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Perspectives in an Age of Modernization & Globalization: A Comparative Study of the United States & Botswana

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Abstract

Upon beginning this paper I wished to compare the dominant individualistic attitude in the United States with the still present kinship-oriented attitude of Botswana. However, upon further reflection, what was most striking was not our differences, but the ways in which are becoming more and more similar as time passes. While our two countries may seem worlds apart, both the United States and Botswana are venturing toward a very similar and not wholly comforting future. While our paths have been entirely different in many respects, both the United States and Botswana are facing an age of decreasing community and increasing modernization intensified by globalization. While this may very well be the way of the future, undoubtedly bringing many positive changes with it, we have turned a blind-eye to what we, the human race, are giving up. The human race has rarely hesitated to look at other cultures and see problems and potential solutions- donating funds and time in order to “fix” perceived issues ultimately trying to make what is “other,” familiar or more “same.” Far too often we miss the beauty, and the ways in which the “other” has succeeded, where we have failed. Through the analysis of several topics including history, marriage & family, AIDS, women & girls, and a “moral crisis” this paper seeks to demonstrate how similar and different these two modes (individualistic and kinship-oriented) are and propose a need to begin working together, recognizing what we both bring to the table, in order to create a more positive future.

The majority of us no longer consider the problems and assets of our ways of living, and the ways in which we can learn from each-other in order to reach a more positive future. We all wish to make progress, but that does not mean that any sense of community and all traditional values must be tossed aside.

During my time in Botswana, even while in the capitol city of Gaborone, where modernization is ever present, kinship and community remained present and comforting even to “outsiders.” Whether I was walking through the streets, or talking with University of Botswana students I was struck not only by the welcoming atmosphere, but the interconnectedness of people. For me, it can be summed up in a comment made by Musa Dube: when one asks “how are you,” one is not only asking about you, the individual person, but you and your family. This mentality is seemingly almost nonexistent in much of the United States. When asked “how are you” here in the U.S, one simply answers concerning themselves – individualistically- without hesitation or further consideration.

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make what is “other,” familiar or more “same.” Far too often we miss the beauty, and the ways in which the “other” has succeeded, where we have failed. In the U.S decreasing moral has become a topic of much discussion, and in Botswana, it is not much different. Throughout my time in Botswana several scholars and others discussed the decreasing moral among people, especially youth. Yet many of us have failed to realize the truth of the matter – it is a shared and potentially global problem. While in a technological and modernizing age we have been able to spread knowledge quickly and cure/treat disease, we also have lost much of the community that made improving our world worthwhile. Only when we work together, opening both our eyes and our hearts to each-other, can we solve many of the problems we face. As Chief Seattle wrote in his letter to the U.S government in 1855, “All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.”¹

Definitions

It is important to define an “individualistic attitude” as well as a “kinship-oriented attitude” as intended by this analysis, especially considering the distinction intended by this paper is far more simple than any anthropological analysis. Furthermore, for the sake of this analysis the context in which these attitudes exist is especially important.

An “individualistic attitude,” as the dominant culture in the U.S, focuses predominately on the individual above the group. This culture encourages individuality and stresses the importance of individual success. From a young age many of us are taught to look out for ourselves “because no-one else is going to” and to compete with others, by doing whatever it takes to be “on top.” This is exemplified by the ranking system in high-schools, which has had to be eliminated for many of the most competitive schools.

Of course, this culture of individualism does not function in a vacuum; it touches every aspect of our lives in the U.S. It is reinforced by our materialistic and consumerist life-styles. Most Americans utilize social networking sites, ranging from Facebook to Twitter, some while humming along to popular pop music such as the recent hit performed by Travie McCoy and Bruno Mars expressing “I wanna be a billionaire so fucking bad, buy all of the things I never had”. While these social networking sites allow us to stay connected, they also leave too many of us gazing upon our own faces, rather than truly connecting with others in our communities and with our world. We are a disconnected population, who pay more attention to the commercials between our favorite television programs and the products that we use than to the people around us; we constantly want “more” - more money, more stuff and more power. Most of us don't even know the name of our neighbors and few people form many close relationships, even with our families.

A “kinship-oriented attitude” refers to a state of affairs quite different, in which connections with other people- family, friends, neighbors, and even the planet – are nurtured and valued. This sort of attitude, while becoming less and less present in Botswana, fosters a strong sense of community and can be best exemplified by the way of life within a village, in the past and today. As with individualism in the U.S, in Botswana, this attitude touches every aspect of life. Before modernization in Botswana, the chief of a village would divide up the land among all the families – it was not considered that anyone “owned” the land. Today, the chief of the

1 Campbell, Joseph. *The Power of Myth*. (New York: MJF Books, 1988), 43

village still exists as a local government official, and the mentality that the chief is “father” and “servant of the people,” not only a leader, seems to be shared not only by the chief I met in Botswana, but by most chiefs, as well as by the people. This kinship attitude can further be exemplified by the way in which marriage was and is still most often perceived as a union between families, not only individuals, with a “bride price” still being paid even by those living in the modernizing cities. While in a modern U.S we may find such a “price” to be antiquated and potentially sexist, this “price” signifies more to the people of Botswana and will be discussed more later in this paper.

Comparing Histories & Issues:

Historically Botswana and the United States have many differences, but are rapidly following the same trajectory in an increasingly global community. However, what has taken the U.S decades, has been accelerated in Botswana, leaving the beauties of “kinship” in the wreckage with its vices.

While both countries were colonies of Great Britain, they gained their independence through drastically different means. The United States had to fight for independence beginning with the signing of The Declaration of Independence in 1776, recognized by Great Britain seven years later with the signing of The Paris Peace Treaty in 1783. In contrast Botswana's independence was granted much later in 1966 due to foreign pressure and the British belief that there was nothing of value in the country; in British cartoons of the time Botswana was depicted as a naked child: essentially helpless.

Since its birth the United States has been considered a place in which individuals can “make their own way” and realize their dreams. People came (and continue to come) to the U.S in pursuit of that dream and are thought to succeed or fail based on their own merit. However, what we may fail to realize is that even with this “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality, there were often strong family ties and large close-knit families-comparable to those facing extinction in Botswana. They were brought from abroad and maintained in communities in which culture and community were nurtured – examples still present today include China Town (in San Francisco, NYC and Boston), Orthodox Jewish Communities in New York and Amish communities in Pennsylvania. However, as times changed through industrialization and modernization the nuclear family became the modern American family, and we began to look to a future in which we mixed together. Eventually, the blended family – exemplified in The Brady Bunch, and then single-parent/divorced families became not only an accepted occurrence, but common.

In Botswana, newly independent as of 1966, modernization has been accelerated, as illustrated by its moving from being the 2nd poorest country in the world at the time of its independence to its current status as a middle income country. Based on the gross domestic product at purchasing power parity per capita, which takes into account the cost of living in different countries, Botswana is the 128th poorest/55th richest country in the world (of the 183 reported countries) in 2011 based on the findings of the International Monetary Fund.² Furthermore, Botswana previously only had one paved road, reaching from the airport to parliament, but is now connected extensively with paved highways and roads. This all was

2 “List of Countries by GDP (PPP) per capita,” Last modified on August 31 2012, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(PPP\)_per_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita).

achieved in under 50 years.

With the sweets however, come the sour. Botswana, a country that previously had strong kinship ties, is struggling in part due to a process that for us in the United States took decades. What we often consider to be a drastic “difference” is merely temporal, as it becomes more apparent under the microscope that many of our differences are rapidly disappearing. However, due to the time of its independence and economic and social status pre-independence, modernization has been accelerated and Botswana has not only had to create and solidify its government and take its place on the world stage, but it has had to try to change the ways people had been living for years, introducing new systems, ideas and technologies on a grand scale. Considering all of these changes it is not surprising that the beauties of the kinship network have been scrambled as many aspects have been at odds with modernization.

Marriage & Family

One way in which to understand the still present differences and increasing similarities between U.S individualism and Botswana's kinship is through an analysis of marriage and family. While the institution of marriage in the U.S can be argued to be incredibly individualized and rapidly becoming marginalized and devalued, marriage in Botswana is often remains a union of families. Furthermore, in traditional kinship-oriented communities, still present in some rural areas of Botswana, children are raised by the community; in comparison to the situation in much of the U.S where children are often raised predominately and in some respects exclusively by parents, especially in legal terms.

Growing up in the U.S in the late 1990s, it seemed that it was more common for your parents to be divorced, than married. In the United States today, 50% percent of first marriages, 67% of second marriages and 74% of third marriages end in divorce according to the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Springfield, Missouri³. Of course, this alone could mean any variety of things. However, when we consider this with other facts it is hard not to consider the impact that modernization and our individualism in the States affects how we think about all our relationships, including marriage. We must consider with how easily one can be married in Las Vegas, the precedent set by celebrities who marry and divorce quickly (ex. Kim Kardashian) and other portrayals in the media. While the divorce rate is decreasing among many populations in the U.S, so is the marriage rate, which may just go to show that how “dated” the practice has become and the value may also be waning.⁴

In Botswana, both marriage and divorce are more complicated and involved matters, as there are both customary law marriages and civil law marriages. In order to acquire a divorce under customary law, the couple must go to the chief in customary court. Within these proceedings the relatives of both parties give testimony concerning the marriage and how property should be divided. Civil law marriage, which most Boatswains choose today to ensure legal benefits, can only be dissolved by the High Court or Court of Appeals.⁵ This is achieved by

3 “Divorce Rate,” <http://www.divorcerate.org/>

4 Morello, Carol, “Number of long-lasting marriages in U.S. has risen, Census Bureau reports,” *The Washington Post*, May 18 2011, Accessed July 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/number-of-long-lasting-marriages-in-us-has-risen-census-bureau-reports/2011/05/18/AFO8dW6G_story.html.

5 “Procedures Relating to Marriage and Divorce,” Embassy of the United States: Gaborone, Botswana, <http://botswana.usembassy.gov/marriage.html>.

one party claiming the marriage has broken down “beyond repair” and one of the following factors must be proven: 1) the other spouse has committed adultery and it is intolerable for one to continue living with them, 2) the other spouse behaved in such a way that one cannot be expected to live with them, 3) the other spouse has abandoned the home for two years or more before divorce proceedings were started, or 4) the two spouses have lived apart for two years before divorce proceedings were started and both spouses agree to the divorce.⁶ Even if one or more of these factors is proven however, the High Court can still refuse to grant a divorce if they are not convinced the marriage is broken down beyond repair. In May of 2011, the *Sunday Standard* newspaper in Botswana reported that there had already been some 986 divorce cases filed that year- a claimed extreme difference from the numbers in previous years.⁷

In the States it is not legally difficult to become divorced. One may need to acquire counsel and while a contested divorce may take longer, a judge will not find that your marriage is not “broken down” enough to dissolve. Furthermore, in the U.S while one's family may speak as witnesses to certain behavior during divorce proceedings, they are not a necessary part of divorce proceedings or have any say in how property will be split. This exemplifies the variation in attitudes; explicitly, marriage in the U.S is a union of two people, rather than two families.

This paper is not seeking to support or promote making divorce a difficult process for anyone; some people should not be together and no-one should be forced to stay in a marriage that is unhealthy or even simply unwanted. However, it is suggesting that we have not fully considered what we lose when we stop considering the entire meaning of marriage and the bonds it can create. In Botswana, marriage as a union between two families, regardless of any shortcomings, brought with it assets. Unifying families creates a strong community and all the love and support that comes with that. A “bride price” is still paid as a way of expressing gratitude for allowing a person (woman) to leave one family and join another. It is not considered that such a “price” is the buying of the woman, but rather the only way to express this gratitude as the woman will potentially rear children and continue the line of the new family, rather than that of her birth family. When we begin to look at marriage as a way to support ourselves in an increasingly global world or as a way to acquire cash or goods, we are all losing something.

While in Botswana, it was often brought to our attention that women are often left in sticky situations when it comes to marriage. Without the means to support for themselves and often for their children, they sometimes end up in unhealthy marriages, or marry young in order to acquire the 3 C's: cell, cash and car. The 3 C's however, are a product of modernization. The problem is poverty, which shouldn't be solved through marriage. Furthermore, this is not just a problem in Botswana; in the U.S we have the same problem. Perhaps, we have simply stopped valuing marriage as a serious commitment that should not be entered into lightly. Especially in the U.S, marriage is often seen as only being taken “seriously” by conservatives in the battle against gay marriage.

Another consideration that is vital in comparing Botswana and the U.S is through the changes in child-raising. In Botswana, the shift has been from a village raising a child to a mother raising a child. This may not seem to be a huge shift, but if you think about the loss of father figures, connections and the shift in responsibility- it is extreme. During my time in Botswana, Professor Log Raditlhokwa of the University of Botswana, discussed this shift and

6 “Procedures Relating to Marriage and Divorce.”

7 Seitshiro, Kabelo, “Botswana Hit By High Divorce Rate in 2010.,” *The Sunday Standard*, May 11, 2010. Accessed July 2012, <http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=9219&>

how mothers have not been prepared to raise male children, which has been thought to, in turn, lead to a lot of discipline issues. In the U.S the shift has, once again been more gradual and in some ways dated, but has been away from families' and communities (in some cases) raising children, to single or divorced parents or children (in some respects) raising themselves. Just as in Botswana, we are faced with discipline issues in the U.S . A year or so ago while in my hometown I ran into an teacher at my elementary school, who described to me the increase in disciplinary problems, of which there were very few when I was young. It is a question simply begging for an answer. While a range of answers has been posited, including the impact of video-games or violent television programming, we don't have a real answers as to why. Again, it seems that we should be looking to our similarities, rather than our differences, in order to answer questions such as these in this time of globalization.

The AIDS Crisis

This analysis would not be complete if the AIDS crisis was not considered. When we consider country development and statistics, we are left only with a surface level understanding of how this virus has affected people around the world. While the country of Botswana's statistics demonstrates that their crisis is greater, a fact indisputable, it is important to consider that with a closer look both of our countries, regardless of attitudes, have allowed this virus to remain undiscussed in most facets of life. Furthermore, our individualism in the U.S has not protected our at-risk populations, nor offered free ARVs (Anti-Retro Viral medications), and while a kinship system may feed stigma, our individualism leaves us apathetic to those populations that are affected similarly to the people of Botswana.

Previously, Botswana had the second highest AIDS infection rate in the world; in 2009 about 300,000 aged 15 and over were estimated to be living with the virus.⁸ However, the government of Botswana has responded with vigor, by providing free ARVs to those who have tested positive for the virus; as of 2010, 93% of those in need of treatment are receiving it.⁹ This is an extraordinary response, however the fight is far from over. The state has fashioned for itself a goal to eliminate new cases of AIDS by 2016, the 50th anniversary of its independence; this will require a more vigorous prevention program.¹⁰

During my stay in Botswana I was witness to several attempts to break the silence and taboo surround HIV/AIDS by raising the issue out of the darkness into the light of every-day life. During a village meeting a woman living with the virus spoke to us about the steps her group was taking to help stop the spread of HIV by breaking the silence. The University of Botswana campus is riddled with large signs drawing attention to the problem of AIDS and sexual health. One of the signs read: "Thinking about getting tested for HIV is a good start, but getting tested is even better. Visit Tebelopele on campus to access the service." During a primary school visit I flipped through many of the books for children about age 9-10 and in books, ranging in topics from agriculture to science, AIDS is a topic of discourse.

One way in which Botswana and the United States have both responded strongly and had much success is in reducing the transmission of AIDS from mother to child. Previously Botswana

8 "HIV & AIDS in Botswana," Avert, <http://www.avert.org/aids-botswana.htm>

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

had a rate of transmission of 35%, which has dropped to 3%.¹¹ In the United States, the number of babies infected with HIV has dropped from from approximately 896 cases in 1992 to 38 cases in 2006.¹²

In Botswana, the population most at risk of contracting the AIDS virus is women, while in the United States those considered to be most at risk are both Black and Latino populations, as well as gay men; however, poverty is also a serious factor in the United States affecting individuals at higher rates regardless of race.¹³ This demonstrates how very similar our two countries and ways of living are. In Botswana, women are some of the most, if not the most, marginalized. Women are more often impoverished than men and women hold very few of the positions of power. Thus, both Botswana and the United States need to consider our impoverished communities, as they are at a higher risk.

Considering our similarities, it is important to also consider how we are different and how those differences in this battle could compliment one-another in order to help us all. In Botswana, a still present kinship network has negatively affected eliminating stigma. When everyone knows everyone else's business and people are unwilling to receive government funded food baskets to avoid stigma, there is a serious problem. However, in the U.S the lack of such a close-knit network and presence of extreme individualism has left us apathetic to those populations, especially the poor, of which those in power are not a part. Thus, it seems as though if we could work together, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of both our cultures, we might be able to find more fitting solutions.

Women & The Girl Child

Women remain the largest group, encompassing about half the earth's population, still struggling with marginalization, and thus hold a unique place in any comparative analysis. The place of women in an individualistic society, considering a traditional kinship system's patriarchal nature is definitely preferential, however, this does not discount similarities and the fact that both systems need work in this arena and could benefit from working together.

In Botswana, women are more vulnerable to poverty and HIV/AIDS; the virus specifically has reversed decades of feminist work by placing women back into poverty (without work or school) and firmly into gendered roles of poverty, sexual violence and impoverished care-giving roles.¹⁴ Within a traditional kinship system especially, women are “second-rate” with fewer rights, as the system is highly patriarchal. As modernization has taken root in Botswana, laws to protect women and promote equality have been placed on the books; examples include the Marriage Amendment in 2001, setting the marital age to 18 and the Abolishment of Marital Power in 2004, establishing equality of the spouses. However, many of these laws do not reach all women, especially in rural areas.

In the U.S it is true that a lot of progress has been regarding women's rights and empowerment, yet there is still a lot to do especially while a presidential candidate's wife claims

11 “HIV & AIDS in Botswana,” Avert, <http://www.avert.org/aids-botswana.htm>

12 “HIV & AIDS in the United States of America,” Avert, <http://www.avert.org/america.htm#contentTable0>

13 “HIV & AIDS in the United States of America.” / “HIV & AIDS in Botswana.”

14 Dube, Musa, “HIV+ Feminisms, Postcoloniality and the Global AIDS Crisis,” *Cross Cultural Theologies: Another World Is Possible: Spiritualities and Religions of Darker Peoples*, (London: Equinox Publishing LTD, 2009): 145-146p

that women should be paid less than men because men have been in the job market longer. We expect women have the same rights as men in the United States, and in many ways they do, however, we have still failed to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, and more often than we care to admit a woman is still paid less than a man for the same work. Our modernization has been paced, the fight has been in progress longer and yet true equality has not been reached for women.

As part of an already marginalized group: women, the girl child in Botswana is a serious concern. Throughout my time in Botswana the subject of the girl child arose in many conversations and lectures. Often, the girl child is more affected by the socioeconomic situation than her male counterpart. Many girls have to look after siblings while their mothers go to work, or drop out of school either so that scarce resources can be used to send boys or to care for the sick and dying. (often those infected with the AIDS virus).¹⁵ Girl children may be subjected to sexual violence, or forced into child marriage for a bride price and consequently experience ostracizing conditions such as fistula.¹⁶ Furthermore, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among young women aged between 15 and 19 years old appears to be much higher than for young men.¹⁷

Professor Log Raditlhokwa expressed the specific significance of the situation of the girl child in Botswana by describing how she can “be raped by anyone.” While this may seem extreme, there are several cases of female children being victims of sexual assault, including rape by those in power – even their male teachers, and it can be assumed there have been cases that have never come to the surface. In Unity Dow's *Far and Beyon'* the case of the girl child is called to the attention of any reader, with a plot focused on a young girl child, Mosa – a victim of her male teacher.¹⁸ While in Dow's story there is some justice for Mosa, the most disturbing fact is in real life there may be a complete lack of justice. In real life where the assault is made public the only “punishment” has often been moving the perpetrator to another school. During Marty Legwaila from the Department of Women's Affairs, she even mentioned a case in which an HIV positive teacher known to be abusing female students was simply moved. During my time in Botswana, one of the facts that stuck with me was from the Stepping Stones presentation: due to the presence of kinship networks, which places value on the group over the individual, in cases of incest, often by an uncle abusing a young girl, the girl is moved away to live with other relatives and the actual problem is never addressed, i.e the uncle is never held accountable.

In the United States also, the girl child is considered part of an at-risk group, however, just as in Botswana there is a lot of silence surrounding sexual assault. RAINN, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, found that 7% of girls in grades 5-8, 12% of girls in grades 9-12 said they had been sexually abused, while girls ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.¹⁹ And this is only based on reported incidents. As part of our individualistic outlook, young girls in the U.S are expected to look out for themselves, and not do anything that may “invite” assault, such as wearing revealing clothing. While such accusations cannot be legally used in court anymore, the mind-set is still present.

15 Unicef/ The African Child Policy Forum, “What Children & Youth Think: Botswana,” *Research Solutions LTD* (2006): 13, <http://www.uneca.org/adfv/polls/botswana.pdf>

16 Unicef/ The African Child Policy Forum, “What Children & Youth Think: Botswana,” 13

17 Unicef/ The African Child Policy Forum, “What Children & Youth Think: Botswana,” 15

18 Dow, Unity, *Far and Beyon'*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2000)

19 “Who Are The Victims?” RAINN, <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-victims>

The short-comings of treatment of women and especially the girl child are exacerbated in Botswana due, at least in part, to Botswana's transitional stage status. But it is important to remember that in the U.S the girl child is still at a "target" and women are still not "equal" to men. In this arena, both individualism and kinship have short-comings, which without analysis and consideration will both fail to ensure the equality between the sexes this world so desperately needs.

Faith

Faith, spirituality or lack thereof, have an ever present and important place in all of our lives. It can have a dramatic impact on how we perceive the world and how we participate in it, and is thus, an important consideration when discussing a comparison between individualistic and kinship attitudes. Attitudes reveal themselves here, while the traditional spirituality of Botswana focuses on relationships, individualistic western religions focus on salvation.

It became clear during my time in Botswana that no-one would consider themselves to be an atheist, or at least, they wouldn't say such a thing. Musa Dube affirmed the sentiment of a scholar of Southern Africa who described her country and her people as "incurably religious." This is not to say that everyone is Christian, Muslim or any number of organized faiths, but rather that there are at least religious undertones: traditional spirituality.

When one goes to a traditional doctor, this doctor is "spiritual," and seeks to diagnose you through considering all of your relationships, even your relationship with the planet. Without healthy relationships, one cannot be healthy. While this can be dangerous in light of the AIDS crisis and other serious diseases, there is merit in considering our health in this kinship-oriented way. We all know how problems in our relationships can make up feel physically ill at times.

Western religion and prosperity gospel specifically- for example of the Pentecostal Church- in contrast especially breeds individualism and places value on what can be considered the 'negative' aspects of modernization, i.e, money. Pentecostalism has paved the way for people to avoid truly connecting with their fellows, encouraging individualism at a basic level. It creates a situation in which one is saved by how much one gives, monetarily. While many faiths preach volunteerism, providing soup kitchens or sleeping quarters to the homeless, Pentecostals do not, and do not need to. In fact, doing so would go against everything outlined by Pentecostalism, for the one is saved then and there based on their faith and contribution. While people place their faith and their money in these churches, the leaders become rich and give nothing more to the community.

While many Americans find fault with the religious presence of other countries, they fail to recognize that there is an extreme religious presence here in the United States, especially compared to other countries in the Western world. In the United States, while we proclaim a separation of church and state, we are certainly stretching the truth. Faith in the United States certainly impacts our leadership and our laws. In California, the right of homosexual couples to be married was recently overthrown by the votes of religious conservatives, while abortion remains a hot topic, contested often by conservative religious groups. Furthermore, there has never been an atheist or simply unreligious president; every president has had some religious affiliation.

Crisis of Morality

While in Botswana, Professor Log Raditlhokwa, lectured on child development and the crisis in the family. One of the main themes in his lecture was the idea of a moral crisis in Botswana, which fixed itself in my mind as something I wanted to come back to. For me, it was, in part, interconnected with mythologist, scholar and lecturer Joseph Campbell's position concerning the breakdown of mythical knowledge. Joseph Campbell did extensive work with comparative mythology before his death in 1987, demonstrating to his students and to the world our shared roots and need for mythology. According to Campbell, mythological studies were not only a part of many people's upbringing in the past, but was at the heart of higher learning. Thus the stories were in the minds of people- stories with similar roots and plots, for example, of the hero journey. People were able to see how these stories were connected to events/things in their own lives and gain perspective.²⁰ Campbell posited that losing these "bits of ancient times" which supported life, built civilizations and informed religions linking us all, leaves us at a loss of sorts. What we are left with instead are those stories that do surround us, especially in the media, disconnected and lacking depth.

For Professor Raditlhokwa, rapid development in the post-independence era lead to the dislocation of families and breakdown of strong family/kinship ties in Botswana. This rapid development lead also to a rapid breakdown of traditional patriarchy, which for the United States and other Western regions has been gradual and like in Botswana still incomplete. This created several problems. First, men were held less responsible in this new system for their families, especially children. Previously, the village elders held the younger men responsible for taking care of their families; there was an expectation that if you had formed a relationship with another woman in addition to your wife, then you had a duty to that woman as well. The man was expected to take care of not only their wife and children, but their lover or second wife and any children fathered from that relationship. However, today men in Botswana are not encouraged any more than in the past to be faithful and have relationships outside their marriage, but are not held to the same standard, which is not only irresponsible, but is dangerous considering the HIV/AIDS virus.

Secondly, there is the aforementioned mentioned shift from villages raising children to mothers raising children while men worked new jobs often outside of the villages, often in urban areas. He puts forth the argument that mothers were then faced with a new problem: raising boys, something they hadn't had to do alone in the kinship/village system. As previously mentioned, he attributes this to the increasing problem of discipline with male children in school. A third problem in this increasingly modern world in Botswana is the place of men; as previously described they began to take work outside of the village and as such, often became and become victims of economic abuse and labor exploitation by an increasingly foreign dominated economy. While this is no excuse for gender-based violence, this kind of exploitation can be incredibly emasculating. All three of these problems demonstrate a moral crisis, stemming from rapid modernization.

This is comparable to the current status in the United States in which there is a crisis in, for lack of better phraseology, knowing how to raise our children in an increasingly modern world. Within this framework it is difficult to pin our crisis on any one factor, but rather it seems

²⁰ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 2

to be a combination of a lack of discipline in the home, many parents' desire to be their child's 'friend' rather than their parent, a lack of understanding how to incorporate technology into our childrens' lives and in many cases single-parent households. In the U.S, we too are struggling with discipline problems in our schools, and a rapidly disappearing “blue-collar” job market, as well as a high unemployment rate.

Recognizing the similarities between our moral crises', their roots in modernization and perhaps even an understanding about what we have left behind in abandoning myth demonstrates to us again how similar we are in spite of difference. It demonstrates again, a need to connect and work together and perhaps relearn things we have allowed to become lost. When two countries which may seem drastically different can have such similar problems, it can be exceptionally beneficial to look at them together, what they share in order to find resolutions.

A Shared Future

There are pros and cons to both kinship and individualism, and their differences are just as important as their similarities. But, through our analysis of these similarities and differences, there is room for a partnership in order to create a better future. While kinship networks create bonds among people and encourage community, in practice they have also fostered sexism. While individualism has spawned creativity and encouraged us to be our best, it has also bred apathy and a lack of community.

Capitalism, modernization and technological advances have fed a new narcissistic way of life clearly apparent in main-stem society in the U.S. Many people spend more inside technology, than they spend hanging out with our friends or family, chatting over coffee or engaging in some other sort of social activity. Several sources have tried to call attention to this growing phenomena in which the ease of connectivity, by cell-phones, email and social networking sites, has rendered people increasingly less connected – examples including Sherry Turkle's *Connected, but alone?* Ted Talk and local news.²¹

While currently the United States and Botswana can still be easily differentiated and can still be said to encompass different attitudes, we are quickly venturing toward an age in which we are not all that different. Despite our differences, if we both don't stop to consider where we are heading and what we may be too easily giving up, it will be lost to an ultimately silent death.

Conclusions

It is all too easy to view the problems of other nations', peoples and groups simply as 'other.' As outsiders we may be able to isolate problems and propose ways of dealing with issues such as HIV or sexual violence in a way that may be overlooked from within, but it can be much harder to see how similar we are. What I've outlined in this paper is not a problem merely in Botswana or just the United States or even simply both countries, but the issues that we are faced with as a global community. It seems, as human beings we may not be fully equipped to deal soundly with modernization, increased digital connectivity and the technological advances we are rapidly achieving and have simply allowed certain important elements of human existence to fall

21 Sherry Turkle: *Connected, but alone?* http://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together.html

to the wayside. We must be willing to look at ourselves under the microscope and see both our successes and failures, while recognizing the place for technology and the place for human interaction.

While in Botswana I felt a profound sense of community and comfort, as well as a profound sense of 'otherness.' But this 'otherness' was complex for, in spite of how different we may outwardly be, I could be welcomed unlike in a way other than I have felt any place in United States. We could sit down together and truly welcome each-other as brothers and sisters in hopes of forming everlasting bonds and a sense of understanding. It may be merely my belief, but we are all interconnected and the people of Botswana may be more in touch with that than we are here in the States.

During my time in Botswana, one of the most touching activities was planting trees at a newly formed school for children with learning disabilities. I simply love nature, especially trees, but was touched by Musa Dube's hugs and thanks for my care and enthusiasm for throughout the day. After planting all the trees she described something I have always felt, an interconnectedness with the earth and these trees and the need to pass our positive energy to them while we plant them. This, for me, is a stunning example of what I think many of us are missing in the U.S. While all people of Botswana may not share her belief, I feel it is a belief shared by more of the people of Botswana, than the people of the U.S, and is something we need to hold on to.

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