social dynamics and food culture, Sobal (2000) posits that, when major structural changes such as modernisation, urbanisation and migration occur, changes in food culture are part of the complex process. This was also the case in Mmotla and became visible in the material culture and behaviour of the people of Mmotla as manifest in their food practices.

Change was visible in the food (material culture) and the associated food behaviour (menti-facts and socio-facts) that portrayed the concurrent changes in the beliefs, values and attitudes of individuals and groups of individuals in this community. The impact of technological developments, mainly as a result of modernisation and urbanisation as well as changes in the physical environment, contributed to an increased availability and exposure to new and other food products. The availability and access to basic services such as piped water, sanitation and electricity, which are closely associated with the physical environment and indirectly affect food practices, have only become available to the majority of the residents in recent years, after the dismantling of *apartheid.* This, together with the continuous interaction with people from other cultures and social groups in the community, the workplace, church and school, simultaneously increased the exposure and introduction to foods others use. Exposure to other kinds of food not only included how and when it was used and prepared, but also the underlying meanings attached to it. Aspects of the food ideology and food behaviour of other people were also integrated, and implied transformed beliefs, values and attitudes toward food in general. These were ultimately noticed as either **adapted** or **new ideas** and **ideals** at the individual and socio-psychological environmental level, and were eventually reflected in the food practices and the meanings individuals and the group attached to them.

To understand the dynamic nature of the changes that took place in the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments of the participants, the cultural perspective and symbolic interactionism complemented the human ecological perspective. Both these theoretical frameworks deal with meaning and facilitate the uncovering of the meanings attached to food in various contexts and situations. The major focus of this study dealt with how the meanings attached to food and food practices, developed and changed over time, as well as why these became obvious in a certain way. Moreover, it included finding out how the situation or context guided the choice of specific foods to give them meaning, and how these meanings were interpreted, negotiated and communicated by those who participated.

The human ecological perspective allows for the deliberation of change and how change impacts on the interrelated environments in which humans interact (Story *et al*., 2002; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:421). The cultural perspective complemented the human ecological perspective in this regard, as this perspective guided the consideration of the meanings attached to food and food practices as they developed and evolved over time and in different contexts. As explained in Chapter 2 (see 2.3), the cultural perspective focuses on the socio-cultural environment and addresses the symbolic realm of social life, where cultural forms and social relations are studied in relation to the ideologies of a cultural group and includes how these characterise a cultural group. A strong focus of this perspective is on the expressive culture or material artefacts (food and food practices in this case) and includes the signification or development of meanings associated with cultural objects. It was not only food as cultural products that resulted in signification, but also the way people related to these products and what they did to, or with it. The assumptions of the cultural perspective guided the interpretation of the meanings attached to the food practices as part of the expressive culture in the various contexts described by the participants. In Chapter 9, a summarised interpretation of the meanings and symbolism attached to food as material culture of the study group was given (see 9.2). Theories on acculturation and the developmental model of food culture also contributed to and guided the understanding of the food practices and the interpretation of the meanings attached to food in the various contexts it was used.

Symbolic interactionism provided the other theoretical framework to research the different meanings (symbols) that were used in different contexts. Symbolic interactionism was useful at the micro-environmental or individual level to understand the meanings attached to food and food practices that resulted from human interaction. Humans react to things on the basis of the meanings that they have for them, thus the meanings of things are derived from or out of social interaction with others (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:1; Blumer, 1969:2). The way people react to an object is usually a result of their interpretation of the meaning(s) the object has for

them (Charon, 1998:48). Here symbolic interactionism was useful to uncover the dynamics through which meanings with regard to food practices were socially constructed, in different contexts by the study group. The premises of symbolic interactionism were applied to interpret and describe the meanings attached to food, the role of food as a symbol and how food obtained symbolic meaning, what meanings were attached to food in different contexts and how food obtained new meanings. In Chapter 9 the meanings of the food practices of the Mmotla participants were interpreted (see 9.2).

The most salient factors that contributed to contemporary food practices and how these had evolved over the past four decades are the result of the dynamic and ongoing changes and developments in the environments of the participants are described and explained. These factors had a direct bearing on the availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability of food and, in turn, on the participants' food practices and the meanings attached to them. All these contributed to and enhanced the shift towards Western-oriented food practices. The main findings follow and relate to the participants' contemporary food practices incorporating reference to how meanings attached to food are based on how food is perceived and used in various contexts

10.2.2 Contemporary food practices and their meanings

The present study aimed to understand how meanings emerged from the context and how these were used to construe the food practices of the Mmotla people**.** Meaning is a social product and arises through the process of interaction between people, in other words it is created. Humans act toward things, including food, on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:1; Blumer, 1969:2-3). People are inclined to categorise food to help them make sense of their world and this simultaneously gives an indication of the cultural usage thereof, including the values attached to it (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Anderson, 2005:113; Furst *et al.,* 2000; Fieldhouse, 1995:37). To make sense of the world they live in, the participants likewise categorised food and special occasions into dichotomised groups of traditional and modern. This provided valuable insight into how food was perceived and used and contributed to understanding the meanings attached to food, especially how these developed and were used in various contexts, to communicate and define the situation.

People not only categorise food to make sense of their world, but also to simplify their world (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:9-11; Anderson, 2005:113; Furst *et al.,* 2000). Through this categorisation the participants gave an indication of the presence of two opposite poles in their lives, namely, the traditional and the modern that was ever present and even

reflected in the way they perceived and used food. Of particular significance was the fact that traditional food has not been discarded, and was still used and regarded as important. The categorisation also portrayed how food was valued and used in various contexts. This in itself reflected a great deal about the values and beliefs and how food, as a symbol, conveyed certain messages. Food as material artefact conveys messages (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:11; Anderson, 2005:112; Fieldhouse, 1995:37) and the participants likewise attached and communicated various messages in each context where the two food categories were used. The categorisation further provided a norm of what should be prepared and served in a specific context (see 9.3).

Various authors indicate that the food practices in which people engage depend on the situation or context in which a food event takes place (Blake *et al*., 2007; Meiselman, 2007:67-69; Devine *et al*., 1999, Meiselman, 1996:247-252). The findings of this study were similar, and the various contexts in which food practices took place, portrayed not only what and how food was used, but also the meanings attached to the food. Even the food-related behaviour of those who participated in its consumption was context or situation dependent. These situations or contexts fell into two broad groups, those that dealt with everyday situations as demonstrated at household level on weekdays and over weekends, and those that related to special occasions or celebrations. Within the special occasion contexts a distinction was made between traditional and modern occasions. The food practices within each of these groups of occasions differed and therefore the meanings also varied. This was due to the degree of interaction between individuals or groups of individuals in each of the contexts. The degree of interaction and who participated determined the status or prestige of the occasion and this guided or defined the food content and the meanings attributed to the food. Figure 10.2 illustrates the various food contexts with an indication of the food category most likely to be used in each.

Household level		
Everyday contexts	**Weekday food practices**	**Weekend food practices**
	Combination of modern/ Western-oriented and traditional food	Mainly modern / Western-oriented food
Public arena		
Special occasion contexts	**Traditional occasions**	**Modern occasions**
	Traditional and modern food	Modern food

FIGURE 10.2: FOOD CONTEXTS AND ASSOCIATED FOOD CATEGORIES

10.2.2.1 Food practices in everyday contexts

The everyday food contexts were those experienced at household level and it emerged that distinctive practices were followed during weekdays and on weekend days.

(i) Weekday food practices

On weekdays the food pattern seemed to be primarily directed by what the food budget allowed and the participants seemed to resort to the less expensive and more traditional type of food items. In contrast, the weekend pattern included more expensive and special treats as more money was available.

(ii) Weekend food practices

Valuable insights into the current food consumption patterns over weekends were obtained in the present study, which contributed to the understanding of the way food was perceived and used by the participants on special occasions. The meal pattern and composition over weekends differed in a number of ways from those of weekdays and appeared to have a more modern and contemporary slant.

How the two categories of traditional and modern food were viewed and used by the participants seemed to be rooted in the contrast between the food used on weekdays and weekends. Traditional food appears to be associated with limited finance and hardship, as well as the routine and drudgery experienced during the working week. Modern food, on the other hand, is associated with having money, pleasant social interaction, relaxation, joy and strengthening of family and friendship ties. Modern food has therefore become a symbol of social coherence and the Sunday midday meal, the “gold standard” or norm for food suitable for all special occasions and celebrations. A higher prestige value is attached to modern food and it has become a yardstick of economic well-being, success and good times.

10.2.2.2 Food practices in the context of special occasions

The other two food contexts, as depicted in Figure 10.2, are those associated with special occasions. In the academic literature of recent times, apart from some authors (McAllister, 2003; Fieldhouse, 1995:93; Jones, 1963:60-61; Quin, 1959:96-102) who merely refer to the prominence of traditional beer and the abundance of meat from a slaughtered animal at special events, no detailed descriptions of the types of celebrations, their format and/or the food served at gatherings of particular significance for the black South African population are

on record. The findings of this study serve to fill this lacuna as a comprehensive account of the food practices associated with special occasions, as celebrated by the Mmotla participants, is given.

In contrast to everyday food practices that were confined to the private sphere of the household, celebrations or special occasions were public occasions and therefore more open to public scrutiny and critique. As in the case of food, special occasions were also classified as being either traditional or modern.

(i) Food practices at traditional special occasions

Traditional occasions were regarded as those that had been celebrated by past generations. An important feature of traditional celebrations was the pivotal role that ancestral veneration played in the food practices associated with certain rituals performed at specific stages during these traditional celebrations. The continued belief in the ancestors thus contributed to the maintenance of certain traditional procedures especially specific food practices. Ancestors were perceived and treated as important special guests at these events, and it was regarded as important to express respect and obedience towards them by serving their preferred traditional food.

This created a predicament when hosting a traditional celebration as nowadays modern food is the preferred food served at most of celebrations. As explained, the most appropriate food for a special occasion was modern food "*like on a Sunday*". To overcome the dilemma of having to obey and respect the ancestors by honouring traditional customs and providing traditional food on the one hand, while guests needed to be pleased on the other, the general practice followed was to prepare both traditional and modern food for these occasions. Traditional food was then used when ancestral veneration took place or when custom required that it be served.

Apart from the prestige attached to modern food, other reasons why it was included side by side with the traditional, related to the religious beliefs and food preferences of the guests. Certain Christian churches required that their members not only abstain from participation in ancestral rituals, but also prohibited the consumption of food used by others in ancestral communication. This included the meat from a sacrificial animal, traditional beer and other fermented traditional dishes. To some, the consumption of modern food even became a symbol of Christianity. The other reason was a direct result of how familiar the guests were with traditional foods and what meanings they attached to traditional dishes. The younger generation, for example, were not used to some of the more traditional dishes and/or had

limited exposure to it, and consequently they disliked the taste and texture of these dishes. Furthermore, traditional foods are now associated with the poor, the old-fashioned or uneducated people and are therefore not regarded as being suitable for serving to guests. In similar vein, others too, have likewise reported on the low status attached to traditional food (Kepe, 2008; Jansen van Rensburg *et al.,* 2007; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003).

Forces from the socio-cultural environment, specifically the ideological and social organisational components of culture were more influential in creating the meanings attached to the various food practices related to traditional contexts, although ideas and ideals, as forces from the socio-psychological environment also came to the fore in some instances. This is particularly evident in the meanings of the food practices associated with the traditional rites of passage of the Ndebele during the male initiation process and *isikiri* at the traditional wedding procedures (see 6.3 and 7.2.2) where cultural identity and the belief system are emphasised. Although the majority of the other cultural groups still engaged in these rites, the Ndebele, as one of the more conservative groups, adhered very strictly to their traditional customs. The other cultural groups did not have such involved rites and it seemed as if food did not feature as prominently as in the case of the Ndebele.

Food practices during traditional celebrations clearly reflected the ease and fluidity with which the participants switched between the traditional and modern food categories and how each was applied to negotiate and saliently define the specific situation or context in which it was being used, thereby accommodating both their own personal beliefs and values whilst at the same time ensuring that important messages were being conveyed through the accepted traditional and modern codes that their food practices signified (see for example 6.3 and 7.2 regarding initiation and traditional wedding celebrations).

(ii) Food practices at modern special occasions

The participants regarded birthdays, weddings, funerals, Christmas and Easter as the major modern celebrations. Although weddings and funerals were part of the traditional special occasions, these have undergone significant changes from the traditional way of doing things, and are therefore regarded as being “modern” and thus identified by the participants as modern special occasions. The food served at modern weddings, funerals, birthdays, Christmas and Easter is similar to that of the Sunday midday meal and communicates the same meanings.

The outcomes of urbanisation, acculturation and conversion to the Christian faith, modernisation and education are evident in the food practices associated with these special occasions that are characterised by mainly serving modern food. Moreover they have considerable prestige value as modern special occasions are often used as an opportunity for conspicuous consumption (i.e. a display of the host's economic status) and to exhibit to others that the host is a modern and educated person and clearly in a favourable financial position and able to afford hosting such an occasion. A large variety of modern dishes are prepared and particular attention is given to the presentation of the food. Although the emphasis is on modern food, certain favourite traditional dishes such as *bogobe, ting mabele*, the meat from a slaughtered animal and traditional beer are often included in the menu. The inclusion of these dishes underscores not only the popularity of traditional dishes, but they are also a subtle signifier of the cultural identity and traditions of the host. As explained by Long (2000:143) the inclusion of traditional dishes in celebratory meals is often deeply personal and emotive and can embrace intense symbolic meanings and values for individuals.

It emerged that the church plays a major role in the food practices of certain groups in this community and this, to a large extent, determines what is permissible at special occasion events. Some participants and their families have been followers of the Christian faith for a number of generations, and it was clear that they had discarded ancestral veneration completely, whilst others continued to adhere to its practices, even though they are members of a Christian church. Some church groups strictly forbid their members to participate in ancestral veneration and, in some instances, this even includes the consumption of food used by others in the ritual communication with the ancestors. Other church groups approve of ancestral veneration and their members are allowed to enjoy the traditional beer and meat others have used in ritual communication with the ancestors.

10.3 FINAL CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The food practices of the people of Mmotla continue to develop and change and, although there is a distinct move towards the Western-oriented food practices, it was clear from the findings of this study that traditional food practices were not discarded. Both the traditional and the more Western-oriented, modern food practices were regarded as important and could thus be viewed as two opposite poles on a continuum with a noticeable dynamic, easy flow of movement between them. Not every participant held the same position on this continuum as, in most cases, they adapted their food practices as required by the context or situation. The fluidity of movement between these opposite poles clearly emerged as context

specific, as explicated in Chapter 9 (see 9.3). Each food situation was negotiated and often included food from both these opposite poles of the continuum.

The level of social interaction, as well as the people concerned, determined the food context. Meanings associated with both the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments were used to define the context. Food from either the traditional or the modern categories became the symbol, sign or code that represented a specific situation and/or communicated the meaning attached to it. The serving of modern or more Western-oriented food at a special occasion function could, for example, mean that the host was educated, successful and had or pretended to have the financial means to host the celebration. In a certain sense the socio-economic standing of, or that which the host aspired to, was signalled through the kind, quantity and variety of food served. Modern food became a symbol of success and advancement and keeping apace with change.

There were contexts in which the use of modern food and the exclusion of traditional food symbolised that the host belonged to the Christian faith. It emerged that some churches and religious groups condemned ancestral veneration and the accompanying traditional rituals and ceremonial procedures including the associated food practices of preparing traditional beer and sacrificing an animal in honour of the ancestors. The authority and power of some religious groups in prohibiting certain traditional food practices contributed to the practice of abstaining from the consumption of certain traditional foods by members of these churches. In some instances the serving of modern food had a hedonistic connotation and the emphasis and associated meanings revolved around the host as an individual and the identity (s)he wished to portray. On the other hand, the serving of traditional food on special occasions or during traditional ceremonies signified that the beliefs in the ancestors continued. Adhering to traditional food practices so strictly on these occasions, bore testimony as to how deep-rooted these were in the belief system of those who continued with ancestral veneration.

Although traditional dishes were no longer frequently prepared in the majority of households and a general decrease in the consumption of traditional dishes was evident, the consumption of certain traditional food items and dishes continued on a regular basis in Mmotla depending on the situation or food context. For instance, when financial resources were limited, some participants often resorted to low-cost traditional-type menu items especially during the week. This situation meant that certain traditional foods became stereotyped as food of low prestige value and as food consumed by poor and uneducated people. This was specifically the case with dishes prepared from indigenous green leafy vegetables. Due to the low status ascribed to these vegetables a negative nutritional

outcome resulted as documented in a number of studies conducted in South Africa and the rest of the continent (Faber, Van Jaarsveld & Laubscher, 2007; Faber & Wenhold, 2007; Jansen van Rensburg *et al.,* 2007; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003). Indigenous green leafy vegetables are excellent sources of micronutrients that could significantly contribute to the micronutrient intake of vulnerable groups such as young children and women to combat micronutrient deficiencies (Faber *et al.,* 2007; Faber & Wenhold, 2007; Maunder & Meaker, 2007). On the other hand, some traditional dishes, such as those prepared with sorghum and certain legumes, have been elevated to high status foods due to the scarcity and cost of sorghum and legumes such as jugo beans and cowpeas. The nutritional benefits of consuming legumes and sorghum dishes should therefore be promoted and the consumption advocated. The importance of sorghum and maize as a sacrificial and staple food was often emphasised. Their use not only symbolised deep-rooted cultural values and beliefs, but also reflected the emotional value attached to these staple foods.

The inclusion of traditional dishes on the menu for special occasions also symbolised cultural identity. In post-*apartheid* South Africa, where cultural and ethnic revival is being promoted it has become permissible to participate openly and even to show-case traditional practices. This was specifically the case with the Ndebele participants who regarded it as important to cherish and maintain their cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, although the modern Western-oriented food practices were embraced in other contexts. Examples of how the traditional and modern food were used side by side or separate depending on the context, was illustrated in the traditional Ndebele *ingoma*, *iqude* and wedding procedures as described in Chapters 6 and 7 (see 6.3, 6.6 and 7.2.1). Devine *et al*. (1999) similarly found in their study that people sometimes enacted their cultural identity through their food choices and at other times they did not.

Apart from the context or situation that determined the degree of inclusion of either traditional or modern food, the age, life-course and lifestyle of the participants were also contributing factors. In reviewing the changes in the food practices from the participants' perspective on how it changed and developed over the past 40 years, it is concluded that, although they basically followed the same eating patterns (see 5.3.2), the familiarity and exposure to certain types of food created subtle differences noted in the food practices of the younger and older generations reflecting their attitudes, values and preferences for certain foods. The younger generation (40 years and younger) who did not have the same exposure to traditional food when compared to some of the older participants, did not portray the same values and attitudes. The younger generation, who had more exposure to the Western-oriented culture, modern technological developments such as television, electrical appliances

and commercial food products did not attach the same value to traditional food. This is ascribed to the effect of secondary socialisation[43] and acculturation on the one hand. On the other hand, the younger generation did not have the same exposure to traditional food in comparison to the older generation, due to the limitations posed by the physical environment of Mmotla. In practice, the consequence was that the younger generation was not as enculturated in the use and preparation of certain traditional dishes as a result of the limited exposure. Apart from the lack of knowledge and skills in the preparation of certain traditional dishes, these were often very time-consuming to prepare in comparison to the modern food. To prepare modern food was easier and less complicated especially for those who used electric appliances. It is understandable that the younger generation, due to their modern life-style with its accompanying time constraints, would resort to Western-oriented food practices. The older generation were more conservative and set in their ways, and inclined to be more attached to traditional-oriented food practices.

On reviewing the change and development of the food practices of the various generation groups, it was evident that the food practices of each generation differed slightly from the previous generations. In the case of the Mmotla people, this is similarly ascribed to the challenges and developments in the physical, economic and social environments in which each generation grew up, as explained in literature (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:6; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:99; Ferraro, 2001:29-31; Devine *et al.,* 1999). It became clear that the food practices of each generation originated from those of previous generations, and that intra-cultural variation exists. This finding underscores the paradox of food habits as put forward by Fieldhouse (1995:2) who states that although food habits are "stable and predictable, they are at the same time undergoing constant and continuous change". The findings of this research confirm that food practices, as part of culture, involve a complex, dynamic, and on-going process. The process not only illustrates the cultural universal that culture is adaptive and that collective adjustments are made over time (Ferraro, 2001:31; Els, 1993:11-12), but it is also in accordance with the premise of the ecological perspective that adaptation is a continuous process and that humans respond, to and act on changes (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:425).

Of particular importance to the South African setting is that, although acculturation regarding food practices was evident, the acculturation response or "degree of acculturation" was very fluid and context-specific, driven by various interacting factors from different environmental levels as explained in Chapter 9 (see 9.4) of which influences emanating from the socio-cultural environment were the most pervasive. Certain traditional food practices continue,

[43] Secondary socialisation occurs as children grow older and become exposed to diverse experiences, viewpoints and the influences of others such as peers and the school environment (Fieldhouse, 1995:5).

since they are an integral part of the belief and value systems of those who still participate in ancestral veneration. However, on the other hand, the acceptable and often preferred taste of Western-type of foods as well as its associated prestige value, accessibility and convenience led them to becoming the more acceptable and sought after food items.

The dualisms that exist in the lives of the participants were reflected in their food practices as were the creative ways they employed to accommodate both the traditional and modern poles. This phenomenon ties in with current psychological thinking on acculturation, described by Sam (2006:16) as being bi-directional. This perspective assumes that it is possible to identify with or acquire a new culture without discarding or losing the old culture (Sam, 2006:16; Berry, 1980:13). According to this viewpoint, the original culture can be maintained whilst adoption of aspects of the new culture can simultaneously take place. It is thus possible for an individual to participate more or less fully in either of the two cultures in which they are involved. This was indeed the case with the Mmotla participants, although they generally adopted the Western-oriented food culture, in certain contexts the traditional food practices were strictly adhered to and/or combined with the Western-oriented practices depending on the situation and the religious affiliation of those who participated. In the exposition given by Theron (1996:18-19) on change in Africa, he aptly states that "[T]the people are actually living in two half cultures". He explains that the traditional culture (including traditional religion) is reluctant to adapt to modern changes and development, and people therefore struggle to change. The reason given is that the Western way of life cannot provide the stability and security to which they are accustomed and that the traditional world view offers them. Moreover many other viewpoints of traditional culture are still prevalent and hold sway.

The tangible part of adopting and accepting the Western-oriented culture was visible in food (as material culture) and served as evidence of the acculturation of the food practices of the Mmotla people. However, that some preserved the original culture is attributed to the intangible component of culture, namely the values and beliefs as part of their socio-psychological environment. In this research the main reason for maintaining certain traditional food practices is ascribed to the deep-seated beliefs in the ancestors and in many instances these formed part of the world view and cultural identity of the participants.

10.4 FINAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 10.1 is now expanded and strengthened by the findings relating to the acculturation responses and the meanings the Mmotla people attached to their food practices. This final

conceptual framework encapsulates the findings of the study and simultaneously serves as validation of the initial conceptual framework that sought to explore and describe the food practices of a black South African community.

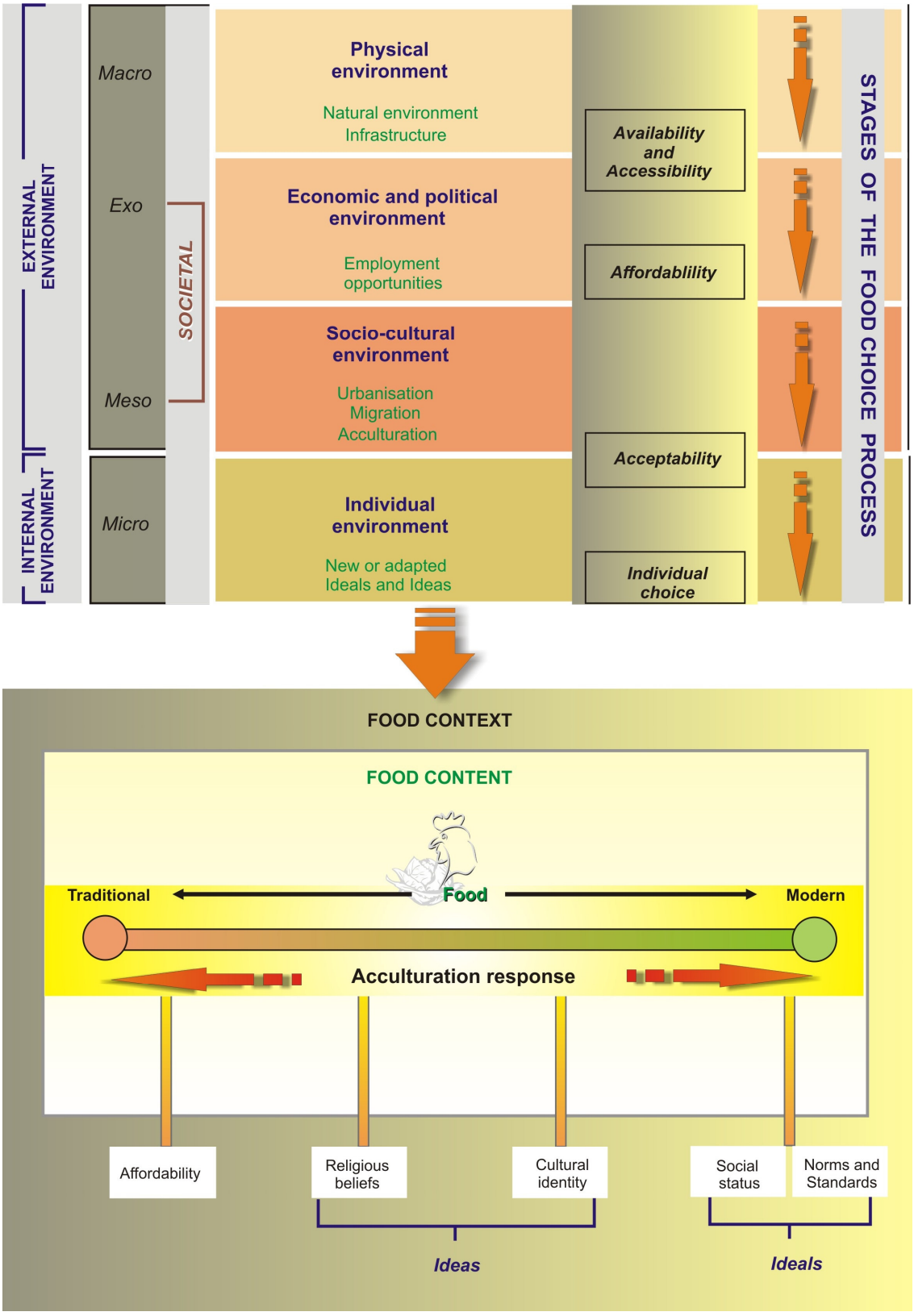

FIGURE 10.3: FINAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The first section of the final conceptual framework portrays the various human ecological environmental levels and gives recognition to the factors in each that contributed to the formation of food practices and the embedded food choice process of the Mmotla participants. The most salient factors from each environmental level that led to the shift towards Western-oriented food practices were discussed in 10.2.1 and how these factors from the external environments have a bearing on the availability, accessibility and affordability of the food choice of the participants was also emphasised.

The second section of the conceptual framework shows that food content is not only embedded in the food context, but that it is steered by factors derived from specific environmental levels. These salient factors are context-dependent and guide and steer the food practices in a specific food direction on the continuum between the traditional and the modern. In turn, this indicates that the acculturation response is context-specific as described in chapter 9 (see 9.4). This implies that not all the environmental factors enjoy the same level of importance in each food context.

This final conceptual framework presents the most important factors from the various environmental levels and how these have contributed to the food practices of the Mmotla people at the beginning of the twenty first century. This inductively developed model thus represents the potential factors that contribute to the food practices with their embedded food choice, food usage and behavioural components for the South African context, where traditional customs and affordability are important forces.

10.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A valuable and noteworthy contribution to augment existing theories and models on food choice, specifically within the South African context have been made. The inclusion of the social, cultural and other environmental dimensions, as advocated in recent publications (Bisogni *et al.,* 2007; Rozin, 2007; Cannon & Leitzmann, 2005) and justified in Chapter 1, have contributed to the acquisition of in-depth understanding of the food choice process and food practices within a typical South African situation. The expansion of existing models and theories in an integrated and holistic model applicable to the South African context has resulted.

In order to understand and describe the food practices and the meanings that the people of Mmotla attached to them required that the **what, why** and **how** of the food practices of this South African community be uncovered. As the interrelatedness and interdependency of the

different environments in which the Mmotla people live and interact needed to be explored, together with the contributing factors embedded in each, a holistic and contextual approach was followed. Three theoretical perspectives and other theoretical models, together with a qualitative research design, methods and techniques were combined to uncover, describe and interpret all the environmental levels and their embedded factors. This approach enabled the researcher to explore and describe their food practices in terms of **what** was eaten in a specific context, the reason(s) **why** it was eaten, **how** their food practices have developed and changed, as well as **why** they have changed. Exploring the underlying reasons for the changes in and development of the identified food practices, has led to an in-depth understanding of them and what they mean. The reasons why a specific South African population group follows set food practices as they do, and the meanings attached to them, have not been studied before, and this study set out to do this in the Mmotla community. The combined application of the three theoretical perspectives together with the other selected theoretical models proved to be a sound approach that not only enabled the researcher to achieve the objectives of this study, but, in addition, to augment existing theories and models relating to food practices within a South African context.

In the first instance, the researcher could expand on the ecological model relating to food choice in a South African situation. In the unfolding of the whole spectrum of contributing factors from the different environmental levels, this study confirmed their reciprocal causation, as posited by the human ecological perspective. Literature indicates that food practices are not only complicated but are multifaceted and multidimensional (Rozin, 2007:8; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:2; Bryant *et al*., 2003:2-3; Story *et al*., 2002; Schifferstein *et al.,* 2001:5-6; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:1), and the food practices of the study group are no exception, as described in this thesis (see 10.2).

The human ecological perspective proposes that both the laws of nature and human-derived rules guide the behaviour of people (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:426). This is also evident in food practices, as people not only choose food for sustenance, but for various other reasons that are embedded in the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments and these are specifically noticeable when dealing with the meaning attached to food practices. The socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments guide, and in many instances even dictate what food is permissible and acceptable to eat in a specific situation through the rules, norms and standards that are derived from these two environmental levels. To augment the in-depth understanding of the meanings of the food practices of the Mmotla peoples, the human ecological perspective was complemented by the cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives. Both perspectives supported an appreciation of the meanings attached to

food practices, including the shift in meaning that resulted from the changes and development in the underlying forces that contributed to them (see 9.2).

Apart from applying the cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives, the human ecological perspective was further supplemented by the dietary acculturation theory of Satia-Abouta *et al.* (2002) and the developmental model of food culture (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11). Both theoretical models were useful, not only to understand the adjustments that black South Africans had to make in their traditional food practices, due to migration, urbanisation and acculturation, but also, how these adjustments endorsed the changes observed and the development of their current food practices.

In addition, two consumer behaviour theories, that of conspicuous consumption (Solomon, 2007:474) and the VALS ™ consumer classification system (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010:439-442), were used to understand and explain some of the meanings attached to modern food with specific reference to the social status of food as material culture. These theories and theoretical models, in addition to the three perspectives, were used to guide the interpretation of the findings and were valuable when seeking to understand how certain aspects, specifically in the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments, contributed to the meanings attached to the food practices of the Mmotla participants. The interpretation and explanations offered in this study are therefore not based on a single perspective or theory, but from a number of carefully selected perspectives and theories that were appropriate as they enhanced the insight into the food practices of the study group. This again underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of human food practices. A detailed account has been given in this report to show how the three theoretical perspectives combine with other theoretical models and theories to further contribute to and augment theories related to food choice and food practices within the South African context. In addition, this approach makes it applicable and transferable to other multi-cultural contexts.

In the final conceptual framework developed from the findings obtained from this research, all the environmental levels, and the embedded factors in each that were significant in the Mmotla study, are depicted to obtain a holistic account of the food practices and the meanings attached to them. This conceptual framework could serve as point of departure in future studies on the food practices of individuals or groups within a multi-cultural setting, as it clearly represents all facets that need to be uncovered when studying this complex topic in the South African context. Although other recently published models on food choice provide valuable insight into the food choice process, they originate mainly from research based on responses from individuals living in developed countries where a larger variety of food is accessible and affordable. Even though recognition is given to the cultural environment in

these models, the emphasis is placed on the socio-psychological environment of the individual in affluent developed societies (Rozin, 2007:14; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:14).

South African society is multi-cultural, and it is inevitable that acculturation will take place between the various cultural groups. This process ultimately manifests how the world is viewed, including food and the food practices associated with it. Acculturation of food choice and use is acknowledged and reported in studies conducted on black South African groups (MacKeown *et al.,* 2007; MacIntyre *et al*., 2002; Viljoen & Gericke, 2001; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996). Although it is distinguished as a continuous and dynamic process, no indication or description of the bi-cultural nature of the food practices of the black South Africans is documented. Augmentation of the dietary acculturation theory as it applies to the South African setting is regarded as a theoretical contribution of this research, and is depicted in the second part of the final conceptual framework.

In this second part of the framework all aspects that drive the acculturation response or the degree of acculturation are included. The bi-cultural nature of the food practices is portrayed and, although the acculturation response is context-dependent, there is an ease or fluidity of movement between the two opposite poles of traditional and modern food. The second part of the final conceptual framework represents a dietary acculturation model for the South African context and the acculturation response depicted is of significance. It provides insight into how food is perceived and used, and how it is categorised. This categorisation assisted in the interpretation and understanding of the meanings attached to food and the associated food practices (see 10.2.2).

Insights into the traditional food practices that are still adhered to by the peoples of Mmotla, together with documentation on the current food practices provided a historical overview of the development and changes that the food practices of these peoples have undergone up to the beginning of the twenty first century. This record is a unique and valuable contribution, as it provides a concurrent indication of **what, when** and **why** specific foods are used, including the meanings these traditional and recently introduced foods hold. In doing this, a contribution is not only made to the documentation of certain traditional food practices (including the foods used and the preparation of certain traditional dishes), but also to the documentation of a neglected part of the indigenous knowledge of these peoples that has been fragmentary and limited. Through this the culinary heritage of specifically the Ndebele group, is documented in a unique manner, as the associated food practices together with the meanings and symbolism attached to certain dishes and practices are also captured, especially how they relate to the male and female initiation rites and the traditional wedding.

The comprehensive description of all the environmental levels and forces that were taken into consideration when exploring and describing the food practices of this specific South African group, in order to understand the **why** of their food practices, is presented. A detailed account of how it applies to the South African situation and this particular group of people at the beginning of the twenty first century, is documented. Food practices are not static, but are constantly changing as a result of the dynamic nature of culture and other environmental forces. It is acknowledged that these aspects might differ when studying the food practices of another black South African population group in another setting. However, as sufficient, detailed and saturated data was collected in this study, and used in the presentation of the findings, transferability of the findings is assured. In addition, it is evident that the contribution of this study goes beyond the initial objectives formulated.

10.6 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The study is methodologically sound and 'thick' descriptions were obtained through the meticulous employment of more than one complementary technique to make the findings of the study transferrable to other contexts.

10.6.1 Research strategy and design

The in-depth understanding of the multiple facets of the food practices of the study group made it mandatory to uncover all events, actions and processes linked to it, in order to expose the underlying meanings of these various contexts. The contextual approach followed, augmented the in-depth understanding of the complex and multi-faceted topic of food practices and the meanings attached to these, and is regarded as a strong point of the study. The ideographic research strategy was a logical choice, as this strategy examines a single or specific event or case within its own context in order to understand it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:272). It served the purpose to study the phenomenon of food practices in-depth, as it not only captured how these people viewed, experienced and interpreted their own world (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Janesick, 2000:382), but also identified and described the respondents' food practices and their meaning.

The ethnographic research design that included, as data collection techniques, focus group discussions, individual interviewing, participant observation and unobtrusive measures proved well suited for this study, as rich descriptions of the everyday experiences and way of life of the study group was obtained. An insider or "emic" perspective of the way of life of the study group was striven for in an attempt to understand their food practices and their

meanings, in the contexts in which they occurred. The research techniques complemented and reinforced each other, and collectively contributed to achieve the contextual approach. This in itself enhanced a holistic description and understanding of the food practices and contributed to the insights into the meanings the participants used to construe their food practices. These methods and techniques not only provided the means to viewing the research problem from different points of view, but simultaneously enhanced triangulation of the data as recommended in literature (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:275; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:11; Miles & Huberman, 1994:438). A reflection of the research methods and techniques follows.

10.6.2 Sampling

The study group was carefully selected to match the specific aim of the study (see 1.4) and comprised females living in the multi-cultural community of Mmotla. The study evolved in two distinctive phases with specific aims for each phase.

The aim of the first phase was to explore and become acquainted with the life world of the participants which included their food practices. Criteria were laid down at the outset of the study to include all cultural groups in the community. It was specified that both older and younger females would be included in the focus group discussions as well as specialists and laymen. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that those who participated in the focus groups met the set criteria. These measures proved successful, as the researcher had the opportunity to be exposed to, and become acquainted with the food practices of the different cultural groups in a relative short period of time. In this way a far wider range of viewpoints could be obtained, which served to maximise the diversity of data on the food practices between the various culture and age groups. This allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the findings from each group. The decision to delve deeper into the food practices of the Ndebele was based on the striking differences that emerged between the food practices of the Ndebele and the other groups.

Theoretical sampling was used to select five fully enculturated Ndebele female participants for the individual interviews that formed the second phase of the study, as justified in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.2.2). This was done to uncover the Ndebele food practices in particular in order to gain an in-depth understanding of why the majority of the Ndebele, in contrast to the other cultural groups, continue to adhere to certain traditional food practices. This small group comprised both older and younger females and included those who did not belong to a Christian church as well as those who were allowed to participate in traditional rites by their church, and those who were not allowed to do so. This strategy enable the researcher to

refine the theory that was developing concerning the observed distinction between those who were discarding certain traditional food practices, and those who were keeping them entrenched. Some of the individuals, who could provide the sought-after in-depth information on the Ndebele, were identified during the focus groups discussions and the others were purposively recruited. Theoretical sampling proved to be the correct technique, as it offered the opportunity to specifically seek participants who could provide alternative perspectives on the contemporary Ndebele food practices.

10.6.3 Data collection

The justification for having focus group discussions and interviewing individuals was given in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.2). A reflection on the appropriateness of each of these two dominant techniques and their contribution to this study that sought to explore, understand and describe the food practices and their meanings in a South African context, will be given here.

(i) Focus group discussions

Introducing the data collection phase with focus group discussions proved to be the correct decision. This technique allowed the researcher to become familiar with the research setting very quickly, getting to know the participants and to find out about their way of life as well as their current food practices and how these have changed and developed. As suggested by other researchers (Betts *et al.,* 1996; Trollip, 1991), it proved to be a sound technique to use with people who value group participation and have low literacy skills. The informal and relaxed atmosphere of the focus group discussions contributed to the development of trust and the establishment of a good rapport between the researcher and the participants. This enhanced the collection of quality data, as thick descriptions of the required information were forthcoming and could not have been as easily obtained using other techniques. The focus group discussions stimulated the participants' thoughts and served as recall triggers, as pointed out by other researchers (Fontana & Frey, 2000:652; Schurink *et al.,* 1998:314; Betts *et al.,* 1996). It often happened that participants provided additional information on a topic that had been discussed the previous week. They were motivated by the discussions and often went back to others to find more information on the aspects that they themselves were uncertain of, or could not give information on. This not only augmented the data, but contributed to the quality of the data collected as they themselves often further explained or verified the information they had given.

Through the focus group discussions a basic understanding and overview of the scope of the food practices in which the participants engaged came to light. This paved the way for the

second phase of the study in that the researcher was able to identify emergent themes and issues that needed further in-depth uncovering during the second phase of the data collection process.

(ii) Individual interviews

To achieve the aim of the second data collection phase, namely to gain an in-depth understanding of the contemporary food practices of the Ndebele participants, individual interviews were undertaken. It proved to be the correct technique to use, as the researcher could delve deeper and build on the themes that came out of the focus group discussions. As mentioned in the literature (Botha, 2001; Morgan, 1997:23), a further feature of this technique is that an opportunity is afforded to gain more information on some of the topics that were only broadly touched on, or were under-represented in the focus group sessions. In the individual interviews, each of the five enculturated Ndebele participants was in the position to provide detailed descriptions of the identified themes from their own perspectives and experiences in a more focused manner. This resulted in a truly insider-view of the lives of these participants, including their food practices, as they were able to speak for themselves and share their first-hand knowledge. Thus the researcher could delve deeper and uncover finer nuances and detail about the traditional Ndebele food practices as well as the modern food practices in which they engaged. The conversational style typical of the interview situation further contributed to creating an open and relaxed atmosphere that helped enhance good rapport with the participants. This approach ensured that the interviews were not too structured, but flexible, conveniently and fluid yielding quality data.

(iii) Participant observation and unobtrusive measures

Two other supportive data collection techniques, that of participant observation and unobtrusive measures, proved valuable for obtaining additional data to supplement information from the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Through participant observation the researcher obtained data on the natural and structural environment of the village and observed the life world of the participants over a period of 20 months. This first-hand method of obtaining data on how people conduct their everyday lives had advantages and enhanced the insider-view of the researcher as suggested by other researchers (Henning *et al.,* 2004; Schurink, 1998:279-281; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:1-2; Adler & Adler, 1994:378). The everyday life of the village as observed on weekdays included aspects such as the available resources, activities and level of interaction that took place. This further assisted the researcher to not only place herself “in the shoes of the participants” but most certainly contributed to a better understanding of the viewpoints, values and attitudes of the

participants, and led to an appreciation of the limitations they experienced in their external environments.

A few unobtrusive measures were adopted and proved to be good and reliable sources of additional and supporting information that gave more insight into certain topics discussed in the focus groups and individual interviews. Some of the participants provided these in the form of photographs and artefacts on request, while others spontaneously brought these along to illustrate or further explain specific aspects that related to the themes under discussion. Some of these photographs served as verification of the data gathered and often such a stimulus opened further discussion that improved the in-depth understanding of the data.

The collection of recipes used for traditional and modern food dishes provided valuable information with regard to establishing the cuisine of the study group. This is an excellent technique for obtaining data on the culinary practices of a group relatively quickly. Both the recipes and the dishes prepared by the participants were a reflection of the life world of the participants. The prepared modern dishes for example, demonstrated and confirmed their adoption of some of the Western-oriented dishes and food preparation methods, including the technology available to prepare these. Through the preparation of the traditional dishes, on the other hand, aspects related to their indigenous knowledge were further uncovered and understood. A very special happening was when one of the participants invited the researcher to observe the traditional beer-making at her home where the process was in progress in preparation for the wedding celebration of her son. This opportunity contributed to a better insider-perspective of the whole procedure, including the large quantities that were prepared as well as the time and assistance of others involved in the whole exercise (see Addendum E for photographs on the beer-making process).

10.6.4 Data capturing and editing

A comprehensive dataset of each research visit could be compiled from the transcripts of the audio tape recordings, the field notes, observations and other additional information obtained through the unobtrusive measures as described in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.2.1).

The measures taken to ensure that minimum data was lost during translation as described in Chapter 3 proved to be quite successful. It is recommended that, when discussions and interviews need to be translated in cross-cultural studies, as was the situation in this study, the assistance of a scribe from a cultural group similar to that of the participants be sought to record the main points under discussion and to help with the translation and clarification of

lengthy discussions when needed. The researcher is convinced that the participants gave truthful information and that the translators gave honest accounts of the discussions, however, the language barrier between the researcher and some of the participants can be regarded as a limitation and some of the finer nuances of the narrative could have been lost despite the measures taken to prevent any data loss as described in Chapter 3 (see 3.4.2.1). Another limitation of the language barrier was the time implications posed as everything that was asked and discussed in the focus group discussions and interviews had to be translated.

The concurrent analysis and interpretation of data collected had definite advantages. The data and its interpretation was constantly being verified and clarified during the data collection process. The transcription of the focus group discussions and the interviews was done directly after each contact session and this strategy afforded the researcher the opportunity of not only familiarising herself with the data, but she could also reflect on it, and interpret it as she went along. Missing and unclear issues were detected and noted in time, and clarified at the beginning of the following contact session. Each focus group and individual interview session therefore included issues that needed further clarification and probing apart from introducing new themes.

10.6.5 Data analysis

In following the grounded theory approach to data analysis where the concurrent collection and analysis of data provided the opportunity to not only become familiar with the data, but simultaneously to reflect and theorise on it as advised by Tesch (1990:84-85), had advantages. This sensitised the researcher to further probe or delve deeper on certain aspects that needed more uncovering and explanation. This further assisted in obtaining the ‘thick descriptions’ and ‘insider perspective’ that was necessary for a study of this nature.

Initially data analysis was performed manually during the data collection process according to the guidelines by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and those of Huberman and Miles (1994). The volume of raw data from 36 focus group discussions and 26 individual interviews was, as could be expected, large and extensive. When the computer software package Atlas.ti became available to the researcher during the year after the completion of the data collection, a decision was made to re-run the analysis with Muhr’s (2004) Atlas.ti software package. Although this had time implications, the advantage was that the final analysis was more detailed and refined. This was specifically of value in the selective coding step, as the find-and-retrieve function enhanced the ‘thick descriptions’ that could be compiled with more ease and this was very useful and assisted in theorising about the data. The advantage of the computer-aided data analysis for this research was not only the ability to better order,

structure and retrieve data which added to the quality of the analysis but, in turn, it also augmented the theory-building process.

10.6.6 Trustworthiness of the findings

Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings and a reflection and appreciation of these measures as employed during the study is presented.

(i) Credibility

Credibility was ensured through the prolonged engagement that the researcher had with the participants. The data was collected over a period of 20 months until the researcher was convinced that data saturation had occurred. After completion of the data collection and its initial interpretation, the researcher continued to have contact with some of the key participants to verify or clarify the findings or the interpretation when necessary. Triangulation was achieved through the employment of different data collection techniques as well as using the three theoretical perspectives together with other supporting theories in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The data collection techniques complemented each other, and not only enhanced triangulation, but contributed to the collection of extensive data of the food practices in a holistic manner. This study dealt with the understanding of how the meanings contributed to the food practices. The combination of these techniques brought about multiple perspectives, insights and viewpoints that were important when interpreting data on cultural meanings as advised by Coffey and Atkinson (1996:145). The data was manually analysed at first and interpreted following the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Huberman & Miles, 1994) and took place concurrently with the actual collection of the data. The findings and the interpretation were consistently verified during the data collection phase through member checks. Obvious misunderstandings and misinterpretations were immediately pointed out by the participants and corrections were made to the applicable data. These clarifications often led to additional and new questions or probes that enhanced a wider point of view and contributed to the holistic and in-depth understanding of the food practices of the participants. Valuable other additional information was often spontaneously provided during the member checks which contributed to richer data. The re-analysis of the data with the Atlas.ti software package (Muhr, 2004) further enhanced and added to a refined analysis and triangulation of the data analysis.

(ii) Transferability

Sufficient, detailed and saturated data was obtained by means of the research methods and techniques employed. The 'thick descriptions' of the data were not only strengthened by the various data collection techniques employed, but their success is also ascribed to the purposive sampling that included both specialists and laymen as well as younger and older participants. In this way the range of information gathered was maximised.

To further uncover, understand and be able to explain the meanings of the food practices of the study group, the underlying principles of the three theoretical perspectives and other applicable theories guided theorising and building on theory as proposed by Seibold (2002) and others (Coffey & Atkinson;1996:140-145). The final conceptual framework as compiled and presented as Figure 10.3 serves not only as a theoretical framework to investigate the food practices of other South African groups or individuals but is also equally applicable to other groups or contexts where cultural aspects are important. In putting together this framework the guiding principle of the theorising was to give a holistic and all-encompassing view of the food practices and their meanings, including the underlying interactions and interrelationships that are such an integral part of it. This provides an excellent point of departure for future studies on food practices.

(iii) Dependability

Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) state that there cannot be credibility without dependability and as the former has been fully accounted for under (i) above, it is not deemed necessary to repeat the explanation. However, in summary the researcher aimed to achieve dependability through specifically ensuring the triangulation of data collection and analysis techniques and supportive theory, member checks. This report and the audit trail is available to the reader.

(iv) Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the truth or extent to which the findings are the result of the research and not the "biases of the researcher" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). This requires that an objective presentation of the research procedures, the data and the findings has to be available. An audit trail, as indicated, is available to judge the neutrality of the data and the findings in the form of audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes, including the data analysis and data reduction products. In addition, the experiences and insights voiced by the participants are adequately represented in the quotations provided in the presentation of the findings and the Addenda of this report.

10.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The final conceptual framework (see Figure 10.3) facilitates understanding aspects of the food behaviour of the South African black population. The second part of the model, specifically identifies the acculturation response, and provides insight into the dietary acculturation process. This could be of value in consumer facilitation and nutrition education as the bi-cultural nature of the food choice of black South Africans is evident from the findings, and needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. Apart from being context-driven, the acculturation response is further guided by specific forces. Of these, affordability (as part of the economic environment) and ideas and ideals (as part of ideology) are the most pervasive indicators of the degree of acculturation. In practice this means that not only the typical dietary habits need to be identified, but the salient cultural, environmental and socio-psychological components such as the ideas and ideals too ought to be considered as well. This will lead to a better understanding of where the person or group is in the dietary acculturation process. Dietary assessment thus should include the measurement of traditional food patterns, including the food items and behaviours associated with the Western-oriented diet.

As the goal of this study was descriptive and explanatory in nature, and centred on the meanings attached to food and how they contribute to food practices, it paves the way for future quantitative studies dealing with the food practices of black South Africans. This study gives a comprehensive and holistic account of all the facets that contribute to the food practices of a group of South African peoples, including the meanings they attach to them. This provides a sound foundation for future quantitative studies, as its comprehensiveness ensures transferability that can aid in the interpretation and explanation of future quantitative data, as quantitative investigations are more often concerned with the role of variables in describing and analysing human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49).

10.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The final conceptual model proposed should be examined further, to test and refine it. Future research should be directed to investigating the presence of the identified factors in other groups and other settings as elaboration is needed for each of these factors. Additional research on the role of cultural and individual identities in food choice is advised in order to investigate the deeper dynamics involved in adhering to or discarding traditional food practices.

Based on the findings of this study, future research can be directed to the following:

- An in-depth study on the role and influence of the church and the various religious affiliations on the food practices of black South Africans to obtain an in-depth understanding of the reasons why some groups enforce certain prescriptions and/or proscriptions on their members. This could include the investigation of the food rules that are applied, and the underlying beliefs and values that are in interplay. This includes the deeper dynamics that are involved in adhering to or discarding traditional food practices.

- An investigation of the food practices of the different Living Standards Measure[44] (LSM™) groups in the South African population. More in-depth information on the different socio-economic, lifestyle and generation groups is needed to assist in consumer facilitation and education. It seems as if lifestyle and relevant factors i.e. income (thus affordability), social status through visual consumption has become equally important and, in some instances, even more important in consumer buying and consumption patterns than cultural differences (Odhiambo, 2008). More research is needed on the influence of socio-economic status on food practices including the nutritional intake of the various South African population groups in order to obtain the specific empirical data on the contribution of this variable to food practices.

- To use the life course perspective to compare how the food choices of various generation groups developed in the changing South African society. A life course perspective focuses on the life history of groups or individuals in society in order to understand food choice behaviours and how they developed and changed over time in a changing world (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:2-3; Devine, 2005).

- To study the effect of urbanisation on food practices. This implies a comparison between the food choice behaviour, eating patterns and nutrient intake of urban and rural groups. Such an investigation should include reference to how individuals and groups adapt to the structural changes experienced during migration, urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation as proposed in the developmental model of food culture (see 2.3.4.1).

[44] The South African Advertising Research Foundation Living Standards Measure is one of the ways of identifying profiles of the South African population. It is based on a set of marketing differentiators which group people according to their living standards, using criteria such as the degree of urbanisation and ownership of durables such as cars and household appliances (Haupt, 2009:1; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:100).

- To study and describe the cuisine and culinary heritage of all South African ethnic and cultural groups before the opportunity to include members of the older generations is lost as they are the ones who are more knowledgeable regarding aspects relating to the culinary heritage. Although the transition in food practices is acknowledged and aspects of it researched, the need to investigate and promote the retention of the culinary heritage of all South African groups as part of their food practices, exists. This is important, as the conservation of the indigenous knowledge of the various ethnic and cultural groups in the South African population should be studied, and promoted. It is recommended that graduates with a food and consumer science background from these groups be encouraged to initiate and conduct such research amongst their own ethnic and cultural groups.

A multitude of factors are involved and contribute to the formation of the food practices and the embedded food choice process of groups and individuals, and these factors are not only complex, but interrelated and interdependent. In addition, due to changes in the various environmental levels as a result of ecological, technological, societal and economic changes and developments, the food practices of individuals and groups are often described as dynamic. In this study of a group of black South Africans, this was confirmed. The salient role of changing environments and culture, and more specifically the social organisational and ideological components of culture together with economic factors, emerged as most important. The holistic approach followed in this study, including the comprehensive account on how to achieve it, opens-up the study field of food practices for future research on this complex topic in a South African context. The world view and ideology of the participants and how they impinge on the food choice and usage of the participants, was uncovered and described, which contributed to the understanding of the food practices of the participants from their point of view, including the underlying meanings attached to them in the various contexts in which they took place.

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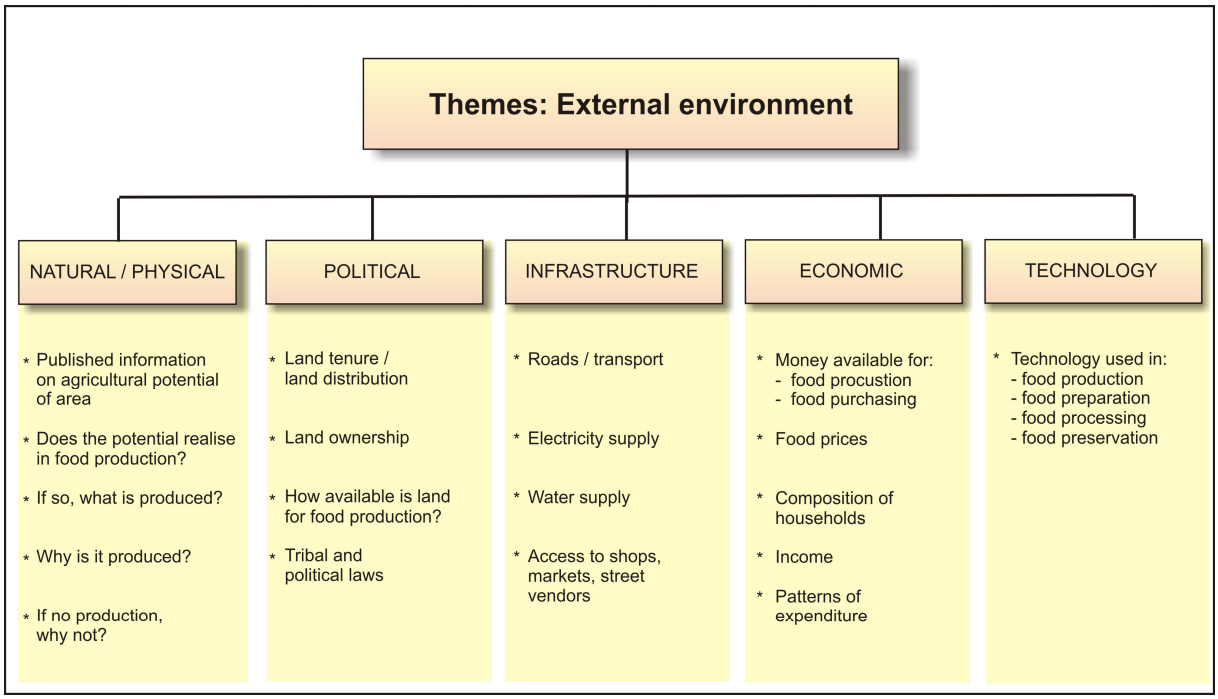
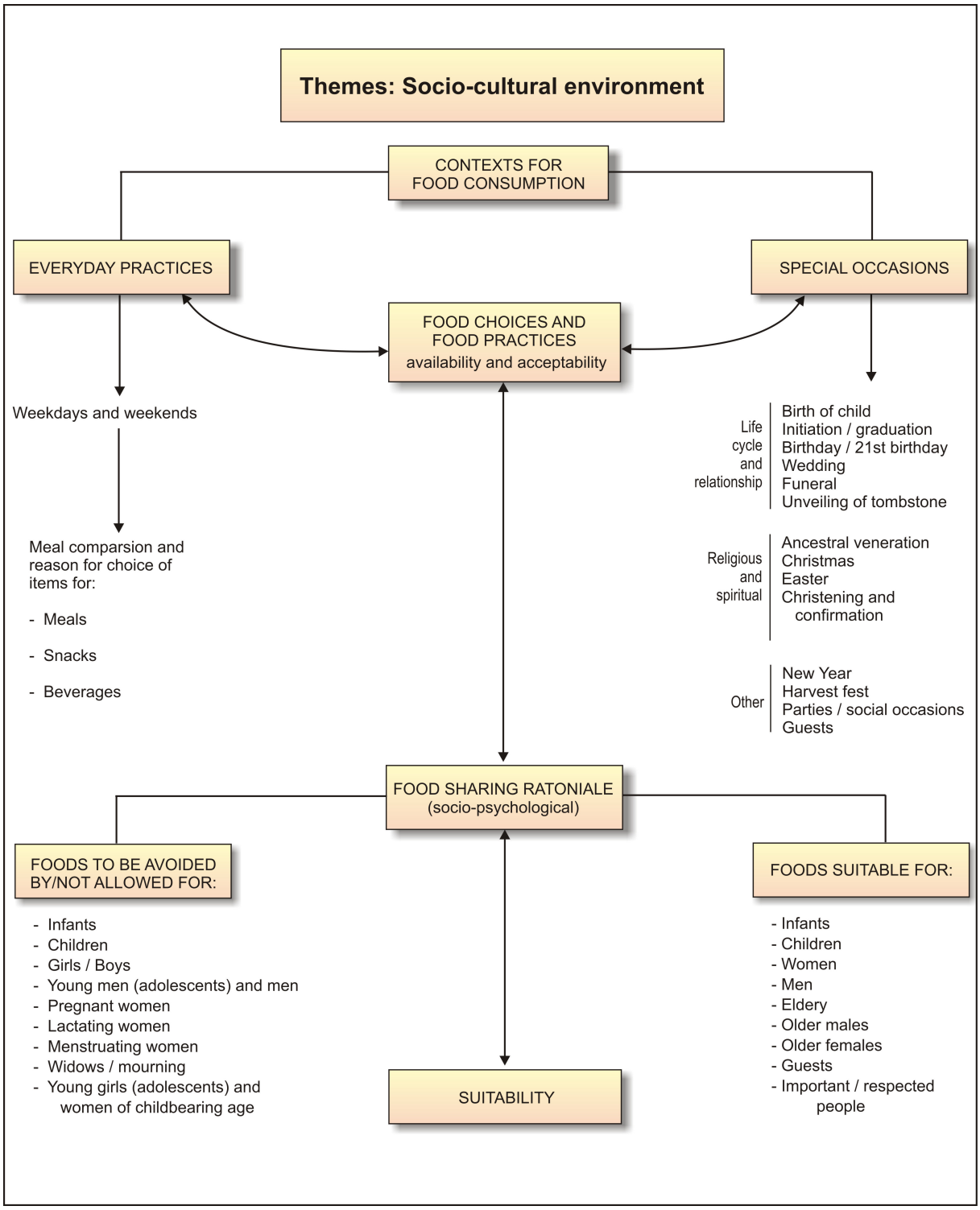
ADDENDUM A

THEMES – EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTS



ADDENDUM B

THEMES – SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT



ADDENDUM C

TRADITIONAL RECIPES

MAIZE ON THE COB
Fresh maize on the cob.

COOKED WHITE MAIZE ON COB
Also known as *lephotlho.* A popular snack. White maize is preferred for this dish.

Method
- Remove outer leaves
- Boil in enough water to cover
- Add a little salt
- Cook till tender

ROASTED MAIZE ON THE COB
Roasted maize on the cob is a popular snack eaten hot or cold.

Ingredients Fresh maize on the cob

Method (a)
- Remove outer leaves and roast cobs over direct heat till the seeds are brown.

- **Method (b)**
- Prepare maize as described for cooked maize on the cob
- Roast the cobs over direct heat until brown

DRIED WHITE MAIZE KERNELS

The outer leaves of mature maize cobs are removed. The maize cobs are dried by hanging them on the branches of trees or roof beams. The dried kernels are removed from the cobs and stored until needed.

LEKOKORO

Also known as *umphohlo* (isiNdebele) or *dikgobe* (Sotho). This is an everyday dish for lunch or supper.

Ingredients
1 ℓ dried white maize kernels
3 ℓ water
1 t salt

Method

- Soak the maize kernels overnight in water
- Boil the 3 litre water and add the soaked maize
- Cook for 2 hours and add more water if needed
- Add salt and serve

IMBASHA

This is an everyday dish prepared from cooked dried maize kernels and roasted after cooking.

Ingredients
1 ℓ dried maize kernels
3 ℓ water

Method

- Soak the dried maize overnight in water
- Cook the maize in boiling water
- After the maize is cooked it is roasted in a pan. Only water is added during roasting and salt to taste is added roasted after cooking

SAMP

Also known as *setampa.* Everyday dish for lunch or supper.

Ingredients
1 kg samp
8 ℓ water
1 t salt
½c oil

Method

- Soak samp overnight in a large quantity of water
- Cook the samp in 1 litre water for 3 hours
- Continue to add water until the samp is cooked (another 7 litre water will be needed)
- Add the oil and salt before serving

XIBASWA

Everyday Tsonga dish prepared from finely-grinded soaked samp.

Ingredients
1 kg samp soaked overnight in water
3 jugs water

Method

- Drain the soaked samp and grind it very fine
- Boil 3 jugs of water in a pot
- Add part of the ground samp and stir
- Cook for 30 minutes
- Add the rest of the samp to stiffen the mixture
- Cook for another 20 minutes
- Serve

BOGOBE

Also known as *umratha* (isiNdebele) and *boswa* (Tsonga). Stiff maize-meal porridge served as everyday dish for lunch and/or supper. Regarded as staple food.

Ingredients 2 ℓ maize-meal
1 ℓ water

Method

- Boil 1 liter of water
- Add maize meal and stir – leave to cook for 3 minutes
- Add more maize meal to stiffen and stir with a *lefetlho* (pin)
- Leave to cook until ready for serving, approximately 30 minutes
- Stir again and serve

PHUTHU

Favourite everyday dish of the people of Nguni decent can be served at any meal. Most suitable for breakfast and lunch and also at a *braai* (barbeque).

Ingredients 4 parts maize-meal
1-2 parts water
Salt (if desired)

Method

- Boil the water in a pot and add 1 ml of salt
- Take a small dish of maize meal and pour the maize meal in 3 parts to the water
- There must be more maize-meal than water
- Stir over low heat with a fork
- Cook for 30 minutes
- Serve with *inkomazi* (sour milk)

UMDOKO

Soft maize-meal porridge also known as *mdoko* or *umdoko.* Served as an everyday dish for breakfast.

Ingredients 4 c water
2½ beakers maize-meal
sugar

Method

- Boil the water in a pot
- Add 1 beaker of maize-meal and stir
- Add another 1 ½ beakers of maize-meal.
- Stir again
- Cook for 25 minutes or longer
- Serve with sugar and/or fresh milk

ISIDUDU

Special dish for visitors. Also used as an everyday dish when there is no relish as *isidudu* itself is regarded as a relish.

Ingredients
3½ c maize-meal
½ jug sour water left from brewing *tlabalala*
100 ml sugar

Method

- Boil the *tlabalala* water in a pot
- Add 1c of the maize-meal and stir with a *lefetlho* (stirring pin)
- Add the other 2 ½cups of maize-meal and use a pin for stirring
- Add the sugar and stir again
- Cook for another 10 minutes
- Serve
- Sweets can be used to decorate the *isidudu* nicely for special guests

MAGEU

Non-intoxicating beer. Resembles a thin fermented porridge. Popular beverage in summer. Enjoyed any time during the day**.**

Ingredients
5 ℓ water
2 small dishes maize-meal
½c flour
1c sugar

Method

- Boil the water and add the maize-meal and stir
- Let this mixture cool for 10 minutes
- Add the flour and the sugar
- Mix well
- Leave one day to ferment (in summer), in winter it could take 2 or more days

DOMBOLO

Also known as isikwa (Ndebele). Everyday dish also served at the iqude and traditional weddings.

Ingredients
6 c cake or bread flour
6 t dried yeast (½ spoons x126)
100 ml sugar
1 t salt

Method

- Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and salt together
- Add the water to form a dough and mix well
- Let the dough stand to rise for about 30 minutes
- Knead the dough down and place in an enamel dish / *"skottel"*
- Place small reeds in the bottom of a pot, add water and let the water boil
- Place the enamel dish with the dough on the reeds
- Put the lid on the pot and let the *dombolo* steam for about 1½ hours until cooked

TLABALALA

Prepared on traditional occasions when ancestral communication takes place.

Ingredients
2 kg King Korn (Sorghum malt)
1ℓ maize-meal
8-10 ℓ water

Method

- Mix 1 cup King Korn with 2 cups maize-meal
- Add the King Korn and maize-meal mixture to 2 ℓ water and boil for 5 minutes
- Cool down till the next morning
- Add another 4 c King Korn to this mixture and add the rest of the water.
- Pour it into calabashes and close
- Let this stand for 2 days
- Sieve the beer on the 3rd day
- The beer should be ready for serving after 3 days

TLHOTLHA

Traditionally this was a household drink for the elderly men and women. At the time of the study prepared for all festive occasions.

Ingredients
1 kg King Korn (Sorghum malt)
350 g maize-meal
3 ℓ water
1 kg King Korn (Sorghum malt)

Method

- Mix the 5 c (1kg) King Korn, maize-meal and water
- Put this mixture in a pot and boil
- Take off from the fire and allow to cool
- Let it stand for one day
- Add the second 1 kg King Korn the next day
- Leave this to ferment for 3 days
- Sieve the mixture on the 4th day
- Serve

TING YA MABELE

Traditional sorghum porridge served on most special occasions.

Ingredients
2 kg *Mabele* meal (*Sorghum meal coarse or fine can be used)
2 ℓ water (lukewarm)

Method

- Mix the *mabele* with the lukewarm water and stir
- Leave this mixture to ferment from 13:00 until 8:00 the next morning in a closed container
- Boil water in a pot and add this fermented mixture to the boiling water and let it cook for one hour
- *fine *mabele* meal will cook in a shorter time

BOHOBE BA MABELE

Traditional dish of black people, normally cooked for traditional celebrations such as weddings, funerals or even everyday when one wishes.

Ingredients 2 kg *mabele* meal (coarse)
Lukewarm water

Method

- Mix the *Mabele* and lukewarm water and place in a bucket with a lid and leave in a warm place for 24 hours
- Boil 2 litres of water
- Add the coarse *Mabele* in 4 parts until the desired thickness is reached. Add more *Mabele* if needed (2 spoonsful)
- Cook slowly over moderate heat for 20 minutes
- Place in a round dish and allow to cool
- Roll into small round balls and serve

UMTSIKITLANA (NDEBELE)

Also known as *thowa* (Tsonga) and *ingqwangqwa* (isiNdebele). Soft sour porridge prepared from sorghum meal and whey.

Ingredients 2 ℓ milk to sour
2 kg *mabele* (Sorghum meal)

Method

- Place milk in calabash and leave to sour
- Take the sour water (whey) from the milk and boil
- Add *mabele* and stir
- Leave to cook for 3 minutes
- Stir again
- Add more *mabele* and cook for another 2 minutes

IRHAYI

Served at the *iqude* on Saturday morning as a breakfast dish. Also popular at wedding celebrations.

Ingredients 1 beaker dried maize
500g *dinawa* (cow peas)
3½ ℓ water

Method

- Soak the maize in water
- Cook the maize in 3 ½ litre of water over medium heat. The water should always be more than the maize because it has to cook for 6 hours
- Cook the maize for 6 hours
- Cook the *dinawa* for 3 hours separately
- Mix the *dinawa* and the maize together and cook for 5 minutes
- Serve

SEKGOTHO (SOTHO)

Everyday dish prepared from *njugo* beans and sorghum meal.

Ingredients
5 mugs of *ditloo* (*njugo* beans)
2 ℓ water
1 kg *mabele* (sorghum meal)
Salt

Method

- Cook the *ditloo* in water for 3 hours
- Add the *mabele* meal to the *ditloo* and a pinch of salt
- Stir with a *lefehtlo* (stirring pin)
- Leave to cook for 30 minutes

UMKHUPHA

Traditional Ndebele wedding dish.

Ingredients
500 g sugar beans or dried *dinawa*
1½ ℓ water
½ kg maize-meal

Method

- Soak the sugar beans/*dinawa* overnight in water
- Cook it in 1½ litre of water
- When cooked, stir it well
- Add the maize-meal
- Stir it together with the beans
- Cook till ready

ISISHWALA

Traditional Swazi wedding dish similar to *umkhupha* and *sekgotho.*

Ingredients
500 g sugar beans (soak overnight in water)
1 t salt
1½ c maize-meal
20 ml oil

Method

- Cook the beans in water for 45 minutes
- Add the salt
- Add the oil
- Add 1½ c maize-meal to the bean mixture and stir well
- Close the lid and cook for another 10 minutes

XIGUGU (Tsonga)

Favourite Tsonga dish prepared for special occasions and as a provision when travelling.

Ingredients
3 kg peanuts
1 kg maize, dried
½ t salt
5 x 10 ml spoons sugar

Method

- Fry the peanuts just as they are on their own
- Fry the dried maize kernels as they are on their own
- Grind the fried maize and peanuts separately
- Sieve the grinded maize and peanuts
- Mix them together
- Add the salt and sugar
- Put the mixture in a grinder
- Grind this mixture until it shines like gold

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TIMBABE

Swazi dish prepared at traditional and other weddings.

Ingredients
2 c maize-meal
4 c peanuts
6 c sugar
1 t salt
Sweets for decoration

Method

- Roast the maize-meal for 10 minutes
- Roast the peanuts as well
- Grind the roasted peanuts
- Add the ground peanuts to the roasted maize-meal
- Add the sugar and salt to this mixture
- Mix all these ingredients together in a grinder and grind again until the mixture is wet
- Serve
- Place sweets on top as decoration

TIHOVE (Tsonga)

Tsonga dish prepared at festivities and on joyous occasions.

Ingredients
2 beakers samp
1½ beaker d*inawa* (cow peas)
Water
3x 10 ml salt
2 beakers peanuts

Method

- Boil the samp and *dinawa* for about 4 hours in enough water till cooked
- Cook the peanuts for 10 minutes in water
- Mix the peanuts with the samp and *dinawa*
- Add the salt

MARAKA
Popular vegetable during summer months.

Method
- Cut *maraka* into large slices
- Remove inner parts and seeds
- Boil in water with skin on
- Serve with milk

ISIJEZA
Also known as s*emphemphe (Pedi).* Prepared during the first 3-4 days of the *ingoma* and *iqude.* Also a popular dish to prepare for the Ndebele bride during the *isimanje* process.

Ingredients ½ kg maize-meal
1 x pumpkin (*ithanga*)
2 tea beakers sugar

Method
- Peel skin from pumpkin
- Cut in pieces and add 2 jugs of water and cook the pumpkin for 30 minutes
- Add the maize-meal and stir
- Add the sugar, stir and cook for one hour

TSHOPI RA MAKWEMBE
Prepared as a special treat for people who work in town when they return home. Popular during the winter months. Also prepared for the *khomba* (initiation for girls).

Ingredients 1 large pumpkin
Maize-meal
250 ml sugar

Method
- Peel and cut the pumpkin in pieces
- Place in a pot and add 4 ℓ of water and boil it
- Stir to mix when cooked
- Leave on fire and add the maize-meal is five small quantities to the pumpkin (*amount depends on how watery the pumpkin is)
- Stir well after each addition
- Close the lid and let the mixture cook for 10 minutes
- Add the sugar and mix well
- Take off the fire and serve.

Other information:
- Fried *dithotse* can be served with the *Tshopi.*

DITHOTSE
Usually served as a snack or relish.

Ingredients Sundried pumpkin seeds
Salt to taste

Method
- Fry the pumpkin seeds on the lid of a pot or in a pan
- Add a little bit of water if needed
- Add salt to taste

MOROGO LEAVES FROM Mbolowa CREEPER

DRIED THEPE
An abundant indigenous green leafy vegetable. Sun-dried in summer and stored for winter months.

Ingredients

Method for drying *Thepe*
- Wash *thepe* in water
- Cook in water for 30 minutes
- Make small lumps (bolletjies) with your finger tips (size of sweets)
- Place on a sheet of corrugated iron to dry in the sun for approximately 24 hours
- Store in a bag or bucket

MOROGO Wembuya
Also known as *thepe* (Sotho). This is an everyday dish during weekdays in summer.

Ingredients *Morogo Imbuya*
Water
Salt

Method
- Wash the *imbuya* 2x in water
- Cook the *imbuya* with ½c water
- After it has cooked take from the fire and mix well
- Add salt

MOROGO Wembicani

Everyday dish. Originally a dish of the black people, especially of the Ndebele people.

Ingredients
1 kg *Morogo wembicani*
1c water
1 t salt

Method

- Wash the *morogo.*
- Boil the water
- Add the *morogo* and cook
- When the water dries up the *morogo* will be ready to serve

MOROGO Mbolowa (Tsonga)

Everyday dish in summer.

Ingredients
2 ℓ water
½ cup ground peanuts
1½ t salt
medium dish fresh **Mbolowa*

*Type of creeper, grows on fences. See sample of leaves on photo.

Method

- Boil water
- Add the ground peanuts and salt to the water
- Add the *mbolowa*
- Boil for ½ hr until leaves are brownish in colour

MOROGO THEPE

Everyday dish eaten by all the groups.

Ingredients
2 c dried *Thepe* *
½ c water
½ c ground peanuts
1 t salt

Method

- Boil water and add the ground peanuts and salt to the water
- Add the dried *morogo* to the boiling water
- Cook for 10 minutes *

* When tomatoes are added you only have to cook the *morogo* until the tomatoes are cooked

UMQWEBU (DRIED MEAT)

Some people used to slaughter during the winter months and sun-dried part of the meat.

Ingredients
Strips of meat from front and hind Legs
Salt

Method

- Cut the meat in strips
- Salt the meat
- Hang to dry in the sun
- Store in bags

SESWAYI

Meat relish prepared as an everyday dish and for visitors.

Ingredients
1 kg Prime Rib or Loin
3 c water
2 c peanuts
1 ½ t salt
Pepper (to taste)

Method

- Cook the meat in 3 cups water
- When cooked, take the meat out of the water and grind it separately
- Grind the peanuts and add to the water that the meat was cooked in
- Add the ground meat to the peanut mixture and cook together
- Add salt and pepper before serving

NYAMAYA SHIKAYA

Also known as household meat. An everyday meat dish prepared according to the traditional way of preparing meat by the black people.

Ingredients
1 kg meat
2c water
1 t salt

Method

- Cook the meat in water over medium heat for approximately 45 minutes, until the water has dried up and only the meat juices remain
- Add the salt
- Cook the meat for another 2 minutes to let the salt dissolve
- Serve the meat

BRAISED MEAT

Traditional braised meat dish.

Ingredients
1 kg Brisket
Water
1 t salt

Method

- Wash the meat
- Cook it in water
- Add 1 t salt
- Braise for 30 minutes

IDOMBOLO MATHAMBO

Everyday meat dish of *dombolo* dough steamed on shin bones. This is a traditional dish of the black people that is still very popular. It is also prepared for special occasions.

Ingredients ***Mathambo***
2 kg *mathambo* (shin bones)
2 c water
½ t salt

Ingredients ***Dombolo***
2 kg flour
1 packet (12,5g) yeast
1 spoon sugar
2 spoons oil
½ t salt
3 c water

Method

- Cook the *mathambo* in 2 c water and add ½ t salt and cook for 2 hours over medium heat
- Mix the dry ingredients for the *dombolo*. Add the water and mix well. Leave to rise for ½ hour
- Knead down the *dombolo* dough and put the dough on top of the *mathambo* and let it cook for another 1½ hours

MOGODU

Boiled ox tripe. Popular dish on weekdays.

Ingredients *Mogodu* (ox tripe)
1 t salt
Water

Method

- Wash the *mogodu*
- Boil the *mogodu* in water
- Add more water during cooking
- Add salt

MASONJA

Also known as *mopani* worms.
Everyday dish and as a special treat.

Ingredients 1 c dried *masonja*
1 ½ c water
½ c ground peanuts
1 t salt

Method

- Place 1 cup dried *masonja* in 1 cup boiling water and soak it until the water has cooled
- Wash the *masonja* in clean water
- Put the washed *masonja* in a pot with ½ c water and let it boil
- Add the ground peanuts and a pinch of salt
- Let this cook for 10 minutes
- Serve with *bogobe*

AMASI

Also known as Mothito / Mmele wa mothito (Tswana). Popular everyday dish for children, adults and visitors with iphutu or stiff maize porridge.

Ingredients 2 ℓ milk (direct from the cow)

Method

- Pour in a calabash and let it stand for 3 days in a warm place to allow it to thicken. (If stored in a cool place it could take up to a week to thicken)
- Take out the thick substance of milk that will be on top. The watery substance underneath should be poured into a separate calabash
- This thick substance (curd) is the part that is eaten
- The watery part (whey) is used to prepare *umtsikitlana*

DOMBOLO 2

An everyday dish, also served on the Saturday morning of the *iqude* celebration.

Ingredients
1 ℓ cake or bread flour
1 t dried yeast
100 ml sugar
1 ℓ water
1 t salt

Method

- Mix the dry flour, yeast, sugar and salt
- Add the water and mix together
- Let the dough rise for about 3 hours and knead it down
- Put the dough in a dish
- Pour a jug of water in a pot and let it boil
- Place the dish with the dough in the pot and place the lid on the pot
- Let the bread steam for about 1 hour till ready

DOMBOLO (small)

Also known as *iqebelengwana* (Ndebele) or d*inkwa* (North Sotho). Served as an everyday dish for breakfast and at the *iqude*.

Ingredients
1 kg cake flour
1 t dried yeast
100 ml sugar
2 beakers water (tea beakers)

Method

- Mix the flour, yeast, salt and sugar
- Add the water and mix to form a stiff dough
- Leave to rise for 8 hours (overnight)
- Knead dough down
- Put water in a pot
- Make small balls from the dough and place each ball in a separate plastic bag
- Place the bags in the pot, place the lid on and let the small *dombolos* steam for 3 hours

ISIPHAPHATHI

Also known as *diphaphata*. These flat breads are served as an everyday dish with tea or coffee.

Ingredients

5 c cake flour
3 t baking powder
1 t salt
1 litre water
Oil to fry

Method

- Mix the flour, baking powder and salt with the water
- Heat pan on fire and add oil
- Make balls and press flat and fry in oil

BOROTHO

Borotho is a pot bread baked as a treat for the family.

Ingredients

4 c bread flour
½ t yeast
4 c lukewarm water
½ t salt
½ c sugar
1½ t margarine or oil

Method

- Mix the flour, yeast, salt and sugar with the lukewarm water with your hands
- Cover the dough with a cloth and leave to rise for 15 minutes
- Knead the dough down
- Smear a 3-legged pot with the oil or margarine
- Place the dough in the pot
- Put the lid on the pot (upside down)
- Place burning coals on the lid and place pot in the burning coals of an open fire.
- Bake bread for 20 minutes
- Test if bread is ready with a fork (it must come out clean)

ADDENDUM D

MODERN RECIPES

WHITE RICE

Important menu item on Sunday midday meal.
Prepared for all special occasions.

Ingredients
5 kg rice
1 t salt
5 ℓ water

Method

- Boil the rice in 5 litres of water over high heat
- Drain the water off
- Add another litre of water and the salt and cook the rice for another 20 minutes over medium heat
- Serve

YELLOW RICE

Also known as dyed rice. Prepared for special occasions such as funerals, weddings and birthdays.

Ingredients
5 kg rice
1 t salt
5 boxes Raja spice mix
½ c cooking oil

Method

- Boil the rice in 2 litres of water. The heat must not be too high. Drain the rice. Add the oil to the rice
- Add ½ litre of water and cook rice again for 5-10 minutes
- Add the spice mix (as colourant to rice) and lukewarm water to the rice
- Cook for 5 minutes to mix evenly

MEALIE RICE

An everyday dish and very popular dish at wedding and funerals.

Ingredients
500 g mealie rice
1 ℓ water
1 t salt
1 spoon Rama margarine

Method

- Wash the mealie rice in lukewarm water
- Boil the water and add the mealie rice and cook over medium heat for 20 – 25 minutes. Add the salt and margarine after the mealie rice has cooked for 5 minutes
- After 25 minutes of cooking the dish is ready for serving

SAMP

Everyday dish for lunch and summer.

Ingredients
1 kg samp
8 ℓ water
1 t salt
½ c oil

Method

- Soak samp overnight in a large quantity of water
- Cook the samp in 1 litre water for 3 hours. Continue to add water until the samp is cooked (another 7 litres water will be needed)
- Add the oil before serving

MACARONI AND CHEESE BAKE

Everyday dish especially for Sundays. Also prepared for weddings, birthdays and funerals. This dish originated from the white people.

Ingredients

½ box macaroni
1 medium onion
4 medium tomatoes
1 t Aromat
1 t barbecue spice
½ c oil
4 eggs
1 c grated cheese
1 spoon Rama

Method

- Cook the macaroni in boiling water, add 1spoon oil to macaroni while boiling to prevent the macaroni from sticking together
- Drain the water off
- Make a sauce from the tomatoes and onion by frying the onion in the oil and adding the tomatoes to it. Add Aromat and barbecue spice to the tomatoes and onions and allow to cool
- Beat the 4 eggs and add the grated cheese
- Mix the egg, cheese and gravy together and mix with the cooked macaroni
- Grease a ovenproof dish with margarine and pour the mixture in the dish
- Sprinkle little bit of grated cheese on top of the mixture and add a spoon of melted margarine on top of the cheese
- Bake at 150ºC for 20 minutes. Add salt and serve

SPATLHO

Everyday dish eaten at school during lunch breaks. Convenience food that has become very popular with the school going youth as a lunch-time item.

Ingredients

¼ brown bread
1 slice of cheese
3 slices of French Polony
2 spoons of achaar

Method

- Mix everything together in the ¼ of soft brown bread

GRILLED CHICKEN

Everyday dish prepared specially on Sundays. Also prepared for weddings and funerals. Originated from the white people and introduced to the others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

2 x 2 kg chicken braai packs
4 t chicken spice
2 t salt

Method

- Cut the chicken in smaller pieces and sprinkle with salt and spices
- Place in a oven pan
- Bake in oven at 260ºC for ½ hour
- When chicken has a brownish colour it is ready for serving.

KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN

Everyday dish but mostly prepared on Sundays. Also popular on special occasions such as weddings and birthdays. This recipe was copied from Kentucky Fried Chicken fast food outlets.

Ingredients
3x 2 kg chicken braai packs
6 eggs
1 litre cooking oil
Chicken spice

Method

- Defrost chicken and cut into medium sized portions
- Beat eggs
- Place chicken spice in a separate dish
- Dip the portions in egg and then in the chicken spice
- Heat oil and fry the chicken portions until golden brown
- Serve

MAOTWANA

Also known as "Chicken runners". This is modern dish that has become popular for lunch or supper during weekdays.

Ingredients
18 *maotwana* (chicken feet)
3 medium tomatoes
1 medium onion
1 t Raja curry powder
½ t salt
2 T spoons oil

Method

- Soak the *maotwana* in warm water to soften the hard outer skin. Peel the outer skin off
- Peel and chop the onion and tomatoes
- Heat the oil in a pot and fry the onion and tomatoes over medium heat for 5 minutes
- Add the *maotwana*, curry powder and salt and cook for 20 minutes
- Serve

SOPPO YA MARAPO

Also known as soup meat. Everyday dish served at lunch or supper with *Bogobe* or rice. Originated from the white people and introduced to the others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
2 kg *marapo* (shin or soup bones)
2 t salt
2 litre water
3 carrots
5 medium tomatoes
1 small packet potatoes
1 green pepper

Method

- Cook the *marapo* for 2 ½ hours in the water over medium heat
- Add the salt
- Peel and slice the potatoes and carrots
- Grate the tomatoes
- Cut the green pepper
- Add the vegetables to the meat and cook another ½ hour
- Add water during cooking as needed
- Serve

STEW MEAT

Everyday dish also suitable for Sundays, weddings, funerals and birthday celebrations. Originated from the white people and introduced to the others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

1 kg meat
2 medium onions
1 green pepper
1 packet carrots
4 cubes beef stock
1 packet instant soup powder
2 t salt
Oil

Method

- Cook the meat first with 4 c of water for 20 minutes over medium heat
- Peel and slice the onions, carrots and green peppers
- Add the onion, carrots and green peppers to the meat and cook for 15 minutes. Don't add any water
- Mix the soup powder with 1 litre of water and add to the meat together with the 4 beef cubes and the salt
- Mix and cook for another 10 minutes
- Serve

BUTTERNUT AND PUMPKIN DISH

Everyday dish also prepared on Sundays and for celebrations such as weddings and birthdays.

Ingredients

1 pumpkin
½ c oil
3 butternuts
1 c sugar

Method

- Peel pumpkin (cut into pieces)
- Cook with ½ c water over medium heat
- Add the sugar, oil and the peeled butternuts and cook for 20 minutes over medium heat
- Mash the pumpkin
- Serve

CHAKALAKA

Everyday dish prepared on Sundays and at weddings celebrations. The dish originated from the white people was taught by those employed as domestic workers to others.

Ingredients

1 small packet carrots
2 medium onions
2 c cooking oil
2 t Raja curry powder, hot
1 t salt
420 g baked beans, tinned
410 g chakalaka, tinned

Method

- Peel and grate the carrots and onion
- Heat the oil and fry the onion and carrots over medium heat for 3 minutes
- Add salt and curry powder to the carrot mixture
- Add the baked beans and cook the mixture for 2 minutes over medium heat
- Add the chakalaka and cook for 1 minute
- Serve

FRIED CABBAGE

Everyday dish also served as a salad. Also popular at weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations.

Ingredients
1 medium cabbage
1 medium onion
½ green pepper
1 t Rajah curry powder
½ c cooking oil

Method

- Grate the cabbage into small pieces
- Peel and chop the onion
- Heat the oil over medium heat and fry the cabbage and onion together (15-20 minutes)
- Cut green pepper and add to cabbage with curry powder. Fry for another 5 minutes

SPINACH

Everyday dish for lunch and supper.

Ingredients
1 bunch spinach
2 medium potatoes
1 medium onion
½ c oil
1 t salt

Method

- Cook spinach in 2 c of water for 20 minutes over medium heat
- Peel potatoes and dice
- Peel the onion and slice the onion
- Add the potato, onion, salt and oil to the spinach and cook for another 20 minutes
- Serve

SPINACH *MOROGO* WITH PEANUT BUTTER

Served with as relish with *bogobe.*

Ingredients
1 bunch of spinach
2-4 tablespoons of peanut butter

Method

- Wash the spinach thoroughly
- Cook in a little bit of water over low heat for 20 minutes
- When cooked add the peanut butter and mix thoroughly

SPINACH *MOROGO* WITH TOMATO AND ONIONS

Served with as relish with *bogobe.*

Ingredients
1 bunch of spinach
2 small tomatoes
1 large onion
2 tablespoons oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

- Wash the spinach and tomatoes thoroughly
- Peel and slice the onion and tomatoes
- Fry onion in oil till brown and tender
- Add tomatoes and fry for 2 minutes
- Add the spinach and cook over low heat for 20 minutes
- Add salt and pepper to taste

SPINACH *MOROGO* WITH TOMATO AND PEANUTS

Served with as relish with *bogobe.*

Ingredients
1 bunch of spinach
2 small tomatoes
½ c of salted peanuts

Method

- Wash the spinach and tomatoes thoroughly
- Slice tomatoes
- Cook spinach and tomatoes together for 20 minutes over low heat
- Add peanuts and cook for another 10 minutes until the peanuts are soft

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MIXED VEGETABLE SALAD

Prepared for Sundays and special occasions such as weddings and birthdays.

Ingredients
½ of 250 g mayonnaise
1 medium tin of mixed vegetables
1 medium tin of curry vegetables

Method

- Drain the tinned vegetables
- Mix the vegetables together with the mayonnaise
- Serve

BEETROOT SALAD

Everyday dish prepared from njugo beans and sorghum meal.

Ingredients
3 packets beetroot
½ c vinegar
2 medium onions
sugar
½ t salt

Method

- Boil the beetroot for 1 hour over medium heat
- Peel after cooled and grate into a dish
- Peel and grate the onions into the beetroot
- Add the vinegar, sugar and salt and mix
- Serve

CABBAGE SALAD

Everyday dish especially on Sundays. Also prepared for weddings and birthdays.

Ingredients
1 medium cabbage
3 carrots
Mayonnaise
½ c fresh milk

Method

- Grate the cabbage and the carrots
- Mix it together with the mayonnaise
- Add the milk. The mixture must be soft, and not too stiff
- Serve

BEAN SALAD

Everyday dish prepared for Sunday lunch. Also popular at weddings and birthdays. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

1 kg green beans, sliced
1 c water
½ t salt
1 medium onion
1 green pepper
4 carrots
½ c oil
1 spoon barbecue spice
125 g mayonnaise

Method

- Cook the beans in water and salt. Drain off the water
- Peel and chop onion and green pepper
- Peel and grate the carrots
- Heat oil over medium heat
- Fry onion, green pepper and carrots over medium heat in the oil
- Mix green beans with the carrots and onion mixture
- Allow beans and carrot mixture to cool
- Add mayonnaise and barbecue spice and mix
- Serve

CHUTNEY BEETROOT

Everyday dish prepared mainly for Sundays, weddings, birthdays and funerals. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

1 bunch beetroot
1x 470g bottle chutney
1 spoon barbecue spice
1 medium onion
1 green pepper
½ c oil

Method

- Cook the beetroot for 1 hour. Peel and cut into cubes
- Fry the onion and green pepper in the oil over medium heat for 5 minutes and add the barbecue spice
- Mix the onion mixture with the beetroot
- Add the chutney (3/4 of the bottle) and mix
- Serve

MAYONNAISE BEETROOT

Everyday dish specially prepared on Sundays, birthdays and weddings. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

1 packet beetroot
250 g mayonnaise

Method

- Cook the beetroot over medium heat
- Cool beetroot and peel when cooled
- Grate the beetroot in a dish
- Mix with the mayonnaise
- Serve

MACARONI SALAD

Everyday dish and for Sundays and special occasions such as weddings. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
1 x 500g packet of macaroni
1 t oil ½ t salt
250 g mayonnaise
1 small tin fish (Lucky Star)

Method

- Cook the macaroni in rapidly boiling water with the salt and oil (to prevent the macaroni from sticking together)
- Drain and allow the macaroni to cool
- Add the tin of fish and mayonnaise to the macaroni and mix carefully
- Serve

POTATO SALAD

Popular dish for Sundays, weddings and birthdays. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
2 kg potatoes 250 g mayonnaise
1 medium onion 2 eggs (boiled)

Method

- Cook the potatoes (unpeeled) in 1 ½ litre water and 1 teaspoon salt for 15 minutes
- Cool potatoes for 10 minutes
- Peel off skin and cut into small cubes
- Grate onion and mix with the potatoes
- Add mayonnaise and mix
- Grate eggs on top as garnish

THREE BEAN SALAD

Everyday dish and also prepared on Sundays and for special occasions such as weddings, funerals and birthdays. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
1 kg green beans (fresh)
1 kg carrots 3 medium onions
1 green pepper 1 t salt
2x 410 g butter beans 1 c oil
2x 420 g baked beans
2 packets chillies

Method

- Slice the green beans, and cook it in ½ cup of water. Drain water off
- Peel and dice the carrots. Cook in ½ cup of water. Drain off the water
- Chop the onion and green pepper
- Heat ½ cup of the oil and fry the onion and green pepper in oil over medium heat for 5 minutes
- Add the cooked green beans and carrots to the pepper and onions and cook it for 5 minutes while stirring
- Add the chillies and the salt and cook for another 5 minutes
- Add the baked and butter beans and mix everything together
- Serve

GRAVY

Everyday dish served as relish with starch such as *bogobe*, rice or bread. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

2 medium onions
1 green pepper
15 tomatoes, grated
2 carrots, grated
500 ml cooking oil
100g Knorrox (soya mince)
2 cubes beef stock
Water according to instructions for making stock

Method

- Heat oil over medium heat and fry the onion and green pepper for 3-5 minutes
- Add the grated tomatoes and carrots and mix together with the onion mixture and cook for 10 minutes
- Add soya mince and beef stock
- Cook for 2-3 minutes
- Serve

SPIKOS

Everyday dish eaten on bread. Convenient and quick and easy to prepare. Eaten at schools during lunch time and leisurely at shops. Very popular with males.

Ingredients

2 c achaar
225 g tin Spaghetti
215 g tin fish
½ garlic
French Polony sliced

Method

- Mix all the ingredients together
- Serve it on brown bread

TOMATO AND ONION RELISH

Also known as s*oppo ya tamati le eiye.* Prepared as an everyday dish as a relish with *bogobe* or bread for breakfast or lunch.

Ingredients

½ c fish oil
2 medium onions, peeled and diced
1 packet tomatoes cut into pieces
1 t salt

Method

- Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onions over medium heat
- Add the tomatoes
- Add the salt and cook for 5 minutes
- Serve

SOPPO YA MARAPO

Also known as soup meat. Prepared as an everyday dish for lunch or supper. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those employed as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
2 kg *marapo* (shin or soup bones)
2 t salt
2 litre water
3 carrots
1 green pepper
1 small packet potatoes
5 medium tomatoes

Method

- Cook the *marapo* for 2½ hours in the water over medium heat
- Add the salt
- Peel and slice the potatoes and carrots
- Grate the tomatoes
- Cut the green pepper
- Add the vegetables to the meat and cook another ½ hour
- Add water during cooking as needed
- Serve

BANANA BREAD

Popular treat over weekends. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those who worked as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
6 Bananas
4 c cake flour
½ c sugar
6 eggs
2 c oil
2 c milk
1 t salt
5 t baking powder
a few drops of vanilla essence

Method

- Peel and mash the bananas
- Mix flour, sugar, baking powder together in a dish
- Beat eggs and add oil, milk and vanilla to flour mixture
- Mix to form a batter
- Grease a pan with oil or margarine
- Place bread mixture in pan and bake
- (½ hour) at 160ºC or until ready
- Serve

DIKUKU (Tswana)

Also known as *amakuke* (Ndebele). Served at all special occasions. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those who worked as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
5 kg cake flour
125 g sugar
1 litre milk
12 eggs
2 c coconut
1 small bottle vanilla
200g baking powder
4x 500g Rama margarine
1 small bottle yellow food colour

Method

- Mix the flour, sugar, coconut and baking powder together
- Mix the margarine into the dry mixture
- Mix the milk, vanilla, eggs and food colour
- Mix with the flour mixture
- Make small balls and place on a baking pan and flatten with a fork
- Bake in oven at 250°C for 35 minutes

QUEENS CAKES

Everyday dish. Baked for birthdays and funerals. Originated from the white people and introduced to others by those who worked as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

5 kg cake flour
200g baking powder
1 kg sugar
200g coconut
4x 500g Rama margarine
1 med tin Nespray milk powder
18 eggs
1 small bottle vanilla essence
1 small bottle yellow food colour

Method

- Mix the flour, baking powder, sugar and coconut in a dish
- Add the margarine (do mix it with hands to make it like crumbs?)
- Make 2 litre milk with lukewarm water and the Nespray
- Beat the eggs and mix with the milk, vanilla and food colour
- Mix the liquid mixture with the flour mixture
- Grease a pan with small holes with margarine – use the wrappings of the margarine for this
- Place small balls of dough in the pan
- Bake at 250ºC till done, take out and allow to cool
- Store in a Tupperware container to preserve the softness of the queens cakes

VETKOEK

Used on a regular basis in households as substitute for bread. Sold to school children by vendors outside school gates and at bus stops and train stations.

Ingredients

2, 5 kg cake / bread flour
2 t dried yeast
2 t salt (rounded teaspoons)
½ c sugar
1 litre cooking oil
± 2 beakers of lukewarm water (tea drinking beakers)

Method

- Mix flour, salt, yeast and sugar together
- Add lukewarm water and mix to form soft dough. (The dough must not be wet or stiff)
- Cover the dough with a tablecloth for 6 hours
- Knead the dough down
- Heat the oil in a pot
- Form small balls of dough and fry in the oil, till brown on one side
- Turn the vetkoek to ensure that they are overall brown

AMASKONS

Also known as u brotho be kaya or household bread. This is an everyday dish, usually prepared for breakfast over weekends.

Ingredients

2 kg cake flour
10 ml yeast
½ c sugar
1 litre milk
1 spoon salt

Method

- Mix the flour, yeast, and sugar together
- Add the milk and mix well
- Let the dough rise
- When it has risen, shape it into small balls
- Put on a baking sheet
- Bake at 125°C for 15 minutes

DOMBOLO (modern version)

Everyday dish, originally prepared at the *iqude.* This dish has developed and changed. This is the more sophisticated version where modern ingredients are added.

Ingredients

1 kg flour (preferably bread flour)
½ c sugar
50 g baking powder
125 g custard powder
½ litre water
1 spoon oil
1 t salt

Method

- Mix the flour, baking powder and sugar
- Mix the custard powder with the water and add to the flour mixture and mix together
- Grease a dish with the oil and place the flour mixture into the bowl
- Boil 3 c of water in a pot and place the dish in the pot
- Put the lid on and cook the dombolo for 15 minutes
- Check with a fork to see if it is cooked (the fork must come out clean)

BIRTHDAY CAKE

Photograph of a purchased birthday cake for a very special birthday celebration.

JELLY

Prepared as dessert on Sundays and on special occasions such as birthdays weddings and funerals. Originated from the white people and introduced to the others by those who worked as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients

1 x 80g packet jelly powder
1 c boiling water
1 c cold water

Method

- Pour jelly powder in a bowl and add the boiling water and stir to dissolve the powder
- Add the cold water and mix
- Put in the refrigerator to set for about an hour
- Serve with custard sauce

CUSTARD

Prepared with jelly and tinned fruit as part of the dessert.

Ingredients
125 g custard powder
500 ml milk
1 spoon sugar
1 spoon Rama margarine

Method

- Boil 500ml milk in a pot add a spoonful of margarine
- Mix the custard powder, the rest of the milk and sugar together
- Add to the milk and cook over low heat for 10 minutes, while stirring frequently
- Pour into a serving dish for serving.
- **Other information**
- A tin of canned peaches (420 g) can be added to the custard
- Crumble tennis biscuits over the custard for garnishing

GEMERE

Also known as ginger beer. Originated from the white people and introduced to the others by those who worked as domestic workers in white households.

Ingredients
2 x 50 g fine ginger
1 c cake flour
1 c sugar
½ ℓ water
25 ℓ water
125 g Cream of tartar
125 g Tartaric acid
6 c sugar

Method

- Pour the two boxes of ginger in a dish
- Add the 1 c of sugar and flour and mix well
- Boil the ½ litre of water and stir the flour and ginger mixture into the water
- Take from the heat and stir thoroughly until the mixture has cooled
- Add the 25 litre of water and the 6 cups of sugar together with the cream of tartar and the tartaric acid to the ginger mixture
- Stir very thoroughly

SOUR MILK

Prepared with jelly and tinned fruit as part of the dessert.

Ingredients
Fresh milk

Method

- Leave milk to sour in warm place

ADDENDUM E

PHOTOGRAPHS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE OF MMOTLA

Houses in the residential areas

Untarred street in residential area

Outside Mooka store showing the tarred main road

Street scene in Mmotla

Donkey carts continue to be used as a method of transport by some

Wheelbarrows are used to transport goods

Livestock such as goats are kept by some

Inside the greengrocer

Outside the butchery

SPECIAL OCCASIONS - WEDDINGS

Traditional Ndebele Wedding

Ndebele bride properly covered with blanket and towel during the *isimanje*. The decorated umbrella is used to hide her face from her future in-laws.

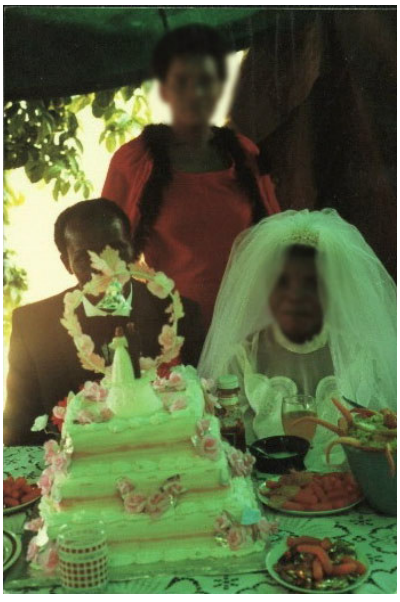
Modern Wedding

Photographs taken in park

Outside the marquee tent

Bride and groom wearing the first change of clothes

Members of a bridal party dressed in *"modern traditional"* clothes



Wedding cakes match the colour scheme of the clothes of the bridal party and are given a prominent place on the bridal table

SPECIAL OCCASIONS – BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

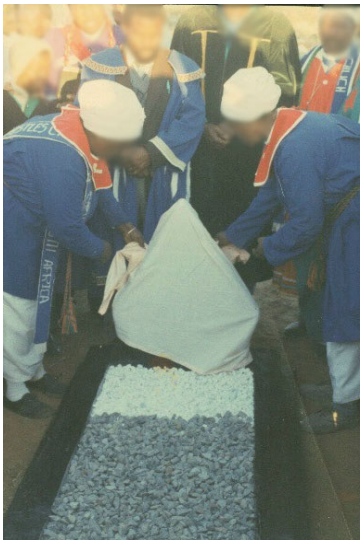
Purchased birthday cakes are important and central to the birthday celebrations of both young and old

SPECIAL OCCASIONS - FUNERALS

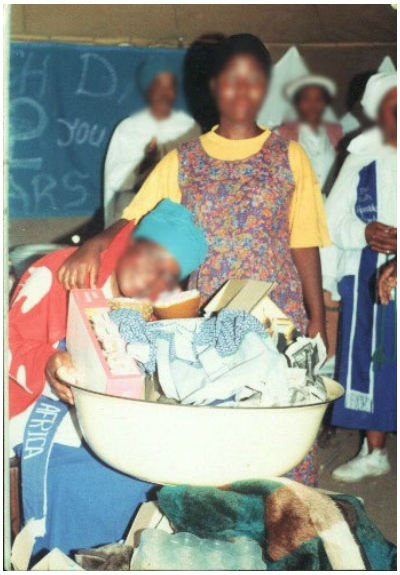
Traditional identification of grave

The personal plates and other eating utensils of the deceased were used by some to mark a grave

Unveiling of the Tombstone



Unveiling of a tombstone at the cemetery



A widow with some of the gifts she received after the unveiling of her husband's tombstone

BEER-MAKING

Malted sorghum and maize-meal

Cooled sorghum and maize-meal mixture

Adding the rest of the sorghum and water to each batch of fermented sorghum and maize-meal

Family and friends who assisted in the beer-making

The mixture is poured into large storage containers

The beer is left to ferment for 2 days

This is sieved on the 3rd day

Poured into calabashes for serving

Hostess serves beer to one of the relatives who assisted her with the beer-making