

Building Cohesion among Bakgatla Male
Adolescents: A Performance as Research
Approach

Written

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Acknowledgments:

In this journey towards the Son I was guided greatly by my art, my mentors and loved ones who have been there to support me. I hope that the group carries on with their journey and are able to find something to help guide them further in their journey of life. Something I hope they have gained from the journey we took together or will gain from us travelling further, as our process is still not over. I have gained wisdom and guidance from them, so I am still committed to carrying on working with the group. But I have faith that they will travel further, on other journeys, and find guidance from others including themselves.

I would like to thank my dear friend and co-researcher Lancelord Tabona Mokgwathi, my friend and colleague Gao Lemmenyane, my dear parents Mr. & Mrs. Motshwane, my supervisor and mentor Warren Nebe, then finally, but mostly I would like to thank the group of young men that I worked with.

Abstract

This practice led research explores masculine identity construction among young Bakgatla men. The research consists of a process-orientated performance intervention and a written component. I worked with a small group of young men of the Bakgatla tribe in the village of Mochudi, Botswana. Together we explored Masculine Identity, rites of passage and what it means to be a man within their community.

This report begins within an introduction that frames the study. Then it proceeds in episodes until the overall conclusion. The first episode gives further context of the study by explaining the problem statement and rationale. Then the second episode goes on to give the aims of the study and how it was originally planned before commencement. In the third episode I discuss the theory relevant to my field of study. The following episode then goes into the pragmatics of the research and the analysis of key findings. The last episode I foreground my findings and the limitations of my study and suggest a possible way forward. The method of research used is practise-based research and the problems the study addresses are those of ethics versus aesthetics when applying theatre to a community setting and also the issue of the young men of the Bakgatla tribe being marginalised when it comes to dealing with issues about them.

The practice led research demonstrated how a facilitator can use heightened performance effectively as a way of mirroring and deepening community-based interventions. Evidence was found that such a method could be more effective in finding a balance between ethics and aesthetics, resolving an on-going problem in other applied theatre methods that use performance processes of personal narratives to assist individuals and groups. This study also foregrounds knowledge about young men of the Bakgatla tribe and conclude that they should be given a space, similar to the kgotla, to confront and dialogue problems that face men in a contemporary Botswana.

Key Terms

Performance

Masculinity

Narrative

Identity

Practices as research

Rites of Passage