

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO CULTURE
OF AFAR PEOPLE: FEMALE GENITAL
CIRCUMCISION IN FOCUS**

BY

ASMERET NIGUS

**MAY, 2011
ADDIS ABABA**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO CULTURE
OF AFAR PEOPLE: FEMALE GENITAL
CIRCUMCISION IN FOCUS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
JOURNALISM AND COOMUNICATION IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIERMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND
COMMUNICATION**

**BY
ASMERET NIGUS**

**MAY, 2011
ADDIS ABABA**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO CULTURE
OF AFAR PEOPLE: FEMALE GENITAL
CIRCUMCISION IN FOCUS**

BY

ASMERET NIGUS

Approved by Board of Examiners

Chairman, Department Graduate Committee

Advisor

Examiner

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my deepest gratitude to my advisor Dr. Gebremedhin Simon. He played a crucial role in shaping and focusing my thought.

Thanks are also due to a number of individuals and organizations in Afar region. Zahara, Hadi, Jamal, and Mohammed have been so kind and helpful in facilitating conditions for the field study. Their genuine hospitality is always memorable. Idris and Mohammed deserve acknowledgment for their roles as interpreters. Their contributions made communication with the rural informants possible.

Thanks are due to the Afar Gender Office, the Dubti Wereda officer Mohammed the Woreda's Gender Office and the Abala Werda Gender Office the Kebele's officers for granting me with a research permit and for their logistic and moral supports.

No wording of thanks can satisfy the debt that I owe to my family and friends who supplied ideas, encouragement and support in many ways. They are worthy to be appreciated and thanked.

Finally, there are many people who have extended their assistance in one way or another for the production of this research. I wish to thank all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	PAGE
Acknowledgements	I
Table of Contents	II
Abstract	VI
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Statement of the problem	4
1.3. Objective of the study	5
1.4. Research questions	6
1.5. Significance of the study	6
1.6. The scope of the research	7
1.7. Limitation of the research	7
1.8. Thesis organization	8
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
2.1. Communication.	9
2.2. The Schools of communication	10
2.2.1. Meaning or semiotic school of communication.....	10
2.2.1.1. Semiotics and meaning	12
2.2.1.2. Structuralist theory and applications	13
2.2.1.3. Branches of semiotics.....	13
2.2.1.4. Elements of Semiology.....	13
2.2.1.4.1. Language and Speech	14
2.2.1.4.2. Signifier and Signified	14
2.2.1.4.3. Syntagm and System.....	15
2.2.1.4.4. Denotation and Connotation.....	15
2.2.1.5. Some important semioticians	16

2.2.1.5.1. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914)	16
2.2.1.5.2. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)	17
2.2.1.5.3. Ogden and Richards (1923)	17
2.2.1.6. Communication, meaning and signs	18
2.2.1.7. Categories of signs	19
2.2.1.8. Codes.....	20
2.2.1.8.1. Basic features of codes.....	21
2.2.1.8.2. Functions of codes	21
2.2.1.8.2.1. Representational codes	21
2.2.1.8.2.2. Presentational codes	22
2.2.1.8.3. Codes and commonality	24
2.2.1.8.4. Convention and use.....	25
2.2.1.8.5. Aberrant decoding.....	25
2.2.1.8.6. Aesthetic codes	25
2.2.1.8.7. Conventionalization	26
2.2.1.8.8. Codes and conventions.....	26
2.3. Culture and communication	26
2.3.1. Characteristics of culture.....	28
2.3.2. Elements of Culture	29
2.3.2.1. <i>Artifacts</i>	29
2.3.2.2. <i>Stories, histories, myths, legends, jokes</i>	30
2.3.2.3. <i>Rituals, rites, ceremonies, celebrations</i>	30
2.3.2.4. <i>Heroes</i>	31
2.3.2.5. <i>Symbols and symbolic action</i>	31
2.3.2.6. Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values	31
2.3.2.7. Cultural Beliefs	32

2.3.2.8. <i>Rules, norms, ethical codes, values</i>	33
2.3.3. Cultural identification.....	33
2.3.4. Importance of culture.....	33
2.3.5. The relationship of culture and communication.....	34
2.3.6. Cultural Factors in Nonverbal Communication	35
 CHAPTER THREE: AN OVERVIEW OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION	 37
3.1. Origins of female genital cutting.....	38
3.2. Countries practicing FGC today.....	39
3.3. Types of female genital cutting	40
3.3.1. Type I: Clitoridectomy	40
3.3.2. Type II: Excision.....	41
3.3.3. Type III: Infibulations with excision.....	41
3.3.4. Type IV: Other types.....	42
3.4. Harmful effects.....	42
3.5. Things being done about female genital cutting.....	44
3.6. Social movements for change.....	44
 CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	 46
4.1. Qualitative research	46
4.2. Study Population and Setting	49
4.3. Data Collection.....	50
4.3.1. Focus Group Discussion.....	50
4.3.2. Individual in-Depth Interviews	52
4.3.2.1. The interview setting	53
4.3.2.2. The Interview Guide and the Researcher Role as a Moderator.....	53
4.4. Secondary Data	54

4.5. Participants Observation	54
4.6. Data Processing and Analysis	54
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION AND PRESENTATION FINDINGS	55
5.1. Social and cultural meaning of FGC for the Afar's	55
5.1.1. Good tradition.....	56
5.1.2. Religious requirements.....	57
5.1.3. Better marriage prospects	58
5.1.3.1. Preservation of virginity	58
5.1.3.2. Enhancement of male sexual pleasure	58
5.2. Disparity in the interpretation	59
5.2.1. Religious leaders.....	59
5.2.2. Women	60
5.2.3. Men	62
5.2.4. Mid-wives.....	63
5.2.5. Rural area residents	64
5.2.6. Urban area residents.....	64
5.3. Social values and acceptability of FGC.....	64
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
6.1. Conclusion	67
6.2. Recommendations	69
References	
Appendices	

ABSTRACT

The role of communication in understanding meaning generated by means of signs and codes and connecting the collection of meanings to the whole is the paramount reason that leads people's way of life to a broader part. This study sets out to examine the generation of meaning through cultural practices; taking the practice of female genital circumcision in focus. The research particularly shades light on the Afar people meaning attribution of female genital circumcision (FGC). Different efforts have been made in order to stop FGC in the study area because its physical and psychological impact is greater than its value in other cultures. Yet the efforts that have been made in stopping the practice are meaningless to the people of Afar and they are not willing to let the new idea or knowledge to get in to the way of the old one because FGC for them is a cultural entity that holds the other traditions and values together and without it their way of life could be diminished. Here what this study tried to find out is the Afar people's generation of meaning by practicing FGC. The study tried to answer the people's cultural implication of the practice and their disparity in the interpretation of FGC. Qualitative methodology is used to dig out information that is vital to the study. The study employed interview, focus group discussion and participant observations as tools for generating data from two weredas namely: Dubti and Abala. For this study a purposive sampling technique was followed as the focus is on limited number of informants, that are selected strategically so that their in depth information will give optional insight. The finding of the study shows that the people's meaning of FGC as a symbol signifying their tradition: preservation of virginity, enhancement of male sexual pleasure, a stage for womanhood, better marriage prospects and prevents excessive clitoral growth; their strong religious attachment: cleanliness, as baptism to be a Muslim and as a procedure to be accepted as a member of the society. Their meaning given to the practice by the people is diverse as a result of their age, gender, social status. In addition, People who live in the urban and rural area have different interpretation of FGC.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Communication in today's world requires culture. Problems in communication are rooted in who you are, in encounters with a different mentality, different meanings, different tie between languages and consciousness. Solving the problems inspired by such encounters inspire culture.

Who gets to talk when? How do we know when it's ok to speak? Does age, gender, or other kinds of hierarchies play a role in who speaks what they say, and how they say it? Is it permissible to interrupt, and how do interruptions happen? What topics are best left to other settings? When we ask such questions, we denaturalize our communicative practices. That is, we begin to see that communication is not something natural that we just "know how to do." Instead, we begin to notice how the ways that we interact with others are linked to larger cultural understandings and expectations. We begin to see communication in terms of shared cultural knowledge that is learned and practiced. In short, we begin to see interpersonal communication as culturally constituted.

The relationship between communication and culture is a very complex and intimate one. First, cultures are created through communication; that is, communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics— whether customs, roles, rules, rituals, laws, or other patterns—are created and shared. It is not so much that individuals set out to create a culture when they interact in relationships, groups, organizations, or societies, but rather that cultures are a natural by-product of social interaction. In a sense, cultures are the "residue" of social communication. Without communication and communication media, it would be impossible to preserve and pass along cultural characteristics from one place and time to another. One can say, therefore, that culture is created, shaped, transmitted, and learned through communication. The reverse is also the case; that is; communication practices are largely created, shaped, and transmitted by culture. Bauman (1989) stressed the relation ship of communication and society as

communication is the ways in which information, ideas, and attitudes pass among individuals, groups, nations, and generation. It is socially constituted, rooted in social relationships and produced in the conduct of social life. To treat language or literature or music as autonomous systems is an analytical observation, distancing them from their fundamental nature as instruments of social practice. Some scholars would go further, maintaining that not only is communication socially constituted but society is communicatively constituted, produced and reproduced by communicative acts. Accordingly, a basic task is to discover the social organization of communication, the patterns, functions, and social meanings of communicative forms and practices. (Bauman, 1989)

James Carey (1988) proposed an alternative to the dominant view of communication as transmission in the form of a 'ritual' model, and he has also advocated an approach to communication and society in which culture is allotted a more central place. "Social life is more than power and trade ----it also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments, and intellectual notions- a ritual order." Carey, 1988:34) accordingly he defined communication as "a symbolic process where by reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed". (1988: 23)

Much of what we think is the "right" or "correct" way to act or to do something is actually part of the knowledge that we have learned from our culture.

The term 'culture' is used, itself a reflection of the complexity of the phenomenon. Culture is defined by Carey as a process, but it can also refer to some shared attribute of a human group (such as their physical environment, tools, religion, customs and practices, or their whole way of life). Culture also can refer to texts and symbolic artifacts that are encoded with particular meanings by and for people with particular cultural identifications.

Leila Monaghan and Jane E. Goodman described culture as "Culture is something those people" have", but it's more than that. It is also something that happens to you when you encounter them. As long as they're just out there, just a different group of folks, you won't have to deal with them. When you deal with them culture turns personal. Culture is

no longer just what some group has; it's what happens to you when you encounter differences, become aware of something in yourself, and work to figure out why the differences appeared. Culture is awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens path to other ways of being. (Leila Monaghan and Jane E. Goodman, 2007)

A cultural approach attempts to develop an ideal personification of the culture, and then that ideal is used to explain the actions of individuals in the culture.

As Carey (1988) has indicated “culture is some shared attribute of a human group (such as their physical environment, tools, religion, customs and practices, or their whole way of life)”. These shared attributes are again transmitted shared and grew because of communication. Here, specifically female genital circumcision, the focus study subject of this study, is grouped as a shared attribute of people all over the world that can create some meaning to the practitioners and are trying to communicate by it.

The socio-demographic account of Afar

The afar people are one of the Islamic pastoral communities of Ethiopia and the horn of Africa. They speak a language that belongs to the lowland Cushitic linguistic family along with Somali and Oromo (Getachew, 2001: 35). The afar people reside in three sovereign countries: Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, Sharing some what similar Islamic culture and tradition.

The Ethiopia afar lives in an area located northeast of the country. Their region comprises of five zones and 29 districts (woredas) covering an area of 278,000 sq.kms occupied by 22,217 urban based house holds and 168,479 rural-based house holds (CSA, 1996:1-3). The region is dominantly composed of pastoral and semi-pastoral population out of which more than 90% live in rural areas (MOH, 2004/5:5).

According to the CSA, as of 2004, 48.57% of the total population had access to safe drinking water, of whom 26.89% were rural inhabitants and 78.11% were urban. Values for other reported common indicators of the standard of living for the afar region as of 2005 include the following: 67.3% of the inhabitants fall into the lowest wealth quintile; adult literacy for men is 27% and for women 15.6%; and the regional infant mortality rate

is 61 infant death per 1,000 live births, which is less than the nation wide average of 77; at least a half of these deaths occurred in the infants' first month of life. On 20 April 2007, the regional government announced that it had increased health coverage from 34 % to 40%, the result of construction of 64 new health clinics, increasing the total for the region to 111.

1.2. Statement of the problem

To begin to understand culture, you need to understand all the experiences that guide its individual members through life, such things as language and gestures; personal appearance and social relationships; religion, philosophy, and values; courtship, marriage, and family customs; food and recreation; work and government; education and communication systems; health, transportation, and government ; and economic systems. Think of culture as every thing you would need to know and do so as not to stand out as a “stranger” in a foreign land. Culture is not a genetic trait all these cultural elements are learned through interaction with others in the culture.

As Fred E.Jandit (2004) indicated, opportunities to “see” culture and the dynamic relationship that exists between culture and communication are few. Two such opportunities do occur when there are violations of cultural conventions or when there is cross-cultural contact.

As Ethiopia is a country that is composed of diversified cultures, although the researches conducted on the countries cultural practices and the meanings that the people's want to attribute by their cultural heritages is not satisfactory, it is remarkable to really see and give attention to their way of life.

In addition the Afar people are elements of the diversified culture which puts more color to it. As they are a pastoral and many people of the region lives in the rural part of it, their way of life may not be that much affected or harmonized with the culture of other people of the country or the world.

In this regard as there are many cultural practices that the people of Afar want to describe their way of life, beliefs, values, traditions, etc by employing different symbols a

researcher may be inclined to study these people and can narrow the information gap of people that are interested in people's way of life. Edward Hall (1981) argues that:

each culture has its "own characteristic manner of locomotion, sitting, standing, reclining and gesturing ... Most people are unaware when these are happening, When they become aware, they are unable to pay attention to anything else" (p. 75).

Of all communities in Ethiopia, the afar people were taken as a subject of this study because the researcher had an experience of working with the people of the region and got an opportunity to come across with the over all issue of FGM and can not stand away with out identifying the people's attribution of meaning in practicing FGC.

According to Obermeyer (2003) the first step in changing anything is to understand what it means to the people who do it. With more insight, we can better understand why people have resisted widespread change and why some are now pursuing change. Many writers, particularly social scientists and public health researchers, have tried to improve the understanding of people's reasons for genital cutting without condemning the people who have followed their traditional practices.

Moreover, there are different materials which indicate the overall situation of female genital circumcision, but there are no scientific studies made on the culture of the afar people particularly female genital mutilation in relation to communication.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The study aims at assessing the cultural interpretation of female genital mutilation by the afar people and the role of communication in reflecting their meaning of FGM to the outer society of the study area. In bringing the attitude ional change of the people that live in the study area.

Specific objectives

1. To explore the reasons behind the acceptance of the present attitude of the afar people towards FGC.
2. To find out the meaning they reflect by practicing FGC.
3. Examine whether the interpretation of FGC varies across age, gender, urban and rural places.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What is the reason behind to linger on the previous attitude towards FGM regardless of the attempts done to prevent the practice?
2. What meaning do they generate or reflect in being as an active participator of FGC?
3. What social/cultural value has been given to FGC by various sections of the afar people?
4. Is there any considerable variation in the community's interpretation of FGC across age, gender, and social status and residence places?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The research could pave a way to other regions and concerned bodies on how to choose applicable communication strategies on the prevention of FGM.

It will point out to other regions and health centers and other concerned bodies on choosing applicable communication systems on the preventions of FGM.

To go deep in to the Afar people's culture can bring additional element or clarity in the process of studying culture in relation to communication. This study may also provoke similar attempts of further investigation on the area there by building additional body of knowledge. So

So far, to the best knowledge of the researcher not so much study has been done on the area of communication in relation to FGM or in the area of FGM itself. It may however, be possible to find some general studies written regarding FGM, by various government or non-government organizations in Ethiopia. Thus this piece of work will, after it is

finalized, be an addition to the writings already available. This study may also contribute to future endeavors in the field.

1.6. The Scope of the Research

The study is entirely focused on cultural female genital circumcision of afar people. Other cultural elements or practices of the region were not included.

Referring to the sampling, the study covered two zones of the region and four kebeles of the two zones.

As to the qualitative analysis it has been tried to analyze data that were collected from the two zones which are considered as locations that are considered to give broader information. The researcher also involved 16 focus group discussions with the total of 80 respondents.

1.7. Limitation of the Research

Given the limitation of time and resources, the researcher had to limit the sampling size. Data were collected during a period of two months. The researcher found it difficult to include data from other zones and kebeles because of the remoteness of the research site itself.

The sites were far away from the capital (Addis Ababa) and the researcher had to travel far and deep into the countryside especially with regard to the more remote areas, which were far away from the towns and cities in the Woredas. There were no means of adequate transportation and thus communication problems were encountered. In some cases, the researcher had to walk on foot to reach these places. The remoteness of the study sites and the above mentioned constraints.

Regarding the research methodology, this study mainly uses focus group discussion and in-depth interview as a primary instrument to gather data from various sources. The researcher was limited to employ other method because of the educational background of the people that live in the study area. Hence, the limited use of different methodologies as

equally as the focus group discussions and the in-depth interview might influence the reliability and validity of the research to a degree.

The absence of local researchers and well documented and organized data had also compelled me to rely on the context of the findings in other countries and this might as well be a limitation to this present study.

1.8. Thesis Organization

This thesis is made up of six chapters. The first chapter deals with the general feature of the paper including the background of the study, statement of the problem, and also objectives, research questions, significance, scope and limitation of the study and the thesis organization.

Chapter two, the literature review, is the theoretical framework of this study. It deals with the literature of semiotics, its elements, and its role in studying the meaning of cultural practice.

An overview of the focus of this study, female genital circumcision, is discussed in the third chapter. This chapter includes an illustration of FGC's meaning given by different scholars of the area, its origin, its global status, types and other social issues regarding FGC.

The fourth chapter is where the methodology of the study is discussed. Discussion of methodology paradigm selection, data collection methods, sampling size and techniques are also presented.

The fifth chapter deals with the data presentation and interpretation, and discusses how the afar people attribute meaning out of the female genital circumcision. It discusses the social and cultural value of FGC for the Afar's, the disparity of interpretation among the people and the social acceptability of FGC.

Finally, chapter six concludes the thesis, highlights key findings and provides recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Communication

Robert E. Park (1966), described communication it is a process or form of interaction that is interpersonal, i.e., social in the narrower sense. The process is complete only when it results in some sort of understanding. In other words, communication is never merely a case of stimulus and response in the sense in which those terms are used in individual psychology. It is rather expression, interpretation, and response. Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another, it is television, it is spreading information, it is our hair style, and it is literarily criticism: the list is endless.

According to Edward T. Hall (1966), communication is the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop all the symbols of the mind, together with the means of conveying them through space and preserving them in time. It includes the expression of the face, attitude and gesture, the tones of the voice, words, writing, printing, railways, telegraphs, telephones, and whatever else may be the latest achievement in the conquest of space and time. All this taken together, in the intricacy of their actual combination, make up an organic whole corresponding to the organic whole of human thought; and everything in the way of mental growth has an external existence therein. The more closely we consider this mechanism the more intimate will appear its relation to the inner life of mankind, and nothing will more help us to understand the latter than such consideration.

The system of communication is a tool, progressive inventions, whose improvements reacts up on mankind and alter the life of every individual and institution. A study of these improvements is one of the best ways by which to approach an understanding of the mental and social changes that are bound up with them; because it gives a tangible framework for our ideas.

Charles H. Cooley (1966) noted that, one may conveniently distinguish between certain fundamental techniques, or primary processes, which are communicative in character and certain secondary techniques which facilitate the process of communication. The distinction is perhaps of no great psychological importance but has a very real historical and sociological significance, in as much as the fundamental process are common to all mankind, while the secondary techniques emerge only at relatively sophisticated levels of civilization. Among the primary communicative process of society may be mentioned: language; gesture, in its widest sense; the imitation of overt behavior; and a large and ill defined group of implicit processes which grow out of overt behavior and which may be rather vaguely referred to as “social suggestion”.

2.2. The Schools of Communication

There are two main schools in the study of communication: the process school and the meaning or semiotic school. The former sees communication as the transmission of messages and the latter sees communication as the production and exchange of meanings. The focus of this research will be on the second one; the meaning or semiotic school.

2.2.1. Meaning or Semiotic School of Communication

This school is concerned with how messages, or texts, interact with people in order to produce meanings; that is, it is concerned with the role of texts in our culture. It uses terms like signification, and does not consider misunderstandings to be necessarily evidence of communication failure- they may result from cultural differences between sender and receiver.

For this school, the study of communication is the study of text and culture. Semiotics defines social interaction as that which constitutes the individual as a member of a particular culture or society. For semiotics, the message is a construction of signs which through interacting with the receivers produce meanings. The sender, defined as the transmitter of the message, declines in importance. The emphasis shifts to the text and how it is ‘read’. And reading is the process of discovering meanings that occurs when the

reader interacts or negotiates with the text. The negotiation takes place as the reader brings aspects of his or her cultural experience to bear upon the codes and the signs which make up the text. It also involves some shared understanding of what the text is about. Readers with different social experiences or from different cultures may find different meanings in same text. This is not, as we have said, necessarily evidence of communication failure.

The message, then, is not sent from A to B, but an element in a structured relationship whose other elements include external reality and the producer/reader. Producing and reading the text are seen as parallel, if not identical, processes in that they occupy the same place in this structured relationship. We might model this structure as a triangle in which the arrows represent constant interaction; the structure is not static but dynamic practice.

According to Ronald Barthes (1964), John Locke used the terms **semeiotike** and **semeiotics** in Book 4, Chapter 21 of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Here he explains how science can be divided into three parts:

All that can fall within the compass of human understanding, being either, first, the nature of things, as they are in themselves, their relations, and their manner of operation: or, secondly, that which man himself ought to do, as a rational and voluntary agent, for the attainment of any end, especially happiness: or, thirdly, the ways and means whereby the knowledge of both the one and the other of these is attained and communicated; I think science may be divided properly into these three sorts. (Locke, 1963, p. 174)

Locke then elaborates on the nature of this third category, naming it Σημειωτική (*Semeiotike*) and explaining it as "the doctrine of signs" in the following terms: Nor is there any thing to be relied upon in Physic, but an exact knowledge of medicinal physiology (founded on observation, not principles), semeiotics, method of curing, and tried (not excogitated, not commanding) medicines.

John Fiske (1990) states his assumption book of communication studies as that all communication involves signs and codes. Signs are artifacts or acts that refer to something other than themselves; that is, they are signifying constructs. Codes are the

systems into which signs are organized and which determine how signs may be related to each other. These signs and codes are transmitted or made available to others: and that transmitting or receiving signs/codes/ communication is the practice of social relationships.

2.2.1.1. Semiotics and Meaning

Semiotics, deriving largely from Saussure and Peirce, emphasizes not on stages in the process, but on the text and its interaction with its producing/receiving culture: the focus is on the role of communication in establishing and maintaining values on how those values enable communication to have meaning. Saussure's and Peirce are interesting the nature of the sign itself, rather than in how it is transmitted, signals this change of focus. This school has concept of a breakdown in communication and is not much concerned with efficiency and accuracy. Communication must occur: a case in which my meaning differs from your meaning is not seen as a communication failure, but as indicative of social or cultural differences between us. And divergence of meanings is not necessarily, of itself a bad thing; it may indeed, be a source of cultural richness and of sub cultural maintenance. If we wish to minimize the divergence of meaning we should not, according to this school, seek to achieve this by improving the efficiency of the communication process, but by minimizing the social differences. In other words, the determinants of communication lie in society and the world around us, not in the process it self. Schroeder (1998) describe the value of semiotics as:

Semiotics makes us aware that the cultural values with which we make sense of the world are a tissue of conventions that have been handed down from generation to generation by the members of the culture of which we are a part. It reminds us that there is nothing 'natural' about our values; they are social constructs that not only vary enormously in the course of time but differ radically from culture to culture. (P.225)

Semiotics, then, focuses its attention primarily on the text. The receiver, or reader, is seen as playing a more active role. Semiotics prefer the term 'reader' to 'receiver' because it implies both a greater degree of activity and that also reading is something we learn to do; it is thus determined by the cultural experience of the reader. The reader helps to

create the meaning of the text by bringing to it his or her experience, attitudes, and emotions.

2.2.1.2. Structuralist Theory and Applications

Semiotics is a form of structuralism, for it argues that we can not know the world on its own terms, but only through the conceptual and linguistic structures of our culture. For the structuralist the task is to uncover the conceptual structures by which various cultures organize perception and understanding of the world. Structuralism does not deny the possibility of human beings having access to this reality in an objective, universal, non-culturally-determined manner. Structuralism's enterprise is to discover how people make sense of the world, not what the world is. Structuralism, therefore, denies any final or absolute scientific truth- if universal unchanging reality is not accessible to human beings, and then we cannot evaluate the truth of statements or beliefs by measuring how closely they approximate to this reality.

2.2.1.3. Branches of Semiotics

Semiotics is usually divided into three branches, which include:

- 1. Semantics:** Relation between signs and the things to which they refer; their *denotata*, or meaning
- 2. Syntactics:** Relations among signs in formal structures
- 3. Pragmatics:** Relation between signs and the effects they have on the people who use them. Pragmatics deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs.

2.2.1.4. Elements of Semiology

Elements of Semiology does not analyze popular culture directly. Rather, Barthes shows his critical interest in mass culture, writing about the value of semiological analyses of

mass cultural products in an era of mass communication. "The development of mass communications confers particular relevance today upon the vast field of signifying media, just when the success of disciplines such as linguistics, information theory, formal logic and structural anthropology provide semantic analysis with new instruments" (Barthes, 1964, p. 9).

With *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes introduced four classifications of the elements that create the process of semiological analysis. These classifications are borrowed from structural linguistics, and consist of the categories of language and speech, signified and signifier, syntagm and system, and denotation and connotation (Barthes, 1964).

2.2.1.4.1. Language and Speech

Barthes (1964) applied the concepts of language, or the part of the semiological system which is agreed upon by society, and speech, or the individual selection of symbols, to semiological systems. The application of these concepts can be applied to the semiological study of the food system. According to Barthes (1964), a person is free to create their own menu, using personal variations in food combinations, and this will become their speech or message. This is done with the overall national, regional, and social structures of the language of food in mind (Barthes, 1964). Then he expanded on Saussure's terms, by explaining that language is not really socially determined by the masses, but is sometimes determined by a small group of individuals, somewhat changing the relationship of language and speech. Barthes claims that a semiological system can essentially exist in which there is language, but little or no speech. In this case, Barthes believes that a third element called matter, which would provide signification, would need to be added to the language/speech system.

2.2.1.4.2. Signifier and Signified

For Saussure (1959), the signified was a representation of a concept, while the signifier was used to represent the sound-image of that concept. Barthes (1964) points out that the importance of both the signified and the signifier is the relationship between them; it is within this relationship that meaning is created, "...that the words in the field derive their

meaning only from their opposition to one another (usually in pairs), and that if these oppositions are preserved, the meaning is unambiguous” (Barthes, 1964, p. 38).

Out of this relationship, the sign is created. Saussure (1959) considered the sign to be arbitrary in nature, based primarily on the relationship between the signified and the signifier. Barthes (1964) explained that the sign can no longer be arbitrary when semiological systems are considered. Instead, Barthes shows that once a sign takes on a function or use, it will gain its own meaning in the process. “...as soon as there is a society, every usage is converted into a sign of itself” (Barthes, 1964, p. 41). The sign can actually lose its arbitrary nature and become motivated (Barthes, 1964).

2.2.1.4.3. Syntagm and System

Barthes (1964) defines the syntagm as a linear combination of signs. Within semantic analyses, this would be something like a sentence, where each term is related to the other terms within the phrase (Barthes, 1964). The syntagm is compared to the system, which explains associations on the same level, such as how certain words relate to the meaning of other words within our minds, as in the case of the relations between “education” and “training” (Barthes, 1964, p. 58). Barthes expands upon these ideas by applying them semiologically to various systems, including food. With food, the systematic level becomes the various dishes within a particular category (i.e. types of desserts), whereas the syntagmatic level becomes the menu choices selected for a full meal (Barthes, 1964).

2.2.1.4.4. Denotation and Connotation

The terms denotation and connotation were used by Barthes for examining the relationships between systems. Each semiological system can be thought of as consisting of an expression, a plane of content, and a relation between the two (Barthes, 1964). A connotation then examines how one system can act as a signifier of this first relation, specifically how it represents the expression within the first system (Barthes, 1964). These elements were particularly useful for examining relations between systems of symbols, rather than just relations between elements. Rylance (1994) asserted the idea of Barthes as follows:

Despite the theoretical discussion, Elements of Semiology offers Barthes's own interpretation about the political or existential conditions. He recommends a "total ideological description" (Barthes, 1964, p. 46) of the culture to "rediscover the articulations which men impose on reality" (Barthes, 1964, p.57). "Semiology will describe how reality is divided up, given meaning and then 'naturalized' (Barthes, pp. 63-4), as if culture were nature itself. (p. 38)

2.2.1.5. Some Important Semioticians

2.2.1.5.3. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914)

A notable logician who founded philosophical pragmatism, defined *semiosis* as an irreducibly triadic process wherein something, as an object, logically determines or influences something as a sign to determine or influence something as an interpretation or *interpretant*, itself a sign, thus leading to further interpretants— Semiosis is logically structured to perpetuate itself. The object can be quality, fact, rule, or even fictional (Hamlet, and can be (1) *immediate* to the sign, the object as represented in the sign, or (2) *dynamic*, the object as it really is, on which the immediate object is founded. The interpretant can be (1) *immediate* to the sign, all that the sign immediately expresses, such as a word's usual meaning; or (2) *dynamic*, such as a state of agitation; or (3) *final* or *normal*, the ultimate ramifications of the sign about its object, to which inquiry taken far enough would be destined and with which any actual interpretant can at most coincide. His *semiotic* covered not only artificial, linguistic, and symbolic signs, but also semblances such as kindred sensible qualities, and indices such as reactions. He came *circa* 1903 to classify any sign by three interdependent trichotomies, intersecting to form ten (rather than 27) classes of sign. Signs also enter into various kinds of meaningful combinations; Peirce covered both semantic and syntactical issues in his speculative grammar. He regarded formal semiotic as logic *per se* and part of philosophy; as also encompassing study of arguments (hypothetical, deductive, and inductive) and inquiry's methods including pragmatism; and as allied to but distinct from logic's pure mathematics.

Peirce used a different set of terms to describe sign functions, which for him were a conceptual process, continually unfolding and unending (what he termed "unlimited

semiosis," the chain of meaning-making by new signs interpreting a prior sign or set of signs). In Peirce's model, meaning is generated through chains of signs (becoming *interpretants*), which is parallel with Mikhail Bakhtin's model of *dialogism*, in which every cultural expression is always already a response or answer to prior expression, and which generates further responses by being *addressable* to others.

2.2.1.5.4. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913),

The "father" of modern linguistics, proposed a dualistic notion of signs, relating the *signifier* as the form of the word or phrase uttered, to the *signified* as the mental concept. It is important to note that, according to Saussure, the sign is completely arbitrary, i.e. there was no necessary connection between the sign and its meaning. This sets him apart from previous philosophers such as Plato or the Scholastics, who thought that there must be some connection between a signifier and the object it signifies. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure himself credits the American linguist William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) with insisting on the arbitrary nature of the sign. Saussure's insistence on the arbitrariness of the sign has also influenced later philosophers and theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard. Ferdinand de Saussure coined the term *semiologie* while teaching his landmark "Course on General Linguistics" at the University of Geneva from 1906–11. Saussure posited that no word is inherently meaningful. Rather a word is only a "signifier," i.e. the representation of something, and it must be combined in the brain with the "signified," or the thing itself, in order to form a meaning-imbued "sign." Saussure believed that dismantling signs was a real science, for in doing so we come to an empirical understanding of how humans synthesize physical stimuli into words and other abstract concepts.

2.2.1.5.3. Ogden and Richards (1923)

Ogden and Richards were British workers in this area who corresponded regularly with Peirce. They derived a very similar triangular model of meaning. Their referent corresponds closely to Peirce's object, their reference to his interpretant, and their symbol to his sign. In their model, referent and reference are directly connected; so too are

symbol and reference. But the connection between symbol and referent is indirect or imputed.

This shift away from the equilateral relationship of Peirce's model brings Ogden and Richards closer to Saussure. Like Saussure, Ogden and Richards put the symbol in the key position: our symbols direct and organize our thoughts or references; and our references organize our perception of reality. Symbol and reference in Ogden and Richards are similar to the signifier and the signified in Saussure.

2.2.1.6. Communication, Meaning and Signs

To explain the relationship between semiotics and communication studies, communication is defined as the process of transferring data from a source to a receiver. Hence, communication theorists construct models based on codes, media, and contexts to explain the biology, psychology, and mechanics involved. Both disciplines also recognize that the technical process cannot be separated from the fact that the receiver must decode the data, i.e., be able to distinguish the data as salient and make meaning out of it. This implies that there is a necessary overlap between semiotics and communication. Indeed, many of the concepts are shared, although in each field the emphasis is different. Marcel Danesi (1994) suggested that semioticians' priorities were to study signification first and communication second. A more extreme view is offered by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1987; trans. 1990: 16), who, as a musicologist, considered the theoretical study of communication irrelevant to his application of semiotics.

Semiotics sees communication as the generation of meaning in message whether by the encoder or the decoder. Meaning is not an absolute, static concept to be found neatly parceled up in the message. Meaning is an active process: semioticians use verbs like create, generate, or negotiate to refer to this process. Negotiations is perhaps the most useful in that it implies the to-and-fro, the give-and-take between person and message. Meaning is the result of the dynamic interaction between sign, interpretant, and object: it is historically located and may well change with time. It may even be useful to drop the term 'meaning' and use Peirce's far more active term 'semiosis'- the act of signifying.

Barthes (1978) stated that the importance of signs and signification has been recognized throughout much of the history of philosophy, and in psychology as well. Plato and Aristotle both explored the relationship between signs and the world, and Augustine considered the nature of the sign within a conventional system. These theories have had a lasting effect in Western philosophy, especially through Scholastic philosophy.

The study of signs and the way they work is called semiotics or semiology. Semiotics, as we will call it, has three main areas of study:

1. The sign itself. This consists of the study of different varieties of signs, of the different ways they have of conveying meaning, and of the way they relate to the people who use them. For signs are human constructs and can only be understood in terms of the uses people put them to.
2. The codes or systems in to which signs are organized. This study covers the ways that a variety of codes of a society or culture, or to exploit the channels of communication available for their transmission.
3. The culture with in which these codes and signs operate. This in turn is dependent upon the use of these codes and signs for its own existence and form.

A sign is something physical, perceivable by our senses; it refers to something other than itself; and it depends upon recognition by its users that it is a sign. According to Chandler (1995), Signs do not just 'convey' meanings, but constitute a medium in which meanings are constructed. Semiotics helps us to realize that meaning is not passively absorbed but arises only in the active process of interpretation.

2.2.1.7. Categories of Signs

Pierce and Saussure both tried to explain the different ways in which signs convey meaning. Pierce produced three categories of sign, each of which showed a different relationship between the sign and its object, or that which it refers.

In an icon the sign resembles its object in some way: it looks or sounds like it. In an index there is a direct link between a sign and its object: the two are actually connected. In a symbol there is no connection or resemblance between sign and object: a symbol communicates only because people agree that it shall stand for what it does.

Saussure was not concerned with indexes. Indeed, as a linguist, he was really concerned only with symbols. But his followers have recognized that the physical form of the sign and its associated mental concept can be related in an iconic or arbitrary way. In an iconic relationship, the signifier looks or sounds like the signified; in arbitrary relationship, the two are related only by agreement among the users. What Saussure terms iconic and arbitrary relations between signifier and signified correspond precisely to Peirce's icons and symbols.

Semioticians classify signs or sign systems in relation to the way they are transmitted (see modality). This process of carrying meaning depends on the use of codes that may be the individual sounds or letters that humans use to form words, the body movements they make to show attitude or emotion, or even something as general as the clothes they wear.

2.2.1.8. Codes

Both schools are concerned with codes: the process school sees them as the means of encoding and decoding, whereas semiotics sees them as systems of meaning.

Codes are in fact, the systems into which signs are organized. These systems are governed by rules which are consented to by all members of the community using that code. This means that the study of codes frequently emphasizes the social dimension of communication. Almost any aspect of our social life which is conventional, or governed by rules consented to by all members of the society, can therefore be called 'coded'. We need to distinguish between codes of behavior, such as the legal code and the code of manners and signifying codes. Signifying codes are systems of signs. Having made the distinction, we must recognize that the two categories of code are interconnected.

2.2.1.8.1. Basic Features of Codes

1. They have a number of units or sometimes one unit from which a selection is made. This is the pragmatic dimension. These units may be combined by rules or conventions. This is the syntagmatic dimension.
2. All codes convey meaning: their units are signs which refer, by various means, to something other than themselves.
3. All codes depend up on an agreement amongst their users and upon a shared cultural background. Codes and culture interrelate dynamically.
4. All codes perform an identifiable social or communicative function.
5. All codes are transmittable by their appropriate media and/or channels of communication.

2.2.1.8.2. Functions of Codes

As indicated by Fiske (1990), there are different functions of codes which can be stated as: analogue and digital codes, presentational and representational codes, elaborated and restricted codes, broadcast and narrow cast codes, arbitrary or logical codes, aesthetic codes.

But in relation to this study the focus has been given to the presentational and representational codes which perform communicative and social functions, and aesthetic codes.

2.2.1.8.2.1. Representational Codes

Representational codes are used to produce texts that are messages with an independent existence.

2.2.1.8.2.2. Presentational Codes

These are indexical: they cannot stand for something apart from themselves and their encoder. They indicate aspects of the communicator and of her or his present social situation.

Non-verbal Communication

Hickson & Stacks, (1989), indicated that nonverbal communication is hugely important in any interaction with others; its importance is multiplied across cultures. This is because we tend to look for nonverbal cues when verbal messages are unclear or ambiguous, as they are more likely to be across cultures (especially when different languages are being used). Since nonverbal behavior arises from our cultural common sense -- our ideas about what is appropriate, normal, and effective as communication in relationships -- we use different systems of understanding gestures, posture, silence, spatial relations, emotional expression, touch, physical appearance, and other nonverbal cues. Cultures also attribute different degrees of importance to verbal and nonverbal behavior.

Some elements of nonverbal communication are consistent across cultures. For example, research has shown that the emotions of enjoyment, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, and surprise are expressed in similar ways by people around the world.

However most differences of interpretation may lead to conflict, or escalate existing conflict. Even though some facial expressions may be similar across cultures, their interpretations remain culture-specific. It is important to understand something about cultural starting-points and values in order to interpret emotions expressed in cross-cultural interactions.

Non-verbal communication or NVC is carried on through presentational codes such as gestures, eye movements, or qualities of voice. These codes can give messages only about the here and now. Presentational codes, then, are limited to face to face communication or communication when the communicator is present. They have two functions.

The first, as it has been indicated, is to convey indexical information. This is information about the speaker and his or her situation through which the listener learns about her or his identity, emotions, attitudes, social position, and so on. The second function is interaction management. The codes are used to manage the sort of relationship the encoder wants with the other.

The human body is the main transmitter of presentational codes. According to Fiske (1990) there are ten such codes and the sort of meanings they convey which are suggested by Argyle (1972).

1. Bodily contact – whom we touch and where and when we touch them, can convey important messages about relationships.
2. Proximity (or proxemics) - how closely we approach someone can give a message about our relationships.
3. Orientation- how we angle ourselves to others is another way of sending messages about relationships. Facing someone can indicate either intimacy or aggression.
4. appearance- argyle divides this into two: those aspects under voluntary control- hair, clothes, skin, bodily paint and adornment- and those less controllable- height, weight, etc. hair is, in all cultures, highly significant as it is the most ‘flexible’ part of our bodies: we can most easily alter its appearance. Appearance is used to send messages about personality, social status, and, particularly, conformity.
5. Head nods- these are involved mainly in interaction management, particularly in turn-taking in speech.
6. Facial expression- this may be broken down into the sub-codes of eyebrow position, eye shape, mouth shape, and nostril size. These, in various combinations, determine the expression of the face, and it is possible to write a ‘grammar’ of their combinations and meanings.

7. Gestures (or kinesics) - the hand arm are the main transmitters of gesture, but gestures of feet and head are also important. They are closely coordinated with speech and supplement verbal communication. They may indicate either general emotional arousal or specific emotional states.
8. Posture- our ways of sitting, standing, and lying can communicate a limited but interesting range of meanings. These are frequently concerned with interpersonal attitudes: friendliness, hostility, superiority or inferiority can all be indicated by posture.
9. Eye movement and eye contact – when, how often, and for how long we meet other people’s eyes is a way of sending very important messages about relationships, particularly how dominant or affiliative we wish the relationship to be.
10. Non-verbal aspects of speech – these are divided into two categories: (a) the prosodic codes which affect the meaning of the words used. (b) The paralinguistic codes which communicate information about the speaker.

These presentational codes are classified by their medium. They are all relatively simple, in that they have comparatively few units to choose from in the paradigmatic dimension, and very simple rules of combination in the syntagmatic.

2.2.1.8.3. Codes and Commonality

Fiske (1990) stated that all codes rely on commonality that is an agreement amongst their users on their basics- the units they contain, the rules by which these units may be selected and combined, the meanings open to the receiver, and the social or communicative function they perform. But how this agreement is reached and the form that it takes can vary considerably. We consider three significant ways of reaching agreement: by convention and use, by explicit agreement, and by clues within the text.

2.2.1.8.4. Convention and use

By this we mean the unwritten, unstated expectations that derive from the shared experience of members of a culture. Convention relies on redundancy: it makes for easy decoding, it expresses cultural membership, and it relies on similarity of experience, it is reassuring. It can also produce conformity, lack of originality, resistance to change. The agreements that are reached by convention are usually, but not always, unstated. This means that there is no formal paradigm of signified to parallel the paradigm of signifiers.

2.2.1.8.5. Aberrant Decoding

Fiske (1990) states “Eco (1965) refer aberrant decoding as difference of ‘reading’ that derives from different experience.” (p.78). If the message is read by a member of a different culture who brings different meaning to it, aberrant decoding will produce a different meaning. In general, aberrant decoding is when a message encoded in the codes of one culture has been decoded by the codes of another. The problem occurs mainly with iconic codes-verbal languages are usually so different that no decoding is possible. Aberrant decoding results, then, when different codes are used in the encoding and decoding of the message. This encoding that fails to recognize that people of different cultural or sub cultural experience will read the message differently, and that in so doing they will not necessarily be blameworthy. The reading of a message does not of itself include a search for the encoder’s intention.

2.2.1.8.6. Aesthetic Codes

Aesthetic codes are harder to define simply because they are more varied, more loosely defined, and they change so rapidly. They are crucially affected by their cultural context: they allow of, or invite, considerable meaning: aberrant decodings are the norm. They are expressive; they encompass the interior, subjective world. They can be a source of pleasure and meaning in themselves: style is a relevant concept.

2.2.1.8.7. Conventionalization

There is a common cultural process by which innovative, unconventional codes gradually become adapted by the majority and thus become conventional. This is called conventionalization.

Conventional aesthetic codes acquire their agreement amongst their users from shared cultural experience. But aesthetic codes can also break conventions as well as follow them.

2.2.1.8.8. Codes and Conventions

Codes and conventions constitute the shared center of any culture's experience. They enable us to understand our social existence and to locate ourselves within our culture. Only through the common codes can we feel and express our membership of our culture. By using the codes, whether as audience or source, we are inserting ourselves into our culture and maintaining that culture's vitality and existence. Fiske (1990) argues:

A culture is an active, dynamic, living organism only because of the active participation of its members in its codes of communication. Codes also represent the values of the culture, and are able to add new shades of connotation to every aspect of life. (p.82)

2.3. Culture and Communication

Culture refers to the pattern of human activity and the symbols that give significance to these activities. Culture manifests itself in terms of the art, literature, costumes, customs, language, religion and religious rituals. The people and their pattern of life make up the culture of a region. Cultures vary in the different parts of the world. They are different across the land boundaries and the diversity in cultures results in the diversity in people around the world. Culture also consists of the system of beliefs held by the people of the region, their principles of life and their moral values. The patterns of behavior of the people of a particular region also form a part of the region's culture. The word 'culture' that hails from the Latin word, 'cultura' derived from 'colere', means, 'to cultivate'. Hence the way in which the minds of the masses inhabiting a particular region are cultivated, in

someway determines the culture of a region. Let us look at the basic characteristics of culture and its fundamental elements. As Fiske (1990) put his assumption; "I assume that communication is the central to the life of our culture: without it culture of any kind must die. Consequently the study of communication involves the study of the culture with which it is integrated". (p.)

Culture is defined as the total way of life of a people, composed of their learned and shared behavior patterns, values, norms, and material objects. Culture is a very general concept. Nevertheless, culture has very powerful effects on individual behavior, including communication behavior.

As noted by Deepa Kartha (2010), culture is something that a person learns from his family and surroundings, and is not ingrained in him from birth. It does not have any biological connection because even if a person is brought up in a culture different from that in which he was born, he imbibes the culture of the society where he grows up. It is also not a hidden fact that some people feel the need to follow the beliefs and traditions of their own culture, even though they might be not subscribing to certain ideologies within. In addition Edward T. Hall (1976) defines culture as it is the total communication framework: words, actions, postures, gestures, tones of voice, facial expressions, the handling of time, space, and materials, and the way her/she works, plays, makes love, and defends himself /herself. All these things and more are complete communication systems with meanings that can be read correctly only if one is familiar with the behavior in its historical, social and cultural context.

Culture is a complex tool which every individual has to learn to survive in a society. It is the means through which people interact with others in the society. It acts in a subconscious way and whatever we see and perceive, seems to be normal and natural. Sometimes, other societies and people seem to be a little odd because they have a different culture from ours. We must remember that every society has a distinct culture that forms the backbone of the society. Culture does not remain stagnant; on the other hand it is evolving constantly and is in fact somewhat influenced by the other cultures and societies. (Cited Deepa Kartha, November, 2010)

According to English Anthropologist Edward B Taylor (1983), culture is complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Edward B. Taylor noted that in order to understand the collective consciousness of a given culture, we must understand the most significant influences contributing to its worldview. In most cultures, religion is a primary component. It explains the unexplainable and is a foundation for many of the beliefs in a culture. We do not need to know all the historical events of the culture or all the tenets of its religions. Rather, we need to examine how members of the culture understand the outstanding features of their historical interaction with other cultures, features often told in narratives-whether stories read to children or the history taught in schools.

Any social unit let it be a relationship, a group, an organization, or a society—develops a culture over time. Everett M. Rogers and Thomas M. Steinfatt indicated, in their book of intercultural communication that, while the defining characteristics—or combination of characteristics—of each culture are unique, all cultures share certain common functions. Three such functions that are particularly important from a communication perspective are (1) linking individuals to one another, (2) providing the basis for a common identity, and (3) creating a context for interaction and negotiation among members.

2.3.1. Characteristics of Culture

Cultures are complex and multifaceted. As is apparent from the above discussions, cultures are complex “structures” that consist of a wide array of characteristics. The cultures of relationships or groups are relatively simple compared to those of organizations and, especially, societies

Haviland (2002) indicates that cultures around the world share four common characteristics: culture is shared, it is learned, it is based on symbols, and it is integrated. The members of a culture share a set of “ideals, values, and standards of behavior, and this set of shared ideals is what give meaning to their lives, and what bonds them together as a culture”. (p. 34) Culture is not an innate sensibility, but a learned characteristic.

Children begin learning about their culture at home with their immediate family and how they interact with each other, how they dress, and the rituals they perform. When the children are older and venture out into the community, their cultural education is advanced by watching social interactions, taking part in cultural activities and rituals in the community, and forming their own relationships and taking their place in the culture. (pp. 40-41). In order for the culture to be transmitted successfully from one person to the next, and from one generation to the next, a system of symbols needs to be created that translates the ideals of the culture to its members. This is accomplished through language, art, religion, and money. (p. 41). Finally, in order to keep the culture function all aspects of the culture must be integrated. (pp. 41-42). For example the language must be able to describe all the functions within the culture in order for ideas and ideals to be transmitted from one person to another. Without the integration of language into the fabric of the culture, confusion and dysfunction would reign and the culture would fail.

2.3.2. Elements of Culture

Brown, A. (1995) explained broadly the elements of culture as follows:

2.3.2.1. Artifacts

Artifacts are the physical things that are found that have particular symbolism for a culture. They may even be endowed with mystical properties. They can be the first products of a company. Prizes won in grueling challenges and so on are all artifacts.

Artifacts can also be more everyday objects, such as the bunch of flowers in reception. The main thing is that they have special meaning, at the very least for the people in the culture. There may well be stories told about them.

The purposes of artifacts are as reminders and triggers. When people in the culture see them, they think about their meaning and hence are reminded of their identity as a member of the culture, and, by association, of the rules of the culture.

Artifacts may also be used in specific rituals. Churches do this, of course. But so also do organizations.

2.3.2.2. Stories, Histories, Myths, Legends, Jokes

Culture is often embedded and transmitted through stories, whether they are deep and obviously intended as learning devices, or whether they appear more subtly, for example in humor and jokes.

A typical story includes a bad guy (often shady and unnamed) and a good guy (often the founder or a prototypical cultural member). There may also be an innocent. The story evolves in a classic format, with the bad guy being spotted and vanquished by the good guy, with the innocent being rescued and learning the greatness of the culture into the bargain.

Sometimes there stories are true. Sometimes nobody knows. Sometimes they are elaborations on a relatively simple truth. The powers of the stories are in when and how they are told, and the effect they have on their recipients.

2.3.2.3. Rituals, Rites, Ceremonies, Celebrations

Rituals are processes or sets of actions which are repeated in specific circumstances and with specific meaning.

They may be used in such as rites of passage, such as when someone is promoted or retires. They may be associated with company events such as the release of a new event. They may also be associated with everyday events such as Christmas.

Whatever the circumstance, the predictability of the rituals and the seriousness of the meaning all combine to sustain the culture.

2.3.2.4. Heroes

Heroes in a culture are named people who act as prototypes, or idealized examples, by which cultural members learn of the correct or 'perfect' behavior.

The classic heroes are the founders of the organization, who are often portrayed as much whiter and perfect than they actually are or were. Heroes may also be such as the janitor who tackled a burglar or a customer-service agent who went out of their way to delight a customer. In such stories they symbolize and teach people the ideal behaviors and norms of the culture.

2.3.2.5. Symbols and Symbolic Action

Symbols, like artifacts, are things which act as triggers to remind people in the culture of its rules, beliefs, etc. They act as a shorthand way to keep people aligned.

Symbols can also be used to indicate status within a culture. This includes clothing, office decor and so on. Status symbols signal to others to help them use the correct behavior with others in the hierarchy. They also lock in the users of the symbols into prescribed behaviors that are appropriate for their status and position.

There may be many symbols around an organization, from pictures of products on the walls to the words and handshakes used in greeting cultural members from around the world.

2.3.2.6. Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values

Culture is stored in individual human beings, in the form of their beliefs, attitudes, and values. There are strong similarities in the belief systems among the members of a given culture.

Beliefs are an individual's representations of the outside world. Some beliefs are seen as very likely to be true, such as "2 + 2 = 4." Others are seen as less probable, such as "All old people sit at home in rocking chairs." Beliefs serve as the storage system for the

content of our past experiences, including thoughts, memories, and interpretations of events. Beliefs are shaped by the individual's culture.

Attitudes, like beliefs, are internal events and not directly observable by other people. *Attitudes* are emotional responses to objects, ideas, and people.

Attitudes store these emotional responses in the same way that beliefs store the content of past events. People express opinions, outwardly observable verbal behavior, and engage in other behaviors, partially on the basis of their attitudes and beliefs. Attitudes and beliefs form a storage system for culture within the individual. Attitudes and beliefs are internal and are not publicly observable. I cannot know your attitudes or your beliefs directly, but I can observe what you say (your expressed opinions) and what you do (your behavior) and infer your attitudes and beliefs from these overt expressions.

Attitudes and beliefs indicate behavioral intentions, tendencies for a person to respond to events, ideas, and people in particular ways.

Values are what people who share a culture regard strongly as good or bad. Values have an evaluative component.

They often concern desired goals, such as the Christian value of salvation, or the values of mature love, world peace, or preservation of the environment. Values also concern ways of behaving that lead to these goals, such as valuing thrift, honesty; cleanliness, or speaking and acting quietly so as not to make noise that disturbs other people.

2.3.2.7. Cultural Beliefs

When a belief is held by most members of a culture we call it a *cultural belief*

Culture influences the perceptions and behaviors of the individuals sharing the culture through beliefs, values, and norms. They are important building blocks of culture.

A cultural belief may rest on a common history that a people share. Not everyone in a society holds exactly the same cultural beliefs. In other words, an individual's culture does not totally determine his/her beliefs. But the members of a society who share a

common culture have relatively more similar beliefs than do individuals of different cultures.

2.3.2.8. Rules, Norms, Ethical Codes, Values

The norms and values of a culture are effectively the rules by which its members must abide, or risk rejection from the culture (which is one of the most feared sanctions known). They are embedded in the artifacts, symbols, stories, attitudes, and so on.

2.3.3. Cultural Identification

One of the important ways in which culture affects communication is through cultural identification, the degree to which individuals consider themselves to be representatives of a particular culture. Such cultural identification determines which ethnic groups an individual considers as in groups and which as out groups, how people behave depends, in part, on culture.

2.3.4. Importance of Culture

As Manali Oak (2010) mentioned in the article of the importance of culture, the cultural values of a community give it an identity of its own. A community gains a character and a personality of its own, because of the culture of its people. Culture is shared by the members of a community. It is learned and passed from the older generations to the newer ones. For an effective transfer of culture from one generation to another, it has to be translated into symbols. Language, art and religion serve as the symbolic means of transfer of cultural values between generations.

Culture is a bond that ties the people of a region or community together. It is that one common bond, which brings the people of a community together. The customs and traditions that the people of a community follow, the festivals they celebrate, the kind of clothing they wear, the food they eat, and most importantly, the cultural values they adhere to, bind them together.

Edward A. Shils (1966) stated that culture is seen as a system of social control, wherein people shape their standards and behavior. The cultural values form the founding principles of one's life. They influence one's principles and philosophies of life. They influence one's way of living and thus impact social life. The importance of culture lies in the fact that it is a link between people and their value systems

2.3.5. The Relationship of Culture and Communication

Understanding the nature of culture in relationship to communication is helpful in a number of ways. First, it helps to explain the origin of differences between the practices, beliefs, values, and customs of various groups and societies, and it provides a reminder of the communication process by which these differences came into being. This knowledge can and should heighten people's tolerance for cultural differences. Second, it helps to explain the process that individuals go through in adapting to new relationships, groups, organizations, and societies and the cultures of each. Third, it underscores the importance of communication as a bridge between cultures and as a force behind cultural change. According to Michelle Le Baron (2003), all communication is cultural -- it draws on ways we have learned to speak and give nonverbal messages. We do not always communicate the same way from day to day, since factors like context, individual personality, and mood interact with the variety of cultural influences we have internalized that influence our choices. Communication is interactive, so an important influence on its effectiveness is our relationship with others.

The relationship between communication and culture is a very complex and intimate one. First, cultures are created through communication; that is, communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics— whether customs, roles, rules, rituals, laws, or other patterns—are created and shared. It is not so much that individuals set out to create a culture when they interact in relationships, groups, organizations, or societies, but rather that cultures are a natural by-product of social interaction. In a sense, cultures are the “residue” of social communication. Without communication and communication media, it would be impossible to preserve and pass along cultural characteristics from one place and time to another. One can say, therefore, that culture is

created, shaped, transmitted, and learned through communication. The reverse is also the case; that is; communication practices are largely created, shaped, and transmitted by culture.

To understand the implications of this communication-culture relationship, it is necessary to think in terms of ongoing communication processes rather than a single communication event. For example, when a three-person group first meets, the members bring with them individual thought and behavioral patterns from previous communication experiences and from other cultures of which they are, or have been, a part. As individuals start to engage in communication with the other members of this new group, they begin to create a set of shared experiences and ways of talking about them. If the group continues to interact, a set of distinguishing history, patterns, customs, and rituals will evolve. Some of these cultural characteristics would be quite obvious and tangible, such that a new person joining the group would encounter ongoing cultural “rules” to which they would learn to conform through communication. New members would in turn influence the group culture in small, and sometimes large, ways as they become a part of it. In a reciprocal fashion, this reshaped culture shapes the communication practices of current and future group members. This is true with any culture; communication shapes culture, and culture shapes communication.

2.3.6. Cultural Factors in Nonverbal Communication

Participants in a communication process adapt to each other's speaking style—for example, by leaning forward, matching the other's speech rate, assuming a similar posture, using similar gestures, or pronouncing words with the same accent. If a communicator rejects the style of the other as culturally inappropriate—for example, by leaning away, intentionally slowing the speech rate, or assuming an uninviting posture—the flow of communication is interrupted. Edward Hall (1981) stated "People in interactions move together in a kind of dance, but they are not aware of their synchronous movement" (p. 72). When someone from a low-context culture interacts with someone from a high-context culture, the rhythms are likely to be very different and may create such discomfort that communication is jeopardized. Fred E. Jandt (2004) described Culture as

an establishment of standards for nonverbal behavior. We often have an involuntary reaction to someone violating our expectations about personal space. Our culture specifies behaviors that invite or discourage interaction. We learn nonverbal signals that indicate another person is receptive to being approached—for example, smiling, an open stance, and eye contact. If we use those same cues in interaction with someone from another culture, we could be quite startled by the response. If our expectations are not met, we will probably evaluate the other person negatively based on behavior that conforms to a culture different from our own.

CHAPTER THREE

AN OVERVIEW OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital cutting (FGC), also known as female genital mutilation (FGM), female circumcision, or female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C is about two combustible words - females and genitalia. These words are known to foment a litany of dialectics between the inalienable and culturally relative. It is any procedure involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs "whether for cultural, religious or other non-therapeutic reasons." At the elemental level, FGC is a cutting ritual that is performed on the genitals of infants and young girls). The term is almost exclusively used to describe traditional or religious procedures on a minor, which requires the parents' consent because of the age of the girl. Caroline B. Brettell & Carolyn F. Sargent, (2009) explained the term "female genital mutilation" or FGM, that has been widely used in recent years, to describe various forms of "female circumcision" that are found in many countries. "Mutilation" is technically accurate for most variants of the practices since they entail damage or to removal of healthy tissues or organs. The provocative term as well as the realities it conveys, has stimulated great international concern and action against the practices.

But since "mutilation" connotes intentional harm, its use is tantamount to accusing the women who do it of harmful intent. Some people even those who favor stopping the practices, have been deeply offended by the term of FGM, arguing that it is not women's intent to mutilate their daughters but to give them proper, socially expected treatment. Their intent is simply to "circumcise" or "purify". The words used commonly used for female genital cutting in Arabic-speaking countries, *tahuror* or *tahara*, means "purification," that is, the achievement of cleanness through a ritual activity. "female circumcision" however, echoes the term for the removal of the foreskin in the male, which has been considered non mutilating (Toubia 1993:9) at least until the recent movement to end that practice as well and is therefore rejected by many people, since it seems to trivialize the damage done and the huge scale of the practices.

The term “female genital cutting” or “FGC” is preferred because it has become well established in international discourse: it avoids disparaging the practitioners yet does not minimize the seriousness of the issue. WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA stated that:

The use of the word "mutilation" reinforces the idea that this practice is a violation of the human rights of girls and women, and thereby helps promote national and international advocacy towards its abandonment.
(WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA, 1996)

According to Shandal (1967), Toubia (1993, 1994), Abdal Rahman (1997) in some cultural contexts, it is very young children who are cut, including infants or toddlers. Southern Egyptian girls undergoing genital cutting at age 1 or 2. Most commonly it's done to young girls between the ages of 4 and 8. But in some cultural contexts, cutting is delayed until a young woman is in her teens and about to be married (14-15 even older).

It has been documented in parts of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, Europe, and the United States. In Africa alone, three million infants and girls are at risk annually of undergoing some type of genital cutting. Approximately 140 million women worldwide are living with the consequences of FGM (World Health Organization, Secretariat, March 20, 2008).

1.1. Origins of Female Genital Cutting

Some believe that female circumcision was rooted in the Pharaonic belief in the bisexuality of the gods. According to this belief, mortals reflected this trait of the gods; every individual possessed both a male and a female soul. The feminine soul of the man was located in the prepuce of the penis; the masculine soul of the woman was located in the clitoris. For healthy gender development, the female soul had to be excised from the man and the male soul from the woman. Circumcision was thus essential for boys to become men and girls to become women.

El Saadawi (2007) claims FGM originated during the slave trade and class patriarchal system. Prior to the rise of Islam, Egyptians once raided territories to the south for slaves, and Sudanic slaves were exported to areas along the Persian Gulf. Reports from the 15th and 16th centuries suggest that female slaves were sold at a higher price if they were

"sewn up" in a way that made them unable to give birth. After the region converted to Islam, this practice was no longer possible because Islam prohibits Muslims from enslaving others of their own religious beliefs.

1.2. Countries Practicing FGM Today

According to Brunner, (2007) FGM in our day is fortified by intricate systems of subjugation, cultural relativism, fear, ignorance, and erroneous information about female health and human sexuality. It remains deeply ensconced in a staggering number of countries and ethnic groups. The practice has been recently documented in the following countries and regions: (1) Benin, (2) Burkina Faso, (3) Cameroon, (4) Central African Republic, (5) Chad, (6) Cote d'Ivoire, (7) Democratic Republic of Congo, (8) Djibouti, (9) Egypt, (10) Ethiopia, (11) Eritrea, (12) Gambia, (13) Ghana, (14) Guinea, (15) Guinea-Bissau, (16) Kenya, (17) Liberia, (18) Mali, (19) Mauritania, (20) Mozambique (21) Niger, (22) Nigeria, (23) Senegal, (24) Sierra Leone, (25) Somalia, (26) Southern Algeria, (27) Sudan, (28) Tanzania, (29) Togo, (30) Uganda, (31) Upper Volta - ethnic groups in (32) India, (33) Indonesia, (34) Malaysia, (35) Pakistan, (36) Central and South America – some groups of the Arabian Peninsula including (37) Jordan, (38) Oman, (39) Saudi Arabia, (40) Syria, (41) United Arab Emirates, (42) Yemen - still others in (43) Iran's/Iraq's Kurdistan, (44) occupied Palestinian territories, and certain immigrant communities in (45) Europe, (46) Australia, (47) Canada and the (48) United States

Amnesty International estimates that Compared with other African countries Ethiopia is in about 69.7%-94.5% prevalence ratio. Ethiopia's Regional statistics of the prevalence from a survey are: Afar Region – 94.5 percent; Harare Region – 81.2 percent; Amhara Region – 81.1 percent; Oromia Region – 79.6 percent; Addis Ababa City – 70.2 percent; Somali Region – 69.7 percent; Beneshangul Gumuz Region – 52.9 percent; Tigray Region – 48.1 percent; Southern Region – 46.3 percent. This practice is not specifically illegal in Ethiopia. Discussions with government officials and NGOs active in the eradication of these practices indicate that the legal provision for prohibiting harmful traditional practices and the policy statements against them are not, as a practical matter, enforced. There are no documented cases of women going to court over or seeking

protection against this practice. We are unaware of any groups or organizations that provide protection to women or girls who wish to avoid it.

1.3. Types of Female Genital Cutting

There are several types of cutting and removal of tissues of genitalia of young girls and women, done to conform to social expectations in communities of many different religions and ethnicities.

The form varies not only from one socio cultural context to another but even within single village, where different ethnic groups do different types of cutting. Forms vary between families, too, with some preferring their ethnic group's traditional forms while other families seek less harmful forms. Also trained midwives and other practitioners (including traditional birth attendants, other older women, barbers, and even medical doctors) have their own individual techniques of doing the procedures, resulting in varying amounts of tissue taken and various levels of hygiene. (In most countries, medical doctors are now strongly discouraged or forbidden by their professional organizations and governments from doing any form of FGC.)

In the past few years the World Health Organization has developed a comprehensive typology that technical experts use for the different types. People who practice female genital cutting have their own terms of different types in their many languages, of course, which may or may not fit well with the World Health Organization's four types. Researchers can however, place the range of the practices into the following categories.

3.3.1. Type I: Clitoridectomy

The World Health Organization's first type includes both the partial and total removal of the clitoris, called clitoridectomy, and also the less severe forms of the operations, such as the cutting away of part or all of the clitoral prepuce, or "hood," analogous to the foreskin removal of male circumcision. Removal of only the prepuce seems to be very rare, but partial removal of the clitoris is fairly common. Clitoridectomy, whether partial or total, is often referred to by Muslims and others as "sunna circumcision" or "sunna purification."

3.3.2. Type II: Excision

The WHO's definition of Type II FGC is "partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora. When it is important to distinguish between the major variations that have been documented, the following subdivisions are proposed: Type IIa, removal of the labia minora only; Type IIb, partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora; Type IIc, partial or total removal of the clitoris, the labia minora and the labia majora.

3.3.3. Type III: Infibulations with Excision

The WHO defines Type III FGM as narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and repositioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulations)." It is the most extensive form of FGC, and accounts for about 10% of all FGC procedures described from Africa. Infibulations is also known as "pharaonic circumcision."

In a study of infibulation in the Horn of Africa, Pieters observed that the procedure involves extensive tissue removal of the external genitalia, including all of the labia minora and the inside of the labia majora. The labia majora are then held together using thorns or stitching. In some cases the girl's legs have been tied together for two to six weeks, to prevent her from moving and to allow the healing of the two sides of the vulva. Nothing remains but the walls of flesh from the pubis down to the anus, with the exception of an opening at the inferior portion of the vulva to allow urine and menstrual blood to pass through. Generally, a practitioner recognized as having the necessary skill carries out this procedure, and a local anesthetic is used. However, when carried out "in the bush", infibulations is often performed by an elderly matron or midwife of the village, without sterile procedure or anesthesia.

A reverse infibulations can be performed to allow for sexual intercourse or when undergoing labor, or by female relatives, whose responsibility it is to inspect the wound every few weeks and open it some more if necessary. During childbirth, the enlargement is too small to allow vaginal delivery, and so the infibulations is opened completely and

may be restored after delivery. Again, the legs are sometimes tied together to allow the wound to heal. When childbirth takes place in a hospital, the surgeons may preserve the infibulations by enlarging the vagina with deep episiotomies. Afterwards, the patient may insist that her vulva be closed again.

According to Nicoletti (2007), Toubia (1995) mentioned that women who have been infibulated face a lot of difficulty in delivering children, especially if the infibulations is not undone beforehand, which often results in severe tearing of the infibulated area, or fetal death if the birth canal is not cleared. The risk of severe physical and psychological complications is more highly associated with women who have undergone infibulations as opposed to one of the lesser forms of FGC. Although there is little research on the psychological side effects of FGC, many women feel great pressure to conform to the norms set out by their community, and suffer from anxiety and depression as a result "There is also a higher rate of post-traumatic stress disorder in circumcised females".(p.2)

3.3.4. Type IV: Other Types

Others that do not include tissue removal are grouped as Type IV. This includes practices such as pricking, incision, stretching of the clitoris or labia, cauterization, cuts or scrapes on the genitalia, or the use of harmful substances in the vagina. Labia stretching to pursue culturally preferred aesthetics of the body are not particularly harmful, but other variations can be painful or damaging. In some East African countries, some men's preference for "dry sex" has resulted in the introduction of dangerous or uncomfortable astringents into the vagina to dry it out before intercourse, which is included in Type IV. In Europe and North America, the fad of labia piercing could be included as a Type IV practice.

3.4 .Harmful Effects

(Shandall 1967, Shell-Duncan & Hernlund 2000, Gruenbaum 2001, Toubia 1994) indicates the harmful effects of these forms differ, but all forms from clitoridectomy to infibulations create risks for the girls at the time of cutting. Medical reports document cases of excess bleeding (hemorrhage), infections, blood poisoning (septicemia),

retention of urine, or shock. Such complications can be life threatening. Later on, the infibulated state sometimes results in retention of menses (if the vagina is blocked by scar tissue), difficulty in urination (if there is excess scar tissue around or over the urethra), and a high incidence of urinary tract and chronic pelvic infections. At first intercourse, the extremely small size of the opening created by infibulations presents a barrier which can make first sexual intercourse very difficult or impossible. Often the scar tissue around the opening must be painfully ruptured or is cut by the husband, a midwife, or a doctor. During childbirth, the inelastic scar tissue of infibulations must be cut by the birth attendant at the right time so labor will not be obstructed. Not only is obstructed labor dangerous to the baby, but also the mother's internal tissues can be damaged, creating a fistula (opening in the tissue separating the vagina from the urinary bladder, which can result in an embarrassing condition with constantly leaking urine).

The psychological effects are less well understood, not systematically researched, and no doubt differ a great deal from one situation to another. There is anecdotal evidence of adverse psychological effects, perhaps particularly if it comes without warning and seems a betrayal of trust. Yet many women simply accept the experience as just part of becoming a woman. Gruenbaum (2001) states:

Damage to sexual responsiveness is suspected for many women, yet there is also data that suggests the frequency and extent of problems vary greatly. Many women do not lose sexual interest and retain the ability to achieve sexual satisfaction and orgasms, even among the infibulated. (p.105)

Sexual responsiveness could be affected differently depending on which tissues are cut and how, whether the surrounding or underlying tissues retain sensitivity, whether there is severe infibulations, and of course whether the emotional attachment of the partners is strong and the relationship loving and supportive. Some midwives have been careful to avoid cutting too much of the sensitive tissue (clitoris and erectile tissue hoping to preserve sensitivity, but still make the result look like an infibulations by joining the labia across the opening.

It is therefore erroneous to assume that all women who have been cut have lost their sexual responsiveness. Similarly, although many experience very harmful medical consequences, many do not, so one cannot generalize about the effects without reference to the specific practices and circumstances.

3.5. Things being done about Female Genital Cutting

As you might expect, many who learn about female genital cutting practices respond with outrage and take strong positions against the practices. Outsiders often have evoked horrible stereotypes of malicious intent, condemning the people who practice such genital cutting of girls as intending to “torture females or “deprive women of their sexuality”.

According to Rahman and Toubia, (2000.) Local reformers sometimes engage in similar strongly worded condemnations in international discourse. But grassroots change agents realize that inflammatory rhetoric and “preaching” alone are not likely to change strongly held values and traditions. Reformers recognize that it may take some time to enlist local practitioners in the change process, so they have patiently promoted health education that they hope will lead people to voluntarily abandon female genital cutting. Others have introduced alternate rituals that contribute to the social goals, for example a rite of passage for maturing girls those substitutes for a traditional ritual of circumcision, but without the physical harm of cutting. Meanwhile, a large number of countries are also pursuing legal reforms and policy changes to criminalize or otherwise discourage the cutting of underage girls.

3.6. Social Movements for Change

Mackie (1996) noted that successful social change requires widespread support, not merely written laws and policies. How will that support be won? Reformers need to endeavor to fully understand people’s reasons. The followers of mutilation are good people who love their children; any campaign that insinuates otherwise is doomed to provoke defensive reaction.

But remaining detached and uninvolved with this serious problem tests the ethical limits of “cultural relativism” (the respect that anthropologists use to try to understand each

culture in its own terms rather than to judge it ethnocentrically by the values of another culture). The World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund issued a joint statement in 1996:

It is unacceptable that the international community remain passive in the name of a distorted vision of multiculturalism. Human behaviors and cultural values, however senseless or destructive they may appear from the personal and cultural standpoint of others, have meaning and fulfill a function for those who practice them. However, culture is not static but it is in constant flux, adapting and reforming. People will change their behavior when they understand the hazards and indignity of harmful practices and when they realize that it is possible to give up harmful practices without giving up meaningful aspects of their culture. (UNICEF,1996)

Both elements are necessary to a successful change effort aimed at a cultural practice a deep understanding of people's reasons and motivations for keeping a practice, yet recognition of the flexibility of culture. People have demonstrated many times that cultures can adapt, and people can make changes when convinced of the need without losing cultural identity and meaning. Ultimately, it is up to them to decide when the time is ripe.

Opinion leaders and grassroots activists, working in different ways, are vital to social change. In the past two decades organized efforts for change throughout the African countries affected have accelerated dramatically, as international and non-governmental organizations have become involved and as African women have moved into leadership positions in speaking out about female genital cutting. International organizations, such as the Inter-African Committee against Harmful Traditional Practices, have taken a lead role in conducting public health education by organizing discussion groups in towns and villages. The World Health Organization has taken on the anti-circumcision work, as have other international organizations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study assesses the meaning attributed from a cultural practice, particularly regarding female genital cutting in the research area. In order to carry out this research, I have employed a qualitative research methodology. This chapter describes the research methods used in the study. Both primary and secondary are gathered using different approaches. I have discussed the data collection methods I have employed in the study, namely focus group discussions and in depth interview being the main data collection tools, personal observation, sampling and selection techniques, interview setting, etc. in each case, I have attempted to describe the methodological significance of the approaches I have used to the theoretical framework of the study.

4.1. Qualitative Research

As it is stated in the first chapter the methodological approach of this study is principally qualitative. Always at the heart of qualitative research is the attempt “to study human actions from the perspective of the social actors themselves,” while describing and understanding, rather than explaining human behavior are the chief goals of studies using qualitative approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p.270). In essence, the purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participant’s point of view, the intention of the researcher being listening to the voice of participants or observing them in their natural environments (Orb et al., 2001, p.94).

It is fundamentally this quality of “attempting to view the world through the eyes (perspective) of the actors themselves” which is strongly tied to the epistemological foundations of qualitative research that addresses the question of methodological appropriateness to this study. Such is a principal feature of what came to be understood as phenomenology. The phenomenological theme, according to Bryman, (1984) is important to qualitative researchers as it takes the actor’s perspective as “the empirical point of departure” (p.70). In describing the concept further, Bogdan and Tylor (1975) state:

The phenomenologist views human behavior as a product of how people interpret the world. The task of the phenomenologist, and for us, the qualitative methodologists, is to capture this process of interpretation. In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view (pp.13-14)

In this light, the researcher should become more than just a mere interviewer or participant observer. "He or she," according to Babbie and Mouton(2001) "has to make a deliberate attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the people they are observing and studying and try and understand their actions, decisions, behavior, practices, ritual and so on, from their perspective" (p.271).

Babbie and Mouton further state that the emphasis on the insider perspective or as it is called in anthropological literature, the "emic" perspective, is especially important "when there are huge (perceived) differences between the researcher and the actors being studied" (p.271). This is of a significant relevance to this study as the actors or targets of the study, as I have stated in the first chapter, are children of ages between 8-9 and 11-12 whereby the worldview they exhibit, the mindset they make up and the values they favor and ignore are supposedly dissimilar and divergent from that of mine.

Qualitative methodology, therefore, represents a divergent paradigm of research tradition which is fundamentally different from quantitative methodology. One key difference of qualitative research over quantitative research tradition is its flexibility. Whereas qualitative methods are typically more flexible, allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant, quantitative research methods are fairly inflexible (Natasha et al., 2005, p.4). Participants in qualitative research have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods, as the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research.

Another facet that illustrates the apparent disparity between the two paradigms is the understanding and appliance of setting. As opposed to the somewhat artificial settings of quantitative methods such as surveys and experiments which may employ setting up laboratory conditions, assuming subjects to groups and drawing samples, the

appropriateness of qualitative research in studying attitudes and behaviors is best understood within their natural setting (Babbie and Mouton, 2001, p.270). In the latter case, the emphasis on the “natural” is related to the “normal course of events” wherein the qualitative researcher wishes to observe events and actions as they happen without any intervention or interference.

Although qualitative and quantitative researchers are interested in the description and understanding of actions and events, qualitative description primarily calls attention to what Babbie and Mouton refer as “thick description”—a lengthy description that captures the sense of actions as they occur, placing events in contexts that are understandable to the actors themselves (2001, p.272); this is contrary to the quantitative, statistical descriptions that make up the foundations of quantitative research. In illuminating such variance further, Fade (2003) suggests:

Qualitative research does not seek to show statistical associations or cause and effect relationships. Instead, the emphasis is on describing or illuminating social phenomena and human experience. (p.140)

Apart from the features discussed so far, central to the qualitative research tradition is the attitude of understanding events, actions and processes in their context. Whereas defining and describing natural contexts of subjects or actors of a given study is of paramount importance to the qualitative researcher, the quantitative researcher seeks to analyze variables and the relationships between them in isolation or in artificial settings primarily for the sake of insuring generalizability. In this light, Natasha et al. (2005) argues:

Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations.(p.2)

Here, it is important to take in to account the fact that context is not only imperative for the sake of a better description and eventual understanding of events and actions at stake, but also provides the boundary for generalizing results, if there is the need at all. On the subject of generalizability, Popay et al. (1998) emphasize that “the aim is to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena rather than

probabilistic generalizations to a population” (p.311). In another wording, generalizability, according to Horsburgh (2003) refers to “the extent to which *theory* developed within one study may be *exported* to provide explanatory theory for the experiences of other individuals who are in comparable situations” (p.314, emphasis on original).

4.2. Study Population and Setting

The study focuses on the Afar people. Afar is one of the nine ethnic divisions of Ethiopia, and is the home land of the Afar people. Formerly known as region 2, its former capital was Asayita; a new capital named Samara on the paved Awash- Asseb highway is under construction.

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the afar region has a total population of 1,411,092, consisting of 786,338 men and 624,754 women; urban inhabitants number 188,723 or 13.4% of the population. With an estimated area of 96,707 square kilometers, this region has an estimated density of 14.59 people per square kilometer.

For the entire region 247, 284 households were counted which results in an average for the region of 5.7 persons to a household, with urban households having on average 3.9 and rural households 6.1 people. Ethnic groups include Afar (90.03%), Amhara (5.22%), Argoba (1.55%), Tigrayans (1.15%), Oromo (0.61%), Welayta (0.59%), and Hadiya (0.18%). 95.3% of the population is Muslim, 3.9% orthodox Christian, 0.7% protestants, and 0.1% Catholics.

Afar is predominantly (90.8%) spoken in the region and is the working language of the state. Other languages with a significant number of speakers in the state include Amharic (6.68%), Tigrigna (0.74%), Oromifa (0.68%), Argoba (0.4%) and Wolaitigna (0.26%).

Like other regions in Ethiopia, Afar is subdivided into administrative zones (and one special woreda, an administrative subdivision which is similar to an autonomous area and is not part of a zone). However, these zones have not been given proper names. Administrative zone 1 constitutes: Afambo, Asayita, Chifra, Dubti, Elidar, Kori, and

Mille; zone 2; Abala, Afdera, Berhale, Dallol, Erebeti, Koneba, and Megale ; zone 3, Amibara, Awash Fentale, Bure Mudaytu, Dulecha, and Gewane; zone 4, Aura, Ewa, Gulina, Teru, and Yalo; zone 5, Artuma, Dalifage, Dewe, Fursi, Hadele Ele, Simurobi, and Telalak; and the special woreda, Argoba.

One of the regions in Ethiopia where female genital cutting is highly practiced is in the Afar region. The Afar ethnic groups occupy their own zone and speak their own language and have their own way of life and culture. However, there is a harmful practice of cutting female genitalia which the world damned as it's found to be as one way of deteriorating human rights. Afar is therefore where my study is focused on. The woredas which were selected for the study are Dubti and Abala weredas.

A purposive sampling procedure was adapted in selecting the Kebeles of the woredas and informants for this study. The Kebeles were selected based on the wide practice of female genital cutting. The informants were selected based on their close relationship with the practice and their various input to the study. Moreover, the areas were also selected on the basis of accessibility, existence of non-government organizations and the significance of Kebeles to provide the needed information.

4.3. Data Collection

In my study, I employed a two stage data collection design in which the stages are linked to one another very closely in such a way that one would offer a lead or draw inferences from the other. The following section discusses these methods—namely focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews—and how they are going to be employed in the data gathering process.

4.3.1. Focus Group Discussion

Natasha and colleagues (2005) define focus group as “a qualitative data collection method in which one or two researchers and several participants meet as a group to discuss a given research topic” (p.64). Lunt (1996) on the other hand, states that the focus group method “involves bringing together a group, or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator” (p.80). A variant definition

from Carey (1994) defines focus group technique as “using a semi structured group session, moderated by a group leader, held in an informal setting, with a purpose of collecting information on a designated topic” (p.226).

Most authors agree that the chief advantage of focus group interviews is the deliberate and purposeful use of interaction in order to generate data (Merton et al., 1990; Kitzinger, 1996; Morgan, 1996). Focus group interviews encourage participants to influence each other through their presence and their reactions to what other people say. Because not everyone will have the same views and experiences in aspects like age, gender, education, access to resources, and other factors, a variety of viewpoints will likely be expressed by participants (Natasha et al.).

According to Hansen et al., (1998) focus group interviews have an edge over individual interviews in such a way that they offer dynamics and ways of “eliciting, stimulating, and elaborating audience interpretations” (p.262). What this essentially means is that the interaction and dynamism exhibited in group interviews takes us closer to everyday life experiences better than personal accounts conveyed in individual interviews. In relation to this, Morgan (1988) states that “the hallmark of focus group is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group”. (p.12)

Profile of focus group discussion participants

Focus group discussions have been conducted with the aim of obtaining in-depth qualitative data for this research. In the study the 120 people have participated. Homogeneous 20 focus group discussions consisting of 4 up to 10 persons were held in the two zones with different categories of informants. I have selected my subjects for the focus group discussion from what Deacon et al. (1999) identify as ‘reconstituted groups,’ “social and professional groups that already exist” (p.56) which in my own case are Parents with children who are circumcised and who are not, midwives who were and are practitioners of female genital cutting, women and girls who are circumcise, religious leaders, community leaders and men, and young boys who are already married and also are about, has a plan of marriage.

The parent focus group discussions consisted of parents whose children were circumcised and may be if there is any who are not. Representatives will be selected from a combination of both fathers and mothers.

The number of group representatives will be high in the case of parents because the parent groups included both mothers and fathers. The participants will be selected purposively. Parents in the focus group will be selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience as well as their relevant responsibilities in relation to female genital cutting in their areas. The selection method considered parents of different ages (young, middle aged and old parents), educational background, and social status.

Focus group discussions were held with females from age 15-25 because this can be the time where the change of their life is crucial for them change and at this age they may be able to express their idea which can be a major identification for the research questions that are going to be answered.

Religious leaders, community leaders, midwives and male youngsters are the participants of the focus group discussion so that the research can acquire full information on the overall situation of female genital mutilation and the change that has been entertained with regard to communication.

Altogether, these focus group discussions were held in the two zones of the study area. Participants are selected purposely from each zone.

4.3.2. Individual in-Depth Interviews

According to Minichiello et al., (1995) in-depth interviewing is defined as “conversation with a specific purpose—a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informants’ perspective of self, life and experience and expressed in his or her own words” (p. 61). In depth interviews are useful for learning about the perspectives of individuals, as opposed to, for example, group norms of a community, for which focus groups are more appropriate (Natasha et al., 2005). According to Beale et al. (2004), in qualitative research, in-depth interviewing is an egalitarian approach to interviewing which develops research relationships and rapport with participants by focusing on the

participant's experiences from their own perspective. "In-depth interviews are an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. They are also an opportunity for us to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world". (p.141)

In my case, a semi-structured interview guide was used to get views of informants on questions designed based on the objectives of the study with emphasis on areas the researcher believed would address the goal of the research.

An in-depth interview was held with key informants who had been articulate during the focus group discussions and had shown themselves to be knowledgeable of the practice and the study areas attitude towards FGC. These included parents, females, religious leaders, males, and midwives from each zone.

4.3.2.1. The interview setting

Hansen et al. quoting Gamson (1992) stresses the need to involve people who knew each other for discussions on the "participant's turf rather than in a bureaucratic setting". (p.271) It was particularly important for me to find a place which my subjects would find 'familiar', 'natural' and 'non- threatening', and not 'strange', 'bureaucratic', and 'formal'. As a result, most of the time, I managed to conduct the focus group discussions and the interviews at a field nearer to the villagers huts. In addition, Clinics and kebeles meeting places were used.

4.3.2.2. The Interview Guide and the Researcher Role as a Moderator

Interview guides will be drawn up in order to ensure concentration of the focus group discussions on the subject matter as well as issues that will be relevant to the research. This method would enable the researcher in the compilation of data and facilitate the discussion of similar issues in the different groups at a later stage.

In illustrating the role of the moderator in focus group interviews, Hansen et al. (1998) state that his/ her task is essentially to "facilitate", 'moderate', and 'stimulate' discussion among the participants, not to 'dominate', 'govern', or unduly 'lead' such discussion"

(p.272). In other words, the moderator is there to learn from the group and not the reverse. In this respect, I saw my involvement in the group as an agent that makes sure the discussion is going in agreement with the topics and issues highlighted in the interview guide. I maintained a general balance in the group discussion so that neither participants are dominant nor are passive; and ensured that dialogue occurs among group members rather than between them and the moderator. I did not rigidly follow the interview guides, but allows the discussions and interviews to maintain a smooth flow although probing at a topic more deeply whenever the necessity arose.

4.4. Secondary Data

Secondary source materials relevant to the research subject were reviewed

4.5. Participants Observation

Purposeful observation of the socio-cultural and communication practices of the population living in the study area was made.

Observation has been employed as complementary technique to gather the necessary data. On top of that, informal discussions were held with some community members to enrich the data.

4.6. Data Processing and Analysis

Before starting the process, the researcher has requested the permission of the groups to allow the recording of interviews and proceedings on tape recorder. Introductions have been made in order to identify each of the groups before conducting the discussions and interviews. The group discussions and interviews are held in Amharic and Afarigna languages with the presence of a translator. The researcher tried to remember the topics that needed to be addressed and took notes. All interviews and group discussions are transcribed and translated first from Afarigna into Amharic and then to English. The researcher has also used thematic analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the major findings of the thesis. In the process, the analysis, discussions, and interpretations are incorporated. The findings are presented from the focus-group discussions, in-depth interviews and individual interviews accompanied by the issues discussed in the literature review.

Findings from the eight focus group discussions with the total of 80 respondents, and an in-depth interview with 16 interviewees were analysed thematically. In addition, results from the five expert interviews are incorporated.

Three overarching themes have been identified based on the research questions and the data gathered from the field. All of the themes include a number of sub themes. The themes are consecutively arranged in a manner that the preceding theme develops the following.

5.1. Social and Cultural Meaning of FGC for the Afar's

According to Roman Jakobson (2011), meaning resides in the total act of communication. It is not a stable, predetermined entity which assesses, untrammelled, from sender to receiver, depending on the situation, one of the elements of the speech act may dominate over the others, but all contributing factors should be considered.

As stated by Ronald Barthes (1964) in our lives we constantly send messages that consist of different signs. These messages (basically anything from making a phone call, waving our hand or the clothes we wear) are based on codes, culturally defined systems of relationships. Living in a certain environment we internalize sets of codes that affect our semiotic behavior, whether we are aware of it or not. Barthes claimed that there is only one exception to the rule "no message without a code": the photographic image, because it shows us something reproduced without human intervention (by means of a mechanical-chemical process). This idea has been much criticized, particularly after the breakthrough of digital photography which seriously challenges photography's earlier

ontological status. Barthes' claims that when we read signs and sign complexes, we can distinguish between different kinds of messages. For example the denotative meaning of an image refers to its literal, descriptive meaning. The connotative meaning is "second order signifying systems", additional cultural meanings we can also find from the image or text. - Barthes identifies connotation with the operation of ideology (which he also calls "myth").

According to Barthes, "ideology or "myth" consists of the deployment of signifiers for the purpose of expressing and justifying the dominant values of a given society, class or historical period (the signs express not just "themselves", but also all kind of value systems that surround them). As myths, signs tend to appear "natural" and self-evident (although they are basically always artificial, coded), hiding the operations of ideology.

As Lévi-Strauss (1972) noted, every sign acquires a history and connotations of its own which are familiar to members of the sign-users' culture.

The social and cultural meaning given to FGC by the Afar people include as a code of protection to a "good tradition", a religious requirement(s) as the religion and the beliefs of the people in a civilization play an important role in shaping up of the culture as well, or a necessary rite of passage to womanhood that it ensures cleanliness, better marriage prospects, prevents promiscuity and excessive clitoral growth.

5.1.1. Good Tradition

Most people who participated in the FDG, have indicated that the main thing that can be considered as a good tradition is that the decorum of a woman. In order to make a girl not have high emotion of sex because for a woman being emotional can show hers bad manner, and be considered as an embracement for her parents, relatives and community. Here FGC is a life savoir and the only mechanism in order to continue their decency. If FGC is not practiced different traditions of the Afar people may be distorted. Mayrem Seid, one of the FGD participants said:

If I were not infibulated my way of life, like marriage, the relationship I have with my families, friends, and the community as a whole might be affected. (Interview, February, 2011)

5.1.2. Religious Requirements

Abusharaf (1998) mentioned that Tahara is the Arabic colloquial word for circumcision, which means to purify (p. 2). Greek historian Herodotus documented female circumcision as a ritual carried out by Egyptians, Phoenicians, Hittites, and Ethiopians in the fifth century BCE. Over the centuries, female genital cutting has been performed by different cultures on different continents during different periods of time among Coptic Christians, Muslims, animists, Black Jews of Ethiopia, and Catholic and Protestant converts in Nigeria. FGM is neither a religious nor a cultural imperative as many insist or presume. It is not advocated in the Qu'ran; the origins of FGM are unclear. It has been inferred that FGM escalated when societies became agrarian and the determination of paternity was crucial. To ensure rightful inheritance of private property, females were subjugated sexually and psychically. Female erogeneity, virginity, fidelity, and consciousness were enslaved by the dominant patriarchal forces; in other words, an unshackled female was viewed as a threat. Some anthropologists believe the practice began to ensure differences between males and females at puberty (Women and Revolution, 1992/2008, pp. 2-3).

The religion implication given to FGC in the study area is that the FGC is like a baptism to become a Muslim. In fact the religion condemned the infibulations type, even though a removal of small part of the clitoris has to be done, in relation to the saying of that in the era of prophet Mohammed the practice was also done in order to remove the 'haram' a part which is not clean and condemned by Allah. As a Christian child is not baptizes the child could not be a Christian, a child who is not circumcised could not be a Muslim.

The other implication of FGC religiously is, as removing the 'haram' part of the female genitalia is a way for a woman to be clean and ready to join the religion.

5.1.3. Better Marriage Prospects

5.1.3.1. Preservation of Virginity

In the afar region the being virgin for a girl is considered as a main criteria for her to get married. A man wouldn't agree to marry her if she is not virgin. In order to protect the woman from being single for the rest of her life, and marriage is the main priority and the highest target of life for a woman in the study area. So in order not to lose this aim of life, the woman herself favors to be infibulated. The practice is as a lock for virginity, because the female genitalia is circumcised and stitched letting a small opening for urine and menstruation purpose. So the practice lets no place for sexual intercourse. After she got married most of the time the husband opens or cuts the stitched part of the female genitalia for the intercourse. Abdulkerim Adem stated his idea of virginity as:

If the girl I'm going to marry is not virgin I wouldn't want to marry her. I just want her to be mine and only mine otherwise if she went with other guys why should I feel betrayed. (FGD, February, 2011)

5.1.3.2. Enhancement of Male Sexual Pleasure

If the female genitalia is infibulated the opening for the intercourse is going to be small not as wide as the natural one and the genitalia is not going to be elastic. Having this reason, in the process of the intercourse the female genitalia is going to be rough for the male sex organ then this will enhance the male sexual arousal.

In the study area, this two and prevention of promiscuity and excessive clitoral growth which helps the husband to feel comfortable and made him not think that he is actually making a sexual intercourse with a woman, are considered to be the most influential things that can lead marriage to better prospects.

Ato Seid Hussein told us one story what his friend has done when he married a girl from Bati area and who was not mutilated. He said that when he tried to make sexual intercourse with her, her clitoris was very long and touches his sex organ whenever he

tries to get into her vagina and made him think of that he was making a sexual intercourse with a man. He then divorced her and got married a woman from Afar.

5.2. Disparity in the Interpretation

For communication and media theorists who stress the importance of the active process of interpretation, and thus reject the equation of 'content' and meaning. Many of these theorists allude to semiotic triangles in which the interpreter (or 'user') of the sign features explicitly (in place of 'sense' or 'interpretant'). This highlights the process of semiosis (which is very much a Peircean concept). The meaning of a sign is not contained within it, but arises in its interpretation. Whether a dyadic or triadic model is adopted, the role of the interpreter must be accounted for - either within the formal model of the sign, or as an essential part of the process of semiosis. David Sless (1986) declares that statements about users, signs or referents can never be made in isolation from each other. A statement about one always contains implications about the other two.

This theme is divided in to six sub themes so that the interpretation of FGC by the Afar's could precisely and elaborately be discussed, as the goal of the research is to dig out the real meaning they give to the practice.

5.2.1. Religious Leaders

Religious leaders are overarching in the community. Whatever they said or do is going to be accepted by the people because they are considered as knowledgeable and wise. The religious leaders that have participated in this study have two conflicting ideas on the relationship of FGC with the Muslim religion. Here what the researcher divides their idea of having a relationship with Muslim and not is presented as follows.

Most of those who live in the urban area and have a better connection with the outside world say that FGC is forbidden by Muslims. Sheck Idris indicated:

When people and some of our colleagues say that Qu'ran (the holy bible of Muslims) accepts or teaches the importance of FGC because in the era of Prophet Mohammed it was also practiced, which is a very wrong interpretation. I tell u what I know and believe that the religion of Muslim condemns the pain of women in any way because she is considered as a wealth that must be protected from any harm. So some religious leaders that are teaching FGC as a good practice of the people, they are not interpreting the holy Qu'ran as they are supposed to and they will be asked for it in the home of Allah.(Interview, February, 2011)

On the other hand, most religious leaders who live in the remote area of the study area, adheres that 'suna', a little removal of the clitoris, which can be considered as a type one of FGC must be practiced in order to remove the 'haram' or dirty part of female genitalia in order to the woman a clean accepted person in the name of Allah. Then the girl or woman will join the community as a pure follower of Muslim.

Sheck Mohammed Ali said that Qu'ran teaches to practice 'suna' in order to make a female clean. What we teach the community is not to practice infibulations and stitching the female genitalia because it is not accepted by the Muslims.

But in afar if a female did not undergone in the process of FGC, cutting a small part of clitoris she will not be a Muslim. When we teach to cut a small part of female genitalia there will be a difference in the interpretation of the degree of small and this is the mistake that the mid-wives and women makes.

Generally, if a female did not undergo in the process of FGC in accordance of some religious leaders like 'suna', the passage to be a Muslim is not going to happen. 95% of the afar people are Muslim, and being afar and not Muslim is like putting a trouser on the neck.

5.2.2. Women

For some women that have participated in the FDG of this study, as the practice is very painful and nothing can be compared with it, they are not as fearful as being or considered as an out cast just because they are not infibulated.

Most women who have had the FGM procedure are strongly in favor of FGM for their daughters. In Egypt, 50 percent of the women surveyed reported that they had at least one daughter who had gone through the procedure, while 38 percent intended to do so in the future. In addition, most of these women want their daughters to undergo the same type of procedure they had.

In Afar every where they move there is a clap of hands of going through the practice and hate, aggression and bias, If the female does not let her self to be circumcised. So for them, wanting to be mutilated and wanting it for their children is a very normal, acceptable and a holly thing to do. Halima Hansen pointed out:

If I was not mutilated I do not get my children to go through the same procedure because of not knowing the importance of FGC in the society. I may not be who and where I am now if I were not infibulated. Being infibulated made my parents, husband, relatives and the society as a whole happy. Their happiness and the respect they have for me is far more important than being painless. (FGD, February, 2011)

Females that are at the early age, who have the chance to go to school and who did not get married, have different meaning to FGC. Most of them said that the only meaning they give to FGM is pain and horror of their life. Many of them undergone through the practice or are mutilated and stitched.

Zahra said that I think of the pain all the time because I have to go to the toilette always. I'm not an active participator of school or in any of the social activities because I don't have the confidence and I know the only reason for this is FGC. They tell me that if I were not circumcised I would not get married and have the respect I deserved; but what I think is that whether I'm mutilated or not my cousin still awaits for me because he doesn't have a choice. For the sake of him there is no way that I could be single. And what if they called me a girl with antenna I wouldn't worry less. If I have a baby girl I won't dare to let her feel the shame and pain I feel for the rest of my life.

A young girl named Aysha Mohammed who got married a year before and just got birth to a child, was very angry in the focus group discussion at the women who said that

regardless of the pain FGM has a great value to them because the only thing she faced was pain and pain only. She describes her feeling as:

Whenever I have sexual intercourse with my husband and got birth to my child I couldn't bare the pain and I thought I was going to die and believe me my wish was to die. I'm so angry on not satisfying my husband whom I love very much. I'm glad that my husband is knowledgeable and understanding and he tries his best to understand my pain but what can he do nothing. We try to discuss about sex, my pain and FGC all the time which helped me to stay still and not going crazy because of this harmful practice of our culture. I worry about women who got married to a person who don't understand them and I always pray for them. (FGD, February, 2011)

Most women who favor ending the practice also feel they do not have enough information to convince men of the harmful effects of FGM. Men help continue the practice by refusing to marry women who have not had FGM or by allowing or paying for their daughters' procedures.

5.2.3. Men

Most men that have participated in the study gave their interpretation to FGC as a good practice of the culture because it preserves virginity and can enhance the sexual satisfaction for the husband.

As they indicated when they get married to a woman she has to be virgin and has a narrow vaginal opening. So the only key for this is FGC.

However, some elders and young men who are not married and who have some educational background condemned infibulations and discussed their interpretation as a backward practice of the culture which doesn't have any connection with the type practiced in their region.

To the young men FGC particularly infibulations is a harsh and painful practice which doesn't have any importance to the women or anyone else. A young boy named Ahmed Abubeker said:

My parents, relatives and some of my friends advise me that I should marry a mutilated and stitched girl; I can then enhance my sexual pleasure. But why lose so much energy and see the woman I loved get hurt. What satisfaction can that bring me? If I'm very lucky I may marry a girl who is not infibulated, but for our generation I don't think that is possible and I call the society responsible for this. In the future I'm hoping that this will be a story to tell to our children and grandchildren. (FGD, February, 2011)

Some old men who want to add their number of wives and get marry a young girl are losing their hopes. This is because of their strength could not handle a fresh power who tries to stop the man from making a sexual intercourse because it hurts very much not as other girls who makes the intercourse for the first time, theirs is much worse because they are infibulated.

Mohammed, a 72 years old man said that I and most of my colleagues wanted to marry a young girl, but we are becoming weak and powerless to face a mutilated and stitched girl. It will take us an ample energy to make a sexual intercourse as you can see we don't have that much energy. So I think FGC is a backward practice which hinders not only us but young men and women themselves from leading a modest way of life.

5.2.4. Mid-wives

Mid-wives are the professionals who infibulates the female genitalia in the study area. Mid-wives who stopped mutilating and who did not were part of the FGD. Mid-wives who stopped their profession has a general meaning, if they were a normal mothers, they would very well lead their female children to be mutilated as they share the meaning of most mothers in the region as a good tradition of and a symbol of a woman's decency and follower of the Muslim religion, and wanting the best for their children. And as professionals, it's a way of their lively hood, in which they get their life earnings out of it.

Mid-wives who didn't stop think of mutilating not just a way of lively hood but also are also doing it what their religion asks them to do and consider themselves as messengers of Allah. W/o Zeyneb Awel asserted:

If I don't mutilate a girl who was a pagan, then my help comes here to lead her to be a Muslim. It's just like baptizing a child to be a Christian. And I don't want any one to force me on stopping mutilating, what they should do is tell the mothers of the children not to ask me, if they did I won't hesitate because I'm sent to this world to fulfil god's wish. (Interview, Febuary, 2011)

5.2.5. Rural Area Residents

Generally, most of the rural area residents consider FGC as a very important value of their culture. As they consider it as a religious requirement and a cultural heritage which preserves virginity and make a woman decent, clean and an important means to lead to a better marriage prospects.

Few of the people think of it as a detrimental practice of the region which hammers down the growth of the region.

5.2.6. Urban Area Residents

Most people who live in the urban areas of the region that have participated in the study strongly oppose the early interpretation of FGC as a result of the knowledge they acquired by different means regarding the harm of the practice.

Some are obliged to think of FGC as a useful and important way of life which they consider the people who argue on the impact of FGC as an out cast and a rival who are trying to destroy their believes, values, traditions just because they consider themselves as a modern or just because they are paid to do this.

5.3. Social values and Acceptability of FGC

Fiske (1987) argues that, the social subject has a history, lives in a particular social formation, (a mix of class, gender, age, region, etc.), and is constituted by a complex cultural history that is both social and textual. The subjectivity results from "real" social experience and from mediated or textual experience...This social subjectivity is more influential in the construction of meanings than the textually produced subjectivity which exists only at the moment of reading.

According to Martin Irvine (2006), the social values of a particular civilization are considered as an element of the culture. The values of a culture often refer to the things to be achieved or the things, which are considered of great worth or value in a particular culture.

As cultural value are embedded in the artefacts, symbols, stories, etc FGC for most of the afar people is a symbol of pride, dignity, faith, courage of a woman. This is what puts FGC as a high socially accepted practice in the study area.

The most important thing in our society is self- respect, honesty and respecting every individual who is part of the society. If any woman is unfaithful or went with different men, she will be discarded from the community. In our culture even a mentally ill person is respected, but for a woman to go with diverse men and also making a marriage relationship with other clan is forbidden. If she does one of this she will totally be discarded from the society.

Recently in most part of the region the type of FGC practiced is infibulations, which is a removal of part or all of the external genitalia (clitoris, labia minora, and labia majora) and stitching or narrowing of the vaginal opening leaving a small hole for urine and menstrual flow. Then again this procedure that seals or narrows a vaginal opening needs to be cut open later to allow for sexual intercourse and child birth. Sometimes it is stitched again several times, including after child birth, hence a woman goes through repeated opening and closing procedures, further increasing and repeated both immediate and long-term risks. Worst of all the tools that are used to make the opening could be sharp stones, broken glasses, scissors or unsterilized razor or blades without anaesthesia.

Regardless of the above mentioned physical and psychological effects, FGC is a symbol of decency. Women who live in the study area are not supposed to show any emotional reaction towards sex. Women should be slow and must not have a high sexual arousal than men. So removing the clitoris will decrease or totally destroy the female sense of sex.

W/o Fatuma Jemal stated that women who are not accidentally circumcised do different things which are not acceptable by the society for the sake of cooling down their arousal. Things like going with other men with and out of her clan and others like using sticks and masturbating themselves. This is what is not acceptable in our society.

As the researcher has observed, most women are not that much attracted by other men or their husbands. They seem like whenever they think of sex the only thing they remember is pain.

But being considered as a decent person for them and getting the respect of the others is the most special thing that the society can offer them. As they are also part of the society their acceptance is to be infibulated and achieve the social class of the society.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter of the study recaps some of the salient issues and findings that arose in the discussion so far. In this study, an attempt was made to assess the meaning given to FGC by the people of Afar. Quite a lot of people ranging from young and old pastoralists to culturally experienced town people working in various offices in the region have been either interviewed or invited as discussants in FGDs held in the people's natural environments. Socio-cultural and demographic factors were considered in selecting participants of the study as equally important as knowledge of and experience in the Afar culture and traditions. Finally, the following conclusions have been made based on findings of the study.

6.1. Conclusion

The Afar people's socio-cultural meaning attributed from FGC is that; the practice as a means of protecting the communal value of the people. It is a symbol that signifies a good tradition by enhancing a better marriage prospects and fulfilling a religious requirement.

The interpretation of the practice is diverse according to the people's gender, age, social class and residential areas.

Most of the religious leaders are inclined to the practice as it is one way to fulfill the requirement of Muslim by removing a small part of the female genitalia in order to discard the 'haram' part of a woman which is 'suna' as the native call it. Some of them condemn FGC because there is no written document not even in the Qu'ran which teaches as it is a good practice.

Most women have a positive meaning towards FGC, as for them it is the way of their whole life. They have to get married, arouse their husbands sexual pleasure, be Muslim and get the respect of the community in order to survive in the society because they can

not be out of the whole idea of it. Some women, mostly youngsters, not married and have some educational background have made FGC a symbol of pain and harm of a woman.

Most men infer FGC as a means of protection of their interest and comfort. Their social position has to be higher than the women and she has to be the property of his own no one else and serve him as long as she's with him. In order to fulfill this FGC has to be a way nothing else. Some relate it to the symbol of pain, physical and psychological punishment of a woman. The cause for this kind of interpretation is their interaction with other world's thinking and education. Few old men consider FGC as restriction not to get married new wives and a mirror of getting old and powerless.

Midwives give it a meaning of profession and a way of being a messenger for Allah that brings a pagan to be a Muslim.

Most people that live in the urban area of the region do not think that FGC is a good value that should be practiced. Their meaning FGC as a way of protecting their traditions and fulfilling the religious requirement is not any more the meaning it brings to them. It is a harmful practice that shouldn't be regarded as a symbol for a good value of the culture. Few are still mitigating their meaning of the practice as symbol of their cultural heritage's identification.

Most people, who live in the rural area, are very much inclined to the meaning of FGC as a savior for their traditions, religion and societal well being as a whole. Few are not sure what meaning to give to it.

The social value of FGC to the people of afar is high. They are communicating their closeness, toughness and decency to other people by having the practice as a way to describe this.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study as well as the suggestions of the informants and FGD participants, the following recommendations are made:

Further study should be made on communication in relation to cultural values of the people.

There is no account of written document or scientific researches that have been conducted in the area of FGC in the region. Researchers should be engaged in this area of study and also look for other problems that reside in the study area and try to answer many questions as a way to fill the knowledge gap.

The religious leaders of the area need to come together to one consciousness on the practice of FGC, whether it is related to the religion or not in order not to create confusion with the mind of the people. They need to dig visible evidence that condemn FGC or not.

The society need to upgrade and change some of their way of life in order to change their social, economic, etc. to a better way, to acquire this education could be the main agent.

Studies should be conducted reaching deep in to the people's cultural practices and get their point of view and their implication of a particular practice.

Different trainings should be arranged in order to help the people to come across to other people's way of life.

Governmental and nongovernmental organizations and the experts that work on FGC should first make a study on the cultural values of the people before teaching the people to stop the practice.

REFERENCES

Africa Files, Soguel Dominique. (2010). FGM Radio Warnings Reach Nomadic Women, Dallol: June 2010. Available on [http:// www. Womensenews.org/story](http://www.Womensenews.org/story). [Date Accessed, 20 august 2010].

Alfred J. Smith. (1966). *Communication and Culture*. USA: Holt, Rinehart Winston, Inc.

Barthes R. (1964). *Elements of Semiology*, Hill and Wong Publication.

Berelson B. and Janowitz M. (1966). *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*. 2nd edition. USA: The Free Press. Berg, B.L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Bogdan R. and Taylor S.J. (1975). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences*. New York NY, John Wiley.

Brent D. Ruben. (1978). *Communication Year Book 2*. USA: Published by International Communication Association.

Holmberg B. and Werner A. (1998). *Cultural Cognition: New Perspectives in Audience Theory*. Sweden: NORDICOM.

Carley H.Dodd. (1995). *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*. 4th ed. UAS: Wm.C.Brown Communications, Inc.

Colin B. Grant. (2007). *Uncertainty and Communication*. Great Britain: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1999). *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. New York: Arnold.

Em Griffin. (2006). *A First Look at Communication Theory*. Mc Graw-Hill.

Fiske J. (1987). *Television Culture*. London: Methuen. Ltd

Fiske J. (1990). *Introduction to Communication Studies*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (2000). The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.645-672). London: Sage Publications

- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F. and Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 15, 717-732.
- Fred E. Jandt. (2004). *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*. 4th Edition. United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Getachew Kassa. (2001). *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-economic Change*. Utrecht: International Books in Association with OSSREA
- Hall T. Edward. (1959). *The Silent Language*. USA: Fawcett World Library.
- Hamm, B. and Smandych, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination*. Peterborough: Broadview Press. Irvine M. (2006). *Journal of Creative Communication*. London: Sage publication.
- James W. Carey. (1994). *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. USA: Newwin Hyman, Inc.
- Kitzinger, J. (1996). *Introducing Focus Groups*. In N. Mays & C. Pope, *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. London: B.M.J. Publishing Group
- Krueger, R.A. (1994). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kuzel, A. (1992). *Sampling in Qualitative Inquiry*. In B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing Qualitative Research* (pp.31-44). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Liebes, T. & Katz, E. (1990). *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of 'Dallas'*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lunt, P. & Livingstone, S. (1996). *Rethinking the Focus Group in Media and Communications Research*. *Journal of Communication*, 46(2), 79-98.
- Monaghan L. and Goodman E. Jane. (2007). *A Cultural Approach to Interpersonal Communication: Essential Readings*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Morgan, D. (1988). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Morse, J.M. & Field, P.A. (1995). *Qualitative Research Methods for Health Professionals* (2nd ed). California: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Natasha, M., Cynthia, W., Kathleen, M.M., Guest, G. and Emily, N. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. North Carolina: Family Health International

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications Ltd.

Paul C.Adams. (2009). *Geographies of Media and Communication*. UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Saukko P. (2003). *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to Classical and New Methodological Approaches*. Great Britain.

Schiller, H. (1976). *Communications and Cultural Dimensions*. New York: Sharpe.

Scott, M. D. and Brydon, S. R. (1977). *Dimensions of Communication: An Introduction*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Servaes, J. (1999). *Communication for Development: One World, Multiple Cultures*. USA: Hampton Press Inc.

Severin, W.and James, W.T.1979. *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, Use*. New York: Hastings House.

Siseraw Dinku. (1996). *Person and Society among the Pastoral Afar of Northeast Ethiopia*. MA Thesis. AAU: AAU School of Graduate Studies, Unpublished.

Sreberny-Mohommadi, A. (1997). *The Many Cultural Faces of Imperialism*. In P. Golding and P. Harris (Eds.). *Beyond Cultural Imperialism*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

UNESCO. (1983). *Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow: Many Voices One World*. Great Britain

Wollman L. Female circumcision. *J Am Soc Psychosomat Dent Med*. 1973; 20:130–1.

APPINDIXE I

THEMATIC QUESTIONS

The social and cultural meaning of FGC

1. What meaning does the society attribute regarding FGC?
2. How does the society's way of life relate to FGC?
3. Which type of FGC is found to be appropriate to preservation of the society's tradition?
4. How peculiar would be if some one did not and want to participate?
5. Who are the most influential parties that argue on the importance of FGC in the society?

The disparity of interpretation

1. What is the religious leader's attribution of meaning of FGC?
2. What meaning of FGC is attributed by women?
3. What is the interpretation of FGC according to men?
4. How do the mid-wives interpret FGC?
5. What is the difference in meaning attribution of FGC between rural and urban residents?

The social value of FGC

1. What social value can be contributed by practicing FGC?
2. How does FGC relate to the other cultural entities of the people of Afar?
3. How does the FGC describe the society?

7. To what cultural element do you give a due value?
8. Do you want you daughters to get married?
9. What could be the effect of FGC in getting married?

An interview guide for women

1. Can you please tell me your name, and what you do?
2. What meaning do you generate out of FGC?
3. What effect do you see because of your infibulation?
4. Do you think FGC should be stopped in the area?
5. What will happen to you if you were not infibulated?
6. Are you married?
7. What impact or value could FGC have in for the prospect of good marriage?
8. What relationship do you think FGC has with the Muslim religion?
9. What do you wish for newly born girls or for the girls that are not infibulated?

An interview guide for men

1. Can you please tell me your name, and what you do?
2. What value do you think has FGC in the community?
3. Do you think FGC has a connection with the Muslim religion?
4. What is the most important thing in your life
-Religion - marriage - wealth - education
5. Are you married?

6. What importance do you think FGC has for marriage?
7. What do you discuss about FGC with your parents, wife or friends?
8. What feeling may your wife or future wife has because of her infibulations?
9. To what kind of FGC impacts have you come across in the community?
10. What is your meaning of FGC?

An interview guide for mid-wives

1. Can you please tell me your name, and what you do?
2. What meaning do you attribute regarding FGC?
3. What is the procedure in infibulating a female genitalia?
4. What religious connection does FGC has?
6. What cultural value does FGC has?
7. For how long have you been mid-wife?
8. If you were not mid-wife, do you think you could let your daughter to be infibulated?