


Chapter 13

Name Giving in the Batswana Culture: A Generational Change Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Naming is an evolving and continuous process that could also be influenced by changes and practices that have emerged due to the contact South African people had with colonization, Christianity, and Western education influence. The study investigated how the Batswana people in Gauteng province give name(s) to their newly born child/children through the different generational changes. The problem is that the customary and traditional practices of name giving are gradually disappearing as generations evolve. Data was purposively sampled through an interview schedule that was administered face-to-face and online. The findings amongst others revealed that the practices in name-giving vary across the generations hence Baby Boomers and Generation X this responsibility is given to the grandparents of the newly born baby. The names given by the Baby Boomers and Generation X are mostly inherited from the family pedigree. Whereas Generation Z prefers to give their children their names, they are trying to break the tradition of inheriting names.

INTRODUCTION

The Batswana people form part of the Sotho group in South Africa which is composed of Northern Sotho (Sepedi) spoken mostly in the Limpopo province; Southern Sotho (Sesotho) spoken predominantly in the Free State province; and (Setswana) spoken both in the Northwest and Northern Cape provinces. All these three groups of languages are also spoken in the Gauteng province because some of these people from the abovementioned provinces have settled in this province (Gauteng) to seek job opportunities. The essence of this chapter focuses on the Batswana people who are residing in the Gauteng province.

The Batswana people are one of the cultural groups are still observing their cultural upbringings. They (Batswana people) always use “proverbs” to understand their surroundings and the changes that are happening around them. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines a proverb (from Latin: *proverbium*) as, “a simple

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and concrete saying, popularly known and repeated, that expresses a truth based on common sense or experience". They are often metaphorical since they are a figure of speech that directly refers to one thing by mentioning another for rhetorical effect (Wikipedia, n.d.). Giving a person(s) a name(s) in the Batswana culture is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a linguistic phenomenon. The meaning that is attached to a person's name also defines the person behind the name "personhood". It is also believed that the given name to a person doesn't only serve as an "identity" but also determines the type of person the individual will be in the future (Guma, 2001). The proverb in Setswana which says, "*Leina lebe seromo*" (literally translated as, "a person's name will shape his or her future") qualifies the notion that the name may influence the character of the person.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Name giving in the Batswana culture have now taken a different direction across generations in so far as customs and traditions. The problem is that this phenomenon of name giving that used to be a collective responsibility of the family has become an individualistic task. The exclusion of the key immediate family members in this process of naming the newly born children has also resulted in them not adhering to the traditional cultural practices that are supposed to be performed.

The researcher has been observing and noticing that this cultural norm so far as name-giving is gradually disappearing as generations evolve. Hence, in this study, the researcher wanted to understand the reasons why certain practices with respect to the name given by the Batswana people in Gauteng Province are no longer applicable as per generation (zooming specifically to these four generational changes Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennial, Generation Z).

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to investigate how the Batswana people in Gauteng province give name(s) to their newly born child/children through the different generational changes. To achieve this aim, the following questions were posed:

- Who named your child/children?
- Is your child/children's name(s) given or inherited name(s)?
- What meaning is associated with your child/children name(s)?
- Was any cultural procedure followed when you gave or inherited your child/children's name(s)?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory that underpins this study is the Generational theory of Mannheim (1952), Howe and Strauss (1997). Mannheim (1952) stems this Generation theory from Marxist thoughts such as the idea that someone's beliefs are shaped by the type of group that person belongs to and associates with. Hence this argument is that all truths and ideas are influenced by the social context upon which they emanate. In understanding this Generational theory, Mannheim (1952) defines generations as a cohort

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