

In the wake of Globalisation and increased patterns of migration today, how can individuals and small migrant communities maintain their cultural traditions and practices, yet still maintain positive relationships with the wider community?

Would there be any dilemmas, limitations or obstacles? How can the obstacles be removed?

This paper defines culture as:

‘A set of shared attributes, values, goals and practices that characterises an institution, organisation or a group’

According to an anthropology definition, culture is the:

‘Total sum of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from generation to generation’

However, mid nineteenth century scientists used the term culture to refer to ‘*the capacity of a universal human.*’ (Dictionary)

For the purpose of this discussion, Globalisation is defined as:

1. ‘*The integration of regional economies, societies and cultures through communication, transportation and trade.*’
2. ‘*Transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular cultures through acculturation.*’

The discussion takes note of the fact that Globalisation is driven by a combination of economic, technical, socio cultural, political and biological factors. (Dictionary)

Due to migration, there is increased settlement of smaller minority groups of people alongside the wider communities. The smaller groups of people are bound to have their own customs and practices.

Among the numerous immigrating communities in the Diaspora is the Zimbabwean Community in the United Kingdom from which the author of this paper belongs. This community is mainly made up of Zimbabweans who immigrated to various parts the world during the Deep Decline in post colonial Zimbabwe.

In African traditional marriage practices including Zimbabwe, parents expect their son or daughter to get married to a person known to their family – usually from the same village or clan. The procedure takes place at a special in door family ceremony called ‘the asking ceremony’ The ‘groom to be’ pays ‘bride price’ or ‘lobola’ in form of cash, cattle, goats, clothes, groceries, beer and other.

In Namibia, according to the book HUMAN – the definitive visual guide, “The groom’s family ‘kidnaps’ the bride (usually by arrangement), dressing her in leather and covering her with butter. Among the Masai people of East Africa, a groom goes to the bride’s home to collect her, at which time the bride’s father spits on her as a farewell blessing.” (R, 2004)

Living in a different culture means that children born to migrants might also acquire a new form of ‘cultural attitude’ resulting from influences from the mainstream culture and other cultures.

The custom of ‘do not marry a stranger’ will probably have no place in the next few decades as the younger generation interact more with other people outside their ‘cultural bracket.’

In that case there could be a problem if a son or daughter decides to marry outside the bracket. Parents may refuse to recognise such a marriage. The son or daughter could choose to be adamant and stick to his or her choice anyway. The end result can be ongoing dispute or total family relationship breakdown.

It could even be tragic where people resort to violence as a means of cultural conflict resolution.

This can be illustrated by this 21st Century story of an African girl who settled in the United Kingdom with her refugee parents and siblings.

The girl fell in love with a young man of western culture while they attended the same College. Eventually the two decided to settle down together.

Nevertheless, according to the girl's African culture, the boy was expected to pay the 'bride price or lobola' before they could settle. But according to the young man's western culture, there was no such thing as lobola. The young man struggled with this idea of having to 'Purchase a wife'. So the man apparently asked his lover: 'Sweetheart, how much are your parents selling you for?' The girl was apparently offended but they managed to patch things up after she explained to him that lobola was a marriage custom - not a buying and selling transaction.

The young man saved up a substantial amount of money to pay bride price. He did not tell his parents about the required lobola because he was not sure of how they would react to it. The last thing he wanted to hear was to be told to abandon his lover. He was determined to marry her at whatever cost.

However the young man soon found out that the formal procedure required him to prove his parental consent to the matter. The girl's parents would not accept his money for lobola unless he was accompanied by an adult family representative at the asking ceremony.

Now he had no option but to tell his parents. They immediately objected to the whole idea of lobola payment. The father branded the girl's parents 'greedy cows' accusing them of trying to 'rip off' their son. The mother referred to the young girl's culture to as ridiculous and 'rotten culture'.

There was a heated argument in a meeting between the two families resulting in physical and verbal aggression between the father of the girl and the father of the boy.

The girl's parents were deeply offended. They advised their daughter to abandon the young man and to find another man from within their culture.

However the two were deeply in love and abandoning one another was not an option. In the end, they moved in together. They cut ties with both parents.

A common African custom that was supposed to bring joy and pride in the family actually brought misery and relationship breakdown. Perhaps all that the two families needed was to learn more about and understand each other's culture.

Perhaps some of us still live in what one might call a 'cultural bubble.' While in this bubble we do not see or hear anything. Yet so much surrounds us, and so much of that which surrounds us is changing so fast.

The author of this discussion shares this:

"In May 2011, I travelled from Leicester United Kingdom to my country of origin in Africa - Zimbabwe. While on a visit to my village, I decided to go round catching up with some of my relatives and other villagers.

When I got to my auntie's place, I realised that she had an improvised bandage and sling over her left arm. Auntie was in pain; she sobbed as she narrated the story of how she had slipped and fell while chasing baboons out of her orchard. I offered to take auntie to the hospital but she said 'no' I asked her "why?" She said precisely, "I will not go – it's against my religion."

Auntie was not going to hospital because her religion had a 'culture' of shunning any form of medicinal treatment.

She believed only prayers and 'holy water' from the religious prophets would patch up her broken bone.

This paper argues that if people remain in such religious and cultural 'quarantines' there is bound to be problems in the way humans relate. Some people especially the older generation will not 'move an inch' when it

comes to their cultural practices, they will not adjust, and they will not 'change a thing.'

The author believes that with the immerging new forms of technology, new global networks, the world is moving forward at a fast pace. People cannot just remain 'quarantined' in a world of 'own culture'. Not that people should dump their culture but perhaps there is need for cultural adjustment and cultural advancement. People need to open up and learn other cultures and value other cultures not just 'their own.'

However there is a dilemma where certain cultural practices are regarded as violating other people's personal freedoms for example where parents arrange marriages for their children against their wish in the name of 'cultural tradition' In such cases this discussion proposes that people consider 'cultural adjustment' so as to allow freedom of choice.

Perhaps these are the situations that result in more and more of the younger generation becoming 'cultural rebels' – leaving behind the older generation in a 'cultural nightmare.' - Being left behind, only existing as history – long before they die.

Moving with the times is perhaps the 21st Century way of being able to keep up with the younger generation and be able to help them establish their cultural identity. This would otherwise be impossible if the older generation and the younger generation alienate each other. They are equally important in making decisions that affect communities and shape the future.

Perhaps one might think that 'moving with time' means that one abandons one's culture? – NO. It means you keep up with what is happening in your community and in your world – 'which is also full of other cultures.' You recognise how other people do things even if they do it differently from the way you do it. The more you get to know different cultures, is the more you understand yourself and make sense of and partake in your world.

Perhaps 'cultural tolerance' is the key word. If people fail to recognise one another's culture or regard other cultures as 'inferior' there is bound to be

'cultural conflict' which leads to a breakdown in individual, community or even international relationships.

Small migrant communities and individuals could benefit from showcasing their identity through music, drama, cultural dance, literature and live talk, food and fashion showcase, active participation in cultural festivals organised alongside the wider communities.

Widespread Carnivals are a good example of a forum for people to showcase their culture.

A lot of the younger generation tends to connect very well with such events.

The author thinks that the next two decades will see the younger generations trying to get out of a 'cultural bubble' and digging deep into history to learning more about their cultural origins and establish their cultural identities. This is supported by Robert Winston's view on Global Society of which he wrote: "...although westernisation is a domineering force, the 'culture' that is being exported is a narrow one marketed primarily at the young. As people grow older, they come to value the individuality of their own culture." (R, 2004)

However a lot will have been transformed through 'cultural adjustment' - the arts and social networks and education system will probably predominantly influence people's 'cultural attitudes.'

We will perhaps live to see substantial cultural reforms in the next two decades.

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