SEEKING THE OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT OF KIKUYU WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF

TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES IN MAAI MAHIU, KENYA

BY

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Abstract

Sandra Bem's (1993) Enculturated Lens Theory provides a helpful model for beginning to understand the development and socialization of sex roles within cultures by emphasizing the importance of gender schemas and lenses of gender polarization, androcentrism, and biological essentialism. Other studies have used this theory to observe sex roles within Appalachia (Rezek, 2010), South Asian female immigrants (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000), and Kenya as a whole (Simiyu, 2007). Little is known, however, about the socialization of sex roles and phenomenological identity development in rural women from the largest ethnic group in Kenya, the Kikuyu. This study provides a qualitative examination of sex roles from the perspective of Kikuyu women in rural Maai Mahiu, Kenya. A critical feminist lens was used to understand and gently challenge issues of stagnancy related to sex roles and expectations for men and women. Data from structured observations, semi-structured interviews, and consultation with community leaders and local non-governmental organization (NGO) members were integrated to ensure validity and reliability of data. Fifteen Kikuyu women were interviewed, and their transcripts were later coded for themes using critical and interpretive analysis methodologies. From the data emerged several sub-themes and categories falling under and providing further description of three meta-themes: 1) Internalized Gender Expectations; 2) Sex-role Socialization; and, 3) Goal Attainment. Wolcott's model of data transformation (1994) helped guide processes of description, analysis, and interpretation of results. It is ultimately concluded that female roles and responsibilities in Maai Mahiu are perceived to be inferior to those of men, which leads to a belief that women are of lower social value and tend to be treated accordingly. These beliefs appear to be slowly changing over time

through the increased value of and access to education, protection of women from female

genital mutilation practices, and greater visibility of women in Kenya due to a new Constitution.

Limitations of the current study are discussed, and directions for future research are provided.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

"In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery.

In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism.

We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge

will be the struggle for gender equality in the developing world."

(Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, authors of *Half the Sky:*
Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide (2009))

The field of counseling psychology has long been concerned about fostering optimal

development and functioning in individuals. The goal of optimal development is for individuals

to be able to freely set and work toward goals and values of personal and cultural importance

without discrimination or fear of repercussion. The unique social and psychological experiences

of females within our society have become a matter of special interest for many psychologists,

resulting in the development of the American Psychological Association, Division of Counseling

Psychology's Committee on Women (Meara & Harmon, 1989). In the 1970s and 1980s, after

Western women drew attention to embedded sexism within everyday life, many psychologists

started trying to understand and help prevent the persistent, and often subtle, discrimination

toward women. One way of promoting change in society's perceptions of women has been to

alter the previously androcentric nature of psychotherapy, psychological research, and theory

development (Fitzgerald & Nutt, 1986). One of the most common places for researching and

encouraging the optimal development of women is for those in the workforce (Fitzgerald,

Fassinger & Betz, 1995).

Sex roles, defined as behaviors, expectations, and role sets that are culturally and

socially regarded as appropriate either to males or to females (Unger, 1979), are of great

importance in understanding the diversity in social experiences among men and women.

Comprehensive studies (ex: Bem, 1993; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Wood & Eagly, 2002) have shown that many social, behavioral, and personality differences between men and women are not, as previously thought, strictly evolutionarily or biologically determined. Feminist psychologists and other social scientists have therefore made it their mission to publicly dispute overt attitudes and acts of sexism which frequently are the result of society's belief that biology determines a man and woman's abilities, skills, and roles (Meara & Harmon, 1989; Rose & Rose, 2000).

Recent advancements in feminist thought and industry have allowed American women to seek equality in personal, educational, and occupational pursuits. However, prior to the advancements, the division of roles and responsibilities based solely on sex was an automatic process. Historical accounts have shown that hunter-gatherers and other tribal cultures across the world all divided responsibilities based on sex (Silberschmidt, 1999). Explanations for that division are currently of great debate. Evolutionary psychology perspectives suggest that it was the substantial demands required for the daily functioning of a family which made it adaptive for men and women to divide responsibilities based on abilities (Buss, 1995); however, social constructionist explanations describe the same division of labor as the result of learning and exhibiting "gender-appropriate" behaviors and language in society (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Evolutionary (also referred to as essentialist) theories view sex roles as fixed within an individual; whereas, the various sociological theories of gender conceptualize them as socially constructed products of the culture (Bohan, 1993; Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The existence of rigid sex roles and their requisite behaviors promoted growth of stigmatizing conceptions that women are submissive and men are dominant (Eagly, 2004).

This framework significantly influenced the social order for which societies have been

organized, and has since been difficult to overcome.

It has always seemed essential that children be socialized into their sex roles and help

the family with their prescribed duties as early as possible for the maximum functioning of the

child socially, as well as the family as a whole. Sex role socialization is defined as the process by

which children and adults learn and adopt the mindsets and behaviors associated with their

gender (O'Neil, 1981a). Children are socialized from birth to display gender appropriate

emotions, to engage in and enjoy only certain activities and responsibilities, and to manage

body language and communication in the gender congruent manner, etc. Various foundational

theories have attempted to explain how children learn what is expected of them in their

respective cultures as boys or girls. Social Learning Theory proposes that one learns gendered

behavior directly through reinforcement and punishments, and indirectly by observing and

imitating their same-sex parent (Mischel, 1970). Psychoanalytic identification theories describe

a complex development of castration anxiety for boys and penis envy for girls after a shocking

awareness of genital differences between sexes which eventually leads to identification with

their same-sex parent (Freud, 1949). Social Cognitive Theories suggest that children are

constantly constructing knowledge (or schemas) of modeled sex-typed behaviors as a result of

an inherent desire for self-categorization and to match one's gender conception (Bandura,

1989). Evolutionary psychological theories explain sex-differentiated behavior as automatic,

psychological dispositions ingrained in the human species as a result of sexual selection

pressures and adaptation to primitive conditions (therefore there is no socialization process;

Buss, 1995). Regardless of how each account defines the construction of sex roles, all theorists

agree that the mechanism for creating sex-typed behaviors and beliefs is strong and enduring.

Traditional sex roles and expectations are rarely challenged in many societies.

However, since the Industrial Revolutions in the majority of Western and more developed cultures, several daily responsibilities have become less burdensome and the traditional division of responsibilities based on sex has deteriorated as a result. It appears that sex roles which had been adopted and exhibited by many individuals became malleable. Women were less tied to the home and gradually began to adopt more equal expectations and views of men and women. For example, the availability of education afforded to many contemporary Western women unlocked opportunities for alternative roles, allowing independence to the extent that women desired both personally and professionally.

Additional evidence for the loosening of sex role boundaries can be found in females' increasing presence in the United States work force, growing from only 19 percent of women working in 1900 (U.S. Census, 1975) to 60 percent in 1999 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution passed in 1920 and various anti-sexual discrimination laws have also promoted equal treatment of men and women in public spheres. Increasing availability and acceptance of contraceptives and sex education in the U.S. now afford women greater control over their bodies and in their lives (Rubin, 2010). Although a slow process, many women have become empowered to move beyond their originally prescribed responsibilities, which is now reflected in the modern female identity. Where such a shift has not been evidenced is in many communities where resources, education, and money are limited.

Significance and Context of Problem

      Kenya is an example of a nation that hosts groups of people who endorse a wide spectrum of lifestyles and values, from very traditional to modern. Its capital city, Nairobi is a rapidly expanding urban area with many areas of growth. Although in the heart of a poverty-stricken country, the capital city of Nairobi has become one of the most important trading, industry, and commerce centers of East Africa (Cities of the world: Nairobi, n.d.). Most of the Nairobi residents have access to a wide range of resources and opportunities for employment and education (National Council for Population and Development, 2011). On the contrary, dwellers of both urban slum and rural areas typically live in poverty without access to modern luxuries and resources of electricity, plumbing, internet, and opportunities for education (National Coordinating Agency for Population and Development, 2009).

      The gap in resources between rural areas in Kenya and Nairobi mimics the equally large disparity in sex role expectations in these areas. In comparison to rural Kenya, individuals living in more developed, urban areas experience substantially greater access to technology and education, and are found to have more equal roles across sexes (Friedman & Todd, 1994). Additionally, women in urban areas report higher usage of contraceptives (53.1% in urban areas, and 43.1% in rural areas of Kenya; NCPD, 2011). Because of the large number of job opportunities in Nairobi, and poverty in most rural areas, families and individuals from across Kenya are drawn to relocate in the heart of Nairobi or its nearby slums. The migration of millions of individuals from Kenya's forty ethnic groups to Nairobi has resulted in the blending of tribal customs within a community, and as a result has lessened migrants' ability or disposition to emphasize their traditional cultural practices (Friedman & Todd, 1994). In tribal

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cultures, however, where traditional customs are held sacred and passed on through generations, rigid roles for men and women remain unquestioned. While much of the world progresses in social norms proportionately with their exposure to technological and agricultural advancements, many poor Kenyan communities remain static in their social behaviors and expectations consistent with their minimal exposure to worldly innovations.

Relevance to Counseling Psychology

Cross-cultural efforts to understand and assist individuals experiencing various forms of discrimination or other social hardship are consistent with counseling psychology's aim to encourage the optimal development of individuals. It is believed by psychologist P. Paul Heppner (1997) that "Counseling psychology can play an important role in building a global village that helps people improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, modify maladaptive environments, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives" (p. 7). In order for counseling psychology to advance significantly as a science of cross-cultural human behavior and affect, it is imperative that psychologists around the world collaborate to understand psychological development, and intervene accordingly. This call to action is referred to as a movement of internationalizing counseling psychology and will lead to an enhanced ability to incorporate varied worldviews and clinical lenses in work with all clients (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003).

Counseling psychology as a field is becoming actively involved in many capacities to research and assist citizens from several countries across the world. Many times this work involves studying counseling approaches and techniques within colonized cultures or those from which North America receives a large number of immigrants (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003).

It is also believed, however, that to be a truly multicultural field, counseling psychology must be committed to social justice initiatives which cannot be addressed solely by providing culturally sensitive counseling (Vera & Speight, 2003). A social justice perspective involves attending to societal concerns such as justice, equality, self-determination, and distribution of resources (Bell, 1997). Individuals from developing countries may benefit significantly from psychologists in such a social justice role because of their lack of available resources and consequent difficulty in reaching their desired optimal functioning.

An increasing number of graphic and disturbing news stories about the oppression of women in countries across the world have recently shed light on a global problem related to the low value of women in many cultures. American media's recent focus on sex trafficking, violence against women, and the overall social and cultural acceptance of these practices in their countries provide evidence for the need of counseling psychologists to become more involved with international advocacy efforts. Being aware of the unjust treatment of women throughout the world also allows counseling psychologists to increase their sensitivity toward cultural issues and sex roles in therapy. These efforts are aligned with Leong and Ponterotto's (2003) goals for the internationalization of counseling psychology.

Social justice issues in such underserved populations have not been a significant focus of counseling psychologists' attention to date. This is an important domain of research for counseling psychologists to pursue in order to identify specific needs for such an understudied population. Rubin and Rubin (2005) identify that many cultural norms and values are often taken for granted when they become everyday life for insiders, and that utilizing outsider inquiry in cross-cultural research can help uncover nuances for in-depth conversation and

examination.   Specific inspection of different cultural practices and mores can provide a greater understanding of how cultural contexts influence human behavior, and can give insight into the relevance of psychological paradigms in an international setting rather than just in the West (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003).

The majority of cross-cultural or international research conducted by counseling psychologists has utilized quantitative, positivist research paradigms (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). Such designs seek black-and-white answers to specific questions of interest, and may not be sensitive to barriers of language or differing cultural meanings. Leong and Ponterotto (2003), in their proposal for internationalizing counseling psychology, advocate that the adoption of constructivist and critical theory paradigms will assist in a broader understanding of cultural perspectives on mental health issues.

Research Goals

An individual's access to resources and education can impact feelings of power and control in their daily life. This research is motivated by an understanding of the link between poverty and feelings of powerlessness. In a sense, this is action research; I conducted this study with the objective of improving quality of life by helping Kenyan women to identify barriers to reaching their maximum potential. I specifically chose to conduct a qualitative study of women from a poor, rural settlement in Kenya called Maai Mahiu to understand their lived experiences and perspectives on the construction of sex roles within Kikuyu (tribally referred to as Gikuyu) culture. Because of the scarcity of literature on sex roles within Kikuyu tribe, the first goal of the study was to understand the extent of the current disparity between how men and women are valued within Kikuyu culture. Second, cultural and social influences were examined for

their contribution to the construction of the Kikuyu female identity. Third, potential barriers or

challenges for women in setting and achieving personal and occupational goals were identified.

Last, I attempt to synthesize evidence for potential mechanisms for social change.

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

Critical Feminist Research Paradigm

Sociologists and anthropologists frequently enter countries such as Kenya to study tribal customs and everyday life for men and women. Many times qualitative, ethnographic approaches are utilized to gain a broad understanding of particular cultural customs or behaviors. These researchers' comprehensive conceptualization of cultural behavior provides a fascinating overview of the cultures of interest. However, by utilizing the research and clinical skills of a counseling psychologist, information about Kikuyu women's lives, experiences, and perceptions are aggregated and presented from a feminist and advocacy approach. Using this approach to data collection and analysis allowed me to focus on inherent strengths of the individuals and the community while also identifying areas in need of further assistance or empowerment.

The field of counseling psychology has become increasingly interested in understanding the role of culture in an individual's identity and well-being. As clinicians and researchers have concerned themselves with issues of diversity in culture and sexuality in recent decades, the field of counseling psychology has broadened its scope to understand the complex experiences of individuals with diverse backgrounds (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003). An area that has received less attention by psychologists is in the construction, maintenance, and implications of rigid sex roles in lesser-developed countries. Maai Mahiu, Kenya is one example of a colonized and slowly progressing village in which little is known about the changing sex roles and their ramifications on society. Understanding this phenomenon can enhance counseling

psychologists' conceptualization of the current disparity in responsibilities and social value for men and women, as well as how the inequalities impact a woman's self-identity and future aspirations. If applied, this knowledge would increase counseling psychologists' cultural sensitivity and awareness as they assist women from similar developing cultures with mental health or vocational needs.

Grounded in critical feminist theory, I conducted this qualitative study for the purpose of uncovering injustices brought about by social inequality in the structure of sex roles. In addition to identifying culturally sensitive mental health or vocational interventions for Kikuyu women, a driving force for this study was to help them identify and reach their optimal potential. Deeper than simply understanding and describing a phenomenon, critical qualitative research seeks to "critique and challenge, to transform and empower" (Merriam et al., 2002, p. 327). Critical research operates under the assumption that there is inherent inequality in the distribution of power in society, and that people unconsciously reinforce the status quo which results in marginalization and oppression of those without power (Merriam et al., 2002). Because inequalities have become ingrained within society, questioning about those "normal" structures is important for a full understanding of the power inequality. Critical research requires that injustices be exposed in order to facilitate necessary social change (Crotty, 1998).

Tenets of critical research methodology have helped to inform the feminist research movement. Feminist research raises questions about societal, historical, and cultural assumptions about women which have led to their various forms of oppression (Merriam et al., 2002). It enlightens people about every day practices within the government and community which reinforce sexism and gender-blindness (Sarantakos, 2005). There is a strong belief in

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feminist research that each individual is an expert in explaining his or her experiences and

defining the meanings of them.   Because of the postmodern and liberal nature of most feminist

work, there exists no distinct definition for what constitutes feminist perspectives or research

methodology. Common characteristics of feminist researchers include: 1) rejection of strict

objectivity and acknowledgment of subjectivity in research questions and results; 2) adoption

of a political stance on research topics and procedures; 3) emphasis on women's experiences as

indicators of reality; 4) application of an anti-positivistic stance (Sarantakos, 2005).   Anti-

positivism, also known as 'interpretivism' or the 'social action approach', views social reality as

consciously and actively created by individuals. It rejects objective approaches to measurement

of human phenomena and instead focuses on capturing the meaning of experiences as they are

constructed by individuals (Hayes, 2000).

By integrating methodology and perspectives from both critical and feminist paradigms,

I specifically attended to the deep-seated sex differences in expectations, goals, and roles in

Maai Mahiu, and analyzed how they are constructed through various cultural and social realms.

I challenged the status quo and focused solely on the perspectives of Kikuyu women. This

effort allowed for the richest possible examination of the female identity and encourages

initiatives for the empowerment and optimal development of women.

Enculturated Lens Theory

Numerous theories have been proposed to explain the development and socialization of

sex roles within cultures (Bandura, 1989; Freud, 1949; Kohlberg, 1966; Mischel, 1970). Each

theory describes a slightly different perspective on the influence of social, situational, or

internal cues to the development of a culturally-determined perception of male and female

characteristics. A merger of cognitive-developmental and social-learning theories yields gender

schema theory, Sandra Bem's first published attempt at conceptualizing gender development

(1981). This theory posits that children internalize the lens of gender polarization and thereby

develop conventional, polarized gender schemas for understanding their social reality. In turn,

through metamessages, children learn to judge and live by the cultural definitions of

appropriate gendered behavior. She later incorporated social and historical contexts to

describe the enculturation process of learning gender schemas, and produced what is known as

the enculturated lens theory (Bem, 1993).

To understand the construction of sex roles and the inequality in expectations for men

and women passed cross-culturally through generations, Sandra Bem's (1993) enculturated lens

theory provides an insightful framework. The process of enculturation is guided by cultural

beliefs, values, and practices which influence a child's internalization and socialization of sex

roles (Bem, 1993). The enculturated lens theory asserts that culture dictates what is considered

acceptable thought and behavior, called lenses, which are embedded in society's values, norms,

and in people's mindsets (O'Brien, 2009). The strength and power surrounding these lenses

allows societies to pass on values and norms for future generations.

Androcentrism, biological essentialism, and gender polarization (i.e., the belief that

males and females are complete opposites) are the lenses through which society views sex

roles, according to Bem's (1993) enculturated lens theory. The inclusion of the androcentrism

lens not only allows for an understanding of society as passively gender polarized, but now

assumes that individuals become active collaborators in the social development of male power.

Androcentrism is the concept that men are the superior sex, and that their experience is

considered the norm against which all female experiences deviate. Along with gender

polarization, androcentrism is automatically embedded in social institutions and everyday

human interactions, leading men and women into different and unequal life circumstances.

During the process of enculturation, individuals internalize the cultural lenses which are

constantly being presented, and become motivated to construct an identity consistent with

society's norms (Bem, 1993).

Biological essentialism is the third lens. This lens helps explain society's belief in the

natural and inevitable nature of gender differences as a result of many theorists

overemphasizing biological sex differences and underemphasizing the historical and social

construction of gender roles (Bem, 1993). The third lens justifies society's adoption of gender

polarization and androcentrism by explaining gender differences as biologically driven (O'Brien,

2009). Biological essentialism is the last key in Bem's model for understanding the construction

and reproduction of rigid gender roles.

The utilization of enculturated lens theory is a helpful way for understanding polarized

gendered behavior within social order. Studies examining masculine-atypical behavior in Kenya

(Simiyu, 2007), gender role patterns for young mothers in Appalachia (Rezek, 2010), and

socialization and acculturation issues for South Asian female immigrants (Talbani & Hasanali,

2000) have successfully utilized tenets of gender schema theory or enculturated lens theory for

understanding gendered phenomena in everyday social behaviors and practices.

Sex Roles and Sex Role Strain

With sex roles so salient within societies, counseling psychologists have sought to

understand circumstances in which individuals persistently attempt to achieve. Striving in such

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a way has resulted in what Garnets and Pleck (1979) refer to as sex-role strain. Sex-role strain is

defined as a discrepancy between an individual's perceived personal characteristics and their

expectations derived from sex-role norms. The problem with sex roles, from a socialization

perspective, is that a rigid set of standards is indiscriminately applied to a variety of individuals

with varied potentialities. When individuals experience a poor fit with the standards,

psychological maladjustment and personal self-devaluing may result. Ultimately, conflict

between personal characteristics and sex roles restricts the individual's ability to actualize

his/her full potential (O'Neil, 1981a; O'Neil, 2008).

Although past women's movements have made tremendous strides in minimizing

sexism and rigid sex roles, an overarching "Feminine Mystique" stereotype that women should

find "fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love"

(Friedan, 1963, p. 43) has been present for decades. This perception of women continues to be

portrayed in several contemporary magazines, reality television shows, and other media,

objectifying women and reinforcing gendered expectations. Similarly, most males in Western

cultures feel pressured to adhere to standards and value systems set forth by the "Masculine

Mystique", which places emphasis on male power, control, and competition (O'Neil,

1981a). Although originally conceptualized by classical feminist theorists, these fundamental

gendered concepts continued to be utilized and built upon in later analyses of sex roles (Auster

& Ohm, 2000; Bem, 1993; Eagly, 2013).

Both men and women have a variety of reactions to the roles they learn are appropriate

for their sex. Such strict roles can make individuals feel trapped when they are unable to

achieve what they want or express their desired characteristics or behaviors. Individuals must

choose between reluctantly accepting their ascribed roles, adamantly trying to fit into their roles, or pursuing their true selves and managing the personal and societal consequences of their non-conforming behavior. Regardless of how women choose to handle the contrasting external and internal drives, they are implicitly aware of that which is expected of them.

The detrimental effects of society's expectations of females have been shown through a line of research in the West related to a phenomenon called Stereotype Threat. Studies have found that society's low expectations of female students to succeed in areas such as math or science have actually resulted in their underperformance in those areas (Inzlicht, & Schmader, 2012; Schmader, 2010). Some women have such a strong fear of confirming that stereotype that they underperform on tasks in which they had pre-established competence. Such a high level of fear results in distraction and compromises the cognitive systems (i.e., working memory) required for optimal performance (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008). Women who choose to accept their sex roles and believe in the legitimacy of sex differences are more likely to endorse those stereotypes and have more negative self-perceptions (Schmader, Johns, & Barguissau, 2004). A recent study found that a mother's endorsement of gender stereotypes related to math moderated her daughter's vulnerability to stereotype threat (Tomasetto, Romana Alparone, & Cadinu, 2011). This finding provides further evidence for the important role that women play in passing along rigid beliefs about their own sex.

Both men and women have a variety of reactions to the roles they learn are appropriate for their sex. Such strict roles can make individuals feel trapped when they are unable to achieve what they want or express their desired characteristics or behaviors. However, other women prefer to stay within the passive female gender role script rather than pursing

alternative needs or desires. They may reluctantly accept their ascribed roles and abandon any internal drives, adamantly try to fit in with their roles, or pursue their true selves and manage the personal and societal consequences of their non-conforming behavior.

Individuals are at least implicitly aware of that which is expected of them and therefore must choose how to handle the contrasting external and internal drives. The concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) helps explain the compelling force that causes people to either conform or not conform their behaviors and attitudes to their socially prescribed roles. Cognitive dissonance is mental discomfort experienced by an individual who simultaneously attempts to hold contradictory beliefs or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing belief systems. In order to resolve the mental discomfort, individuals must alter or justify their cognitions and behaviors or ignore conflicting information. For example, some women in the West struggling with conflicting internal and external gendered expectations may reduce the value they place on academic achievements and increase the importance of attractiveness and passivity, in congruence with the female gender role script.

Women who pursue certain socially prescribed characteristics, but despite many efforts, are unable to achieve them, may suffer from various negative psychological consequences. Self-objectification, when women continually monitor their physical appearance in order to meet internalized beliefs about beauty and meeting men's sexual desires, is a never-ending battle for many women (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Because many sex roles are aspirational in nature, they can never be fully achieved, which allows women to obsess over the expectations held for them by society and eventually themselves. Women's preoccupation with beauty and thinness in American culture, for example, seems to reinforce certain sex roles

for themselves and future generations. Constantly attempting to attain the unattainable may put women at risk for feelings of hopelessness, depression, and body image problems (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004).

Deviance from society's prescribed sex roles results in both public and private punishment; however it has been found that punishment appears to be more severe for males than females (Eagly, 2013; O'Leary & Donoghue, 1978). Some of the many ways that a male may deviate from traditional male roles are by choosing a female-oriented career, by not asserting his power in relationships or conversation, or by identifying as gay or bisexual. Consequences for these behaviors and/or attitudes may involve being publicly labeled as immature, or effeminate, and privately experiencing dips in self-esteem and strains in relationships (O'Neil, 1981a; O'Neil, 2008). Women who fail to conform to traditional sex roles may be less accepted and held to lower regard by both males and females. For example, when women assert themselves or their opinions instead of being passive or agreeable (as mandated by the female sex role), many times they are labeled as unfeminine or aggressive, or even ignored (Nelson, 2011). This type of sexism is particularly common within the workplace, and results in women not receiving well-deserved promotions or pay increases (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). When care is not taken by women to conform to American standards of beauty and thinness, they are commonly criticized as lazy, eccentric, and possibly believed to be "butch" or lesbian. And although less common in contemporary American society, some judgment is still passed on women who choose to work outside the home instead of raise their own children.

Choices men and women have for dealing with society's prescribed sex roles are numerous. The degree of importance placed on each of the roles within marital, familial, and

occupational realms determines the degree of traditionalism and equality among men and women (Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002). When individuals struggle with finding the appropriate medium for managing internal drives and societal expectations, various private and public consequences may result, thus limiting their ability or willingness to reach their ultimate potential.

Understanding influences of sex roles on the behaviors and attitudes of Western individuals provides a springboard for examining similar concepts within African cultures in which little is known. However, a much different approach is required in order to separate conceptions of gendered behavior in African women from that of American women. Mary Kolawole (2004), a Nigerian professor in African women's studies recommends the application of an approach known as womanism rather than strictly Western feminist approaches to understand African women's realities. Kolawole (2004) stated that "womanism has been a conciliatory gender concept as it emphasizes cultural relevance, the family, motherhood, and the intersection between various forms of oppression, social stratification and marginalization based on race, ethnicity, class and gender" (p. 262). The inclusive womanist approach derives from African women's desires to conjure empowerment from their existing, but uncharted power base instead of attempting to be more like men. What has been found regarding the construction of gender roles or the development of the female identity within various African or Kenyan cultures is described in the following sections.

Historical and Contextual Factors for Consideration

The Kikuyu

The Kikuyu are Kenya's most populous ethnic group, comprising approximately 22% of Kenya's total population (CIA Factbook). They are known for their integral participation in Kenya's struggle for liberation from British imperialism, known as the Mau Mau Rebellion or The Land and Freedom Movement in the 1950s (Countries and their cultures: Gikuyu, 2012). Throughout the time of British rule in Kenya from 1890 to 1963, many Kenyans were affected by Britain's redistribution of land. Kenyan women lost control of their land in which they farmed, forcing even greater economic dependence on men. This strengthened domestic patriarchal values and behaviors, which were reinforced by colonial social structures (Kariuki, 2010). The same patriarchal order has long persisted into the post-colonial era and continues to "suppress women" (Kariuki, 2010, p. 2).

The Kikuyu made up rebel forces that fought against British colonists who seized their land and forced labor from Kenyans (Countries and their cultures: Gikuyu, 2012). Large numbers of women were active in the rebellion, and although their efforts and agendas were often discounted, they fought against discriminatory laws and poor working conditions imposed by the colonialists (Presley, 1988). The Mau Mau Rebellion is believed to have ultimately led to Kenyan decolonization and independence in December of 1963 (Nissimi, 2006).

Jomo Kenyatta, a prominent Kikuyu post-colonial leader of Kenya, recounted the myth of the origin of Kikuyu people in his 1938 ethnography, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1962; reprinted version). He described that his tribe originated from a man named Gikuyu (the father of the tribe), who atop Mount Kenya was given a wife named Mumbi (Moombi) from the Divider of

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the Universe, known as Mogai. To this union, the couple had nine daughters but no sons.

When it came time to marrying off his daughters, Gikuyu sacrificed two animals in order for

Mogai to provide nine male suitors. All of the young men agreed to marrying his beautiful

daughters under the condition that they live on Gikuyu's estate under a matriarchal system.

Each family joined together in one lineage (mbari) named after Mumbi, with the parents acting

as the heads. Each daughter bore several children and eventually grandchildren. After the

parents died and all of the families expanded radically, it became difficult for all of the nine

families to live together as originally expected. Thus, nine clans were founded, and the women

continued to be the heads of their family groups and clans. However, it is believed that with all

of this power in the clan, women became domineering and jealous, and began practicing

polyandry. Outraged at their treatment, men planned a revolt against women's rule. The

revolution worked, and men took over leadership of the community and their families, with one

of the first steps being to establish the system of polygamy, and the second to change the

original matriarchal tribe name to a patriarchal name – Gikuyu.

This mythology of Kikuyu origination is consistent with Kikuyu monotheistic religious

beliefs, their inhabitance of fertile land near Mount Kenya, and their cultural practice of

polygamy. It also serves to justify the patriarchal system in Kikuyu families, politics, and

communities. The mutual distrust of men and women in Kikuyu culture is illustrated in the

folktale, which then emphasizes the importance of bonding with same-sex peers to enhance

power (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). This story is a common folktale recounted to Kikuyu children

today as a way of encouraging a strong sense of cultural values.

Traditionally, Kikuyus held a close spiritual relationship with their ancestors and the supernatural. They held a belief in one high god whom they call Ngai. Ngai lives in the sky, but at times can be found on Mount Kenya, only to be approached by elders of the community in life-or-death situations. He is believed to be present at the birth, initiation, marriage, and death of every Kikuyu (Kenyatta, 1937). Ancestral spirits, however, are involved in all daily matters and cause negative consequences if their interests are not given appropriate consideration (Countries and their cultures: Gikuyu, 2012).

Today, Christianity is the primary religion for approximately 60-70 percent of Kikuyus. However, belief in Ngai and the ancestral spirits have become incorporated into Christian life (Jenkins, 2008). Religion and spirituality are taken very seriously in most Kikuyu communities, oftentimes treating Sunday church as a day-long prime social event (Barsby, 2007). It is common to hear Kikuyu refer to themselves or others as "saved", representing a personal experience with God through Jesus Christ, and indicating that they currently abstain from alcohol, drugs, and pre-marital sex (Jenkins, 2008). Themes of community solidarity and conformity evident in the traditional Kikuyu and Christian religions help emphasize the values most important to Kikuyu people (Countries and their cultures: Gikuyu, 2012).

Maai Mahiu

Located in the Great Rift Valley area of central Kenya, within the Nakuru district, Maai Mahiu is inhabited predominantly by Kikuyu people. In 2011, the population of Maai Mahiu was estimated to be approximately 20,000 and growing (Kuria, 2011). The ten square mile rural settlement of Maai Mahiu is accessible to the capital city of Nairobi and the tourist haven of Mombasa by its convenient location on a major trucking highway. This allows some residents

of Maai Mahiu the opportunity to commute to a larger city for work. The Great Rift Valley

village is also burdened with a semi-arid climate making its main source of revenue, farming

and agriculture, unpredictable.

Although Maai Mahiu's central location as a common truck stop promotes trading and

the growth of some small businesses, the frequency of male truckers in the town also

encourages the spread of HIV/AIDS, giving the connecting highway the nickname "AIDS

Highway" (Williams, 2004). In 2004, AIDS outreach workers estimated that approximately half

of the 20,000 residents in Maai Mahiu are infected with HIV or AIDS (Williams, 2004). Lack of

economic opportunities, poor nutrition, stigma of being tested, minimal education about the

disease, difficulty accessing medication, and additional health complications, all cause people

living in Maai Mahiu with HIV/AIDS to suffer (CTC International, n.d.). The stresses of having

high incidence of AIDS as well as economic problems compound for the Kikuyu as one problem

increases the rates of the other.

The main languages spoken by the Kikuyu of Maai Mahiu are English and Kiswahili, also

pronounced Swahili (national languages), as well as the tribal Bantu language of Gĩkũyũ, also

pronounced Kikuyu. Some older community members only speak Kikuyu. The Kikuyu language

is typically spoken within the home and community and among groups who know the language.

In many areas of Kenya, societies function under a patrilineal system (Kenyatta, 1962).

The father, or *baba*, is the owner of the homestead and requires respect from all family

members. The mother, who is often addressed as "mother of So-and-so" (referring to her

eldest child), also requires respect from her children, and maintains her prestige by being

hospitable to visitors and neighbors (Kenyatta, 1962). Males have long been expected to serve

as head of the household and provide for the family, while women's responsibilities include cooking, cleaning, and caring for children (Mitchell & Abbott, 1987; Silberschmidt, 1999; Sudarkasa, 1982). These rigid sex roles have become the social order for which society is organized. Mitchell and Abbott (1987) declare that "Kikuyu society exhibits marked social inequality by sex… Men have unquestionably greater political, legal, and economic power" (p. 307). Both males and females have always been aware of and maintain their places in society due to several pre-existing social structures and norms.

Influence of Sex Roles on Cultural Life

Social Value in Marriage

The differential social value for men and women is one important contributor to the maintenance of sex roles in Kenya (Silberschmidt, 1999). Ortner and Whitehead (1981) identify that cross-culturally, structures of social value and prestige are of utmost importance for the cultural construction of gender and self-identity. The gendering of many societies is first and foremost a function of prestige; and marriage, which is closely linked to social value functions to reproduce gender ideologies. This theory fits closely with the life and culture of lower-class Kikuyu such that a man needs a wife who will perform domestic and sexual duties, and that by marrying one or more women, he increases his social prestige and respect within the community (Friedman & Todd, 1994; Levine, 1966; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981).

The question then turns to the function of marriage for a woman. In Kenyan culture, when a woman marries a successful man, she is viewed as having reached the final transition into full womanhood, attaining her greatest aspiration of wifehood, and hence will be forever provided for (Friedman & Todd, 1994; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Silberschmidt, 1999).

Traditionally, there has been a clear interdependence between men and women. Kenyan men have been dependent on their wives for status, as cultivators and food producers, and to bear their children. Women need their husbands in order to get land, status, children, and protection (Abbott & Weisner, 1979; Silberschmidt, 1999).

Within a marriage, it is traditionally expected that women obey and respect their husbands (Brodus, 2008; Gwako, 1997), consult their husbands before taking any action, respond promptly to his demands, and be gracious to his guests (Silberschmidt, 1999). When a wife doesn't fulfill her husband's expectations, the sanction is typically either withdrawing attention from the wife (Levine, 1966) or beating, which is a common and socially acceptable practice in most of Kenya (Silberschmidt, 1999). If a husband fails to meet his wife's expectations of providing food and money, she may choose to sanction him by refusing sex, failing to cook, or returning to her parents' home. If the marriage is polygamous, it is likely, however, that these sanctions have minimal effect because the other wives could assist in the areas being neglected (Silberschmidt, 1999). Rigid and unequal expectations for men and women in a marriage reinforce the underlying imbalance of perceived and projected social value, which perpetuates male superiority. Consequently, women are held back from seeking out and attaining their optimal development.

Marriage and Mental Health

Much like for hunter-gatherer cultures, Kikuyu men generally are in charge of major tasks (i.e., generate income and provide food) which provide them with greater access to or control of resources and decision making power (Wood & Eagly, 2002). This power differential in many Kikuyu marriages makes women more susceptible to victimization through domestic

violence (Brodus, 2008), as well as losing control of her reproductive rights (Gwako, 1997). In fact, wives who generated independent income, and therefore had higher positions within the family, reported more frequent use of family planning methods (Gwako, 1997).

Domestic violence has been a long-standing problem throughout Kenya, but due to the strong beliefs about gender roles and marriage, such violence is particularly prevalent in rural areas (Voice of America, 2010). The Attorney-General of Kenya in 1999, S Amos Wako, publicly acknowledged domestic violence as a major issue in Kenya with the following statement:

> Violence against women pervades all social and ethnic groups. It is a societal crisis that requires concerted action to stem its scourge… [S]ome cultural practices, beliefs and traditions have had the tendency to relegate women to second class status in society thereby not only violating their rights as human beings [but also] leading to discrimination against women. Some… customs and cultural practices have found their way not only into law but ... [are used] as justification for violence against women. (Amnesty International, 2002).

On the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 39 percent of all Kenyan women reported being abused by a husband; however, other sources indicate a much higher rate because it is well understood that incidents of domestic violence are gravely underreported and minimized by women (Voice of America, 2010). In a news article, Ann Njogu, executive director of the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness stated:

> In a patriarchal society, domestic violence is actually recognized as one way of disciplining one's wife. In fact, even the society socializes you as a woman to anticipate this discipline. It is so deeply inculcated in many peoples' minds. We have women who say, when they have not been beaten, their husbands have stopped loving them. (Voice of America, 2010).

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Marital rape is also a common form of domestic violence. Currently, marital rape is not recognized as a criminal offense in Kenyan law because the presumption of consent to sexual intercourse is guaranteed through the act of marriage (Amnesty International, 2002). Many Kenyan women are therefore reluctant to seek legal or medical help, except in extreme cases where their lives were at risk, and very few female victims actually leave their husbands or press charges because of their economic dependence on their husband and fear of losing custody of children (Amnesty International, 2002).

The inequality of sexes in a Kikuyu marriage also socializes and internalizes gender roles for the husband, wife, and their children. The unequal level of respect and power within the marriage propels tendencies toward discrimination and inequality for females within the context of family and may result in feelings of powerlessness and depression (Mitchell & Abbott, 1987).

Martin Seligman proposed a theory of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) which Mitchell and Abbott (1987) use to explain women's expectations of powerlessness resulting from an inability to take control in their lives and their internalized inferior social status. This conception is consistent with the stereotypical perception of females as passive while men are viewed as powerful and strong. After years of consistent inequality and discrimination based on sex, many women find it useless to continue to fight social order and thus develop feelings of learned helplessness and maybe even depressive symptoms (Mitchell & Abbott, 1987).

Access to education

Unequal access to education in many areas of Kenya has also attributed to the wide disparity in expectations of and responsibilities for males and females (Colclough, Rose &

Tembon, 2000; Friedman & Todd, 1994; Gwako, 1997; Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Silberschmidt, 1999; Sudarkasa, 1982), because it perpetuates beliefs about biological differences in the intellect of sexes, makes women less competitive for job opportunities, preserves sex role stereotypes by keeping girls at home, and prevents girls from accessing information and knowledge which leads to empowerment and free thinking. Although it is estimated that males and females in all of Kenya receive approximately the same number of years of education (11 years) and have similar rates of literacy (male=90.6%; female=79.7%; CIA Factbook, 2011), it is more difficult for both sexes to access education in rural areas with low-income families (Mensch & Lloyd 1998), making discrepancies between the sexes more likely. In 1996, it was found that at younger ages, the overall school enrollment rates for boys and girls in Kenya were fairly equal (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996). However, in the teenage years, sex differentials appear in exam performance, dropout rates, and grade progression. The number of girls under the age of 19 who drop out of primary school is estimated to be 31 percent higher than that for boys (Appleton, 1991).

Reasons for the disparate numbers of girls and boys receiving formal education and for their unequal treatment at school are many. The expense of school fees, uniforms, and books for a low-income family make it difficult for parents to invest in each of their children's educations; therefore, many times families choose to educate their sons (Chesiana, 1994; Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, 2005). Even in places where primary education is free, it may still be too costly for families to be without the labor of their children, on which many families have come to depend (Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, 2005). Mothers also report needing

additional help with cooking, cleaning, and other domestic responsibilities and prefer the assistance of their daughters (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi & Osirim, 2004; Sudarkasa, 1982).

Colclough and colleagues (2000) describe that a girl's allegiance after marriage to her future husband's family decreases parents' perceived benefits of educating their daughters before marriage. Parents have alternately explained their decision to educate their sons rather than their daughters because they do not see the fundamental value in educating girls in order for them to become housewives, and because they do not believe women can succeed as far as men (Campbell, personal communications, November 2011). Many times, girls are pulled from school in order to be married (Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, 2005). It is also not uncommon for girls to either drop out or be expelled from school due to premarital pregnancies; however, the father of the baby experiences no repercussions (Chesiana, 1994; Etta, 1994).

Unequal treatment of male and female students at school also contributes to the unfair advantage of males in the educational system and reinforces sex bias. Mensch and Lloyd (1998) describe their observations of domestic chores being required at school which reduces time for learning. They found that it was the females who performed the majority of the domestic duties at school, presumably mirroring their expected responsibilities at home. They also discuss how females' obligations to perform chores at home may decrease their time available for completing homework.

The school environment in many areas of Kenya may be less conducive for the attendance of females than males, as found by Colclough and colleagues (2000). Toilet facilities usually are subpar, particularly for females' needs. Verbal and sexual harassment occurs both

by peers and male teachers, increasing the discomfort of female students. And the typically long journey to school may have greater safety risks for females than males.

The imbalanced financial investment in education across sexes, overreliance on girls for extra domestic assistance, less conducive learning environment for females, and discrimination against a woman but not a man's sexual behavior denote a fundamental devaluing of females and their future potential. When females are unable to receive adequate education, research has found that women become more susceptible to domestic violence (Brodus, 2008), low interpersonal power, submissiveness (Friedman & Todd, 1994), low conjugal power (Gwako, 1997), and lower rates of employment (Sudarkasa, 1982). By making the gap in knowledge and readiness for employment larger, the social structure succeeds in maintaining the position that females are the inferior sex. However, by understanding and drawing attention to these inequalities, women may begin to achieve their desired, optimal functioning.

Research Questions

Based on prior observations in Maai Mahiu and existing literature about how women in Kenya endure a greater burden of responsibility and discrimination than men, the following research questions were used to guide the study: 1) What do women perceive to be the expectations for and responsibilities of Kikuyu males and females in Maai Mahiu? 2) How do cultural or social influences contribute to women's identity development and well-being within various domains of life? 3) What do women perceive as the perpetuation of the sex role structure within their culture? 4) What types of personal and professional goals do Kikuyu women have? 5) What types of barriers do women perceive with regard to meeting their own goals? 6) What do women identify as potential mechanisms for implementing social change

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and increasing female empowerment, if so desired? These questions were intended to encapsulate a critical feminist research paradigm that takes the level of understanding beyond simple interpretation. The breadth and depth covered by these questions help expose social inequalities and promote female empowerment, which is consistent with critical feminist values.

Bem's (1993) enculturated lens theory is the conceptual framework for which the cultural construction of sex roles is understood. Lenses of androcentrism, biological essentialism, and gender polarization are identified and discussed within the Kikuyu culture to ascertain the congruence of this theory to the traditional culture of the Maai Mahiu. Beyond the influence of gender schemas, which are internalized after being subject to gender polarized cultural norms and values (Bem, 1981; Markus, Smith, & Moreland, 1985), this study explains how access to education and other resources can lead to gradual progression toward sex role equality in Maai Mahiu.   Because previous literature has identified the overwhelming impact of education and access to resources on female empowerment and equality between sexes (Friedman & Todd, 1994; Gwako, 1997; Mensch & Lloyd, 1998; Sudarkasa, 1982), I also examine these components for their relative contribution to sex role equality in Maai Mahiu.

Personal Interest

Sensitivity to cultural factors in conceptualizing and working with clients has been a key tenet in my training to be a counseling psychologist. I have learned to appreciate the complexities that an individual's cultural background can have on their mental health and well-being. Within my training and personal experiences, I have developed a keen interest in

understanding the role that culture plays in the construction of sex roles and responsibilities, and which further contribute to the development of one's well-being.

Since 2008 I have spent several weeks volunteering in Maai Mahiu, Kenya working with the women and their children on empowerment initiatives. For each trip, the main task is to assess the needs in the community by joining with the women and providing emotional support, guidance, and education on women's issues. Along with fellow Comfort the Children International (CTC) volunteers, I witnessed first-hand the severe inequality between sexes in this Kenyan village. Women came to us with their stories of feeling overburdened with domestic and monetary responsibilities, loneliness within the marriage, domestic violence, and rape by their husbands. Although appearing incredibly strong and resilient, their feelings of hopelessness and helplessness were clear. I was moved by the strength of these women despite tragedy, and have thus made it a priority to do what is within my power to help.

As a clinician, my interest in examining sex inequalities was strengthened while working with a client from an Asian culture who was struggling with her own feelings and experiences of oppression based on her sex. Although her experiences were vastly different from those of Kenyan women, the influence of traditional cultural values on an individual's self-concept appear to be prominent in both instances. My increasing interest on this topic was expanded to other African cultures as I read Fauziya Kassindja's "Do They Hear You When You Cry" and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's "Infidel" which are autobiographical narratives detailing personal perspectives and experiences of female oppression in Togo and Somalia, respectively. Then, reading the inspiring accounts of women across the world who succeeded in helping themselves and other women in the face of the most cruel forms of oppression in Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl

WuDunn's "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide"

empowered me to move forward with this project. These various encounters with culture

launched my curiosity about how cultural practices and values shape an individual's identity

development and mental health.

I am increasingly aware of and unsettled by the role that colonialism plays in the

oppression of indigenous cultures, often controlling and holding communities back from many

of the values and resources needed for genuine success. In a sense, research, particularly

positivist research, can even be considered a form of colonization. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999,

p. 80) stated "they came, they saw, they named, they claimed" as a description of parallels

between goals of some cross-cultural researchers and colonizers. Because of the strong

influence of imperialism, it can be difficult to disentangle viewpoints of indigenous people from

their colonizers (Smith, 1999). As my interest grew in helping the women of Maai Mahiu by

understanding the construct of sex roles in their culture, I was determined to conduct this study

in a way that would not further oppress my research participants or leave them feeling used,

but instead benefit them and provide empowerment. I did not want to quantify the construct

of sex roles, make assumptions, or categorize the women in any way. I found great value in

letting the women use their own voices to challenge issues of power and social hierarchies.

I previously conducted a pilot study with three women from different East African

nations who were pursuing their education in the United States. The purposes of the pilot

interview study (which was conducted for a course project) were to understand African

women's experiences of sex roles and responsibilities in the United States compared to their

country of origin, and to learn about alternative perspectives on the construction of the female

identity within the context of different cultures. Each of the women discussed their perceptions of gender inequality between individuals living in more developed, urban cities such as Nairobi and those living in poverty-stricken, rural areas. They described that the discrepant access to and value of education, and availability of resources and technology are largely responsible for the differences in treatment and expectations for sexes. Preliminary results from the pilot qualitative study provided the groundwork and motivation for designing goals and methods for this study.

Based on my previous two successful visits to Maai Mahiu, I felt confident that although I am not native to the community, I would be able to recruit women for this study who would feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. Preliminary relationships with several of the prospective participants had been established prior to data collection. On the two previous occasions, women of Maai Mahiu had displayed their openness to discussing intimate details of their lives, as well as an eagerness for attaining knowledge. With miniscule published research available on issues of equality across sexes in Maai Mahiu, there was a large gap in knowledge. I felt the need to fill that gap prior to initiating any social change. By conducting this study and providing more of a voice for women in Maai Mahiu, I have now taken the first steps toward fulfilling my personal and professional goals of assisting the women of this village in reaching their optimal personal and professional potential.

Pilot Study

A pilot interview study for this dissertation was conducted with three women who were born and raised in East African countries (one from Kenya, one from both Uganda and Kenya, and one from Sudan) but came to the United States as international students. Each participant

was interviewed regarding her perceptions of gendered expectations and responsibilities within her country of origin, as well as about her experiences with empowering and disempowering forces contributing to the development of her cultural female identity. Despite these pilot participants having a significantly different experience within their countries of origin (as a result of having the privilege to pursue international education) than the prospective Kikuyu participants for the proposed study, interesting themes arose which may provide preliminary evidence for the importance of the proposed study.

The interviewees identified many of the same experiences and perceptions in their respective cultures, which are relevant for establishing interest in the research questions for the proposed study. Each interviewee stated that despite recent female empowerment movements in various African communities, most continue to hold extremely low expectations and rigid domestic responsibilities for women. They each noted that there are more traditional cultural customs and beliefs exhibited within rural than urban areas, which the participants believe result in stronger sex role differentiation. Poverty is believed by each interviewee to be a major perpetuator of rigid sex roles by denying both boys and girls access to education. Customs such as female genital mutilation and polygamy were witnessed in the participants' friends to have had negative implications for women's well-being as they promote the view that females are powerless and easily controllable. Additionally, the interviewees each discussed how many women in their respective cultures have adopted negative beliefs about their own value and importance within the community or family.

Perspectives given in the pilot study were similar to those outlined in the reviewed literature, thus providing further need for pursuing a deeper understanding of these issues

within the Kikuyu culture. Additionally, feedback was solicited from each of the pilot

participants regarding the collection of data for the proposed study. One participant advised

that extreme care be taken to build rapport and trust with the Kenyan women prior to

attempting to understand their experiences. This advice has been incorporated into the study's

methodology. It also was recommended that if any social change initiatives develop as a result

of the study, that native Kenyan women are enlisted to help provide that education and

empowerment to the community.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

Research Site

I chose to conduct this study in the village of Maai Mahiu, Kenya where I previously

traveled and built numerous collaborative relationships. Maai Mahiu is a rural province located

in the Great Rift Valley in central Kenya, approximately one hour northwest of Nairobi, the

capital city. Situated along a major trucking route known as AIDS highway, Maai Mahiu

residents subsist predominantly on agriculture, trading, prostitution, and small business

income. Because of the unpredictable rain fall in this semi-arid climate, unreliable farming

makes poverty and hunger an immeasurable problem.   This problem was recently

compounded by the cutting down of trees for charcoal, which impacted the rainfall for a

number of years. Not including the nearby Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp (which

comprises approximately 1,300 Kikuyu families; Parsitau, 2011), the population of Maai Mahiu

is estimated to be approximately 20,000 people and growing (Kuria, 2011) spanning across ten

square miles (Williams, 2004).

My familiarity with the town and pre-established relationships with many of the women

and several leaders of the community were anticipated to be helpful for recruiting study

participants. Maai Mahiu is a prime location for studying this phenomenon because of its

unique character as a rural community, which is adapting to several recent advancements and

continual holistic development. Significant influences from other cultures such as NGOs and

humanitarian groups (including Comfort the Children International, CTC), and tourists or

truckers traveling on the AIDS highway are slowly increasing the educational, agricultural,

infrastructural, and personal development resources readily available for the people.

Participants

The population of Maai Mahiu, Kenya consists predominantly of people from the Kikuyu tribe which is the largest of Kenya's 42 tribes. The Kenyan official language of Swahili is known and spoken by many in Maai Mahiu; however, the tribal language of Kikuyu may be more common among lesser educated individuals. English is taught and practiced in school as well as among more highly educated individuals. In 2007, it was estimated that in all of the Rift Valley provinces, 53 percent of all female adults and 60 percent of all male adults are literate (National Council for Population and Development, 2011). In all of the Rift Valley, the proportion of children to adults is approximately 3:4, with an estimated 3.6 million children under the age of fourteen compared to 4.8 million adults aged fifteen to 64. The total number of males and females residing in the Rift Valley is approximately equal (National Council for Population and Development, 2011).

In the Rift Valley, which comprises Maai Mahiu among many other provinces, 42.4 percent of all currently married women reported using any method of contraception in 2008-2009 (including both modern and traditional methods of family planning), with higher rates among educated women (National Council for Population and Development, 2011). There are more unmet needs for family planning among younger women aged fifteen to twenty four than for other age groups, and more unmet needs in rural areas of Kenya than urban areas (National Council for Population and Development, 2011). Reports have estimated that approximately half of the 20,000 (Kuria, 2011) residents in Maai Mahiu are infected with HIV or AIDS (Williams, 2004). Medical, educational, and free testing services were established in 2010 within Maai

Mahiu, with an estimated 400 community members enrolled in HIV/AIDS support groups (CTC International, n.d.).

Because the participants live in a town which has recently received more NGO assistance than most other rural areas, they likely have more access to better resources than those in other areas. No formal comparable evaluation was conducted as part of this research nor could it be ascertained from literature to compare women from Maai Mahiu to other communities. However, it was anticipated that the women in Maai Mahiu have insight into both traditional and contemporary men and women's experiences within the community and family. Selecting Kikuyu women who are slightly more empowered and educated as the sample of interest was expected to allow for rich discussion about the pertinent needs for Kikuyu women in Maai Mahiu.

The current sample of interview participants comes from a broad spectrum of backgrounds; however, there are also many similarities among the group. All interviewees were female with the average age of 37.6 years old. Ages ranged from 25 to 48 years old. As part of the requirement for recruitment, all participants had been married at some point. Seven participants are currently married; five of the women are widowed in which their husbands died of complications from AIDS; and, three of the women are currently separated from their husbands. The average age when these participants got married was eighteen years old. All but one participant have at least two children; and the one has none due to infertility problems. Eight out of fifteen women reported having HIV, for which all receive medication. All fifteen participants reported having spiritual affiliation to the Christian church. The average number of years of education for this group of women was eight and a half years, which is

slightly more than primary school. Specific details and background information about each of

the fifteen interviewees is provided at the beginning of Chapter IV.

Data Collection Procedures

To study the socialization and implications of sex roles in Maai Mahiu, Kenya I employed

qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are intended to be descriptive, inductive,

and focused on understanding the meaning that is socially constructed by participants

(Maxwell, 2005). Because of this study's goal to understand the unique experiences of Kikuyu

women and the meaning they make out of their female identity, qualitative methods are the

most appropriate method of inquiry. Because no such examination into this social construct

has been conducted in Maai Mahiu previously, the exploratory nature of this study was aided

by inductive methods inherent in qualitative research.   The major methods of data collection in

this study included participant observations and semi-structured interviews. I also consulted

with community leaders and staff at CTC and utilized this supplementary information as data to

help guide interview questions and observations, and provide clarity regarding interview

themes. For safety and security reasons as well as to translate and enhance my comprehension

of observations, I was escorted everywhere I went by a Kikuyu. Each of my escorts provided

thorough explanations and interpretations of ongoing observational data, and provided a

constant opportunity for on-the-go consultation.

Observations

Throughout my time in Maai Mahiu, I conducted several systematic and purposive

observations at major community sites such as the market, truck stop, and small businesses

around town. Because I was temporarily living in the village, much like an ethnographer,

surrounded by potential participants, opportunities for rich observation were also spontaneous and constantly available. Each time I walked through town or interacted with Kikuyus, I approached the opportunity as a qualitative researcher.   There were many times when my presence required more active participation or communication with observees in order to more richly understand the data. Therefore, many times I transitioned back and forth from acting as a complete observer to a complete participant, with varying levels of involvement as each situation necessitated.

After my presence became known in the area, women invited me into their homes to allow for more in-depth and in-vivo observation. I visited each home along with my translator escort who mediated communication between non-English speakers and myself. During home visits I interacted with families, observed males and females complete their typical home routines, and volunteered to help with house chores. Engaging with families in this way and actively participating in the natural Kikuyu home environment helped me develop greater clarification of men and women's roles.

Prior to each in-home observation I asked all participants to provide oral consent. (Please see Appendix C for the script read to participants.) During each observation, I recorded information about the roles and responsibilities I witnessed women and men assuming, the relationship and communication styles among both same-sex and opposite-sex dyads, and nuances in family or community dynamics. I also wrote about my general impression of each observation.

As recommended for qualitative observations, I utilized all five senses to engage in each observational moment and obtain broad impressions of my surroundings (Adler & Adler, 1994).

Types of roles, jobs, and interactions females have in the public and private spheres relative to those of males were noted descriptively and objectively. If I was unable to take notes during the period of observation, I made diligent efforts to record and reflect upon my experiences as soon after as possible to prevent missing or jumbled data.   Notes were kept and organized within a field notebook and/or recorded electronically on my personal and password-protected laptop.

Throughout my time in Maai Mahiu I maintained a field notebook with separate sections for phenomena that I observed and conversations or consultations that I had. I also kept an electronic document to organize of my reactions and ponderings as I digested each day's activities. Each evening I reflected upon the day and generated a list of questions or topics for further exploration to help guide interviews, future interactions, and research opportunities.

Semi-Structured Interviews

While observing and engaging with townspeople, I simultaneously recruited fifteen participants to be interviewed. Because of their connections within the community and knowledge about the native residents, Comfort the Children International staff helped identify and recruit many of the interview participants. I utilized purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to select individuals for this study who had particularly interesting or unique backgrounds, while also meeting specific criteria. For example, after interviewing a few women with similar backgrounds, I specifically sought out participants who had engaged in sex work to broaden the scope of sampling. Other participants were identified through referral by other interview participants, also known as snowball sampling (Noy, 2008).   Snowball sampling was an effective

strategy for maintaining a non-threatening and informal relationship with the community and

to get me access to more difficult-to-reach and unique circles of women. For example, without

utilizing referrals I would have had much more difficulty capturing the experiences of a woman

living in an Internally Displaced Person camp, which currently represents an important cohort of

the Maai Mahiu population. A mixture of these types of sampling allowed me to gather a broad

sample of experiences for analysis in this study.

Interviewees were only selected to participate if between the ages of eighteen to fifty

years old, from the Kikuyu ethnic group, and ether currently or previously married. The age

requirement for participation in the interviews is broad for the purpose of allowing women at

different stages of young to mid-adulthood to share their unique but relatable experiences

regarding marriage, child rearing, and family of origin issues. However, it is limited to this age

range because of the increased likelihood that women over 50 may have additional

generational experiences which threaten the homogeneity of the sample (i.e.,

grandparenthood, widowhood, and more traditional value systems). Females under the age of

18 are not included in this sample because of their minor status and their presumably

undeveloped and nongeneralizable experiences as a Kenyan girl. Sampling women with the

experience of marriage allowed for discussions about the husband and wife relationship and

domestic responsibilities outside of their family of origin. The requirement of Kikuyu ethnic

group background provided some degree of similarity in experiences regarding tribal and

cultural customs, traditions, initiations, and values.

A sample of twelve to fifteen participants was initially planned based on the level of

depth and breadth necessary in this study compared to other cultural qualitative studies of

similar phenomena. Fifteen participants were ultimately selected because it fit within my time constraints. After interviewing that number of participants, I also appeared to have reached saturation of information and was no longer discovering qualitatively new perspectives. The remainder of my time in Maai Mahiu was spent immersing myself in data analysis, consulting with community leaders, and conducting additional in-home observations in order to test my emerging results against in-vivo confirmatory or contradictory evidence.

I initially intended to select only participants who were familiar or fluent in the English language, but decided against that requirement because it may have biased the sample of participants toward being higher educated or with more resources. Instead, a female Kikuyu interpreter was present during interviews in which the participant's English fluency was questionable. The interpreter directly translated the discussion of informed consent and each of my questions and comments. She translated back the interviewee's response in its entirety, or paraphrased long narratives and stories when necessary. After the completion of each interview she assisted by clarifying certain cultural expressions or customs that arose in interviews. Because I transcribed many of the audio files while in Kenya, I frequently sought assistance from my main translator and escort, Mary. We listened to audio together to decipher instances of muffled speech or heavy accents. I regularly consulted with Mary regarding interview content to ensure that transcripts reflected interview responses as accurately as possible. Mary received financial compensation for her work on this research project.

Each interview took place in a quiet, private space. Many times participants preferred to be interviewed in the home, and other times the space was allocated by Comfort the

Children International. Some participants elected to complete the interview immediately after being asked, while others preferred to schedule it for a later, mutually agreed-upon date.

Prior to conducting any interviews, I reviewed my questions and interview protocol with my main translator, Mary, to ensure the cultural relevance and appropriateness of questions. She gave feedback and encouraged changing the phrasing of some questions to enhance interviewees' understanding of constructs. For example, after consulting with Mary I decided to eliminate a main question of "What does it mean for you to be a female in Kenya?" due to the high level of abstract reasoning and introspection required to answer it that may be unfamiliar for respondents. The question was replaced with a more direct question that was initially intended to be a follow-up. She also recommended I eliminate "either/or" options in questions, which resulted in me just asking about how men and women are "respected", rather than how they are "valued or respected". She advised against the use of certain language that may be unfamiliar to respondents such as using the phrase "rite of passage". I revised the phrasing of certain questions accordingly, and the changes are reflected in the list of questions provided in Appendix A.

Semi-structured interviews began with verbal and written informed consent procedures. I fully explained the purposes of the study and allowed each participant time to ask questions. Interview length ranged from 36 to 115 minutes, with the average of approximately 60 minutes. The broad range of interview lengths is due to three main factors: 1) some participants elected to provide much more detail and explanation than others; 2) the interview protocol concludes with an open-ended question inviting participants to discuss other related concerns, perceptions, or experiences, which added additional length to the interview at times;

3) interviews requiring full-time use of interpreter tended to be longer due to the time it took to translate back and forth. Each interview was audio recorded for thoroughness and to assist with later transcription. I provided each interview participant with one bag of fresh fruit and vegetables from the local market to compensate for their time and willingness to participate.

Interview protocol began by collecting demographic information about the participants (i.e., age, spiritual affiliation, level of education, family constellation). The interview then continued with broad scope questions about perceptions of and experiences with role and responsibility differentials between males and females at school, growing up, and in current daily life. Next in the protocol were questions aimed at understanding how social and cultural traditions have contributed to the construction of the female identity and role. Questions in that section were posed about participants' experiences with marriage traditions, initiation ceremonies or rites of passage, and various other cultural values or practices. Then, questions regarding participants' personal and occupational goals were asked with a focus on their perceived strengths and potential barriers for reaching them. The last section of questions included those about each individual's perceptions of themselves and other women within the community.

Initial questions for all sections were read verbatim to each participant, phrased so to avoid leading the participant in any desired direction. A list of possible follow-up questions was utilized as needed to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's perspectives regarding constructs. Additional (scripted or unscripted) probing questions were used at my discretion to further clarify topics.   The standard list of questions for semi-structured interviews is listed in Appendix A. Although the interview protocol covers several inter-related topics, it is

recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005) that an effective cultural interview should have an exploratory quality that allows for less structure and more freedom to explore ideas and experiences not explicitly articulated within the protocol. For that reason, I addressed additional topics (such as interviewee's experiences with or perceptions of sex work in Maai Mahiu, or their struggle with HIV) in some of the interviews to gain perspectives and knowledge about important topics that were identified in pre-interview observations and consultations.

Consultations

Confidential consultations took place throughout my time in Kenya with both males and females. They sometimes occurred formally through specific and planned question and answer sessions. Other times they occurred more informally, as opportunities arose for discussions with various community members or CTC staff. Having an escort who spoke both English and Kikuyu also allowed for spontaneous opportunities for consultation regarding the phenomena I was witnessing and experiencing. There were many purposes of this consultation: 1) to assist in my understanding of Kikuyu culture as needed; 2) to cross-validate my observation and interview findings; 3) to help minimize the effects of potential biases.   The valuable insight gained through these consultations also assisted in development of follow-up questions in interviews, and with interpretations of findings.

Some of the topics on which I consulted with CTC staff include: men's recent increased tendencies to use drugs and alcohol, women's options for legal and financial assistance, the perpetuation of sex work in Maai Mahiu, comparison of Maai Mahiu to surrounding communities, and mechanisms for potential social change. I frequently asked questions of my consultants about how common some of the participants' experiences are in the community.

Because I could not sample everyone in the community, this helped me understand base rates for behaviors and decipher some individuals who had relatively unique experiences. All of my consultations were summarized at least daily if not immediately after conversations took place in a field notebook. Consultation data are considered supplemental rather than primary sources of information, and therefore specific details from conversations are not quoted or utilized by themselves as findings.

Technology

A Sony digital handheld audio recorder was used during each interview, with an additional RCA digital audio recorder as back-up. Each evening during data collection, I uploaded the day's audio files to a password-protected folder on my personal laptop. Those files were also backed up every few days to an external harddrive to ensure data were not lost due to computer theft or malfunction.   Files were accessible in those folders throughout the transcription process, analysis of data, and writing of this manuscript. Files were saved utilizing a pseudonym and the date of interview.

Each audio file was transformed into a text file with the assistance of transcription software. Express Scribe software was utilized to assist with transcription. It has the capability of fast forwarding and rewarding audio files at a variety of paces and also allows the user to change the speed of audio playback as needed. I had initially intended to utilize voice recognition software; however, the thick accents of all interview participants made it difficult for automatic transcription and proved unhelpful for this process. I also attempted to utilize a professional transcription company to assist me with the process; however, once again because of the thick accents and differing voice inflection of interviewees, I had to correct too many

errors made by the company for their assistance to be worthwhile. I therefore opted to

complete the transcription process by myself to minimize errors due to others' carelessness or

unfamiliarity with certain cultural words, phrases, or inflections. I listened to each audio file at

least twice: to transcribe it initially, and to double-check its accuracy. I utilized a checklist to

ensure the thoroughness of this process. I completed the initial fifteen transcripts either during

the data collection period in Kenya or after returning to the United States. For any questions I

had about words or phrases that were difficult to understand either due to language or

background noise, I consulted with my Kikuyu translator, Mary. Several times when she was

available, Mary assisted me by listening to the audio to help decipher difficult-to-understand

words or the interpretation of certain cultural phrases.

Ethical Considerations

Inherent in all cultural research, especially when exploring a sensitive topic such as sex

role conflicts, are issues of ethics. A main focus for many feminist researchers in their work is

to address issues of power differential for women. Therefore, it is also an important ethical

responsibility for feminist researchers to minimize power differences between the researcher

and the researched (Bell, 2014). In conducting this study I took many precautions in an attempt

to minimize or resolve the possibility of discomfort or repercussion for participants when

engaging in the study.

Prior to each in-home observation, I acquired oral consent from all individuals involved.

Written informed consent was collected from each interviewee, and the benefits, risks, and

purposes for the study were thoroughly reviewed prior to starting the interview. The

interpreter was utilized as needed to ensure participant comprehension, and they were given

opportunities to ask questions or state concerns. I was completely forthright with participants

about the purposes of the study and how their data will be used. After each interview,

participants were debriefed and screened for any maladjustment resulting from the interview

or other stressors. My training as a counseling psychologist helped me identify participants

who may have needed additional time to process concerns that arose in the interview.

Supportive counseling and/or problem-solving techniques were utilized as necessary during

debriefings. One participant wished to speak privately about the emotions that were brought

up for her during the interview. Another interviewee sought me out in the community at a

later date to seek support and discuss her marital concerns that were initially broached during

the interview.   Participants were encouraged to utilize social support within their community

networks for additional assistance. Information shared in those two extended debriefing

sessions was not audio recorded or considered formal data for the purposes of this study and

therefore were not quoted or explicitly included in the analysis.

To address my ethical responsibility of minimizing power differentials in the research

relationship, I had many precautions in place. First, it was important that I, as a European

American researcher from the West, truly attempt to understand the culture and community

with which my participants live. I believe the participants recognized my stature as curious and

willing to learn from them, which allowed them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

Linda Bell (2014) suggested that the use snowball sampling may assist with forming a sense of

equality and trust because it depends very closely on interpersonal relations.   I also made great

efforts not to appear too "stuffy" or controlling with regard to interview protocol. Participants

were asked to choose the time and location for their interview, and their wishes were

accommodated. When invited into the interviewee's home, I graciously accepted their gift of

tea or food which is an important cultural value. I conducted the interviews in a relatively

conversational manner to further decrease power dynamics.

In conducting this research I also had the objective of maintaining an ethical standard of

confidentiality. Because the town name of Maai Mahiu has been identified as the research site,

I took extra precaution to secure the anonymous identity of all participants involved in the

study. All data were de-identified and kept in password-protected computer folders. To ensure

confidentiality and attempt to prevent repercussions of participants' sensitive narratives being

in public domain, pseudonyms were assigned in place of the participants' actual name. In

describing my observations and the narratives of participants I utilized the richest level of

description possible without including specifically identifiable information.

Examination of Researcher's Values and Potential Biases

Prior to traveling to Kenya to collect data, I developed a list of my own values and beliefs

related to issues of gender.   The purpose of this exercise was threefold – to help me remain

focused on my purposes for completing the research; to recognize the difference between my

beliefs of right or wrong as well as potential grey areas; and, to be able to remain centered in

my own values after conducting such an immersive exploration of another culture. What is

listed below could be considered a universal declaration of human rights which helped focus my

research and identified pieces of my own subjective reactions.

1) No one deserves to be physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed by another individual.

I will not stand by and watch it happen. I will do what I can to keep the person safe.

However, I also will not pass judgment on individuals without understanding the context of their actions.

2) Everyone has a right to make informed decisions about cultural or religious practices. When a specific practice happens at the expense of another person's physical or emotional well-being, changes should be made. Sometimes that requires education about how a practice is aversive.

3) Men and women are made equal and deserve to be treated that way. They should have equal access to resources and be respected equally, rather than based on the value of one sex. Many times advocacy is needed to shift the focus of intentional as well as unintentional behaviors and belief systems.

During data collection I also paid attention to evidence of my own subjectivity that was triggered in various ways. Alan Peshkin (1998) wrote about the influence of his own subjectivity in research. He described ways in which he recognized that his subjectivity was engaged which include "the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences I wanted more of or wanted to avoid, and when I felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfill my research needs." (p. 18). Peshkin suggests that researchers monitor themselves to recognize emotional arousal as an indication of subjectivity. I completed this through constant self-observation and nightly written reflections. I recognized several important pieces of me as the researcher but also as a human that were activated and which may influence the direction I chose in data collection or interpretation. Three of my most significant values I identified in this research process include: (a) philanthropy, (b) social justice,

and (c) self-awareness. These values are discussed in the following paragraphs and are

revisited in Chapter V in a discussion of researcher reflexivity.

During many of the semi-structured interviews, discussion often turned to the topic of

the women's financial concerns. Without specifically asking for assistance, it became clear to

me that many of the women were used to or at least hoping that Americans would help them in

this way. Each time I had to explain that financial assistance was not my objective for this trip, I

noticed a feeling of guilt arise inside of me. However, I also recognized a strong sense of

urgency and drive to assist these women with knowledge and empowerment. This dichotomy

is what I refer to as my value of philanthropy. I believe it was that same drive that motivated

me to pursue this type of research and it was exciting to recognize how often it was activated

while collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. I was surprised how intrigued I became

with the sex worker culture and frequently noticed my philanthropic values arise when working

with these women.

An emotional reaction that was activated regularly throughout data collection was a

sense of anger or frustration with Kikuyu men for having hurt these women with their fists

and/or their inability to fulfill responsibilities. This was something I noticed during previous

volunteer trips to Maai Mahiu and likely had a role in selecting this as a research topic. In my

background I have a strong drive for advocacy, both personally and professionally, which is

clearly evident in the aims of this study. This social justice value is consistent with several of

the human rights I identified above. While analyzing the data I recognized how strong of a

message it was in the participants' narratives. However, I also realize how I may have

emphasized it in my interpretations in part because of my own subjectivity.

The last piece of subjectivity that was readily apparent during data collection was my own sense of self-awareness. I recognized issues of privilege and culture in many of my interactions and experienced a mixture of emotions. I felt proud to be privileged enough to be able to travel to Kenya and conduct this type of research. However, that sense of privilege also humbled me and motivated me to become more immersed in the community activities. That sense of privilege also was something that set me apart from my study participants and the rest of the community, which I attempted to minimize in various ways. In addition to privilege, I was also very aware of my own Western ideals and biases, particularly when I was reminded of how different they can be than the predominant belief system in Maai Mahiu.   Some of these Western ideals help drive my perceptions of human rights and decision to initiate this study.

Data Analysis

"Analysis is a pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 11). In the current study it was very important that I begin systematically thinking about and analyzing the data as I was on the ground collecting it. According to Maxwell (2005), listening to audiotaped interviews, reading observation notes, and writing memos are all important types of data analysis. This form of constant immersion with the data allowed me to tailor my observations appropriately and adjust my interviewing strategies as needed. Thinking about, transforming, analyzing, and interpreting data continued when I returned to the states and was a process in which I engaged for several months. The specific steps I took to transform the data from raw transcripts and field notes to interpretive findings are discussed in this section.

Using a basic interpretive approach to analyzing data, my goal was to "understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam et al., 2002, p. 37). The addition of critical and feminist research philosophies (Crotty, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005) to basic interpretive methods allowed me to dig deeper into data analysis to not only understand phenomena, but also help uncover social injustices and inequality in the structure of sex roles. Wolcott (1994) outlined a strategy of data transformation which includes the processes of description, analysis, and interpretation. The phases are not mutually exclusive but do depend heavily on one another. Understanding data on a descriptive level involves asking the question "What is going on?" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 9) and answering it in the richest, most vivid manner possible. To enhance the descriptive nature of qualitative work, Wolcott recommends that the researcher "Tell the story. Then tell how that happened to be the way you told it" (1994, p. 16). I followed these recommendations and spent significant time reading through my notes and transcripts to allow the data to tell its own story. In my writing I provided thick description of participant's experiences and circumstances which I learned about and observed.

Following Wolcott's model, analysis should entail a process of expanding and extending the data beyond the descriptive level. Key themes and patterns should be identified across data. Analysis is intended to be a controlled process that involves the detailed coding and sorting of data and results in statements of fact reared from data (Wolcott, 1994). My particular process of analysis was long and rigorous, involving several steps to help reach the most thorough analysis of hundreds of pages of data. I began with transcription of audio files which were each checked for accuracy. As I listened through each audio file sometimes a second, third, or fourth time, I highlighted and annotated transcripts to identify key words or

concepts that arose either within the interview or across participants. I also maintained a memo file of my ongoing thoughts, reactions, and ponderings about the data, which was of assistance during the interpretation phase. Next I developed a Microsoft Word document with each participant's responses related to the interview questions and other concepts that had arisen so far. This document allowed for comparison of concepts across participants.

At this point I began the process of coding, which entailed crafting a descriptive label (typed in the margin of the page via track changes) to designate each concept. Coding serves different purposes for many researchers. However, Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) model of combining data reduction and complication strategies fit best with the type of data and level of analysis required for this study. Coffey and Atkinson posit that "Coding generally is used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories *and* is used to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation" (1996, p. 30). Examples of codes classified within the first interview question about barriers they encountered in receiving education include: "cost", "lack of family resources", and "female roles". Because it would be impossible to code for everything in the data, I paid most attention to responses that were determined to exhibit the greatest importance in understanding the construction of sex roles or the Kikuyu female identity. These items were deduced from examining patterns in the interview data, comparison with field notes, and by referencing relevant literature. I also maintained an "other response" category which is where I compiled participant responses that appeared significant but not directly related to specific themes. These responses were utilized during interpretation sometimes as supporting evidence or incorporated to themes as relevant.

In order to compare codes across participants I created another Word document with a list of the key concepts and codes relevant to each interview question topic, further separated by participant. This "compiled codes" document was used to start observing patterns across data. At this point some the most important codes were becoming obvious due to how frequently they were found in the data. Integrating data from field notes and various memos with the newly identified codes allowed me to narrow down the interview topics into three manageable and meaningful themes. Many of the codes were condensed or combined to form the hierarchy of sub-themes and categories that were ultimately used to illustrate and make meaning of data in this study. I consulted with two colleagues, both trained at the doctoral level in clinical psychology, regarding my process of condensing and organizing codes into these categories. They each assisted by providing informal feedback about the names and operational definitions selected for each sub-theme and category.

The next step was to identify notable quotes and observations which illustrate each category of data. I compiled a vast list of notable quotes for each category. Having an extremely large number of quotes or few quotes was an indication to me that a particular category was too broad or too narrow and sometimes led me to re-organize the categories further. I consulted again with the same two colleagues during the process of selecting quotes to represent each theme, sub-theme, and category. My colleagues assisted me in the process by providing confirmatory or disconfirmatory feedback regarding the match between specific quotes and categories.

During the interpretation phase of Wolcott's data transformation process, I began to synthesize data and offer new interpretations of phenomena. This is a phase which

"transcends factual data and cautious analyses and begins to probe into what is to be made of them" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36). The process of interpretation entailed constant consultation with relevant literature and theory, as well as field notes, and memo files. The memos in which I wrote about my reactions to the data at various points of the research process were quite helpful for formulating hypotheses and explanations for the findings.

Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness for qualitative researchers involves an assessment of the study's methodology and interpretations against multiple standards of quality. Instead of assessing the validity, generalizability, or reliability of this study which are traditional values held for positivist, quantitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four areas which are more appropriately used to assess the rigor of qualitative research but achieve the same purposes. The four criteria set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985) include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these will be addressed below in accordance with my goal of establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility of qualitative research refers to the truth value or believability of findings, and is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rubin and Rubin (2005) indicate that credibility is gained by presenting convincing evidence for major conclusions. Strategies utilized for establishing credibility include triangulation, prolonged engagement, and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation occurred by collecting three different types of data - interview, observation, and consultation – checking accuracy of data or interpretations gleaned from one source against the other, and synthesizing them into the interpretations I drew. Furthermore, I achieved a triangulation of perspectives

by gathering interviewees who come from many different backgrounds within Maai Mahiu and have different perspectives on the lives of women. For example, there was a wide range of educational and occupational levels reached by participants. Prolonged engagement was my objective for staying in the field for three weeks and observing interactions during every opportunity I had. I completed the maximum number of interviews that I had planned and did reach saturation in responses to interview questions. Evidence of saturation is clear in the overlapping responses to interview questions and multiple participants reporting similar perceptions. Morrow (2005) suggests that "detailed, rich descriptions not only of the participants' experiences of phenomena but also of the context in which those experiences occur" also enhances credibility. I made many efforts to let the data speak for itself by using direct quotations when possible and rich descriptions of each participant's physical circumstances. While member checks were not feasible within the scope and resources available for this study, I utilized the assistance of my translator many times to ensure that I had understood and transcribed confusing pieces from audio files correctly. I also completed a thorough double-checking procedure of all transcripts to ensure nothing was missed from audio. In addition, I took additional steps prior to collecting any data to ensure that interviewees would accurately interpret and understand the interview questions in the Kikuyu language.

Transferability in qualitative work is similar to generalizability in positivist research paradigms (Morrow, 2005). Because the aim of qualitative research is not to generalize findings per se, transferability instead focuses on the applicability of findings to other contexts. Transferability can be aided through a sufficient level of information provided about the

researcher as an instrument (Morrow, 2005), thick description, and purposive sampling (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985). As the sole and primary investigator in this study I outlined many of the biases

and values I hold as well as personal interest in engaging in this research, both of which were

laid out in the previous chapter. While in the field I spent most of my afternoons trying to

absorb the culture to understand it better and reduce any ethnocentric biases in my work

(Norsworthy, 2006). By recognizing my own subjectivity as it arose through the research

process, I actively worked to limit it from influencing the directions of my work. The sampling

technique I used helps establish transferability because I selected locations and participants

that differ in ways that represent the community at large specifically to obtain a broad range of

data. The thick level of description I used provides sufficient detail and precision to allow

readers to make judgments about transferability.

Consistency and reliability of findings across time are the goals of dependability within

qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Unlike in experimental designs which require a

significant amount of control and consistency across settings, qualitative designs appreciate

that change in context is expected. I worked toward the goal of dependability in this study by

maintaining diligent notes during collection and analysis, and explicitly stating my

methodological procedures for data collection and analysis.   Furthermore, I provided insight

into my potential biases which could be considered context for the study. These steps allow for

an audit trail which can be later examined by peer researchers or other colleagues.

Confirmability is achieved by ensuring that the study's findings are the product of

inquiry rather than the biases of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is based on the

acknowledgment that research is never completely objective. In qualitative research, with the

researcher as the main instrument, it is important to manage subjectivity appropriately and

"adequately tie together the data, analytic processes, and findings in such a way that the reader

is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Because I was the only

researcher involved in data collection, there were no competing belief systems, biases, or

subjectivities among researchers to sort out in the context of the findings.   I also was the only

person to transcribe interviews which further ensured the process was done consistently across

fifteen files. There was no variability in how audio was understood or interpreted and

therefore introduced no confounds of inter-rater reliability. I documented my procedures of

checking and rechecking interview transcripts to ensure that nothing was missing and they

correctly represented the stories spoken in interviews. I maintained a set of notes with my own

reactions and beliefs about the phenomenon as I was collecting and analyzing it that was used

during interpretation to maintain checks on my own subjectivity to the data. Reference to

literature and findings by other authors that are consistent with my interpretations of the data

can also strengthen confirmability of the study.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Six general research questions provided the motivation for the current study and became the basis for understanding and categorizing data into the structure described in this chapter. The first research question involves Kikuyu women's perception of differences in expectations and responsibilities between males and females. The second question involves the cultural and social influences that contribute to female identity development. Third, the study questions women's perceptions of the perpetuation of sex roles within Kikuyu culture. Fourth, the study attempts to understand the types of goals that Kikuyu women set. Women's perceived ability to achieve their goals comprises the fifth question. The sixth and final research question involves women's perceptions of social change. Three themes emerged in the analysis of observational and interview data, with several sub-themes and categories providing further classification and description of each construct. The three themes include: 1) Internalized Gender Expectations; 2) Sex-role Socialization; and, 3) Goal Attainment. Issues related to women's perceptions of social change are interspersed through each theme and are addressed further in Chapter V of this manuscript. Each theme is classified into sub-themes and some are further designated with operationally-defined categories. I illustrate each construct with direct quotations, or examples from observational and consultation data when applicable. It should be explained that for those interviews that required translation, many of the quotations are direct from my translator and therefore narratives may be provided in third person. For example, I frequently heard in those interviews "she thinks…" instead of "I think…"

The results chapter addresses the six aims of this study first by presenting historical and behavioral information about the participants and circumstances surrounding each

interviewee's decision to participate in the study. The purpose of the detailed narrative of each

interviewee is to enhance conceptualization of responses and allow comparison of experiences

and perspectives between interviewees. Next, this chapter provides an outline of the emergent

findings from the process of analyzing data and addresses the study's research questions. In

the final chapter of this manuscript I will discuss possible interpretations of these findings,

address limitations, and explore future directions for research.

<div align="center">**Participants' Narratives**</div>

In order to present the most accurate and thorough depiction of the data, I asked each

interviewee a series of demographic questions at the start of the interview. This included

information about their age, tribal background, spiritual preference, marital status, level of

education, employment, and family of origin. This section includes detailed information about

each interviewee, providing historical context for understanding and comparing the narratives

described later in this chapter. The referral and recruitment process for each interviewee is

detailed. Observational data from interviews is also provided to illustrate the women's current

physical and mental status as well as the type of living arrangements (when applicable) they

currently experience.

"Elizabeth"

Elizabeth was the very first participant who volunteered for an interview after I initially

presented information about the study to the sewing room at CTC where she works. The

interview was conducted that same afternoon in a community TV area at The Transit Inn

(where I was staying in Maai Mahiu) which was secured with privacy maintained for the

purposes of this interview. The open-air room had a locking metal gate for security purposes

and housed several over-sized wooden couches and chairs with dark blue and unevenly padded cushions. The sound of birds crowing and water splashing on the cement ground as maids swept the area was ever-present.

Elizabeth is a 37 year-old, married, Kikuyu, Christian mother of three children.   She grew up as the second oldest of seven siblings and lived with both parents until her father died when she was young. She then moved to her grandmother's house who helped raise her and her siblings. Elizabeth's mother never received formal education unlike her father who received some, but she was unsure how much. Elizabeth completed eight years of primary school and has a desire to go back and pursue secondary school. During the interview she spoke mostly in Kikuyu and required translation throughout. She currently works as a seamstress at CTC.

"Jennifer"

Jennifer was recruited for the interview through my interpreter because they were friends from secondary school. The interview took place in her apartment on my third day in town. Her apartment was located in a locked compound, on the second floor of the building. When we first arrived for the interview, we could hear Celine Dion music playing loudly from an apartment inside the compound. After the ten-foot, blue, metal door to the compound was unlocked, she led us through the large, open-air shared courtyard which has a dirt floor but had recently been wet to keep dust at a minimum. Her apartment opened up into the living room which had walls separating the space from the kitchen and sleeping area, and consisted of two upholstered chairs facing a matching couch, each covered with a stark white lace doily with hot pink trim. There were several stuffed animals sitting on the arm rest of each piece of furniture. A hutch sat against the wall with a missing glass door, and housed various non-matching

glassware. Jennifer was dressed in a knee-length black and white patterned knit skirt and a short-sleeve striped top. Her hair had a few small braids in the front going back, and the back part of her hair was covered with a black net. One of her teeth she had a small diamond stud pasted on. She did not speak much English, but appeared able to understand some questions asked in English.

Jennifer is a 26 year-old married, Christian, Kikuyu woman currently working as a hair dresser in town. She does not have children because of a problem with infertility. She completed both primary and secondary school (12 years) at an all-girls school. Jennifer grew up in a family as the oldest of four siblings and with both parents at home. Both of her parents received education through primary school and work as farmers. She has a goal of returning to school to attend a beauty course and become qualified to do makeup for brides.

"Eunice"

Eunice volunteered early to participate in the interview and later was instrumental in recruiting and interviewing additional participants. She is very connected in the Maai Mahiu community because she is a trained health worker who provides Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) for HIV and other diseases through CTC. The interview took place in her private office within CTC's compound. The twelve foot by eight foot long room had space for several wooden chairs, Eunice's metal desk, storage shelves, posters on the wall about HIV, testing, and women's health, and several large cardboard boxes. Eunice speaks fluent English and did not require a translator for the interview. She was dressed with dark blue pants, heeled shoes, and a white button-up dress shirt w/ black trim that was oversized and draping on her small frame. Her black hair was unbraided and pulled back from her face with a headband.

Eunice is a 39 year-old born again Christian, Kikuyu, married, mother of two. Her

mother is Kikuyu and her father is from a different tribe, the Keriyanga. Her mother grew up in

a polygamist family and none of the girls other than her youngest sister received any education;

her dad had some secondary education. Eunice's parents stayed together most of her

childhood and then separated after Eunice graduated from secondary school. Her mom

remarried to a man from another tribe, the Meru. Her step-father had received no prior

education and saw no value for it; therefore, her three youngest siblings were not allowed to

attend school. Eunice opted to pursue further education on her own and received several

healthcare certificates. She currently works full time doing HIV counselling and testing in the

community and supports her family on that income. Her first husband passed away in 1997

after being poisoned and she remarried to a man who has been to seven years of school and

works now as a mason. She describes them as having a distant marriage, nearly living as

roommates, after she was tested and learned her positive HIV status. Her husband refuses to

be tested but has an ongoing relationship with a female sex worker in town who he helps to

support financially. One of her greatest passions in her life is helping the community. Her goal

is become a sponsor for other families and children suffering from illness and hardship to

ensure they make it through school.

"Susan"

Because of her unique circumstance of living in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

Camp since the post-election violence in 2007, Susan was identified by Eunice as someone to

represent an important subsection of Kikuyu women. We traveled by a very cramped public

transportation vehicle (matatu) to the IDP Camp approximately four miles outside of town and

found several rows of the exact same home, all constructed with sticks and mud. A recent report suggests this IDP camp is a temporary home for 1,300 families, mostly from the Kikuyu ethnic group (Parsitau, 2011). Susan's home was divided into three small rooms, a sleeping area, common area, and kitchen, with walls made of dried mud. A narrow pathway separated each home from the others and provided a place for neighbor children to play together as they were doing when we arrived. Inside her home the smell of manure overtook me, and I later discovered it was from a goat sleeping in the kitchen closed off by a curtain. Susan explained that the goat needed to stay inside for protection from her ex stealing it. Flies swarmed everywhere; however, Susan appeared completely unfazed by them, allowing them to land on her face repeatedly. The sitting area felt overcrowded with wooden furniture, most of which were missing seat cushions, but all had lace doilies covering the back. Several blue plastic gallon jugs of clean water were piled in the corner of the room. After the interview, Susan served us a cup of tea and lunch comprised of generous portions of red beans and maize in a plastic bowl. She explained "In our culture, if we give a guest a cup of tea or food and you don't accept it, we view it as there's something wrong with us." Susan was dressed in a knee-length leopard print tight skirt, and a black and hot pink printed sweater, with a shawl wrapped around her shoulders. She also had a scarf covering her hair.

Susan is a 35 year-old Christian, Kikuyu, widowed, mother of three children. She grew up as the middle child with fourteen siblings, although four died at young ages. Neither parent ever received formal education, and had jobs of selling groceries and operating a hotel. None of her siblings received more than seven years of education, which was what she attained. Susan and her eldest daughter are positive for HIV and complying with treatment appropriately.

Her husband died from HIV in 1998. Susan does not currently work, but supports her family

with IDP supplies and rations from the government. Her goals are to help her children succeed

in school and eventually become more engaged in work and financially independent.

"Miriam"

Miriam was referred to participate in the interview by one of the other interviewees,

Eunice, because of her unique background and circumstances related to her husband's death

from HIV. The interview took place at her home which was a short distance from the busy

"AIDS highway". Her home was a one room structure with long sheets and white lace fabric

hanging from the ceiling to separate the sleeping quarters from the sitting area. The

approximately six by ten foot sitting area was filled with a wood coffee table, two chairs, and a

very firm couch. In the corner of the room were assorted cooking pots, plastic dishes and

utensils piled on a table, and a portable stove. There was no electricity in the very dark room

which required us to leave the door open for light and a breeze. Miriam appeared overweight,

estimated to be 250 pounds, and was dressed in a t-shirt and long, fabric skirt, with her hair

parted and sectioned into braids. She spoke very little English and required translation

throughout the interview.

Miriam is a 44 year-old, Kikuyu, Christian, widowed, mother of four daughters. She was

the first born of seven siblings and received seven years of primary education. She was unsure

about the educational level of her parents, but they both worked as farmers and tended

animals. Miriam's husband died five years ago from HIV, and she herself is positive for HIV, but

is managing it appropriately with medication. She currently leads a support group for women

with HIV. She provides for her family by doing casual labor – washing clothes and cooking for

others. Her future goal is to start a business selling new and used clothes.

"Ruth"

As a CTC community health worker who was involved in recruiting participants, Ruth

learned a lot about the study and volunteered her own perspectives as well. Other health

workers also identified Ruth as having a "normal family", which was a perspective I believed to

be helpful for gathering a sample of all representative experiences in Maai Mahiu. The

interview took place at Ruth's home. When we arrived, her two children were playing outside

as Ruth bent over washing clothes in an 18 inch orange plastic basin. Her t-shirt was soaked

with water all the way down the front and she wore a long cotton skirt. In her large living room,

there were several options for seating, so I sat down in the chair closest to the front door in

order to get the most light in the dark room. She informed me I was sitting in her husband's

seat because he is the head of the household. She served us a very common drink during the

interview – chai tea.   The sound of rain pouring down on the tin roof was loud and distracting

throughout the interview. Ruth had adequate English skills and only required occasional

interpretation.

Ruth is a 42 year-old Christian, Kikuyu, married, mother of four children. She grew up in

a polygamist family in which her father had two wives and eighteen children; he passed away in

1997. Ruth reached the third year of secondary school and her goal is to one day graduate

from secondary school. She believes her dad reached four years of primary school and her mom

never attended school. Ruth is currently very active in her church as an elder and leader of

seminars for women and youth, and also is a community health volunteer, educating and

providing in-home support for those with cancer or HIV. Her family is supported primarily by her husband who works as a truck driver and is away for weeks at a time.

"Gladys"

Gladys was specifically recommended for the interview by Eunice because she continues to struggle with the change in responsibilities and expectations since her husband's death earlier this year. The interview took place at her home which was located in a quiet area of town in a gated compound. The living and sleeping areas of her home were separated by sheets much like many of the other homes visited. The floor of the room was made of uneven rock and was quite dusty. A wave of heat hit us as we entered Gladys' home and the constant sound of flies whizzing around was remarkable. The sitting area had two firm couches facing one another, separated by a wood coffee table which took up all but approximately one foot of leg room. Gladys was dressed in long blue thermal pants with a striped long-sleeve top. Her hair was covered with a stocking cap, which covered her braided hair that was in a net. Gladys' one year old son sat with us during the interview and fussed until Gladys picked him and nursed him. Gladys had difficulty knowing how to complete the consent form which required a signature and date; she required Mary's help for the format of the date.

Gladys is a 25 year-old Christian, Kikuyu, widowed, mother of three children. She is the second oldest of eight siblings. Her parents separated and her mom went to seek a better place to live and remarried, so she spent most of her life living with her grandparents. She received four years of education, which is halfway through primary school. She is unsure of the education level of either parent. Gladys got married around age 15 and her husband died a few months prior to the interview due to HIV and tuberculosis. She did not specify in the interview

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about her HIV status. She has never worked outside the home and currently does not work. At present she relies on financial support from the community. Her goal is to have a business of selling charcoal so she can support her kids.

"Victoria"

As another community health worker with CTC, Victoria learned about the interviews early and volunteered to participate. For practicality purposes, the interview took place in the TV area of the Transit Inn over the weekend. She was dressed in striped dress slacks, a long-sleeve shirt, and had her hair covered with a scarf.   Victoria speaks very good English and did not require a translator for the interview.

Victoria is a 35 year old Protestant converted from Catholic, Kikuyu, widowed, mother of three children. She was the fifth born of eight siblings and lived with both parents throughout childhood. Her dad completed primary school but her mom received none because education was not permitted for girls in the polygamist family in which her mother was raised. Victoria achieved a full secondary education along with most of her other siblings that wanted to. She grew up and was married in the Catholic Church, but after learning she was HIV positive, she switched to the Protestant church because she felt it provided more support and guidance. Her husband died from HIV-related complications in 2006, just two years after they both learned their positive status. She currently works as a volunteer in which she receives a moderate stipend from three different community organizations providing outreach and support for HIV and AIDS programs. She supplements that income with some casual labor such as selling vegetables and washing others' clothes. Her greatest goal is to pursue further education and receive a degree in the medical field.

"Monicah"

In order to gather perspectives regarding the ongoing concerns of sex work within Maai Mahiu, Community Health Workers at CTC recruited Monicah to be interviewed. As expected she was eager to participate and was involved with the study by providing further insight and resources even after this interview. She invited me to her home for the interview. When my translator and I arrived in the morning we found her sweeping the floor and completing house chores. The sectioned off sitting area of her home was decorated with reggae and Bob Marley posters. There were several colorful, crocheted outfits on tables and chairs waiting for her to finish. Her braided hair fell below her shoulders and the beads on the end of each braid clinked each time she moved. Monicah spoke loudly and fast, but had great command of the English language, and she insisted on trying to speak English by herself when possible.

Monicah is a 44 year-old Christian, Kikuyu, separated, mother of two children. She was raised as the oldest child in a large, polygamist family. She was only allowed to complete primary school, which was seven years at the time, because her mom did not believe girls should go to school. Her mother did not complete primary school and married at age fifteen; her father completed two years of secondary school. Monicah ran away from home due to mistreatment from her mom around age eighteen, and had to start working rather than pursuing education like she wanted. She eventually got married at age 23 and had two children, but her husband left her because he was not ready to commit to marriage. After being left with two children, little education or skills, and no support, she decided to pursue sex work to help make ends meet. She continues to do sex work as needed to supplement her other means of income generation (i.e., farming, knitting clothes). She is HIV positive and

spends a large portion of her time doing peer education with other sex workers in the community regarding safe sex practices, alternatives to sex work, skill building, and women's health. She recently began adult literacy classes in the community, which is where she learned English, and plans to finish secondary school. She has dreams of opening a rescue center for women and children to help prevent them from resorting to sex work.

"Lilian"

Recruited by other community health volunteers, Lilian appeared to have a unique story because of her recent unsuccessful attempts to discontinue her employment as a sex worker. The interview was conducted in one of CTC's private offices. Lilian is a larger woman, approximately 250 pounds, with short black hair, messily spiked in the back. She wore a polo shirt with a statement about HIV prevention and education printed over the breast. She had good command of the English language, but was not particularly elaborative or forthcoming with details of her life. In fact, she did not endorse being a sex worker until the end of the interview, and answered "not much" when initially asked what she does for a living. She only occasionally relied on a translator during the interview.

Lilian is a 39 year-old, Christian, Kikuyu, widowed mother of two teenage boys. She is educated through primary school, and is the third oldest out of eight children. Both of her parents did attend school, but she is unsure to what level. She got married at the age of 19 and her family was paid a dowry of several cows from her husband's family, as is customary in their culture. She and her husband were diagnosed with HIV in 1999. She willingly paid for and took Anti-retroviral (ARVs) medication, but he refused because of stigma, she believes. He died in 2001. After his death she moved from Nakuru to Maai Mahiu in search of a job and ended up in

sex work. She volunteers as a health worker through CTC and enjoys providing sex education

and empowerment to the community of sex workers. Her greatest goal is to build a house for

her and her family, but she lacks financial resources to do so and therefore is conflicted about

quitting sex work.

"Grace"

Grace was one of the community health workers involved in identifying and recruiting

participants, but volunteered herself to participate because of her unique experience of being

separated from her husband and living in a large household with extended family. The

interview took place in the afternoon at her residence, which happens to be her parents' home.

They live on the second floor of a multi-story building. Entering the home through the dining

room, I observed six tall dark wooden chairs arranged around a dark wooden table and two

bowls of partially-eaten food sitting at one place setting. Each chair had matching white and

pink cloth covering the chair back, seat, and armrests. We sat in the living room which had an

abundance of chairs and couches, all with the same covering cloths, lining the concrete wall.

Grace was dressed in a bright blue, short-sleeve t-shirt from one of CTC's health programs, a

knee-length skirt, and tan sandals. She wore a wig that was styled into smooth curls. Grace's

mother was present for some of the meeting, and offered us chai tea.   Several children who

were Grace's nieces and daughters wandered through as they returned home from school.

Grace spoke some English but required a large amount of translation.

Grace is a 36 year-old Christian, Kikuyu, separated, mother of three daughters, and

living with her parents. She is educated through primary school, but could not continue on due

to a medical condition and needed to receive treatment at that time. Neither of her parents

received any education as children, but her father made money as a landlord and her mother farmed. She is the fourth born of eight children. Grace was twenty years old when she got married and stayed with her husband for seven years until 2003. He was an alcoholic, constantly beating her and their two daughters. She believes he beat her because she of her medical condition for which they could not afford treatment. She eventually left him while three months pregnant and retreated to the safety of her parents' house. Her mother had a stroke a few years ago, so Grace helps to care for her and their home. Her family currently helps with finances and pays for her children's school fees. Grace volunteers as a community health worker and truly enjoys the outreach she does with HIV positive individuals. Her biggest goal is to go back to school just to gain more knowledge.

"Valerie"

In search of participants with a history of adversity, Valerie was recommended by CTC staff to participate. The interview was conducted at the CTC office in the afternoon. Valerie presented as older than her stated age of 48 and her frail appearance showed evidence of a long, hard-working life. She was very thin, with her long skirt, and white-collared shirt that were hanging off from her body. Her hands appeared large for her petite size and showed signs of callous and roughness.   She walked slowly and had a slight hunch in her back. She carried a small shopping sack that had two empty water bottles, her cellphone, and a paper with information about her medications. Prior to the interview even beginning, she divulged her desire to talk about her past traumas. She stated she feels it's cathartic to talk about her experiences. Valerie had little command of the English language and required word-for-word translation.

Valerie is a 48 year-old Kikuyu woman who is separated from her husband and is caring for her young niece and nephew. She grew up as the second born of eight children, and was educated through class five.   She described her and her siblings as "street children", meaning they had minimal parental support and rummaged through garbage for food. As a teenager she worked as a house girl, a common occupation for many young Kenyan women, living in and cleaning a wealthy family's home. However, she quit and returned home after the man of the house tried to rape her. She later met her husband while both working on a farm.   After giving birth to her last child, Valerie returned home to find her father-in-law having brutally killed six of her seven children. One of her sons ran away to safety and survived the attack. After the event, Valerie spent time in Mathari psychiatric hospital near Nairobi and decided to separate from her husband at her mother's advice. Also at the age of 38, Valerie was raped until unconscious by six different men. This was how she contracted HIV, which she reports managing very well in the present. Her only living son is now an adult and living in Tanzania, partially helping to support her. She currently works at a local hotel, cleaning rooms.   She has a goal of starting a business to make her less financially dependent on her son. Valerie grew up Catholic, converted to Islam after her children were killed, and eventually converted to Christianity because she was not content as Muslim. She tends to find the most strength through reading the Bible and talking with friends. After the interview, Valerie learned from CTC staff about an adult literacy program in which she can participate. She began smiling upon learning of the program and immediately agreed to participate as it would assist in her goal of starting a business and moving forward in life.

"Tabitha"

Tabitha, who works as a part-time teacher in the same building as CTC offices, volunteered to participate in an interview after hearing about the study from others. The interview took place in a private office allocated by CTC. She agreed to complete the interview before reporting to work one afternoon. She was dressed smartly in a long blue pleated skirt with a black blazer, 2-toned dress neck scarf, and her hair covered with a scarf. In addition to teaching young children with disabilities, she is also a volunteer tutor with the adult literacy program in Maai Mahiu. The interview was completed mostly in English with the assistance of Mary for translating initial questions.

Tabitha is a 38 year-old, Christian, Kikuyu, married mother of five. She completed secondary school, and later, after much persistence and fundraising, continued on to earn a college certificate. She is unsure of her father's education level, but her mother was not permitted to attend school. Her father works as a tailor and her mother is a farmer. Tabitha was the fourth born out of five children in her family. She got married at age sixteen and has had five children. She is the primary earner in her family as a tutor and assistant teacher. Her husband works casual labor occasionally as an electrician; however, she stated "he is a drunkard so he doesn't help us very much." Currently Tabitha's goal is to continue seeking education in order to pursue becoming a teacher.

"Joyce"

Joyce volunteered herself for an interview after I came to speak with her and her fellow CTC employees about the study. To make it easier and prevent Joyce from taking extra time off work, the interview was conducted in one of CTC's private offices. She was dressed in a knee-

length print skirt and t-shirt. Joyce understood and spoke English adequately, only occasionally

utilizing the translator for her narratives. She became tearful during the interview when

discussing her stressful home life and she accepted my offer of brief supportive counseling and

debriefing after the interview.

Joyce is a 33 year-old, Presbyterian, Kikuyu, married mother of two children. She has

seven years of education and is the first born of six children. After her parents separated and

her father passed away, Joyce began working as a house girl in the city to help support her

siblings. Her mother received four years of education and she is unsure of her father's level.

Because her father was an alcoholic, her mother primarily supported the family through casual

labor jobs and they lived partially at their maternal grandmother's house after her parents'

separation. Joyce currently is employed as a seamstress at CTC, with which she takes great

pleasure. Her greatest goal is to return to school and earn a certificate for tailoring.

"Anne"

Like Joyce and Elizabeth, Anne also is a seamstress at CTC who volunteered for the study

after observing me in the area for several days. The interview was conducted in a CTC office

prior to the start of her work shift. She was dressed in a wrap-around, long, printed skirt and t-

shirt. Anne understood spoken English but had more difficulty explaining herself in the

language and opted to use the translator for her narratives.

Anne is a 43 year-old, Baptist, Kikuyu, mother of five.   She got married at age

seventeen, but is currently separated after her husband stopped providing financially or

assisting the family at home. She believes part of his motivation for disconnecting from the

family was due to their child having disabilities. Currently she works as a seamstress at CTC and

is the sole provider for her family. Anne was the third born out of nine children. Her father had a seventh grade education and her mother went through sixth. Anne attended school through class eight, and her primary goal is to help her children graduate from school and get good jobs.

Summary. Participants selected for semi-structured interviews came from a variety of backgrounds, yet also shared many similarities. Ranging from 25 to 48 years old, participants had an average age of 37.6 years. All have been married, but five of the women are widowed, and three are currently separated from their husbands. Over half of the women are currently being treated for HIV. All participants identify as Christian and are also from the Kikuyu tribe. Their education levels range from four years to having received a college certificate, with the average level at eight and a half years, just over primary school.

THEME I. Internalized Gender Expectations

One major aim of the current study was to understand and describe the current roles for Kikuyu males and females within Maai Mahiu. Having this conceptual understanding is essential prior to attempting to explain where the roles come from, what purposes they serve, or anything about trying to implement change, all of which are later goals of the study. Several interview questions were developed for the purpose of understanding women's perceptions of gender differences, and the topic became a theme of discussion throughout many interviews. For example, each participant was asked about her and her husband's current roles or responsibilities within the community, the family, and at work or school.

For the purpose of this study, an internalized gender expectation was defined as a rule for behavior that was either actively or passively taught. The internalized rules do not always equate with actions or reality, but this section focuses on what women perceive the

expectations to be for men and women. One very general example, cited by all fifteen

interviewees, was that females are responsible for cooking, cleaning, and caring for children.

The general concencus was that men, on the other hand, are supposed to be responsible for

providing monetarily for the family.

Women perceived there to be a large difference in expectations for women and men,

particularly regarding acceptable behaviors and traits. However, these expectations seem to

vary based on the following contexts: personal life, family, and community. Women also

discussed differences in their perceived potential compared with that of men. These four sub-

themes of 1) Personal Responsibilities; 2) Familial Responsibilities; 3) Social Responsibilities;

and 4) Potentiality are illustrated in the following sections.

1. Personal Responsibilities

In the current study, a personal responsibility involves the expectation that an individual

conducts him or herself in a manner consistent with community's beliefs and values for their

given sex. This construct closely involves issues of masculinity and femininity and the behaviors

or traits with which one is expected to conform.   Evident in the interview and observational

data was the expectation for women to engage with others passively, remain quiet, be

respectful, and rely heavily on men. Adult females were observed to be generally separated

from males in public areas, and women reported having few opportunities to make decisions or

influence others. Women perceive that men's greatest responsibilities involve taking charge,

making decisions, being independent, and providing financially for the family. Each of these

perceptions is discussed with examples in the following paragraphs.

In Maai Mahiu, it is expected that women be respectful in their language and communication style, often deferring to men. As a result, women often have difficulty expressing themselves or getting their needs met. Monicah stated that "men never want women to talk… so there's no way you will find a Kikuyu woman talking in front of men. It's only that right now we have power because of the constitution because now they are recognizing women." She also added that "even you are discriminated against, you are raped. You couldn't go to anybody telling you are raped… you just keep quiet." This lack of voice and power is even a problem within a marriage according to Anne: "sometimes you hate him because of his behavior. And sometimes you are not powerful to tell him 'you are wrong, you do this' so you have to keep quiet and be with anger." In consulting with male and female CTC staff, this lack of voice in women was confirmed. I learned that men tend to stay out at night past 7:00 PM and that they do not need to explain their whereabouts, nor is the wife allowed to question it. Grace expressed concern about her ability to get help around the house from her husband when needed:

> If you tell a man to do something in the house, he can't. He sees you are commanding him. Even if you have a baby, let's say you have a small baby, the baby is sucking, and you tell him to bring you even a cup. 'You are doing me like a child. Am I your son?'

There are also strong beliefs about behaviors, activities, or jobs allowed for either sex. Monicah described a time when she wanted to work as a mechanic and felt discriminated against because of her interests. Her boss told her: "you're a woman; you're supposed to be in the house. Just go back in the house. I can come in and give you money and you survive. There is no need for you to touch oils, being dirty; you're a woman." Eunice reported the same

type of discrimination: "you could not find a woman mechanic. Initially it was very difficult to find a woman driving – that was a man's role." She continued on to say that "when it comes to nursing, teaching – those were feminine duties."

Susan provided a description of how she learned and was reminded of her own personal responsibilities as a girl:

> Most of the time, how you're supposed to behave was being done by the mother. And especially after certain age, if you are late to come into the house, you'd be reminded you are a girl child, you need to be in the house at this time. But with the boy child, they did not have any problems even if he spent the night out.

As evidenced in Susan's experience and observed throughout the community, girls tend to have tighter restrictions on them than boys which seems to foster beliefs about their fragility and inability to handle independence. These are both important pieces for understanding the development of the female identity which is socialized to rely heavily on males.

One of the main personal responsibilities learned by young Kikuyu girls is the importance of getting married. In many families, marriage is a young woman's greatest goal. Eunice indicated that "others were brought up with the mentality that when you get married, that is where you belong." Monicah discussed how many of her classmates from school are already grandparents at the age of 44 because "I was supposed to get married when I left school."   In Jennifer's case, "she saw she was getting old so she decided to get married" at the age of 22.

2. Familial Responsibilities

This sub-theme includes behaviors or characteristics of men and women within the family and homestead that are consistent with the values and expectations for their sex. Differences in responsibilities within the home and family were commonly discussed and easily observed in multiple contexts. In the context of this community of people, it is evident that there are specific responsibilities for men and women within the traditional Kikuyu home; however, expectations of behavior are evolving based on demand and acceptability. These responsibilities came naturally; "they never debated" regarding the division of responsibilities, said Lilian. Women are to care for the children and the husband, complete daily house chores, and tend to the farm. Men have no specific responsibilities within the home other than to provide food and money for the family. Tabitha described how her father was extremely dedicated to their family and worked hard to provide for them. She stated that "my dad was very much struggling for it. Because he was not drunkard, he could not get into those things that makes one not consider the house." Although not always the case in reality, this financial responsibility is what is generally expected of married Kikuyu men.

It is this difference in responsibilities at home that likely contributes the most to someone's understanding of sex roles. Beliefs about these differences also contribute to a perception that men's work is harder than women's. For example, Gladys' view is that "the man is the one who is doing the hard work – like constructing. As the women are taking care of children." After additional questioning, she stated a belief that men's work is harder than women's. Eunice provided a very thorough account of the differences in familial responsibilities for men and women:

When it comes to the responsibilities in our community, unless you need maybe repairs of some of the assets that you have, maybe you need to construct a new shed – that is the role of the men. …and the men bring the food, whatever they purchase with all the money on the table. You [woman] can do the budgeting, you go to the market, you prepare the meals, you do the roadwork, you clean the house, make sure the children are clean, ensure he's okay, he's had a meal, he's taken a shower, you know where his socks are, all those are the responsibilities of the woman. So even current to like you'd find most of the men are resting, watching the TV, reading the newspaper. But the women, even after her daily job, even if she is employed, when she gets back to the house, unless you have a house help, most of us are still busy when you get back.

One of the most common phrases used across interviews and consultation meetings was that men are "head of the house". Eight out of fifteen interviews used this phrase which relates to a viewpoint that men automatically merit more power and respect than women in the household. In contrast, Monicah and Eunice referred to women as the "neck", and Ruth and Grace view women as the "chin". Gladys added that "he's referred as the head of the family, so he's given more respect than the wife." Similarly, Elizabeth believes that "as a woman, you respect your husband." When visiting Ruth's home to conduct the individual interview and I sat in the chair which was located in the center of the room near the door, she commented that the chair was her husband's chair because "he is head of the house". There was no evidence of reserved seating for other members of her family.

It is incongruent with the male sex role and familial responsibilities to complete house chores. For example, Jennifer stated: "if a man is found washing the house, he wouldn't be respected. He would be taken like he isn't man enough in his own family, so his woman is the

one to clean the house. That is her role." In describing the responsibilities of her parents

growing up, Grace indicated "[her mother] was a farmer. And [she completed] the house

chores, washing clothes. The dad didn't have to work with the house chores, so he was

providing food for them and the money." Monicah noted a similar split in roles for her parents

at home: "We find that mom was the one who was taking care of us. The dad is only giving the

money and then pass. Other than working outside, he was giving us food." Susan's experience

was described as:

> So it's like he [dad] did not have roles within the house or within the home. He is just to come in
>
> the evening, sleep at home, and leave in the morning. [I] never used to know where he is most
>
> of the time. And on almost all the occasions, he used to come home drunk.

The accounts of Eunice, Grace, Monicah, and Susan were consistent with nearly all of the other

women and observations in Maai Mahiu. Miriam provided one example of contrasting

evidence from her childhood, in which her father became ill and had to leave his job as a

matatu (bus) driver. While he was ill and at home, Miriam stated "he was helping the mother,

like milking, the housechores that the mother was doing when she was alone at home – he was

helping the mom." This account is one example of behavior outside of the expected familial

responsibilities for men and women. However, in general, it is expected for women to be very

hands-on within the home, selflessly taking care of everything; whereas men are not expected

to be present or involved at home or with children, likely due to work demands. Victoria

summarized this phenomenon with her statement: "Men, they are the bread winners… solely

the bread winners."

There are occasions when the man is unable to meet the financial needs of the family with his wages, but continues to be resistant to the woman working outside the home. In many Kikuyu's eyes it is not acceptable for a married woman to be employed. Working outside the home is not traditionally considered a female's responsibility. Monicah relayed that her dad used to say to her mother: "no, a woman is supposed to stay at home. You can't do business. You can't do job, and I do job. You stay at home." CTC staff suggest that a man's resistance to women working may also be the result of him not wanting his wife to earn her own money and in doing so, develop independence from him. Victoria has a similar perspective about men attempting to maintain control by keeping the wife dependent. She proclaimed:

> [men] take it like they are the Gods of the home, so he can dictate anything in the home. He can do all that he wants. Just because he knows that the woman has not a shilling to buy food. She is depending on the man to get food. So it's like the woman is like a slave in the home.

Victoria described how this problem played out in her marriage to her late husband. He would not allow her to work despite their family needing the money. He accused her of being a sex worker when she insisted on starting a job. She stated:

> The man doesn't want to see you going out for jobs; he tries to escape you like you're going to do bad behaviors. But then he can't provide even enough, and even if he provides enough, he takes the advantage of like 'okay, you're also waiting for me to bring, so I have to do everything I want because by the end of the day you wait for me so that you can eat.'

Because she is currently working to support their child with special needs, Joyce's husband was given the following advice from his friend: "'go and tell your wife to leave the job so she can be the housewife… your wife have to stay at home because when she started earning something she can't respect you."

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It was men's lack of follow-through with primary familial responsibilities that led

Monicah and many other women into the profession of sex work. She stated:

> he doesn't want us to work… That's why there are so many sex working… Many of them have
>
> been married, maybe 99% have been married - they were in marriage. Yeah, but because the
>
> men didn't want to take the responsibilities, that's why the women decided to come out,
>
> because maybe you are being left here.

When a woman is a single mother due to death or separation from her husband, the

woman is faced with the familial responsibility to provide for the children and run the

household. These are not typically roles that women learn or for which they have a role model.

However, single mothers tend to be very focused toward the family and therefore do whatever

is necessary despite hardship. These women are acting outside of the scope of their familial

responsibility by working outside the home, but also are aligned with the general expectation of

women to be selfless and focused on family. Since her husband's death from AIDS-related

complications, Victoria indicated that now, "I'm the father. I'm the mother. I'm the leader in

the family. I take the responsibility of the father because I'm the mother. I'm the

breadwinner." Susan, also a single mother, described her recent increase in responsibility

"since she's the bread winner, she has to ensure everything is in order. She has to provide

what is needed here within the house, and she has to ensure life is comfortable for the kids."

Seven out of eight of the single-mother interviewees expressed similar requirements to

complete both male and female responsibilities. The eighth single-mother, Gladys, is a recent

widow who appears to still be in shock regarding her husband's death six months ago. Instead

of finding work outside the home to support her three children, she continues to rely on community and family support.

In addition to the division of responsibilities to run a household, there are also specific expectations of a woman when she gets married. Many young women are unaware of the marital responsibilities for a woman upon the start of marriage, such as the expectations of sexual intercourse and the initiation of house chores. Ruth believes that it is partially the role of the church to educate men and women about their roles and responsibilities in a marriage.

3. Social Responsibilities

For the purposes of this study, social responsibilities were identified as expectations of men and women to engage within the community in behaviors consistent with the values held specifically for their sex. From this data it is evident that women are expected to engage in communal behaviors in a social context; however, it appears men do not have such expectations. It is possible there are very few expectations of men, or it may be the case that women had difficulty identifying them in the interview. The differences that were observed and discussed in interviews are explained in the following paragraphs and tentative explanations provided in final chapter.

Whether purposeful or accidental, the physical and ideological separation of men and women emphasizes the differences between sexes and reinforces their current gendered behaviors. Segregation of adult males and females was observed throughout town and discussed extensively in interviews. Both Gladys and Miriam indicated that separation of boys and girls was first noticed in grade school. Miriam stated "the girls have to group themselves

into the girl's group; and the boys, they had to play alone." The separation continues into

adulthood, when women are taught not to interact with men. Susan learned that:

> you are now a big woman, you don't joke around with men. If you do so… what are the
>
> consequences… what would be the community's perspective of your conduct and such things?
>
> Maybe if you got a child even when you're not married… what was the community's perception
>
> of who you are? Maybe you are not a role model in the community and such - you're a bad
>
> example to these others - you'd be denied maybe the chance to get a normal marriage. Maybe
>
> your family would be degraded.

Sitting in a local bar one Sunday afternoon, I also observed men sitting at tables conversing only

with men and women sitting and conversing only with women. On numerous occasions I also

noticed that men tend to be away from home in the evening doing what CTC staff assumes to

be spending time with men at a bar or utilizing a sex worker, all while the wife is at home.

Interview data showed that women perceived collectivistic-type behavior to be the

most common social expectation for women. Seven women specifically referenced that it is a

woman's social responsibility to be a role model or to respect other women, with the purpose

of bettering the community. Elizabeth perceives that her primary social responsibility is "being

an example for others" and to not "gossip about other women". Jennifer's experience is that

"since she wants to be a role model to other women, she has to go to work each and every day

to earn a living. And then she won't have to sit around like any other woman." Joyce and

Susan noted having roles in which they promote cooperation and good relationships within the

community. For example, Susan described that part of her role is "to ensure that they're all

living in peace in love with one another with the neighbors so that life would be more easier for

each of them."

There was some overlap with beliefs about being a role model, but nine out of fifteen women also emphasized the importance of helping the community through education, outreach, or acts of service.   In Miriam's case, she views her greatest social responsibility to be attending educational seminars, and afterward, "she shares the knowledge with the other women and they plan on how to develop a woman." Similarly, Ruth tries to educate and counsel young boys and girls from broken families about "family life responsibility and roles, behavior and all that." Susan, who lives in a very tight-knit community of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), described her most important roles in the community as:

> To ensure there is cohesiveness within all that they are undertaking in the community. Like if there is a burden, or there is something communal taking place, she has to participate, to make it lighter for maybe the family that is affected – like when there is sickness, when there is death or when there is another ceremony like a wedding.

Similarly, Elizabeth also has the role in her community of: "cooking and stuff for ceremonies like pre-weddings". She described that volunteering in this way helps maintain good relationships in the community.

Victoria and Grace both spoke about their involvement in outreach activities and community health by counseling individuals about their management of HIV or nutrition. Victoria specifically described herself as a "leader" for this reason.   Lilian and Monicah both discussed their responsibilities of empowering women who are involved in sex work. Lilian's work involves "trying to tell the single women or the single moms to accept themselves the way they are… And try to struggle with this life since they are not alone." Monicah, who is viewed

as a leader or a self-proclaimed "super-mobilizer" in Maai Mahiu to educate and empower

fellow sex workers, described her responsibilities as:

> I do empower women. I do tell them to change behavior. I do tell them you see like I told you,
> 'if I get this money from this, I don't go to street. Because the street - although it's a business,
> that business is very risky.' … I'm a peer educator, so I do educate my peer educators about
> condomizing. Like I have a dispenser here. I do put condoms for them outside there. So they
> come and collect them. They come and pick.

Monicah also is an activist against gender based violence and is working to advise her

community about the problem. She stated "I work with children, I take them to rescue centers

for the sexually abused, even the abandoned children."

Though not discussed with interviewees extensively, data show that women tend to

perceive men as uninterested in bettering the community or the welfare of others. Miriam

described her beliefs about the role of a man in the community: "a man should also be able to

help other people outside other than his family. He should be able to look for something to

help other people in the community other than being focused on one person." However, when

questioned about a man's tendency to follow-through with these wishes, she stated, "It's

difficult for them to do that. They don't." Eunice had very similar perceptions, and added that

"most of the men would give excuses like I'm busy, I'm not available, I'm far away. But yet they

are still around" when asked to assist a family in need.

One of the mornings I spent in Maai Mahiu involved "Ubuntu Day" which is a

community-wide trash pick-up event to assist efforts at increasing sanitation in town. Dozens

of women and children initially participated in the event, and the numbers grew exponentially

as onlookers joined. There were no men from the community who offered to help, despite

passing by several in the streets. I questioned CTC staff about the lack of involvement from men during "Ubuntu Day". I learned that men had asked if they would be paid to help, and when denied payment, they were uninterested because they feel it is up to city council to pick up the town. Additionally, I learned that men view the job of picking up trash and sweeping as a woman's responsibility, and therefore are unwilling to assist. This observational example provides further evidence of the assertion that Kikuyu men possess minimal investment in the community or the betterment of its people.

4. Potentiality

As in many other areas, the community holds different beliefs about the future potential of men and women. Potentiality, for the purposes of this study, is defined as beliefs about inherent capacities or abilities for growth based on a person's given sex. One of the major ways in which differences in potentiality are visible is through examination of beliefs surrounding marriage for Kikuyus in Maai Mahiu. Because it is expected that girls will leave their family of origin in order to get married, I learned that many families view their daughter as a lost investment. Therefore, little is invested in daughters from a young age so families do not feel they are losing resources. School fees are not prioritized for girls, nor is there much investment in their future.

Potentiality related to girls getting married was a topic of discussion in five of the fifteen interviews. Ruth experienced as a young girl that "you are not recognized in the family for you are going to be married. But the boy is there. He's the man to stay to the house. But the lady will go and leave the family. So you are not recognized." However, she does believe that times are changing and young girls are more valued at home today.

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Eunice stated that "there was this belief that if they invest in us girls, you are going to benefit the family that you are going to join. So they concentrate much on the boy child." She may have illustrated this problem best with the following statement: "For the girls, they were not taken to school… they were considered like assets. Like you grow into a big woman, you get married, and then when the dowry is paid – that's how the family will benefit. So you're considered assets for exchange."

Susan noticed a very important difference in the investment of education for boys and girls considering the different routes prescribed for their future:

> at times boys were given the priority to go to school since they would benefit their families. And the girls would be retained since after all they would finally get married… it's like the girl will finally go away, so she would go with whatever she benefitted with. But for the man, if he gets like educated, employed – his land will bring in into the family. He'll have to bring in the wife and a good wife. He'll have to bring in whatever he's earning back to the family and he'll remain there – he's not going anywhere. So he's seen as somebody to benefit the community.

Lack of investment in education for young girls sends a message that their potential is low or that family does not believe they are worthy of success. This lack of investment leads to an even greater gap in the future.

Similar messages were relayed to girl children by the amount of attention or resources provided to them. Monicah said, "every time you find that your dad comes home, he just want to talk with his sons; he had no time with us." She also experienced inequality between the treatment of her brothers and sisters. Although her brother was not interested in learning, he was taken to secondary school while she was not allowed. The brother additionally was taught

how to drive and given a driver's license at his request. Monicah expressed frustration about

these differences that have kept her behind:

> But you see like now, we are 7 sisters in my family, my dad has never given any one of us any
>
> course, but my brothers they are both drivers, they have driving license. The dad who have
>
> done that. My dad have bought them motorcycles.

These examples of educational and family investment show the difference in value for

boys and girls. As adults, women continue to experience the consequences of lower perceived

potentiality which has direct effects on esteem and goal-setting.   For example, Eunice believes

their lack of access to education makes women feel unworthy of positive life or career changes,

other than what is prescribed for them. She stated: "Others feel like since they did not go to

school, they are useless. They are not forecast." Eunice also added that:

> Others were brought up with the mentality that when you get married, that is where you
>
> belong. They usually say the men are the head and women are the neck. So you've always
>
> accepted the fact that you are there below the head, not realizing that as the neck, you have to
>
> turn the head. But some of them say 'no, I'm also the neck, so I'm below the head, so I just wait
>
> for the head plans.'"

Monicah noted how internalized beliefs about potentiality have caused problems for women

becoming leaders in the community. She observed the following:

> They were saying 'you are wife, belong to somebody… us, we can't be led by a woman' … Even
>
> us women, we have that mentality that women can't lead. You see? Even as women we
>
> discriminate ourselves because we don't find ourselves as if we can be leaders. Yeah. Because
>
> at beginning we are shown that we are down. We are the neck, they are the head. Yeah, we

are discriminated. Yeah. So you find that we are being discriminated by men and even us

ourselves, we are discriminating ourselves.

Implications of the internalization of these beliefs are discussed in Chapter V.

THEME II: Sex-Role Socialization

Belief systems and expectations are typically well-established and inter-woven through

culture and everyday practices in various ways.   But where do the sex roles come from, and

how are they reinforced and perpetuated? These are the second and third research questions

driving this analysis and are addressed in detail in this section. The socialization of sex-roles is a

very cyclical process, which oftentimes uses the developing sex-roles to strengthen the

foundation of the initial belief. For example, gendered expectations tend to deter women from

pursuing certain areas of work and therefore reinforce beliefs about women's abilities or lack

thereof. Additionally, implementation of sex roles keeps men and women segregated, making

it difficult for them to equally obtain certain resources such as education. The inaccessibility of

important resources makes women less able to achieve the means to success. Each of these

pathways will be illustrated in the following sections with several examples from interviews.

Five areas emerged through the analysis as the most important influences on female

identity development and women's understanding of their prescribed roles in Maai Mahiu.

Understanding the role of each of these influences is important for determining areas for

intervention in the future.   The following sub-themes will be discussed with regard to their role

in sex-role socialization: 1) Education; 2) Government; 3) Religion; 4) Community; and 5)

Culture. Each sub-theme is further separated into categories which are explained through

quotes and observational data.

1. Education

Access to education for Kikuyu children opens up a world of opportunity. However, it is not the norm in Maai Mahiu for women to be educated through secondary school. Several of the women expressed an increase in personal or professional strength as a result of being educated. Tabitha stated: "I'm very much empowered by learning. Yeah, very much, very much. I feel so much very high. I'm not like the common woman back at home." Grace, Lilian, and Miriam all expressed feeling empowered through their education because of the literacy and communication skills they gained. For Grace, "the school enabled her to be able to speak or communicate in English. So the school has strengthened her as a woman". Victoria and Eunice both focused on their observations of differences in logic and reasoning abilities between those who received education and those who did not have the opportunity. Eunice noticed that "The way they reason, the way they respond to things, their capabilities, the way they are handled – it is completely different." Victoria believes that educated people have "a grown-up mind" and "you see things differently". She added that "The thinking is so different… Like when you try to reason in a certain situation, you see like you can think far."

Monicah discussed the negative consequences that she experienced due to her limited opportunity for education. Monicah turned to sex work as a young adult because of family turmoil and lack of education or transferrable skills. She believes "if they had educated her, she wouldn't have gone through that." She later added: "You know, you can't get any good job without education".

Despite all of the advantages from being educated, many Kikuyu children are not able to benefit from schooling for a variety of reasons. Poverty in this area of Kenya is extremely

widespread. Valerie experienced many problems due to poverty: "they didn't have food to eat.

They'd sleep hungry, wake up and drink water. Then they didn't have shoes, they didn't have

uniform… there was a point when they became street children so they had to go in the street

and eat from hotel's garbage." When it is already difficult for families to eat, the cost of

college, secondary school, and sometimes even primary school is unfathomable. School fees

and associated costs such as books and uniforms are quite prohibitive for many families,

particularly when there are several children at home. Thirteen of the interviewees mentioned

their families having some degree of difficulty paying school fees for both boys and girls.

Valerie stated: "The dad was not financially stable so he didn't have money to pay for the

school fees. So they dropped out of school." Joyce had similar problems attending school:

"Like I don't have uniform. And I can't tell my mom to buy because she don't have money.   So I

go find job then I buy it for myself school uniform.   Then I go back to school."

When children show up to school with unpaid school fees, they are sent home until

parents resolve the debt. I learned through consultation with community members that this

procedure leads to children being out of school for weeks or months at a time and significantly

falling behind their peers. With too much school missed, children may be ineligible or fail

yearly exams required to pass a grade. Eunice described the process that she encountered: "At

times maybe you're sent away due to lack of school fees. At other times you're sent away and

you don't even have transport home."

Beyond the financial constraints, there are several problems which make it particularly

difficult for girls to benefit from education. The predominant barriers to education for girls that

were suggested in the data include: a) beliefs about educating women; b) feminine roles that

distract from education; and c) segregation. Each of the categories related to educational

barriers are discussed in the following sections.

     a. Beliefs about educating women. For the purposes of this study, this category

involves attitudes, statements, or actions made or observed by others related to women and

their ability to receive education. There were several general statements made by interviewees

about the perception from others that women either do not belong in school or have no ability

to benefit from education. For example, Tabitha stated that in her mother's generation "the

ladies were not considered to go to school." Monicah described the predominant belief during

her childhood that "for us in Kikuyu culture… women I don't think they were meant to learn."

However, Monicah insisted that because she had learned vicariously about the value of

education, she has not discriminated between her son and daughter in their access to

education. For a short period of time Eunice was prohibited from attending school because of

the negative beliefs toward women held by her mother's new husband who came from the

Meru tribe. She stated that "their tribe does not advocate very much for educating the girls…

he had decided that I should not go to high school." Eunice went on to indicate how her step-

father refused to use his many financial assets to assist in her education, but had no problem

spending money elsewhere. Explanations for these beliefs were not fully explained in

interviews, but several possibilities are discussed in detail in Chapter V.

     It is of note, however, that Tabitha experienced much more positive attitudes at home

regarding the value of educating women. She described how all of her siblings were afforded

the same opportunities for education. When responding to the question of whether she ever

had to miss school when her brothers did not, Tabitha stated: "No, no, no, no, no. My father could not accept that. He was making sure that we go to school, all of us."

Many of the beliefs about not educating women are related to perceptions of how daughters will benefit their families in the future. As a child, Joyce remembered hearing others say, "'don't educate the girl because when you educate the girls it's unfair … let's say in form 3 she get married, and that money waste.'" Susan also spoke about negative beliefs regarding educating girls: "at times boys were given the priority to go to school since they would benefit their families and the girls would be retained since after all they would finally get married." Many of these beliefs are predicated on a cultural practice that was discussed at length in consultations with CTC staff. It is custom in Kikuyu culture for the girl to join and support her husband's family after marriage and essentially cut ties with her family of origin. Once married, the wife becomes dependent on her husband and has no need for independent skills or financial abilities outside the home. Any financial gain from the wife will benefit her in-laws; therefore, many families view the investment of their daughters' education as less important. This concept of a woman's value being linked to educational investment is strongly related to the topic of potentiality discussed elsewhere in this chapter. It should be noted, however, that not every daughter completely disengages from her family of origin after marriage, particularly those who become separated or widowed. One prime example of this is Grace who currently lives with her parents because her husband left her years ago when she experienced health problems.

b. **Feminine roles that distract from education.** This category illustrates the tendency for girls to leave school prematurely in order to help within the household; whereas boys are

continuously encouraged to attend school.   The findings in this category are consistent with the different familial responsibilities discussed elsewhere in this section; however, this category focuses on the problem of women's familial responsibilities keeping them from being educated and excelling in the future.   Seven of the interviewees reported periods of their developmental life in which they were kept from school in order to help their mother at home or by making money for the family outside the home. This number is not considering the several women discussed in other sections who likely completed chores at home instead of going to school, but were kept out of school predominantly because of lack of money or beliefs that girls should not be educated.

A prime example of this phenomenon was provided by Gladys: "If the mom had to go to work, then she would leave her with the child and the brother would go to school." Monicah and Susan had nearly the exact same expectations of them as young girls, both after having only completed seven years of school. Miriam also had a similar experience in which "her mom got sick and she was responsible, so she was taking care of the younger siblings. So she didn't have to go to school, she had to take care of the others for 2 years."   Monicah provided an illustrative account of her responsibilities as a young girl which made it difficult for her to attend school due to exhaustion and constant familial responsibilities:

> I'm the first born, the one who is carrying the whole burden in the family. You're carrying as if you're the mother because we were working as mothers. Me, I remember when I was 7 years, I was going about four Kilometers I've come and gone to school. [then] I go to get my mom and carry the baby, carry the firewood. Even you just get tired of education, you see…. I didn't have time to go to school.

Other women described being taken out of school and sent elsewhere to find work to help support their family. Joyce completed seven years of education before dropping out and starting to work. She stated: "my mom told me to left school so that I help her to help the other kids … I find a job in Nairobi for house girl and I work there for three years then I go to Naivasha, then I work there for one year and a half." Grace indicated that her brothers remained in school while she left after class eight.   She stated, "But me I left home sometimes by helping my mother in working."

c. Segregation. In addition to differences in access to education, many Kikuyu children have differences in experiences while at school, based on their sex. Boys and girls are often physically separated and given different tasks at school. This category captures the differentness between boys and girls that is emphasized in various ways at school. There are likely assumptions underlying the reasons for segregation of boys and girls in this way at school, which is a topic of discussion in Chapter V.

Physical separation is one way of emphasizing that boys and girls are different by allowing their group differences to be observed. This also allows for them to be treated differently. Gladys described the segregation that occurred in her classroom: "a teacher would separate them in class. She would separate the boys and the girls. The boys would sit on the one side and the girls on their side in class."   In addition to forced physical separation, there is also evidence that boys and girls are treated differently at school, much like they are in the home. For example, Tabitha discussed differences in chores at school, which appear to be a way of segregating the boys and girls. She stated:

let's say in the class, ladies could be told to wash, and the boys to fetch water. So they were

not, they were feeling as if they are not supposed to wash with the dusters and whatever. Their

[boys'] work was to just fetch water, bring to us, so that we can continue with our work.

It appears that this segregation is dictated heavily by teachers, but also is learned

behavior embraced by boys and girls.   For example, Miriam discussed how the girls choose to

separate themselves from the boys. She noted that "the girls have to group themselves into

the girl's group; and the boys, they had to play alone." Eunice also brought up the fact that girls

and boys segregate themselves due to the course subjects and career paths they choose.

Eunice stated:

> Even when it comes to choosing of the subjects we were taking, the girls want the simple – what
>
> was considered the feminine subjects like English, Kiswahili. And the boys would take the hard
>
> ones like mathematics, sciences and all that… And even it goes through when we are choosing
>
> colleges… Like there are some careers which are for women and some careers for men.

2. Government

 In a developing country like Kenya, the policies and procedures of the government have

a lasting impact on its citizens. The government actively influences daily life through the

development and enforcement of legislation and regulation of economic forces. Government

also influences communities more subtly through role modeling and attending to important

social concerns which reflect the country's values. Interview participants were asked

specifically about whether the government or economy has influenced their views of or

experiences as women. Ten of the women responded with rich examples of how they have

been either helped or hindered (or both at times) by the government's policies. This sub-theme

encapsulates many of the concerns regulated or affected by the government, including a)

legislation and social justice; and b) economy. These governmental influences are discussed in the following two sections.

a. Legislation and social justice. For the purposes of this study, this category includes laws and practices of government officials that affect the development and perpetuation of sex roles and beliefs about women. In 2010, Kenyan citizens voted to pass a new Constitution part of which was intended to provide greater voice and more power for women in the country. According to community leaders in Maai Mahiu, the new Constitution has the potential for a very positive impact on women's roles in the country. However, the challenge has been to help the community understand its implications and become motivated to make positive changes in accordance with new laws. Although much of the reform is viewed as ideological or possibly aspirational, it is clearly a marked difference from the past and appears to go in the right direction for equality between sexes.

Prior to the 2010 Constitution, Kenya operated under the 1969 Constitution which lacked written law calling for the equality of men and women's rights (Chitere, Chweya, Masya, Tostensen & Waiganjo, 2006). The most recent Constitutional reform calls for all women to have the right to family inheritance of land. It also ensures that one third of elected government positions be filled with women. Overall, it prohibits all forms of discrimination against women, even those who are unmarried, widowed, and divorced. These assertions by the government are powerful statements about gender equality and the important role of women in the country that if executed appropriately will infiltrate each of the smaller communities.

Reformation of the Constitution was a popular topic of discussion during interviews, particularly for the women heavily involved in educating and empowering other women in the community. Eunice discussed changes she has noticed since the implementation of the new constitution: "They've actually even started pro-bono services to enhance the rights of women. Yeah, the Kenyan government. We have that. And much is being done just to uplift the lives of women." Monicah also noticed recent differences in attitudes toward women and in women's behaviors. She stated "It's only that right now we have power because of the constitution because now they are recognizing women."

However, there was pessimism expressed regarding the community's ability to benefit fully from the new laws at this time. Eunice indicated that "there's a lot of corruption – so most of what is the government policies, at times they don't get to the ground levels. That's why I appreciate the CTC, because through CTC you can be able to get some of these policies." CTC does have many strategies in place for assisting with the dissemination of knowledge to community members and for advocating for the rights of women on a more applied level. Monicah believes there is much reform needed in the attitudes and behaviors of men in order for women to be able to truly benefit from constitutional changes. She provides the following example of how husband and wife are expected to provide equally for their children: "like this Constitution is saying that a woman must provide 50 and a man 50. So everybody's 50 percent, 50 percent. But for men, they don't want to take responsibility."

In addition to the new Kenyan Constitution, there are several other ways interviewees identified that the government or law enforcement influences sex-role socialization and the social justice of women. Susan noticed that the government has had a positive attitude toward

women for quite some time. She discussed her experiences living in the IDP camp and relying

on the delivery of government resources for her family's survival. Susan's feelings and

experiences were discussed as follows:

> The government or the policies favors women and it's typical. So like where she's living within
>
> the camp, she realizes the government supports women. So like when some of the men get
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> whatever is given out, whether it's money or foods or such things. A man can go and squander
>
> whatever he's been given, but the woman will think more of the family and the children that she
>
> has. So she feels that the government is focusing on women a lot to boost the family affairs, to
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> boost the family welfare and all that. … they want to see the woman since they realize that
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> whatever they are giving out would be more secure and it would reach the intended family
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> unlike when they give to the man. So it's like they are trusting women with their families.

Joyce and Eunice both also described positive interactions with law enforcement in which they

felt empowered and validated in their rights as women. For example, Joyce has been the victim

of domestic violence numerous times with her husband, but received a helpful response from

police. One time she was beaten brutally with a pipe and she decided to take her husband to

the police station for assistance. She explained that "I took him there police station and [he

was] also he beaten by the police. And [police told him] 'when you beat this lady another time,

we put you to jail so your wife can be settled free.'" Eunice remembered a positive interaction

with the police chief in Maai Mahiu in which he stood up for her when her husband tried

kicking her out of the house. She reported he chief told her husband: "'if you're saying she has

to go, whether she as the infection or not, she has her rights. You are the one to go.'"

In recent years the Kenyan government has also taken an important stance toward

public health initiatives by encouraging community health education and better healthcare for

all. Specifically, the government provides free anti-retroviral medications for individuals

positive for HIV and sponsors free HIV testing and counseling services. This assistance is helping

the nine participants living with HIV, and has allowed them and their families a longer and

better quality of life. Miriam discussed openly how she has benefitted from this government

policy:

> They control the HIV virus and there's an initiative, they used to pay hefty amounts for the
>
> drugs, but now the government policy, they are getting the medication free. So at least when
>
> she's on the air of this, she can have some other time to share with the children and at least see
>
> their upbringing.

Valerie also recognized the benefits she has received: "The government has helped her through

the medicine… they used to be taken to the seminars first, and then they are taught about the

medicine, ARVs." With the government advocating for positive health practices and education

in such a way, community health workers believe that communication has increased and stigma

around HIV has decreased slightly. Government's initiatives are helping women by providing

equal access to resources and allowing for longer and fuller lives to meet individual and family

goals.

In addition to health initiatives related to HIV, the Kenyan government has also taken a

stance against female genital mutilation practices. Kenyan government's attitudes against the

heavily ingrained cultural practice have been darkening for decades. It was initially outlawed in

2001 with the "Children's Act", but required further explanation and legal backing, so the

"Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act" was passed in 2011. Ruth explained that the

government's discouragement of FGM was what prevented her from having to undergo the

procedure. She stated: "In my family, the elder sisters have gone through this [FGM] and when we were becoming bigger, the government started… they taught our parents not to do this. So we were the youngest, so we didn't go through it." Publicly advocating against the practice of FGM symbolically shows that the government values the lives of women and girls, which is an opportunity for modeling this attitude to the rest of the country.

While the law enforcement and enactment of new legislation was overall viewed positively by interviewees, one participant expressed concern regarding the government's ability to help protect women. Joyce stated:

> Like here in Maai Mahiu many women they don't have husband. And the government they don't take action for the girls…. Let's say like when I got divorced with my husband, I go with my kids. And that man he didn't help the kids that I go with. Or the house that I'm going to rent, he didn't pay the school fees. So the government they have to take action for them because these kids they are not only for myself. We get those kids both. So they have to take action for that guy so that he pay for school fees.

These concerns may be lessened to an extent in the future as a result of new constitutional laws that protect divorcees and expect men to provide fifty percent for his children. However, it is also likely that the enforcement of these laws may require an adjustment period.

b. Economy. This category addresses how issues of finances, cost of living, and employment have impacted sex-role socialization and the different lived experiences for men and women. There are many factors influencing the cost of living in Maai Mahiu. The exchange rate is approximately one Kenyan Shilling for one cent in U.S. Dollars. According to Tabitha, average monthly house rent in Maai Mahiu ranges from 1,000 to 2,500 Kenyan Shillings, which is between eleven and twenty nine U.S. Dollars. My interpreter, Mary, explained that school

fees in secondary school and university range from 1,500 to 30,000 Kenyan Shillings per child per term, depending on the quality and location of the school. In recent years, however, primary school became free for all children. I observed in Maai Mahiu that an average family spends a few hundred shillings per week for basic food and staples. To have several children at home, which is the norm, the expenses add up quickly, and there is rarely enough income to cover the costs. Lilian expressed concern because of the high cost of food and difficulty making ends meet. She stated: "[the government] still oppresses because the economy is still so high, so the prices of food and stuff is still expensive. So it becomes hard for her to manage."

A large problem that was expressed in the interviews and observed widely as a stressor in the community was the lack of jobs and insufficient income to support the family.   Ruth and Tabitha explained that income generated through casual labor, which is the common term for temporary, manual labor, or unskilled work, is 150 to 250 Kenyan Shillings per day. This amount of income, particularly because it is sporadic, is not sufficient to sustain the basic needs of a growing family, including education expenses for children. Common casual labor jobs in Maai Mahiu include harvesting crops, construction, spreading and drying maize, selling goods, or digging and transporting dirt. The general consensus I gathered through interview and observation is that women have difficulty securing casual jobs like this, and they typically are held by men. Victoria explained that "there are very few few chances of women getting jobs… there are so many chances of jobs for men, the casual jobs. Otherwise the women, we only depend on the shamba." (Shamba is the Swahili word for garden.) Eunice had similar complaints: "the kind of employment that is locally available, it favors men…The chances, they favor men more than women." Susan also chimed in that "men are at an advantaged level here

of accessing casual labor or employment unlike women." These statements by interview participants provide clear evidence of the discrimination against women in many job markets. The source of discrimination is unclear in this analysis, but possibilities are discussed in Chapter V. This discrimination ends up hurting whole families when enough income cannot be generated for women to help sustain the family's needs.

Women are very active in agriculture which is the largest industry in Maai Mahiu; however, for much of the year the valley suffers from drought. When this happens, cost of food increases and residents are out of work with few other job opportunities available. As the primary provider for the household, men typically pick up casual labor jobs at this time. Victoria explained that "in Maai Mahiu there's only this one season of farming. So once the season is over, there's no other place that a woman can get a shilling. Other than the men, they have all sources of jobs." However, as explained above, casual labor is sporadic and depends on the needs of the community. There are other times when a man refuses to work or he spends the family's money on drugs or alcohol. When this happens, it is up to the wife to find a way to feed the family. Ruth explained how this problem arises in families:

> For some men as I told you, they are drunkards… They come home drunk at night so the lady's the one who goes to work. Let's say she goes to the farm and do some digging and nowadays is like 150 shillings in a day. So you see this money can't take care of the children, giving food and all this.

As another option, and typically as a last resort, women turn to sex work in order to help their families. Two interviewees discussed their observations of what brings women down that path. Eunice described reasons she has seen why many women get into sex work:

You find that most of the women – they have kids to support, but at times they cannot access

some of the jobs that are locally available. So they have to rely on just whatever they can do.

That's why most of them are turning to the sex work. And that's when you'll find that most of

them – more than half of the women, even more are sex workers

Similarly, Tabitha explained that "when there is no this, she turns to this" – referring to

"immorality" of sex work. According to Monicah, who currently engages in sex work to help

make ends meet since her husband left, a woman can earn approximately 100-500 shillings per

encounter, and typically engages in several encounters per evening.

Perhaps Tabitha summarized it best with her exclamation that "the economy is not

favoring the ladies". The high cost of living, insufficient job opportunities, and discrimination

against women for jobs leads many families to have difficulty meeting their basic life needs.

When men are unable to provide for their family, women should be able to help, but there are

too many barriers preventing this from happening in a reasonable way.   Because of a woman's

strong alliance to her familial responsibilities, she is often forced to take drastic measures such

as commercial sex work to make ends meet. Pre-existing sex roles and negative beliefs about

women allow for the discrimination to occur within the job market.

3. Religion

All fifteen interview participants reported having a spiritual affiliation or attending

church. Thirteen reported following solely Protestant beliefs through their life; two were

brought up Catholic, and one of those also practiced for a period of time as Muslim.   In a small,

rural community with such a heavy emphasis on spirituality and religion, it is highly likely that

the church would have an influence on sex-role development. This section focuses primarily on

the development of the female identity and experiences of women. Interview data suggests

further division of this sub-theme is needed in order to better understand the two main ways in

which women have been influenced by their religion. This section will focus on ways that

religion in Maai Mahiu has a) reinforced familial responsibilities; and b) advocated against

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

a. Reinforced familial responsibilities. Fulfillment of gendered responsibilities is crucial

for maintaining status quo within the community and family. The plethora of responsibilities

expected of men and women in the family setting are outlined in the first section of this

chapter, but this section will focus on how religion influences those expectations. Two main

interview questions were crucial in assessing the church's involvement in sex-role development.

One question asked open-endedly about how Kenyan girls learn what they are *supposed* to do

or how they're *supposed* to act. The other question asked more pointedly about if or how

spirituality influences the view of women. Eleven of the women provided specific examples of

how the church taught about female's roles and responsibilities. The most common way that

women reported being influenced by their church was through seminars. Seminars for females

through the church are primarily educational in nature, involving a variety of gender-specific

skills (i.e., cooking, cleaning, child rearing), but also teach about gender-specific values (i.e.,

faithfulness to family, and appropriate behaviors). Additionally, the seminars provide support

and encouragement to help keep women on the appropriate path for their church's beliefs.

They occur informally and formally within several Christian denominations; however, exploring

differences in content between churches was not pursued for this study.

One major purpose of seminars is to disseminate information about women's responsibilities so that women can engage with their families in a manner consistent with the church's expectations. Grace explained that "we used to go to seminars and we were taught how to stay at home, how to do our duties as a wife or as a woman." Ruth is currently very active in her church and assists with the seminars. Many of the topics she described include: "how to stay like a woman in the house, how you can stay with your husband and your children, and how to pray for your family." When asked to clarify about the meaning of her phrase "stay with the husband and child", Ruth provided the following explanation:

> You know, women, more women they don't know what about marriage. Like the other day we have, I have a lady who was married and when they go to the bed with the husband, she was crying and all those. So you tell her about marriage, what is the role of being a woman, and all those things. She just calling and calling and told me 'he's doing this and this. I refuse, so he beats me.' So I go and tell her that's the role of a woman in the house.

Laden in this teaching is the belief that women must stay at home and be submissive to the husband. Messages like these perpetuate several rigid sex-role expectations and provide additional reinforcement for continuing to conform to gendered expectations. These beliefs are likely a reflection of church and community values rather than ill-intent. However, it is important to be mindful of the ways in which beliefs are spread in order to understand the socialization of sex-roles.

Another purpose of the seminars is to provide factual information to women about their health. Ruth and Eunice both explained that since most women in their generation did not undergo female genital mutilation, the traditional process was traded for sex education within the church. Ruth described the educational message from a seminar she attended as a girl:

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"you have to know from 18, you're now a grownup girl. If you play with boys, you can get

pregnant. If you have some mammary glands, you are now a big person who can be a mother

in the house." Additionally, Grace explained an upcoming church seminar she is planning for

the purpose of educating women about and providing screenings for cervical cancer. For these

reasons, the outreach provided through the church is commendable for bettering the lives of

numerous young and old women.

Familial responsibilities are also reinforced by the church through subtle everyday

messages and reminders. Victoria described how the Protestant church "really guides me in my

behaviors." She noted a distinct difference between the guidance she currently receives in the

Protestant church versus what she previously received in the Catholic Church. She provided the

following statement as a description of how the church's guidance has helped her:

> In the Catholic Church, I didn't used to get anything. So I just walk and my conscience or my
>
> instincts wouldn't guide me in anything. And now that I've joined the Protestant I would feel
>
> that I'm being judged. So when I try to go do something wrong I would feel like something is
>
> judging me.

Anne reported similarly that "the church sometimes teach about good behavior." She described

a common exercise that was used to help teenage Kikuyu girls learn appropriate behaviors. She

explained how leaders at the church would select a girl from the community whom everyone

knew was sexually promiscuous or a sex worker and use her as a model for discriminating good

from bad behaviors. Leaders would say: "'what do you see about that girl? Is she good?' Yeah,

so you know about her behavior, so you know not to copy." Anne went on to further describe

the bad behaviors girls were taught about in church through comparison to others: "You know

sometimes a girl can behave, having sex with every man, yeah. She cannot have one boyfriend or stay like that, so she has to go from one boyfriend to another, so I had to avoid that." Based on these accounts, it seems the teachings of the church are incompatible with the realities of what many women must do to survive. The shaming of these women gives them an extra burden to carry.

     b. Advocacy against female genital mutilation. In the last few decades Kenya as a whole has changed its stance regarding female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision. Other than the influence of the government, Protestant churches appear to be a main reason for this attitude change. The government's protest against FGM was discussed elsewhere in this manuscript; however, Ruth explained that in order to reach more people, the government relies partially on the church to educate the community. She stated: "The pastor is one of the community entry points."

Advocacy against FGM was one of the most commonly cited ways that religion influences the lives of Kikuyu women. In fact, five of the interview participants stated that their families' Christianity was the reason for deciding not to have them undergo the traditional cultural procedure. For example, Eunice stated that, "for our culture, initially we had the female genital mutilation, but after Christianity came in, most of those people who accepted the Christianity and underwent formal education, they know the advantages and the disadvantages." And Monicah explained that: "You know my mom was a Christian and as Christians we're not doing that." Another participant, Susan, stated that although she was circumcised, her parents soon after "embraced Christianity" so her younger siblings were spared. Susan also added that "she does not advocate that for her children." Eunice pointed

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that as a result of the church's and government's advocacy against the cultural practice, "the

FGM is gradually losing meaning." Reasons why FGM is harmful for the development of the

female identity and is considered a form of discrimination against women is discussed in detail

under the sub-theme of Culture.

4. Community

For the purposes of this study, Maai Mahiu is referred to as the community in this sub-

theme. Aspects of the community are differentiated from over-arching Kikuyu culture because

of unique economic, personal, and infrastructural factors within Maai Mahiu which require

adaptation from the norms or expectations of the culture. As a community, norms, values, and

processes tend to be shared in order to facilitate fulfillment of needs, and group cohesion. This

sub-theme is comprised of two very different factors which uniquely relate to the development

of sex roles in the community of Maai Mahiu. They are both included under the umbrella of

Community because they involve shifts from traditional Kikuyu cultural values and

expectations. In the following two categories, issues related to sex work and exceptions to

traditional gender roles in Maai Mahiu will be discussed.

a. Social system of sex work. The profession and/or practice of sex work in Maai Mahiu

is extremely prevalent, likely having an immediate or distal effect on nearly every resident of

the town. It was estimated by a community leader assisting with the sex worker support group

that there are approximately one thousand women actively engaging in sex work at any given

time, which would be about ten percent of the population of women in the town. Sex work, as

described by many interviewees and community members, involves the provision of sexual

favors in exchange for money or goods. Sex work is a practice in Maai Mahiu that is engaged in

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and maintained by both male customers and female workers despite extreme consequences. The practice could be viewed as a double-edged sword, with the benefits for the woman and family outweighing the severely negative consequences much of the time. It is not outwardly accepted by most people, yet it is a practice necessary for making ends meet for most of the community and therefore succeeds in maintaining status quo in the sex role structure.

Because of the major highway through Maai Mahiu, attracting tourists and truckers to the town, many women from the region flock to Maai Mahiu in search of work. This was the case for Lilian who moved to Maai Mahiu after her husband died in 2006. It was described that "she was looking for a place where she could find money." Although viewed as dirty and immoral by much of the community, the profession of sex work is kept alive by these men. Ruth stated that "you know in Maai Mahiu, there are so many prostitutes because of these truck drivers and all this so they can help themselves."

There are many benefits women perceive for engaging in sex work. It is one of the only professions available or accessible to all women in Maai Mahiu. Women could attempt to find casual labor, but the wages and consistency of work for women is usually insufficient when that is the only income for a family. The payment for sex work tends to be good - between 100-500 Shillings per encounter, according to Monicah who is a long-time sex worker. Therefore, many women are driven into this type of work because of lack of other option. As Tabitha described it, "they're forced by circumstances". The woman may have a husband who cannot or will not provide enough for the family, or she may be a single parent unable to find sufficient work due to lack of transferrable skills or no job opportunities. Monicah estimated that "maybe 99%

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have been married… but because the men didn't want to take the responsibilities, that's why the women decided to come out." Eunice stated that:

> They have kids to support, but at times they cannot access some of the jobs that are locally available. So they have to rely on just whatever they can do. That's why most of them are turning to the sex work. And that's when you'll find that most of them – more than half of the women, even more are sex workers

As a community health worker, Ruth has spoken with many of the sex workers who say "'if I have some alternative, I can stop this.'"

Despite the financial benefits for the family, there are some very extreme negative consequences. Oftentimes women are refused pay or beaten brutally during an encounter. Monicah described one of her experiences in which "I went with a man, then we talked about the money, so after going to the room, he snatched the money and started beating me. When I started struggling with him, he started slashing me." She has a scar from her forehead through her scalp where this man slashed her with a machete. During one of the sex worker support group meetings which I observed, there was an emphasis on women needing to protect themselves against assault given a recent incident of rape and murder during an encounter in Maai Mahiu. Women were reminded about the importance of watching out for one another and detecting early signs of danger. The meeting also consisted of a significant amount of education about the application of condoms and the benefits of using them to prevent spreading diseases. Many of the women reported this to be relatively new information for them.

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There is also the widespread problem of HIV and other diseases spread through the practice of sex work and unprotected sex. Until recently it has not been common practice for men or women to use condoms to prevent impregnation or the spread of disease. Eunice identified that most of the women she treats in the community for HIV, AIDS, and other STIs are prostitutes. Many times their positive status does not deter them from continuing sex work. Eunice stated "They don't have an alternative. They're positive so they're still into prostitution." Because they are already infected, they may see it as no more harmful to continue making money in the way they know how. The women are also faced with another dilemma: to disclose their status and risk being stigmatized with no money, or not disclose and risk infecting the partner. This problem could be alleviated with the use of a condom, and this safety practice was highly advocated for by Monicah and in the sex worker support group I attended. However, Eunice described a further complication of the issue. She stated:

> It's like there's a bargain; sex without a condom is paid higher than sex with a condom. So most of them would not disclose their status to be earning for the higher side. And that's why we are still continued with the infections despite what is being done

Therefore, infections are spread rampantly through the community and the homes of male and female spouses. Discussions in the community and with participants revealed that condoms are not commonly used between husband and wife.

An additional negative consequence of sex work is the effect on the woman's children. Consultation with a panel of community members revealed a problem of children growing up and observing their mother in that environment. Many times when this happens, children are pushed to the streets with little parental supervision and may be at risk for prematurely

entering into this lifestyle.   They also are likely to observe that sex work is a profitable way of life, and thus not set more empowering goals for themselves.

b. Socially sanctioned exceptions to traditional gender roles. This category consists of traditionally expected behaviors that are not enforced due to an overall shift in values or needs of the community. Issues in this category involve leniency on men or women regarding their expected familial responsibilities. Over time and for a variety of reasons, men have become less diligent about their familial responsibility to be the financial provider for their family. And community expectations have lessened to some extent to allow women to work outside the home, particularly in the area of sex work.

The give-and-take of established responsibilities has dissipated over time for many families and men have become less invested in their familial responsibilities. Women are burdened by this change in their husbands, but because of the community's sex role structure are powerless to cause repercussions for men's behavior. Community leaders suggest the change in behaviors may be the result of men struggling to find employment coupled with an increased acceptability of alcohol and drug abuse. Instead of leaving home every day to work and bring home money, many of the men in Maai Mahiu will now leave home with the purpose of just idly passing time in town or on the streets. Valerie remembers that her dad "didn't work. He would sleep or when he wakes up, he goes for a walk." Victoria's father also did not have a steady job. When asked about her father's responsibilities to the family, she responded with, "my dad has that kind of habit of a politician. Just going out, talking with men. And just if he comes home, he just do very little."

It continues to be against men's familial responsibilities and perceived expectations to remain in the home to help the wife. Therefore, it is common to find men spending the family's money on alcohol or drugs either after work or instead of working. Gladys complained that "men - they do go, they drink, they don't leave any food for the children to eat." Anne recently experienced the same disregard of familial responsibilities in her husband, and it led her to leave the marriage:

> Nowadays men wants to come home and eat, be helped in everything, but they don't want to help anything in the house… [I] told him that enough is enough because I could not stay with him just like a picture. He has to work. He has to help children.

Tabitha further illustrated this problem of men using alcohol to the detriment of the family:

> If one gets a thousand (Kenyan Shillings) today, in the evening he just induces himself in immoralities, drugs abuse, and all this. Then they aren't able to work the next day. Yeah, yeah. They are unable. Maybe even if he was, he's just, um, induced to it. Addicted. So tomorrow then the same case. The day after that day, the day after that day. But that man remembers - he'll never fail to come back home and ask for a plate of food.

As a result of men not fulfilling their familial responsibilities, Tabitha continued to say "The lady has to do it. Has to take all the responsibilities as a woman, then tomorrow wake up, go to fight for our daily bread." However, working outside the home is not traditionally one of women's responsibilities.

In situations where the husband is unwilling or unable to provide for the family, the wife is burdened with all of his financial responsibilities in addition to tending the house and children. However, oftentimes the woman's efforts at finding work are insufficient for feeding the children or paying their school fees, likely because of her lack of experience and education.

That is what tends to lead women into the sex work profession. Evidence related to the

practice of sex work as a mechanism for socializing sex roles is found in the "social system of

sex work" section of this sub-theme.

This category developed as an assumption that the general expectations of men and

women are a function of both culture and community need. The cultural expectations tend to

be more rigid and longstanding. Community's needs are thought to be reflective of the family,

government, religion, educational system, and other values. Therefore, some expectations may

evolve as necessary, but they are likely still considered "exceptions" and dissonant to the

original rules for behavior set forth by culture.

5. Cultural Practices

In addition to the influential factors of education, government, religion, and

community, there are other ways that the Kikuyu culture affects men and women's

understanding of and experience with sex roles. The Kikuyu culture promotes several different

traditional practices which have subtle ways of influencing an individual's perception of

themselves and others.   Years of engaging in specific behaviors that express an important

cultural belief or memorialize a specific event make those behaviors very meaningfully

ingrained in the culture as habit or ritual. They continue to be practiced in the same way

through generations likely because of symbolism, tradition, or lack of alternative. There may be

others of note, but for the purposes of this study, the cultural practices discussed within this

sub-theme include female genital mutilation, marriage, and dowries. Each cultural practice is

discussed in the paragraphs below in terms of its influence on female's identity development

and the socialization of sex roles.

Five participants reported having undergone the cultural process of female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision. According to Joyce, "in our Kikuyu tribe, they taught that the girls have to get circumcised." Susan explained that "Yeah, she did it since it was demanded by the culture but she does not see the physical value of what she went through." Tabitha also reported that she was forced into it "because it was our culture. So that you can know that you are grown up."

FGM among Kikuyu is being practiced less and less every year as a result of strong advocacy against it by churches and the Kenyan government. Eight of the participants reported that their mothers or older sisters underwent FGM, while they were spared as a result of government or church influence at the time. Therefore, it appears the impact of FGM is lessening by each generation as a result of learning about the significant negative health consequences of the procedure. There is a risk of significant blood loss during the procedure to the point where some girls have lost their lives, and the cutting has caused major problems later for the woman during childbirth. FGM is being replaced by "seminars" through the church and/or more in-depth conversations and "counseling" with community elders. Although FGM is less common today, the cultural tradition and beliefs surrounding the process are still carried and may continue to influence sex roles.

The interviewees identified three main meanings behind the practice of female circumcision. First, FGM is considered a "rite of passage", a symbolic ceremony in which a girl becomes a woman and is taught about what that means. Susan explained it as:

a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. So after it was done, they would sit like in a place with the community elders or leaders. They would be taught on what is expected as an

adult in the community. They would get some maybe secrets revealed to them pertaining to their culture and such things.

Tabitha similarly reported that the purpose of FGM was to:

indicate that now you are a grown up. You can get married, you can take responsibilities as a grown up person. Now you are not child again, you are not supposed to, to accompany children when in the field, you have to accompany the grown-ups, live as a grown up person, you see? In performing of the duties, you take roles as an adult.

Grace added that, "when you went through the FGM you're an adult and when you get into the house you'll be able to be like a woman… so she wouldn't have to have boyfriends and she'd stuck to her husband."

A second implicit meaning for conducting FGM is the assumption that it makes the girl more complete. Victoria discussed the messages she heard about other individuals in her community who did not undergo circumcision. She explained that individuals who were not circumcised would be viewed as "incomplete" and called bad names or stoned. She stated, "in fact they would even put barriers, like 'don't marry from that family. She won't come to behave well, correctly, that is.'"

The third purpose described for conducting FGM is to establish "age groups". Eunice described that "those who are undergone the ritual at the same time, that becomes an age group." Age groups are referenced throughout a woman's life as a way of reminding the women what is expected of them by comparing one woman to her age mates. Eunice continued by explaining that:

So whenever you're doing something wrong, maybe your age mates or group members will be called. Or whatever you're undertaking, you'll do it at the same time as the other colleagues.

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So if you're left behind – like if you're not getting married, you're still getting old. They don't

use it directly to tell you 'why aren't you getting married?' They'll talk of a certain age group is

already getting married. That reminds you you belong to that age group.

The average age at the time of the procedure for the applicable study participants was

about fifteen years old. Boys continue to be required to pass through circumcision around the

same age. For boys, the procedure mainly functions as a rite of passage into adulthood and to

show courage by not crying during the procedure. Boys are eager to undergo the procedure to

increase sanitation and prove their manliness; however, all of the female participants who were

circumcised stated it was against their wishes, for they did not understand the purpose. It

appears that FGM continues to occur simply because of cultural ritual rather than any obvious

benefit for the girl child. Ruth described that for many families, "if you don't do that, a curse is

attached to that." The traditions of male and female circumcision are one of the many ways

young adults learn what is expected of them and they begin to be held to that gendered

standard. Being expected to behave as an adult woman, ready for marriage, and bearing

children in accordance with age mates are some of the pressures experienced by fifteen year

olds.

Other than one comment by Grace about FGM helping women stay faithful to their

husbands and family duties, no one endorsed a belief that FGM is practiced for the purpose of

decreasing women's pleasure from sex and thus making her faithful to her husband. That is a

common explanation for the practice of FGM in other cultures but does not appear to be

withstanding for Kikuyus.

The other two cultural practices discussed openly in interviews were the process of marriage and payment of dowry. In Kikuyu culture, formal weddings are quite expensive with ceremonies lasting several days. This type of affair is not common within Maai Mahiu because of the poverty level. Of all the interview participants, only Victoria had a traditional "church wedding." It was described by Elizabeth that the alternative way to symbolize the beginning of a marriage was to "come and stay." This means that the woman just moves into the man's house. She clarified this statement by stating: "they never wedded like in the church. It's like you come and stay. And then if you want to like renew your wedding, then you can go to church when you have kids." Participants in this study got married between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two, with an average age of approximately eighteen.

It appears to be tradition to have both families very involved with negotiations and agreements surrounding the decision to marry. Introductions are to be made across both families, and it is customary for the girl to receive guidance from her family regarding the appropriateness of her decision to marry a particular man. Elizabeth described the first step of the process as somewhat of a get-to-know-you: "The boy has to see the parents of the lady… And then the girl has to meet with the parents of the boy." Eunice further elaborated on the process with the following description:

> you bring in the in-laws, you do the introductions, then maybe they can tell you whether you've gotten the right person and all that. But before you bring this person into the family, you'll have somebody you have confided in, maybe an aunt… Maybe an aunt would've known about it before it comes to the family level.   And so if you're getting this person from the same locality, if they're not something bad or something undesirable within that family, maybe they'll tell you before the relationship goes too far.

Next is the process of negotiating and paying a dowry, also known as "bride price". In Kikuyu culture, a dowry tends to be provided by the groom and his family to the bride's family in exchange for her hand in marriage. Dowries can be paid with cash, livestock, land, or any combination of goods; however, the debt tends to be paid continuously over time. Jennifer explained that "according to the Kikuyu culture, you're supposed to take a goat that will be slaughtered and then give some amount of money as the dowry." If a girl is allowed to marry without her family collecting dowry, Eunice believes that it could be perceived that the daughter was not highly valued, that her parents were "throwing her away" or "proving she's been a burden to you". Eunice also stated that the groom may view his new wife as if "I was just given this for nothing". Therefore, Eunice takes the stand that the dowry is "essential since it brings in some kinds of commitment and the man also puts value on you." The amount of dowry is decided upon by both families. Eunice explained some of the factors taken into account when making this decision:

> like the more you're educated, the more valuable you are in the community. The person that you are at times it determines the kind of dowry that you'll be paid. Like if you're a girl and you give birth in your parents' house, maybe you have 2 kids. And you get married, you are maybe of less value than whoever did not have a child in their house. And also like the relationship with the in-laws.

The structure of dowry exchange makes sense for this culture given the fact that marriage is a time in which the woman stops providing any support for her family of origin and shifts her entire focus to her new husband and his family. It also then makes sense that the family of origin would be reluctant to invest much in their daughters when it may not make a significant difference in the dowry payment they receive for them. However, problems with

the system arise when females are treated like and come to believe that they are simply "assets for exchange" – a phrase powerfully utilized by Eunice. Unfortunately, there are times when a young girl's marriage is arranged and dowry is sought simply out of the bride's parents' needs. Monicah explained how sometimes this happens when a family is in extreme poverty and relies on the dowry for their daughter, no matter what it takes. She described an acquaintance to whom this happened. Monicah narrated, "you are being told as a girl child, you go and get married even if it's to an old man. You just go and get married."

<div align="center">**THEME III: Goal Attainment**</div>

Whether spoken or unspoken, people tend to set goals for themselves. The magnitude of their goal and level of perseverance toward the goal is hypothesized to be influenced by perceived self-efficacy and self-worth as well as hope. This theme addresses the fourth and fifth research questions for this study which involve the types of personal and professional goals set by Kikuyu women and their perceived barriers for achieving the goals.   Understanding these topics can help shed light onto how sex roles and the position of women in Maai Mahiu affect their development and attainment of goals. For a more in-depth understanding, this theme is divided into two sub-themes which will discuss issues of 1) diversity of goals, and 2) influences on goal attainment.

1. Diversity of goals

For the purpose of this study, a goal is defined as a desired end-point or result that is identified uniquely by an individual. The goal could be either actively sought after with a plan in place, or more aspirational in nature. Interviewees were asked questions about goals or dreams they set for themselves as children and those that they have currently. All fifteen

interviewees reported having set some type of personal goal as a child and as an adult. Responses regarding childhood goals had much variance and were influenced by too many different factors to be meaningfully integrated in this study. Many of the women's childhood aspirations involved professions in the medical or teaching field. Other goals included being a chef (Jennifer), beautician (Joyce), or mechanical engineer (Monicah). The majority of the reported childhood goals did not relate to the women's current lifestyles and goals. Valerie was the only participant who continues to pursue the same goal that she had as a child – to be a business woman. Five of the participants specifically noted that their goals could not be attained due to lack of school fees or other economic hardships. Monicah indicated she could not pursue a certificate in mechanical engineering like she wanted because her mom did not believe girls should be educated. Some women discussed personal goals in addition to their professional aspirations as a child. For example, Ruth stated, "When I was young, I wanted to be a nurse. I wanted to have a lovely husband and a beautiful home." Victoria wanted to be able to achieve the following goals: "go to school, excel to the highest levels, secure myself a big job, drive". In addition to Tabitha's goal of being a nurse, she wanted to be "a respected person."

Analysis of the current goals for interviewees provided an interesting glimpse into the specific areas of life which are most valued for these women. The primary focus of the interviewee's goals fell on a spectrum reflecting a range from individualistic to collectivistic values. Current goals were classified into categories based on this range and include the following: 1) enhancing the self; 2) enhancing the lives of her children; and, 3) enhancing the community. Some women reported several goals which fit into different categories. For

example, one goal for a participant was to focus on bettering herself through education and another goal focused on helping her community through outreach. Specific examples from interviews will be provided in each category to offer further illustration.

a. Enhancing the self. Goals listed in this category involve direct actions which the woman plans to complete herself in order to fulfill the goal and provide a direct benefit for her life. Attainment of the goal may also benefit the lives of others such as her family, but that is not the primary or sole purpose for the goal. Many of the goals listed in this category reflect a focus on individualistic values.

Eleven interviewees mentioned a current goal of wanting to help herself in some way. The most common among these goals involve a desire to receive more education. Some of the women have very specific goals in mind in which education is just the pathway through. For example, Jennifer, who currently works as a hair dresser in town, has the goal of applying for a "beauty course" so she can further her career and be able to "do the makeup of the bride". Similarly, Joyce's goal is "to go back to school because I'm still young…. If I get my own certificate for tailoring, I'll be happy." She currently works as a seamstress and believes further training and a certificate to substantiate it will be helpful for her career path. Alternatively, other women reported a goal of getting education simply for the purpose of being educated. For example, in Grace's case, "she would love to go back to school. That's her dream, going back to school and getting the knowledge." Ruth also expressed a goal "to have my form fourth education" without any specific plans discussed for what she would do with it other than enjoy being learned.

Other self-enhancing goals that women had involved starting a business or getting a good job. For Valerie, "her dream is being a business woman. She'll keep a business… she wouldn't have to bother her child like she does right now when she doesn't have money." In Gladys' case, "if she would have some income, she would start a business. Selling charcoal or supplying charcoal." Miriam also has similar aspirations about starting businesses. It was explained that "if she have capital, she would start a business. She's telling me that a business like selling clothes, the new clothes and ones that the second-hand clothes." Another business idea of Miriam's involves a more effective way of selling the hand soap she already produces and sells. It was explained that "she'd be able to sell it when she's at one place rather than going around selling to others." This type of goal set by interviewees seems very practical, whereas the current difficulties for women in accessing education make educational goals possibly less attainable and more aspirational in nature.

b. Enhancing lives of children. Goals in this category have a distinct focus on making life easier and/or better for the respondent's children. These goals appear to reflect more collectivistic values or motivations than self-enhancing goals. The responses in this category provide strong evidence that women in Maai Mahiu are committed to helping their children succeed in whatever way possible. In the interview, women were asked specifically about "your" goals and aspirations, but many responded by focusing on how they plan to make life better for their kids, with no mention of their own desires.

There were five responses in this category. Two of the interviewees expressed somewhat vague but aspirational goals for their families. Eunice stated "for the future, I would

want to see my kids living well." Ruth also was vague about her goal, but explained herself a little better after some probing:

> I would like my family to be better… So the first one [son] is now 3 years outside; he doesn't go to college. He's doing some work in Nairobi. He's washing cars. And you know that's not a better one. So I wanted to have money, take him to a college. He wants to do a refrigeration course. So I wanted to take him to a college.

Another one of Ruth's goals involves preventing her daughter from "thinking about marriage, boyfriends and all that" too early because it would distract from her aspirations of education. So Ruth's plan is "when her exams are out, we take her to a college immediately." Susan stated a very specific and simple goal which is to "ensure her kids go beyond the levels of education that she reached."

     c. Enhancing the community. Respondents' goals are listed in this category if they involve intention to better the lives or experiences of a group of people outside the family. This type of goal also reflects more collectivistic values and a focus on the greater good. Some of the women's goals do not involve elaborate, time-intensive plans, but instead are an expressed desire to help those that may be less fortunate, using whatever means they have available. Four of the participants made comments that involved goals to enhance the community.

     The most common type of goal related to helping the community involved women wanting to share their own knowledge and life lessons to prevent others from having to make the same mistakes or go through similar hardships. This was a big focus for Monicah in her goals related to preventing other girls from getting into or staying stuck in sex work. For example, she stated:

some in my community, I would like to be a very big woman, helping these ladies. Because I wouldn't like any other girl to go through what I have gone, you see? It's really you met so many people like me, I have so many injuries, like here I was slashed by a man…. That's why I do advise them to look for other ways.

Monicah also is passionate about helping children so they have a safer and more loving environment than what she experienced. She described another one of her goals with the following statement:

I have so many dreams because for me I just find that if I get money I can build a children's home, a rescue center… There are no rescue centers here… So my dream right now, I am dreaming to help my community as in if a kid there I have a rescue center for him. That's my dream because I wouldn't like to see my children suffer as I suffered. I wouldn't like to see another child suffer as I suffered.

Tabitha reported similar motivations for setting goals to empower others: "If I achieve that goal I can go back to the community and educate them [about] the challenges I've passed so that they can't feel as if they are the only one who has passed that challenges." She believes that if women feel alone in their suffering, they are less likely to have hope or knowledge about alternatives.

Another type of goal in this category involves a desire and drive to help the community because of altruistic tendencies. After Grace achieves her personal goal of becoming more empowered and knowledgeable through higher education, her next goal is "to help others who have such kind of dreams". Eunice, who already works in the health field providing HIV testing and counseling to the community, expressed a goal involving helping children with school fees to ensure they receive education. She would like to "be a sponsor to some of these families –

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to some of these kids. To ensure you see these kids through school. They cannot repay you back, but at least when you've impacted their life".

2. Influences on goal attainment

After gathering information about current goals, each interviewee was asked to identify any factor they perceive may help or hinder them in their pursuits. Interviewees who had difficulty with the open-ended structure of this question were prompted with options including "a personality trait, another individual, or some sort of social resource." Regarding factors that would hinder goal attainment, interviewees were asked to identify a "barrier or obstacles". Understanding the perceived supports and barriers to goal attainment can help explain the level of hope and motivation expressed. It also can be helpful for identifying potential areas for later intervention in order to make goals and success more feasible. This sub-theme captures the variety of factors which contribute to perceived and real ability to attain goals. The following five categories are considered to be major influences on women's goal attainment and will be discussed in the sections below: 1) finances; 2) determination; 3) God's blessing; and 4) flexibility.

a. Finances. Money was the most commonly cited factor that has the potential to influence goals for women in Maai Mahiu. Responses in this category all involve a perception that the woman's financial situation has either helped or hindered their progress toward a specific goal. With regard to her goal to attend a beauty course to further her cosmetology career, Jennifer's experience was that "the money is what is determining everything. If she gets the money, she can go. But she doesn't have the money to go and apply for that course." Monicah believes she has every other factor already in place for the children's home she

aspires to open (i.e., building abilities and counseling and administrative characteristics for running the home), however, "The barrier is only the money to start the project. But if I have the money, even now, right now I can start it immediately." Valerie and Gladys also expressed concern that they are lacking sufficient capital to get their businesses started. Valerie believes that "if she was capable of getting even a loan she would start the business". Victoria, who is a single mother of three has had difficulty saving enough money to pursue her personal educational goal due to the needs of her children. She described "usually I try to think like now I want to save this 100, and then by tomorrow my kid is asking for a pen, a school dress, books."

b. Determination. For the purpose of this study, determination refers to a personal characteristic which involves perseverance to achieve something difficult despite potential set-backs. Determination was viewed as an integral factor for women to be successful at achieving their goals, particularly when there is lack of monetary funds. Four of the women cited determination as the key to tackling their financial problems, which is typically the first obstacle. Elizabeth provided great insight into how she can work to pursue her goal of building a home for her family. She stated, "the more you work hard, the more you get the salary and be able to save and get this land." She added that "it's that believing in herself". Miriam also identified the link between determination and money in pursuing her goal of starting a second-hand clothing business. Her experience has been that "If you don't have enough determination, you won't be able to obtain your goal. But if she's determined and can get enough income, she'll be able to obtain her goal."

The importance of determination was also discussed by participants when answering a question about the symbolism of women who do set and achieve goals in Maai Mahiu. Miriam described that:

you have to be a hard working woman to obtain a goal in Maai Mahiu. If you're not a hard working person, you won't be able to set your goals because even you don't see your future. But if you're hard working, you're able to see 'I can do this, I can do this within the future.'

In response to the same question, Victoria believes that "it means you have to be strong. You don't have to set goals just because someone else is doing it... You have to mean it. It has to come from deep inside in order to achieve." When Victoria was queried further about the frequency with which Kikuyu women actually achieve their goals and stay strong, she acknowledged that unfortunately, "They do lose hope."

c. God's blessing. With so much emphasis on religious and spiritual beliefs in the Kikuyu culture, it was not surprising to find that goal attainment is at least partially credited to a higher power. This category consists of statements involving a belief that a higher power influences female Kikuyu's ability to meet goals.

For at least three of the participants, prayer and relinquishing control to God has been helpful on the path of goal attainment. Belief in God was viewed as a motivating factor for Monicah in her statement that "like for me if God presses me, I can get my own money to start. I can." In a similar way, Joyce believes that "If God bless me, I can continue college." Successful attainment of goals has also been attributed to God's graciousness, which was illustrated when Tabitha said "I know that everything is possible with God. Because the first time I told you when I was applying [for university] I had not even a single cent. But God made it to be."

Tabitha continues to utilize her spiritual beliefs to assist her through challenges she is encountering while pursuing her current goal of additional education. She even stated "I have no resources, but I know God is there."

    d. Flexibility. The need for flexibility in setting and pursuing goals was evident in many of the interviewee's narratives. For the purpose of this study, flexibility in goal attainment involves being adaptive in the timing of goals or pathways for reaching the final step. If individuals are able to adapt to options that are more readily available to them, they may be more likely to succeed in their ultimate goal. Victoria expressed the importance of flexibility when it came for her to attain her prior goal of receiving secondary education. She and her older brother were supposed to enter secondary school in the same year; however, because her brother insisted on going to a boarding school which is more expensive, her father was not able to afford both of their educations. This unfortunate situation required Victoria to be flexible in her goal if she was to achieve it at all. Victoria pursued an alternative option which allowed both her and her brother success: "I decided to repeat and then I followed secondary school the next year." She delayed the timing of her education by staying in primary school an additional year which allowed her father an extra year to save enough money for her and her brother's education.

    Adaptability in the face of obstacles was identified as a factor that prevents discouragement and leads to success in several cases. Eunice stated that: "If I was depending on the money my family had, I would not make it. But chances come that give me the energy to get to the next level." In that quote Eunice is referring to the pursuit of her prior goal of getting educated and starting a career in the health field. Instead of getting discouraged by her

lack of financial means, she did what she could to put herself in a good position by reliably volunteering as a community health worker. When opportunities at CTC later arose, she was in a favorable position and was eventually given a job in which much of her education was funded. It may not have been the ideal pathway to her success, but her flexibility was what allowed it to happen.   Similarly, Tabitha discussed the way that her father has had to be flexible in his own professional goal. Tabitha's father is a tailor, but several years ago his work load became very slow and unsteady. Instead of giving up, he decided to be creative in his business style and tactics and "he decided to be having a travelling shop. Now he, he travels with his machine from home to the shop."

Susan discussed how her inability to be flexible due to family demands has made it difficult thus far to succeed in her goal of educating her children. In Susan's interview it was expressed that rather than waiting for government support as an Internally Displaced Person, "she would want to be like actively engaging – doing something." However, she is currently unable to work outside of her community. It was explained that:

> she has this restriction of her situation – the medical situation and the situation of the family members. Like she said she's positive, on medication. The first born is positive on ARVs and the small boy is asthmatic… she feels like she cannot be able to move and work in other environments, away from home since she has to be on constant lookout for the others in the family.

As a result of these challenges, Susan may not be fully successful in educating her children to the maximum extent that she desires. However, despite her and her family's medical problems which are discouraging for her, "she has not been idle all this through. She engages like keeping of these like goats here. She has just a few. So she can take care of the family issues

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and do some herding of the goats that she has locally." In doing so, Susan has exhibited some level of flexibility to do what she can to help her family's economic situation.

Summary

In this chapter, the words of Kikuyu women paint a picture of the differences in lifestyle and expectation for men and women in Maai Mahiu, Kenya. The first section comprised current and historical information about the personal lives, educational experiences, and future aspirations of fifteen interview participants. It also included detailed observational data about each participant to illustrate behavioral, personality, and physical characteristics which assist in the complete conceptualization of each individual's unique story.

In the next section of the chapter I presented interview, observational, and consultation data collected throughout my three week research trip in Maai Mahiu, Kenya. Fifteen Kikuyu women participated in semi-structured interviews and their responses helped guide ongoing observational protocol and consultation activities. Using a critical feminist lens (Crotty, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005) and basic interpretive methodology (Merriam et al., 2002), I coded data and compiled it into three main themes: 1) Internalized Gender Expectations; 2) Sex-role Socialization; and, 3) Goal Attainment. Several sub-themes and categories further clarified the complex dimensions within themes.

To summarize the results, Kikuyu women perceive large differences between expectations and responsibilities of men and women in their community. There are many important factors that influence that division in positive or negative ways. The major influences identified in this study include: education, government, religion, community, and cultural practices. The types of goals that women set and work toward are predominantly motivated by

enhancing the lives of their children, themselves, or the community; however, they perceive

there to be multiple barriers preventing them from achieving important goals. The following

chapter discusses the findings of this study and offers tentative explanations and

interpretations of the data.

CHAPTER V - DISCUSSION

The purposes for conducting this study were to understand the current sex roles in Maai

Mahiu, Kenya and the social and cultural construction of them. Data were collected during a

three-week period in which I stayed in Maai Mahiu, Kenya, closely interacting with the

community every day. I recruited and interviewed 15 women regarding their perceptions of

experiences for males and females, beliefs about the development and maintenance of sex

roles, experiences with goal setting, and perspectives on social change.   I engaged in several

structured observations throughout town and others more privately in women's homes. The

observations allowed for real-life experience with much of the phenomena described in

interviews. I also was able to refine some interview questions based on what I observed and of

which I sought greater understanding

Existing literature acknowledges problems related to rigidity in sex roles and negative

consequences of women being perceived as the lesser sex for a variety of cultures, some even

in Kenya. However, prior findings have not focused as much on the gestalt of women's

experiences, nor have researchers explored issues of sex roles in more rural communities.

Findings from the present study help to fill in the gap by offering the subjective perspectives

and experiences of fifteen native women in addition to observed behaviors and roles of a whole

community known to have stark differences in expectation and value for men and women.

Utilizing a critical feminist lens and interpretive approach to data collection and analysis,

three main themes emerged: 1) Internalized Gender Expectations; 2) Sex-role Socialization; 3)

Goal Attainment. These three themes were classified into eleven subthemes and many were

further defined by categories (i.e., the subtheme of "Diversity of Goals" was broken into three

categories: "enhancing the self", "enhancing the lives of children", and "enhancing the community").

While an important piece of this study was to conduct a thorough analysis of current sex roles in Maai Mahiu, it is important to recognize that the community's overall beliefs about sex roles do not necessarily equate with lived experience of interviewed women. The progressive nature of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution has helped shift attitudes about gender equality on an institutional level; however, in many cases it is slow to match up with lived experience. Reality for these women is subjective and based on perception and interpretations of lived experiences. A main goal of this study was to understand how the differences in gendered expectations affect the daily lives of Kikuyu women; therefore, I focused on gathering the subjective experiences and perspectives of these women. To balance personal and communal perspectives on sex roles, I attempted to augment interview data with observational data, and compare it with published literature when possible.

This chapter begins with a discussion about reflexivity in the processes of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Given the context of reflexivity, I then discuss tentative interpretations and implications of the three main themes. In doing so, each of the six research questions will be addressed, with specific attention paid to the last research question about potential mechanisms for implementing social change. When applicable, findings are discussed in relation to previous research with consideration of the specific cultural and social factors for the current sample. Limitations and implications of the findings are explored, and areas for further research and development are suggested.

Researcher Reflexivity

According to Maxwell (2005), reflexivity in qualitative investigations refers to the fact that "the researcher is part of the world he or she studies – is a powerful and inescapable influence" (p. 109). It is important to understand how I, as the researcher, influence what respondents say, and how it affects the inferences drawn from the interview. For example, the procedure of reviewing informed consent and discussing the purposes of the study with participants likely made them aware of my position toward empowerment of women and may have influenced how they responded to questions. Additionally, obvious cultural differences between the participants and me may have led to assumptions of white privilege (Gallagher, 2007) which also could have impacted the response styles for participants. Some of my observational data were collected through me interacting with participants and their environment, sometimes more actively than others. It would have been impossible to attain the richness of some of my observations if I had not interacted with the environment in the way I did, and it is naïve to think my participation did not influence the type of phenomena I observed to some extent.

The influence of researcher life experiences, values, biases, and belief systems are also an important factor in reflexivity. The subjectivity of female researchers in particular is considered "to be continually fragmenting from daily experiences living with the pervasive hierarchical, patriarchal structuring of sexual difference through which women learn to internalize negative and conflicted ideas about what it means to live as a woman" (Merriam et al. 2002, p. 291). Many feminist researchers take the position that some level of subjectivity is inevitable across all phases of the research process, from the selection of a research topic to

the language used to describe phenomena in the write-up (for example, choosing to use the word "abuse" or not). Caroline Ramazanoglu (1992) argued that "it is more logical to accept our subjectivity, our emotions and our socially grounded positions than to assume some of us can rise above them" (p. 211).

However, as encouraged by many qualitative methodologists (i.e., Maxwell, 2005; Merriam et al., 2002; Peshkin, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) I have taken steps to become more aware of and manage my own biases and reactions to data. Specifically, Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that "rather than pretend to have no biases, it makes more sense to examine your preconceptions and work out how you feelings might slant the research" (p. 82). Prior to traveling to Kenya I conducted a thorough self-assessment of my own values and preconceived notions which may influence the directions I took in the field. A list I developed of "universal human rights" which I knew would influence my actions in the field as well as reactions to data is outlined in Chapter IV. Throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation I took diligent notes of my reactions, questions, and thoughts that arose about data. Each of these steps I took helped separate and manage my own beliefs and biases from raw data gleaned from participants' experiences and realities.

The importance of subjectivity is enhanced even further when research crosses cultural and linguistic lines. For example, although previously cleared by my interpreter as acceptable and understandable by native Kenyans, my interview question about "physical violence in the home" may have been interpreted differently by each interviewee. What one woman considers violence is likely to differ from what others do, all depending on experience and perception. These important participant subjectivities are inherent in all types of research,

both qualitative and quantitative, but may be more prominent when crossing the lines of cultural understanding. I attempted to clarify participants' understandings of concepts by asking for examples or listening for context in their narratives. However, sometimes this was difficult with language barriers or participant hesitancy due to the discussion of culturally "taboo" topics.

Internalized Gender Expectations

Results of this study found clear differences in many of the perceived rules of behavior for men and women in Maai Mahiu. The salience of gender in this culture is evident in the physical separation of males and females and emphasis on their inherent and contrived differences. Boys and girls do not spend a lot of time together in the community or at school. They have different chores in both places and the perceived strengths of each sex are emphasized to allow for further growth. Developmental Intergroup Theory (Bigler & Liben, 2007) posits that because of children's desires to categorize their surroundings, they are likely to stereotype and emphasize group differences that are obvious to them, such as gender (Hilliard & Liben, 2010). This research is consistent with Enculturated Lens Theory (1993) showing that society's emphasis on gender categorization results in unnecessary gender stereotyping. In a culture such the Kikuyu, where adult men and women maintain their separateness in the social world, sex differences continue to be emphasized and perpetuate in-group and out-group biases. Boys are groomed to be successful financial providers and thus are encouraged to attend school. Many times girls are shaped to be good mothers and caregivers, so are not as encouraged to attend school but instead get experience caring for younger siblings. It was explained that children tend to spend time shadowing their same-sex

family members to learn how to cook, clean, and care for children (for girls), or how to tend the animals (for boys).

As adults, the differences continue to be emphasized by ongoing physical separation and minimal interaction with the opposite sex in the public domain. Women interact with women and work collectively to complete tasks, while men were observed to be distant from the locale of women, sometimes working or socializing, but rarely crossing the gender lines. The discussion about internalized gender expectations helps answer the first research question by explaining discrepancies between the expectations for behavior and reality for both men and women's roles.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: What do women perceive are the expectations for and responsibilities of Kikuyu males and females in Maai Mahiu?

Findings from this study highlighted the importance of distinguishing expectations of behavior from reality. There are major discrepancies in beliefs about how a man or woman is *supposed* to act and their true, lived responsibilities. To address this research question, expectations of behaviors for men and women are differentiated from the reality of responsibilities for them.

Expectations of males. Findings from interviews, observations, and consultations indicate several general beliefs about the expected roles for Kikuyu men. The most common and important expectation for men is that they provide financially for their family. Along with providing financial stability, men also are expected to be the predominant decision-makers within a family, be "masculine", and maintain a respected presence within the home and public eye. Part of being "masculine", according to the interviewees, involved manual labor-type jobs

or fixing things around the house. Though not a requirement, it is highly valued for men to

receive education. Data showed that educating a son enhances a family's likelihood of finding a

good quality wife and employment for him, which assists the family of origin as well. However,

under no circumstances are men to be found completing "women's work" such as cooking or

cleaning. Additionally, men rarely were observed to be accompanying their children in public.

If seen completing those tasks, women believed men would likely lose the respect of others. It

seems men specifically avoided doing anything that appeared too feminine. Men's gender role

conflict or "fear of femininity" has been documented in various contexts and cultures because

of the devaluing of feminine characteristics and men's desire to prevent being devalued if

observed while behaving in a stereotypically feminine way (O'Neil, 1981b; O'Neil, Helms, Gable,

David, & Wrightsman, 1985).

Within the community-realm there were few expectations about specific responsibilities

for men. Female interviewees commonly stated a desire that their husbands would interact

more with the community or come to the aid of neighbors more freely. However, this was

stated as more aspirational than based on true expectations.   It appears that men are not

expected to be very community-focused.

The expectation that men maintain command of the family and provide financially is so

long-standing and over-arching that it has become intertwined with many value judgments

about the male sex.   Because men are supposed to provide for their family, which is a very

important responsibility within Kikuyu culture, the male sex has become automatically

associated with respect, power, and prestige. Beliefs about men being powerful and deserving

most respect are examples of gender schemas adopted according to the values of the culture

(Bem, 1981). Consistent with the Enculturated Lens Theory (Bem, 1993), certain beliefs and habits are established and maintained which serve the culture. Specifically, the lens of androcentrism, or the belief that men are the superior sex, is played out without hesitation in everyday interactions within Kikuyu homes and communities. Because Kikuyus have traditionally and continue to depend heavily on males for leadership and guidance, it serves the people to continue giving men the utmost respect and presence in the community if their desire is maintenance of status quo.

True responsibilities of males. Interview data from the study indicate that men's actual roles within the family and community are not always consistent with the responsibilities expected of them. The expectations likely develop out of tradition, beliefs, and hope that men will live according to the power and respect they are given. Results showed that men in Maai Mahiu do tend to be the most prominent breadwinner and also maintain command and decision-making powers for the family. Men were not reported or observed to be very engaged with community events other than socialization with other men in the evening time.

Despite being the prominent breadwinner for the family, data showed that men are not always inclined to share their earnings to help the family. One experience shared by most interviewees was the reality that many Kikuyu men choose to socialize before helping their family. Despite having adequate-paying casual labor jobs, many men frequently do not return home with their full wages or are unable to contribute substantially. Part of the problem is men frequently spend their money on independent activities such as restaurant food, drugs, alcohol, or sex workers. The next day they may have difficulty earning wages due to intoxication.

Another factor making it difficult for men who rely on casual labor to contribute significantly to family finances is the extremely high unemployment rate across Kenya, and particularly in rural areas. With a community depending so heavily on agriculture for commerce, jobs are available one day and gone the next, depending on climate. Due to the unpredictability and variability in finances, families who depend solely on the male as "head of house" end up lacking food, have difficulty paying rent, or are unable to afford school fees for children.

Unemployment or low incomes prevent men from fulfilling their male roles as head of household and breadwinner. To accommodate the family's needs, women's roles and responsibilities have therefore increased. This affects men's social value, identity and self-esteem. Multi-partnered sexual relationships and sexually aggressive behavior seem to strengthen male identity and sense of masculinity (Silberschmidt, 2001).

It has become culturally acceptable for men to stay out and socialize with other men during dinnertime and the early evening. They tend not to eat dinner with their family and will either eat outside of the home or have their wife prepare leftovers when they return after children are asleep. Many interviewees remembered rarely interacting with their fathers as children due to their absence at night. While away the men may be engaging in extracurricular activities or simply spending time with other men, as they have been socialized to do. Men choosing to be outside of the home during busy family times may be a way of avoiding household activities commonly perceived as women's work, such as chores and tending to children. This would be an adaptive strategy of maintaining their masculine perception within

the community and perpetuating the division in sex roles. This is also an expression of how

many men prioritize their time or have less of a focus on their family.

The current structure of androcentrism in Kikuyu culture provides men automatic

respect and power regardless of their behaviors or fulfillment of expectations. With few

consequences or threat of repercussion, men have very little reason or motivation to conform

solely to the familial or community rules and expectations. The expectation that men *should*

provide for their family is still there, but the belief that they will follow-through has weakened.

Respecting and granting men command of the household just because they are men also makes

it difficult for women to challenge their authority on important issues related to safety,

finances, or sexual practices leading to HIV. This study found that many women are frustrated

with their husband's lack of accountability. Some of the women stood up for their family's

needs and made a change such as finding work themselves or leaving their husband. However,

there are also many women who do not see their husband's unaccountability and

irresponsibility as problematic. In those situations it is likely to continue unchecked, and the

family may suffer.

It appears that some women view it as the man's prerogative to do as he pleases

because he is the superior sex and most men in the community behave similarly. Most women

from Maai Mahiu have barely been outside rural Kenya to experience other belief systems or

alternative lifestyles. They believe their current interactions and beliefs about male privilege to

be natural. This viewpoint is supported by statements made by interviewees believing that

"men's work is harder" and that a man is "head of the house" despite his constant absence. It

is also consistent with the framework of Enculturated Lens Theory (Bem, 1993) in which lenses

of androcentrism and gender polarization are embedded in the culture. Women such as

Eunice, Monicah, and Victoria who have been able to travel outside of Maai Mahiu for work or

other ventures were observed to be more skeptical than other women of their culture's

androcentric belief system.

Not all men, however, fall short of their gendered expectations.   Consistent with

expectations, males do tend to receive an education, and are more able to reap the benefits of

it than females. There are many successful males in Maai Mahiu who are responsible for

themselves and their families, as is expected by their culture. These men were observed during

the day to be running businesses or working hard in their jobs. It is also more likely that men

are in positions of authority within the workplace than women. These gendered discrepancies

likely relate to cultural beliefs about women working, men having more education on average

than women, and androcentrism. There are also men who have helped out at home with

chores or family responsibilities.   It appears the roles of Kikuyu men fall on a continuum of

responsibility and prosocial behavior; however, unfortunately, there are more men in Maai

Mahiu toward the bottom of the continuum.

Expectations of females. The study revealed a stark contrast in expectations for women

relative to men. In general, Kikuyu women are expected to be quiet, non-assertive, respectful,

and non-challenging of authority. Women learn these characteristics and model the behaviors

after their female relatives and community or church elders. They practice these skills as young

girls and they continue to be reinforced throughout their marriage. These expectations are

complementary to those of the "head of house", husband, who is expected to make decisions

and keep the family in order.

Young women are expected to get married. The reason that a girl has for getting married differs significantly based on circumstance. A girl's marriage could be out of love or convenience, or to enhance the financial well-being or status of the family. Regardless of the reason, many girls view their marriage as the ultimate goal in life. If a woman is not married by her mid-twenties or she has a baby out of wedlock she will be viewed with less respect and questioned about her intentions to marry. Once a woman gets married her expected responsibilities include caring for all of her children's and husband's needs, completing all of the house chores, doing farm work as needed, and budgeting the family's money. When a husband makes commands at home, the woman is expected to comply and take care of his needs accordingly. However, it is not usually appropriate for a wife to give her husband commands.

Nearly every interviewee cited the responsibility of women to be faithful and respectful to her husband and his family. This finding was consistent with literature of similar rural or nomadic Kenyan cultures such as the Kisii (Silberschmidt, 1999, 2001) and Masai (Gwako, 1997). However, three of the participants from this study are currently separated from their husbands or have attempted to leave due to their husband's mistreatment or irresponsibility for the family. In Kikuyu culture, the expectation of women to be faithful was referred to as "staying" with your family. This phrase emphasizes the need for a woman to be loyal and never leave her husband regardless of circumstances. The study revealed mixed perspectives on whether a woman today is expected to stay with her husband despite maltreatment. Monicah was directed by her brothers to stay with her abusive husband rather than leave him, whereas Grace and Valerie were both supported by their families to seek refuge from their disrespectful

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husbands. The difference here in perspectives suggests evolving sex roles and beliefs about the rights of women over time. Previously, it appears that it was not viewed as wrong for husbands to abuse their wives. It was seen as a man's right or that the woman must have done something to deserve it, and the man is disciplining her. Now, husbands continue to be abusive at times, but the community is less approving of it.

Women, especially those who are married are expected not to work outside the home because doing so would undermine the husband and make it difficult to care for all the children. In a community struck by poverty, Kikuyus have come to understand that money equals power and independence if you want it. One of the highlights from this study is that men fear women earning their own or handling too much money. If a woman has her own money, men worry that she could leave because she would not need her husband anymore.

If women choose or have to work outside the home to support their family, there tends to be restrictions on the types of jobs they are permitted to do. For example, Monicah was discouraged from working as a mechanic though that was what she wanted to do. The most common jobs for women that were reported and observed in Maai Mahiu are working as a seamstress, selling produce and goods, nursing, teaching, or as a house cleaner. Of course, there is also the profession of sex work which is extremely common as a part-time or full-time job for women in Maai Mahiu, but not viewed as respectable by most of the community.

True responsibilities of females. Interviewees described a large amount of comparison and judgment between the women of Maai Mahiu, which serves to keep women's true behaviors in line with the expectations. Comparisons and value judgments of other women's behaviors tend to be facilitated by individual families, schools, and churches. The perceived

good or bad behaviors (i.e., sex working, child-rearing, fidelity to family) of specific women in the community are commonly used as teaching moments for which other women or girls are reminded of the expectations for females.

Some women may have difficulty expressing their needs when they differ from what is expected of them in society. There is implicit and explicit pressure for women to conform. As in the case of stereotype threat, some women may try so hard to prevent surrendering to their gendered stereotypes that they get distracted and behave contrarily to their intentions (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008).

Some women may purposefully change their own self-expectations, desires, or behaviors in order to not break out of the passive female gender role script.   Other women may reject society's expectations of them altogether and behave in ways that are viewed as unfavorable for Kikuyu women (i.e., sex work, requiring a "voice" within the home). The concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) helps explain women's need to resolve the mental discomfort of knowing that one's actions or beliefs do not conform to society's expectations. According to Festinger's theory, individuals can reduce dissonance by changing their behavior (i.e., conforming to sex roles), justifying their behavior by changing or altering conflicting thoughts (i.e., rejecting society's sex role expectations), or ignoring any information that conflicts with existing beliefs (i.e., denying there is a difference between behavior and expectations).

Women who fail to conform to traditional sex roles may be less accepted and held to lower regard by both males and females. For example, when women assert themselves or their opinions instead of being passive or agreeable (as mandated by the female sex role), many

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times they are labeled as unfeminine or aggressive, or even ignored (Nelson, 2011). This may

be the case for women who insist on working outside the home despite opposition from the

husband. She is likely to be respected less by other men in the community.

In reality, Kikuyu women engage in many of the roles and responsibilities expected of

them. Their number one role and responsibility is within the family. Women are usually the

primary caregiver for their children and complete all of the chores within the home, including

cooking, cleaning, bathing children, washing clothes, and gardening. There are times when they

may receive assistance from a parent or their own children. In the community, it is common to

find women supporting one another either by providing food, emotional support, or assistance

with childcare. Many married women also have the unique responsibility of taking care of their

in-laws. Some married women do work either full-time or as-needed in casual labor type jobs.

The primary reason for women to work outside the home is to support her family in ways that

her husband has not been able to. However, it is reality that some women have to hide the fact

they work outside the home from their husbands, or they must hide their earnings to ensure it

doesn't get spent frivolously or enrage the husband. Other women who are separated,

widowed, or never married serve as the primary breadwinner of the family, and engage in both

male and female responsibilities within the home.

Consistent with the expectations for Kikuyu women, they do tend to be more passive

and unassuming relative to men. Part of this difference may be due to the custom of women

socializing with women and men socializing with men. It is rare to see groups of opposite sex

individuals interacting socially in public. This segregation emphasizes to each sex the general

tendencies of the other and likely reinforces those when they do have to interact. So men become more assertive and women become less when they are faced with one another.

In response to their financial dilemmas at home, some women are content waiting patiently and faithfully in anticipation that their husband will take care of their family, despite years of evidence to the contrary. In the findings of this study it is unclear if the women desire to stand up for themselves, or if their behaviors are a concern for them. Lack of comparison to other cultures or lifestyles may account for women's normalization and acceptance of their circumstances. The concept of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) may help explain women's difficulty making changes to the family lifestyle or her plight.   After years of the same routine in which the woman fulfills her responsibilities of daily chores and respecting the husband but receives nothing in return, she may develop feelings of helplessness about being able to change the situation. She learns that fighting or being displeased with her husband is getting her nowhere, so she accepts her circumstances as inevitable. Learned helplessness is likely to be even stronger for women who experience violence or significant loss of control within their marriage.

Kikuyu women are also quite dependent on men.   Many times women completely rely on men for financial stability, making decisions, and running the family.   After years of hearing and internalizing messages about the low potential of women and the high power of men, it seems only natural to depend on them. Women do not have many opportunities for developing self-efficacy in those areas and even if they did, it would be rarely reinforced. This internalization of androcentric belief systems may partially explain why marriage tends to be a Kikuyu girl's greatest life goal. Leadership abilities, relationship structures, and career choices

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are all affected by women's internalized beliefs and low self-expectations as well as the social and cultural systems in which they are socialized. In essence, the subtle messages about the value and future potential of women have led to a perpetuation of the sex role structure, reinforcing women's passivity and dependency on men, while increasing men's sense of agency and power. It also decreases the likelihood that women will find problems with or seek to change their current circumstances. This mindset may be adaptive, however, for keeping women's stress levels low and decreasing marital conflict when women are faced with difficult or what others might perceive as unfair life circumstances.

Mechanisms for Socialization of Sex Roles

One of the main purposes of this study was to identify the most important influences on the development and perpetuation of sex roles in Maai Mahiu. Beliefs about the roles of men and women appear to be deep rooted in the community and are emphasized and preserved through several systems and social influences. For example, the perception that women do not need to be educated appears to have been passed down through generations of Kikuyus. It is both a product of socialization and a mechanism for it. The oppression females experience by not being afforded education perpetuates the cycle of beliefs and barriers to later generations of girls in receiving education.

Identifying the mechanisms behind these patterns helps answer the second and third research questions, which will be revisited and discussed in greater detail below. The five factors that were found to most commonly and strongly affect the lives of women and perpetuate the current sex role structure include Education, Government, Religion, Community,

and Cultural Practice. Each of these factors is discussed as they apply to the research

questions.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How do cultural or social influences contribute to women's identity development and well-being within various domains of life?

Interviewees were asked to reflect on many different aspects of their lives, both as

children and adults. They discussed many of the ways they learned about what it means to be a

female. They also related ways they perceive their female identity to have been valued or

undervalued through their life.

Education. Difficulty accessing education and consequences related to that were

discussed as important factors for the development of Kikuyu female identity. Given the fact

that primary education was not free for Kenyans until 2003, and secondary school continues to

be an expensive endeavor for many rural families, it is understandable that many of the older

women in Maai Mahiu report such limited education levels.   It was surprising to find that the

average level of education for interviewees was eight and a half years, which is a little more

than primary school. The moderate education level for participants is likely reflected in having

more empowered and insightful perspectives shared in this study's interviews.

Despite participants having achieved moderate levels of education, the barriers they

experienced through the process are noteworthy. Findings from this study about girls having to

stay home from school to assist their mother or because the family could only afford to educate

their sons were consistent with research done in other Kenyan cultures (Onsomu, Kosimbei &

Ngware, 2005; Sudarkasa, 1982). Beliefs surrounding the decision to keep daughters (rather

than sons) from school involve females having less value in the family and community and

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therefore less need for expensive education. With a girl's main role in life to get married and serve her husband, families see little reason to invest in an education for her.

Without an education, girls are not taught critical thinking skills or other transferrable skills for working in the future to support herself and/or her family if needed. This reinforces the pre-existing sex roles by simply equating females with dependency on husbands. When a woman is forced to make ends meet for her family, but lacks many sustainable skills and capital, she often turns to sex work as the last option. Having her hand forced in this way strongly influences the well-being and identity of a Kikuyu woman. She often gets judged by others in the community and her health and self-esteem suffer.

Government. The policies and actions of the Kenyan government have been both a positive and negative influence at times on the lives of Kikuyu women living in Maai Mahiu. Many of the women feel relatively supported by law enforcement and through legislation. However, this general sense of support and advocacy for females has been slowly building over time, with the most significant gains made since the significant reformation of the Kenyan Constitution in 2010. Prior to that, equality across sexes was rarely emphasized in legal documents or practice of the law. Women were not previously entitled to inheritance of land and had fewer rights within a marriage (Chitere, et al., 2006). With the new legal safeguards in place since the 2010 Constitutional reform, participants expressed feeling hopeful for more equality. However, they also recognize problems associated with the slow speed of policy adaptation to lifestyle and behavioral change. Organizations such as Comfort the Children International have been instrumental in distributing legal information to the community and putting policy into action.

With the government being mostly run and regulated by men, it has been difficult for women to feel equal, understood, safe, or supported in their rights.   Some women experienced that the police did not advocate for them when they needed it, such as in domestic violence situations. Prior to the 2010 Constitution there was no requirement of women to be represented in politics, and many times women were discouraged or threatened from running for parliament. From 2002 – 2007 just ten percent of the members of parliament were women (Brownsell & Gatabaki, 2013). Therefore laws tended to be made and enforced by males, according to the priorities of males. This patriarchal and androcentric emphasis may explain why women have had such a difficult time advocating for themselves or being viewed equally in the community.

Another way the government influences women's lives is through regulation of economy. There is a significant lack of jobs for all Kenyans, but with women living in such a patriarchal Kikuyu society, they are even more disadvantaged. Because of reasons discussed in the previous section, women are less likely to be educated, making jobs initially less available. Because of androcentric beliefs and patriarchal business structures, they are again less likely to be selected for jobs or loans which would help them develop a way of making money. Many women reported great desires to start selling goods or services in the community to help support their families, but their main problem was being approved for funds to purchase necessary supplies or inventory. With few opportunities to engage in ongoing work to support their family, women remain dependent on their husbands and may eventually give up trying to find alternatives. They come to accept their current circumstances and lose hope. The identity

of a Kikuyu woman then remains stagnant and homogeneous across the group   This type of attitude leads to a halting of progressive thinking and action in communities.

Religion. As a predominantly Christian community, the church has had a profound impact on the lives of women and their understanding of gender roles and expectations. Spirituality is a large part of the Kikuyu identity, and their faith base is often expressed outwardly in their initial introduction to new acquaintances. For example, it is common to hear Kikuyus introduce themselves with their name followed by "I am saved." This behavior has been observed to be a way of comparing oneself to another as well as finding common ground.

Kikuyu women generally feel quite supported by their church. Throughout their lives women attend a variety of seminars through their church which educate females about their roles in the community, family, and marriage. Men also are said to attend their own set of seminars, but it is unclear what content it covers. The seminars for females have helped provide guidance for girls as they are slowly beginning to replace the custom of female genital mutilation as a "rite of passage". Where some young girls used to participate in cultural ceremonies which emphasize the beginning of womanhood, many families are now opting to send daughters to seminars to learn about similar cultural lessons, but without the harmful physical consequences. Seminars are also offered on different topics through a woman's life. Some participants related how they specifically were taught how to "stay home" and make do with the stressors that are ongoing in a marriage. In the context of their church women are able to learn from and support one another. Seminars have also been helpful for increasing the well-being of women by providing valuable education about health topics such as cancer screenings.

Community. The community of Maai Mahiu has many unique opportunities to influence the lives and expectations of women. Recent changes in the community include less of a responsibility on men to provide for their family, and weakening of their general sex role expectations. The effects of this change on the lives of women were discussed in detail under the first research question. Another major community factor influencing the identity and social value of women in Maai Mahiu is related to the profession of sex work, which is the main focus of discussion for this section.

Maai Mahiu is unfortunately known in the region for its high rates of sex workers due to the busy highway intersecting town which brings in many out-of-town visitors. With heavy prostitution comes many unfortunate consequences for women and families. Condom use is not common among sex workers, though recent initiatives are pushing for increased use with education provided to men and women about the benefits and ease of application. HIV and AIDS is a significant problem in all of Kenya, and particularly in Maai Mahiu given the high rates of sex work. Though very difficult to approximate due to stigma and restricted access, it is estimated that half of the residents of Maai Mahiu are infected with HIV or AIDS (Williams, 2004). This rate is relatively consistent with the proportion of HIV found in the participant population for this study which was fifty-three percent.

Most families in Maai Mahiu are likely to be affected by this growing industry of sex work in some way or another. The wife may engage to some extent in the work; the husband may hire the women; or they may suffer the consequences of losing family members due to AIDS from unprotected sex. The reasons for women entering into the profession of sex work are multiple. Many times single or married women must support their family but feel trapped

with few transferrable skills to secure regular employment. Other times girls grow up with

mothers engaged in sex work and view that lifestyle as a reasonable opportunity to provide for

her family.

Sex workers are not viewed well in the community, and many times women express

shame or deny ever having taken money for sex. In order for a woman to make the decision to

engage in sex work even once, she must decrease the amount of dissonance in her mind

between her behaviors and personal and cultural beliefs about the morality of sex work. In

applying Leon Festinger's work on cognitive dissonance (1957), women will either decide not to

perform the act, justify their actions by changing or minimizing their conflicting beliefs, justify

their actions by adding new exceptions to their beliefs, or deny any information that conflicts

with their existing beliefs. Many times women have no option but changing their beliefs

because of the immediate need to care for their family. One of the most interesting ways I

observed the resolution of dissonance about sex work was in the case of Monicah. She had no

shame about her engagement in sex work which continues as needed to this day. However,

she only resorts to sex work when her primary means of making money is insufficient. She has

also developed a leadership role among the sex work community by providing education about

other income-generating options and providing free condoms and education. She recognizes

the bad reputation she has developed in the community because of her sex working status, but

minimizes that in order to help other women find other options and prevent the spread of

disease like she does.

Given the plethora of negative consequences for women, men, and the community, the

practice of sex work continues because of the various needs it fulfills for all. As long as it

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continues, it will always be a contributor to the current structure of sex roles in Maai Mahiu.

The fact that women provide a service and rely on men to be customers confirms women's

level of dependency on men and maintains the inferiority of women in the community's eyes.

The fact that many women are given no other viable option but sex work in order to provide for

their family, and then are stigmatized and ostracized for the work is just another way of

degrading the value of women. Lastly, because men in the community willingly choose to be

customers but are not expected to communicate at home about their whereabouts, they are

hurting their wives by spreading disease and disposing of the family's much-needed money to a

sex worker.

      Cultural practices. Kikuyu girls and boys grow up with the belief that they must behave

in a certain way to be consistent with their cultural values. These beliefs are interwoven into

many of the elaborate and traditional cultural ceremonies expected for them to participate at

different points of life. The two most popularly discussed cultural practices in the interviews

were female circumcision and dowries associated with marriage.

      Female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) is currently

decreasing in cultural and practical relevance for many Kikuyus. It was surprising to find that

only one third of the participants went through the process of FGM themselves. However, as

expected, nearly all of their mothers did. This finding is evidence that FGM is happening with

less frequency today than in previous generations. This can be partially explained by the

Kenyan government and Christian Church's public advocacy against such practices. The church

and government have taught about the deleterious effects of FGM for girls' health.

Alternatively, this finding may also be an indication that the interviewees for this study come

from slightly more progressive families in which they were able to take the advice of the church or government over their own traditional beliefs and customs. To replace the role of FGM in Kikuyu culture, alternative learning experiences have been developed that teach girls similar cultural lessons and function as a "rite of passage".

The tradition of FGM is one of the most deliberate ways teenage girls have their expectations reinforced and are symbolically moved from being a girl child to an adult woman. At the young age of fifteen, girls are expected to behave as an adult, be ready for marriage, and bear children. With a ceremony such as FGM, the woman's expectation as a dependent housewife becomes unquestionable. The current transition to seminars and more informal education about expectations for women instead of FGM maintains a similar rapid shift from childhood to adulthood, but the strong symbolism of the cultural practice is decreased. Additionally, cultural meanings behind FGM such as trying to keep women faithful to their husbands have been diminished.

The cultural practice of dowry exchange continues in present-day marriages and holds an important cultural and logistic purpose for Kikuyu people. It is a symbol of releasing a daughter to the care of her new husband and his family. Because of tradition and/or symbolism, an agreed upon sum of money or goods are exchanged between the groom and bride's families. However, the amount of money decided upon puts a price on women and may have a lasting impression for their own self-value and perceived importance in the family.

These two cultural practices have been in effect for numerous generations and play an important part of maintaining Kikuyu cultural beliefs. Females have little to no say in matters such as the cutting of their genitals or the amount of money exchanged on their behalf. They

have never had much of a say. Through the belief system inherent in each tradition and

women's lack of ability to make decisions about her engagement in each process, women are

further pushed into a corner of passivity and lack of voice. It is likely that as FGM continues to

decrease in the community and women become more empowered in other ways, shifts in the

cultural belief system and traditions will happen as well.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What do women perceive as the perpetuation of the sex role

structure within their culture?

Many of the beliefs about sex roles and different social value for men and women are

ingrained in the social structures in which Kikuyus engage regularly. Beliefs about the roles for

men and women cause systematic changes in the workings of the social and cultural

environment. For example, beliefs about the specific roles of men and women influence the

educational system and governmental policies. The belief system and relevant behaviors lead

to different experiences for men and women based on sex. The community normalizes and

adapts to the roles, and perpetuation of the cycle of rigid beliefs and corresponding behaviors

continues.

Education.   One of the most important but also expected findings from the study was

related to the amount of difficulty girls encountered when trying to receive an education. Girls

were kept home from school for practical reasons such as to help their mother with chores or

because of insufficient school fees, but also because of strong beliefs about the non-need for

females to be educated. The belief system behind the practice of not educating girls was the

particularly striking finding, with greatest potential for perpetuating rigidity of sex roles.

Older generations of women have long had limited access to education and once married became engrossed in family responsibilities as the only viable option for sustaining their family. For many reasons this is the most convenient and culturally acceptable behavior for women which would maintain status quo. Girls or women do not typically try to challenge this system, and if they do, it likely falls on deaf ears. Eventually, most women come to embrace their expectations and responsibilities because of their heavy focus on advancing their family rather than themselves. Women then encourage younger generations to follow in their footsteps because it is all they know and it seems to be the only option much of the time.

After years of indirectly learning about their value, it appears women internalize these beliefs about their lack of potential and undeservedness of education or empowerment. Therefore, beliefs such as "I don't think [girls] were meant to learn", stated by Monicah, and that money is wasted when spent on girls because they will just get married, reflected by Joyce, are perpetuated by both males and females. As some of the interviewees pointed out, women are as guilty of perpetuating cultural beliefs and expectations as men. Monicah even referred to it as "discrimination" against themselves because of beliefs they develop about their lack of abilities and competence.

In summary, education can be a very powerful and empowering experience for both males and females, but when access to education is prevented due to underlying beliefs about the value or responsibility of women, they are disempowered further. The beliefs become ingrained into women's self-perception and are maintained and passed along in various ways to future generations, most notably by preventing other girls from accessing education.

Government. Governmental influences in Kenya such as legislation and advocacy are not likely to be as obvious of factors in sex role development or perpetuation as the educational system. However, governmental factors certainly maintain and reinforce the current perceptions within the community. Economic influences also impact the perpetuation of sex role structure in Maai Mahiu in various ways. Both legislation and economic influences are discussed below with regard to the perpetuation of beliefs about the value and roles of women.

Many Kikuyu women endured over forty years with the 1969 Constitution which made no emphasis about equal rights for women. Mixed with high levels of corruption and androcentrism in the political sphere, Kenya has not been a very validating place for many women. The belief system about women's low social value ingrained through other external factors (i.e., family, cultural practices, educational system) was reinforced by women not having the rights in the Constitution to protection, equal treatment, or land ownership. It is expected that the new constitution passed in 2010 will help gradually change the beliefs about women's rights and responsibilities by affording them more equality in legal documentation and practice. Participants believe that the government's sentiment toward women is improving over time, as exhibited by the police helping Joyce when her husband beat her, and supporting women by providing relief supplies directly to them rather than men who are known not to prioritize their family. Therefore, at the present it appears the government is working on enhancing their implementation of laws, but continues to help women through education and advocacy. Participants recognized this shift and appear hopeful for what it means about women's roles in the community.

Soaring unemployment rates and higher costs of living put women in a very difficult position because of their tendency to worry about family's needs and try to make ends meet no matter the cost. Men are having difficulty securing employment, yet women have even more trouble due to their lack of education and community's general bias against women working outside the home. Sometimes women are forced into sex work based on necessity, or they remain dependent on their husband, hopeful that the family's financial circumstances will change.   By keeping women from casual labor jobs, forcing them into stigmatizing and sexualized roles, and making them dependent on their husbands, the process succeeds in perpetuating sex roles and low perceived value of women.

The sample of women interviewed for this study had a higher rate of employment than expected and from what was reported in the general community. Part of the reason for this was the choice to sample women who are involved in CTC and the use of snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), where participants volunteered their friends for the study. Although many of the participants' experiences were unique, these sampling techniques succeeded in finding individuals who had similar perspectives based on their experiences. Participants who were working outside the home either part-time or full-time appeared to conform less rigidly to their prescribed sex roles and had more empowered perspectives about the roles for women.   They expressed a tendency to advocate louder for themselves and their families, not backing down when experiencing resistance from their husbands. This self-advocacy allowed them to find work outside the home to supplement income. Other women indicated that their husbands do not know they work outside the home. Their ability to find work outside the home was likely

due to having higher rates of education and strong beliefs about equality for women which allowed them to push beyond the community's expectations for them.

Religion.   A strong spiritual foundation helps many of the Kikuyu women feel supported in their life activities and reinforces that they are following the right path.   Two of the main ways that this study found religion perpetuating sex role beliefs is through judgment and education.   The church uses a lot of comparison across sexes to help illustrate to males or females appropriate gendered behavior.   For example, women who are publicly viewed as sex workers or who do not adequately respect their husband are viewed as "bad".   Through this exercise, it appears that women learn extreme perspectives of how to act with little tolerance for the middle ground.   They learn to judge the behavior of themselves and others against the prescribed roles taught through the church.   Messages heard in this way get confirmed and ingrained into existing thought because they are consistent with that which is learned elsewhere.   The women who are spectated also receive special counseling from church leaders for help in moving toward their more culturally accepted sex roles.

Churches in Maai Mahiu are also known for providing educational seminars to men and women, separately.   Some of the most common topics include sex roles and helping individuals stay on track with those.   Though helpful for providing support and guidance, this constant inundation of sex role expectations in informal and formal settings makes it difficult for women to develop their own perspectives.   With the sex role expectations so intertwined with the church, women who choose to question her sex roles would likely fear spiritual repercussions, which are likely the gravest.

Community. The practice of sex work is a well-known way in which women are subjugated by men in the community. Sex work helps perpetuate the view of women as less valued or of lesser rank than men. It does not directly influence the sex roles of men or women because the act of sex work is in many ways opposite the expectations for women.

In Maai Mahiu, it appears that sex work is an elective occupation (although women have a very limited set of options for making the family's ends meet). However, in each sexual encounter, men have the upper-hand. Women rely on men to get paid, and as was described by Monicah, they occasionally receive physical beatings instead of or in addition to payment. In order to engage as a sex worker, a woman must overcome her dissonant beliefs about the behavior being against her morals, by focusing on her lack of alternative option.

Sex work is often perpetuated based on the basic need for women to provide for their families. However, children growing up watching their mothers engage in sex work were reported to be more likely to engage in it themselves as either young women or adults. Additionally, the very problem of HIV, which is one of the negative consequences of sex work, serves to maintain a woman's engagement in it. When a woman learns she is positive for the infection, many times she does not discontinue the work, but instead views that she has no reason to quit now.   In essence, with HIV and AIDS being viewed as a death sentence, women lose hope for their future and continue with sex work as a result. Lastly, sex work will continue indefinitely until women find other alternatives. Participants related that either they or their friends have difficulty exiting the profession because of lack of ability to make money elsewhere to support their families.

Cultural practices. Female circumcision and dowries have played an important part in the Kikuyu culture since tribalization. Underlying and driving these two ceremonies is a plethora of assumptions about the role of women in the community and family, many of which are also inserted elsewhere in the culture. When women hear these messages time after time they are likely to adopt the beliefs themselves. They develop a form of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). After generations of women disliking but being forced to undergo these practices, they learn they are inevitable. Women develop a sense of helplessness about their situation and lose hope for an ability to rise above it. It reinforces the woman's role as a passive member of the family and community. As a result they may not set goals to enhance the quality of their or their daughters' lives, seeing it as pointless. This general sense of helplessness in women coupled with androcentrism may explain what has kept these traditional customs in effect for so long. The cycle then continues to be perpetuated for generations, with mothers advocating for the same practices for their daughters that were oppressive for them.

The three main meanings behind the practice of FGM as discussed in interviews were: a "rite of passage" between childhood and adulthood, to help the girl become more "complete", and to establish "age groups" for comparison through life. While FGM has decreased in occurrence in recent years, many of the assumptions from the practice are still interwoven into other pieces of the culture. For example, FGM has been largely replaced by seminars through the church in which teenage girls attend as a cohort and learn what is expected of them as adults. Messages are still reaching younger generations, but likely with less rigidity than with previous practices and without the same health consequences.

The five interviewed women who underwent female circumcision expressed that it occurred against their wishes but were forced into it by their family or cultural expectations. They felt angry and disappointed about having to endure such pain with no reasonable benefit known at the time or in the present. Each woman acknowledged that she would not advocate for her daughter to go through the same procedure. Therefore, it appears that something has changed in recent attitudes toward this practice. Part of the shift is likely to involve the influence of the church and government advocating against it. However, it also appears that women are becoming more aware of their maltreatment and subjugation. Women are taking the opportunity to stand up for the rights of themselves and their loved ones. This advocacy and empowerment is likely in the beginning stages, but is likely to get stronger once women see other women practice it and education continues to infiltrate females' lives.

Goal Attainment

Goals are helpful for providing hope and guidance through trying times. Kikuyu women were questioned in this study about their current goals as a way of gauging their ability to focus on the future as well as to understand the areas they are most likely to wish to improve. Identifying the primary foci for Kikuyu women assists with the research goal of helping them develop their lives optimally and with the fewest barriers.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What types of personal and professional goals do Kikuyu women have?

The goals that interviewees identified fell on a spectrum in which the primary focus ranged from individualistic to collectivistic values. Goals clustered with the primary aim either of enhancing the self, enhancing the lives of her children, or enhancing the community.

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Women also varied in their tendency to identify readily attainable versus more aspirational or distant goals. The reason for this difference is likely due to an interviewee's outlook and ability to envision herself with better and/or different circumstances. For example, Monicah described goals such as having her children attend college, with a clear plan and steps already in place for how to achieve it. Yet others, such as Gladys related a goal of being a business woman, but was unclear about any of the first steps needed to achieve it. Understanding the context for each of these women's current circumstances, some of which includes education level, financial assets, family involvement, and employment history, helps explain the difference in outlook and empowerment for the interviewees.

Goals with the primary aim of enhancing the self reflect a focus on individualistic values and a fundamental belief that women are capable and worthy of success. However, many of the goals identified that enhance the woman's own life also have a strong empowering force for others. For example, starting a business would certainly help the family, but it was categorized as 'enhancing the self' because there was no mention of doing it specifically to provide for the kids.

Goals that primarily focus on the children or community may reflect a viewpoint that the woman herself is not important enough to focus on. This view that women are of lesser importance has been learned in their culture through various ways, and often gets adopted in the form of low self-value and low self-efficacy. Alternatively, focusing on bettering the lives of others may reflect the cultural collectivistic value in which others' needs are placed before your own.

Only four participants made comments that involved goals specifically to enhance the community. This finding suggests that there may be something unique about these Kikuyu women who are able to focus so much on others' needs or concerns. It may be the expression of collectivistic values or low self-efficacy, as discussed above. It alternatively may be a reflection of the interviewees feeling powerful, influential, or stable enough to impact the community because they already have their own basic needs and goals met. The respondents who stated these goals were Monicah, Tabitha, Grace, and Eunice, all of whom were observed to have and reported backgrounds of greater empowerment and internal strength to persevere through life's obstacles. They each have already attained many of their own personal goals, so it seems likely they have shifted their focus onto others.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5: What types of barriers do women perceive with regard to meeting their own goals?

The most prominent barrier to all of the women's goals was money. Many of the women felt they had everything else in line for success except for the financial means. They discussed having difficulty accessing loans to start their business, and have learned from other women that the process is many times unfruitful. Women also related significant difficulty saving money to put toward their goals because the little income for the family goes toward the everyday needs of their children and bills.

The other most significant barrier to achievement of goals for many women and men in the community was lack of motivation. The women in this study reported that poor motivation has not been a significant deterrent in their own goal attainment thus far. This is likely the case given the higher than average level of education and employment represented in this study.

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However, interviewees perceive that poor motivation helps explain others' difficulty in achieving their goals. They see other men and women as not hard-working or not believing in themselves at times which makes it difficult to persevere through obstacles. Loss of motivation may be community-wide at times, in which individuals lose hope after multiple failed attempts at their goals. As discussed throughout this paper, Kikuyu females learn through a variety of cultural and social systems not to strive for much because a woman's goal in life should be marriage and to make the husband happy. If this mindset is adopted by many Kikuyu women, it makes perfect sense that their motivation would dissipate quickly when attempting to set other goals.

I found it unexpected that women did not speak much about cultural beliefs or biases against women as a hindrance to their goals. However, the bias against women is likely less explicit because it underlies the reason why women have difficulty accessing jobs, loans, and land which are needed for fulfillment of many of their goals. Women have difficulty finding and securing regular employment due to lack of education and available jobs in a patriarchal community and because of bias against women working outside the home. Many of the single or widowed women have less difficulty securing employment outside the home because of the necessity of their situation, but have the further obstacle of being the sole provider and caretaker which requires her earned money to stretch farther.

Social Change

As critical feminist research, I hope to "critique and challenge, to transform and empower" (Merriam et al., 2002; p. 327) the lives of Kikuyu women in Maai Mahiu. My first several goals were to thoroughly understand the circumstances by which these women live

which would inform my ultimate goal of identifying mechanisms for empowerment and social

change within the community. I did not ask interviewees specifically about their perspectives

on how to create change. Instead, I found that their perspectives were interwoven through

their responses and particularly in their monologues at the end when given the opportunity to

speak freely about their experiences as a woman. These particular responses help answer the

sixth research question and provide helpful insight as to the areas needing special attention for

further clinical work, program development, and outreach in Maai Mahiu. While compiled

through the rigorous processes of analysis and interpretation of the data from this study, many

of the conclusions and recommendations listed in this section are gleaned from my own

subjective perceptions and feminist advocacy.

RESEARCH QUESTION 6: What do women identify as potential mechanisms for implementing

social change and increasing female empowerment, if so desired?

The most heavily cited mechanism for achieving greater equality and enhanced well-

being for women within Maai Mahiu was the need for more opportunities for loans and access

to jobs. Many women have skills to use to make money but lack the capital to be able to

provide their goods for others. For example, some women have learned how to sew or make

soap, but have no income to purchase the supplies to make their products for sale.   However,

the overarching concern for women was that their husbands would not or could not provide

sufficiently for the family, but women were restricted from contributing as well. Women feel

that if they were able to work more to support their families, the perception that women

should not work or are incapable of it will decrease over time. Another barrier many women

experience is with lack of knowledge about business practices. It appears that the community

of Maai Mahiu is growing in the capacity to help women succeed financially by providing adult literacy courses to both men and women and offering programs which teach women about business practices and help women with small income-generating activities. For example, a few of the interviewees were involved in a community program which teaches women about business by providing micro-loans with which women purchase chickens or goats, and after time the they sell the products from their animals to help pay back the loan and sustain their family. It may be expected that once programs like these become successful, they will become more popular and able to reach more women.

Another mechanism for social change is the Kenyan Constitution, passed in 2010. It is expected that with new laws calling for gender equality in place, positive changes will continue for women. However, interviewees identified the difficulty many people in Maai Mahiu have in understanding or applying the new laws. Maai Mahiu is far from the urban center of Nairobi, and many residents rarely if ever have the opportunity to be influenced by the empowering resources that are more accessible in urban areas. It is likely the community would benefit from better communication and knowledge about how the government is shifting their perspectives to be less androcentric. If perspectives and behaviors related to gender equality were modeled and reinforced in Maai Mahiu, the community may learn alternative ways of thinking about women's roles. Some of the tribal practices and beliefs may become less rigid once the community increases its awareness of how they hurt the power and identity of women at times.

It is apparent that greater opportunities for formal and informal education for all would enhance the lives of women. Empowering not only women but also men to develop

transferrable job skills, set goals, and enhance their critical thinking skills is likely to help change women's positions in the community. If men are able to get better jobs, it would be less taxing for their wives in managing family responsibilities and finances. Also, cognitive flexibility that is often practiced in school may help loosen some of the rigid beliefs about women that currently keep women within a box. Better quality and accessibility of education to women is extremely important for helping them get employment as needed, but also in helping to increase their self-efficacy in new domains. The community of Maai Mahiu has begun programs to increase adult literacy which have been helpful for people meeting educational goals that they did not have available as children. Additionally, with parents filling in gaps of their education, they may be more likely to assist their children with homework to help them succeed. Based on the correlations that were observed between level of education and empowerment in the small sample of participants for this study, it is likely that more access to education for other Kikuyu girls would influence how they feel about themselves and their willingness to seek out opportunities for success. Opportunities for scholarships to secondary school and college would be very helpful for this community due to the financial toll it takes on some families to send even one child to school. Once more women succeed in school and show that their education is worthwhile, it will hopefully start to alter some of the community's beliefs about females in education.

Ongoing outreach to the community about health related concerns is needed. The low rate of condom use given the approximately fifty percent rate of HIV is alarming. It is likely that the high rate of HIV contributes to an overall low morale and level of hope in the community. It is difficult to motivate a community for change when their hope is low. Part of the reason for

low condom use and many people not getting tested for HIV is a problem with stigma. This was a common discussion I observed while participating in World AIDS Day in Kenya and spending time with sex workers as well as health workers. CTC health workers are helping individuals navigate the problem of stigma by providing health services within patients' homes and decreasing barriers to treatment. However, the high level of stigma and lack of knowledge about this disease is literally killing people. Specific recommendations for helping individuals in this area were not a main focus for this study, but would provide very valuable knowledge if explored in future research.

Some women also requested opportunities to learn and practice communication skills. It would likely be valuable to help women practice broaching topics of conflict or assertiveness skills. Many women in the community have been receptive to opportunities for learning these skills in the past, and reported much benefit. It will likely require a change in the belief system for some women to see a need for these skills much less seek them out herself. At the present time many women find no problem with their role in society or their marriage. However, making opportunities available to learn these skills and chiseling away in the town can lead to community-wide changes over time.

Conclusions

The conclusion of any project requires an evaluation of how the findings came to be as well as what can be done with the information. A thorough examination of the trustworthiness for this study was provided in Chapter III of this manuscript, which included consideration of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability sources as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for qualitative research. Strategies such as triangulation of methods,

prolonged engagement in data collection, purposive sampling, use of thick description, and active reflection and management of subjectivity were utilized to enhance the trustworthiness of the study's findings. The following section includes a discussion of factors for consideration in applying the findings of this study, including limitations, implications, and future directions for research.

Limitations

No empirical investigation is without shortcomings. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be straightforward about the study's weaknesses to provide readers the full context of emergent findings, and to help future researchers make informed decisions about design, methodology, or data analysis. One of the most significant limitations of this study design involves difficulties with translation of participants' responses from Kikuyu to English. Temple and Young (2004) emphasize that issues related to language must be addressed in cross language research because of the many ways that language helps construct the social life of individuals. The short time period I had to prepare myself before collecting this data did not allow for sufficient learning of the native languages in Kenya, therefore I relied on a Kikuyu translator during many of the interviews. Approximately eight of the interviews required nearly full in-the-moment translation, where the other seven required partial to no translation. While my translator, Mary, has been fully fluent in English her whole life, she had never been trained to be a translator for research purposes. Because of the fast-paced and in-depth nature of many of the interviews, some of the long stories interviewees provided in response to questions were not translated word-for-word, but instead summarized by Mary. Therefore, it is possible some of the meaning in responses was lost during translation. I frequently reminded

Mary of the importance of literal translations, which did help her translate more verbatim. However, after consulting with my dissertation chairperson, we ultimately decided that as long as translations contained key words, metaphors, and the main content used initially by interviewees, this type of translation would be sufficient for the purposes of this study. Additionally, I recognized the potential that it may harm the flow of interviews or decrease the level of rich detail provided if their narratives were constantly interrupted to allow for translation.

In addition to language issues is the potential limitation of competing biases and values of my translator. There is no denying that she was an integral part of each interview in which she participated; however, it is possible she may have influenced the responses of interviewees or incorporated her biases into the process of translation. Temple and Young (2004) suggest that by talking with translators about their views on the issues being studied, differences in understandings of words, concepts, and worldviews across languages can be explored. Just like the need for recognizing and managing researcher subjectivities, I made many attempts to discuss the reactions she had to the data as well as to the goals of the study. As a resident of Maai Mahiu and a current college student, she was interested and invested in the topics being studied as well as the process of social science research. She also understood the need for research to occur in systematic ways. It is a limitation of this study that some of the quotations and data used in the analysis are subject to my translator's own subjectivities, and that the process of translation adds another layer of potential error to the data. These problems were minimized when possible by maintaining open communication with Mary in addition to

frequently processing data after interviews to ensure we both had the same understanding of participants' reported experiences.

The one-sidedness of perspectives gathered in this study also presents a potential limitation to the findings. The goal of this research was feminist in nature and strictly intended for the collection of Kikuyu women's perspectives and perceptions of sex roles in Maai Mahiu. Time constraints also precluded me from collecting independent perspectives from men. However, there was no way to decipher the reality of the interviewees' accounts when they related to perceptions of men. Other than some observations of men in public settings and consulting with two male Kikuyu CTC staff members, males were not intimately involved in this study. This was a known limitation of the scope of the study from the beginning. However, because only women's perspectives were sought with regard to the identity development and lived experiences of Kikuyu women, the sampling of only women was appropriate. It is recommended by cultural and feminist researchers that "any formulation about women had to include men, since gender is socially constructed and produced relationally" (Lamphere, Ragoné, & Zavella, 2013). Therefore, incorporating more balanced views of life in Maai Mahiu may be a direction for future research, in which perspectives of males and females are gathered with regard to a specific topic.

It is important to consider possible limitations of only using a critical feminist lens for this type of investigation into another social and cultural system different than my own. One of the questions that cannot be asked within the critical feminist lens, and that can be asked with various political and economic lenses, is "Who benefits from these conditions?" A strictly feminist lens allows us only to see "The men benefit, through unearned respect, power, and the

freedom to do as they please." A political lens might ask, "What larger structures of power

keep Kenyan men and women in these positions?" An economic lens asks, "What is being

trucked out of Africa on these roads? What resources are being sold, by whom, to whom, at

what profit?" It may be African oil for Western transportation, tea and coffee for Western

consumption, rare earths for the technology required by phones and computers, and on what

terms were these resources purchased? Likewise, one can ask, what is being transported into

Africa – liquor, tobacco, cheap clothing, and why? Who profits?   In summary, a limitation of

the feminist lens is that it cannot allow us to see the larger forces and power structures of

corporations, corrupt governments, banks, and even churches that require the status quo for

their sustainability.

Additionally, a feminist lens is not able to reveal ecological issues, such as the

sustainability of a culture within an unsustainable environment. Drought and reduction of land

allotment makes it difficult for gardening and herding, the original sources of production, to

provide for food needs. As food and water become scarce, more fragile and less productive

land is brought into production with poor return. AIDS is an ecological issue as well, because

disease spreads among malnourished and exhausted people. Each of these alternative lenses is

in need of exploration in order to more fully understand the social and cultural construction of

sex roles within the full context of political, economic, and ecological issues that could not be

completed within the scope of this project.

Issues of interviewee self-selection and community reactivity to the study's aims were

also potential limitations. Most of the interviewees volunteered themselves shortly after

learning about the study from me or a friend. This high level of interest in the study was not an

anticipated result of recruitment. It did not take long to reach fifteen participants, and I could have taken more volunteers if time and resources had permitted. Therefore, each interviewee exhibited a level of willingness to have their perceptions and experiences examined by an outsider. The question then turns to which experiences were not able to be captured from women because they self-selected out, and the selection bias became a potential limitation of the study. I learned that this was the case for one individual identified by my translator; she was scheduled to participate, but once her husband learned about it, she was not allowed. Furthermore, it could be that women with no fear of repercussions (i.e., widowed, separated from husband, angry at husband) volunteered their perspectives, whereas other women did not feel free to do that. To resolve the concern of selection bias, it may have helped if I had limited the number of interviewees (or randomly selected some) who volunteered willingly and purposefully sought out other individuals who were less visible in the community or who were currently married. Exploration of reasons for selecting in or out of a study about sex roles (i.e., self-selection bias) was not built into the interview protocol. However, in future research it may be beneficial to explore this area to and understand another layer of women's experiences and expectations in the moment.

During interviews some participants were hesitant to discuss certain topics such as their own sex life, the occupation of sex work, and violence. Many times the women were observed to laugh and say "you know" instead of the word we were discussing, and their responses were sometimes ambiguous rather than direct. These concerns are not related to issues of translation because they occurred in the context of interviews conducted in English. This "tip-toeing" may have occurred because participants did not feel completely comfortable or

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because in their culture they are not used to discussing the topics.   This is considered a limitation of the findings because conclusions drawn may not be completely representative of the reality for these women. I followed many of the safeguards recommended by Sands, Bourjolly, and Roer-Strier (2007) to produce high quality, culturally sensitive interviewing and increase possibilities for participant openness.   I maintained transparency regarding the purposes of my research, incorporated as much interviewee choice about time and location as possible, was mindful of the timing and ordering of personal questions, and responded empathetically to interviewee's pain when surfaced. Many of these skills were further enhanced by my training and practice as a counseling psychologist. I also spent time conducting observations and increasing my presence in the community in the beginning and throughout data collection which was recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005) for increasing rapport and strengthening relationships with potential participants. However, as expected, these techniques were not completely effective in minimizing the self-protective strategies participants used during interviews. Participant hesitance when discussing culturally sensitive topics is considered a limitation of cross-cultural research that must be considered when applying the research findings and when designing future studies.

Implications

At the close of any scientific study, it is important to reflect on practical implications that the current findings have for research, practice, and society. While specific findings are not generalizable to other cultures or communities because of the important role of each individual's context (including the researcher) who participated in the study, information about the culture and process of sex role socialization in a small rural Kenyan community can be

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valuable to others in many ways. Key themes from this study, such as differences in perceived potentiality for men and women, women having less power compared to men, androcentric beliefs about education, and perceived barriers for goal attainment, are likely to be similar across other rural communities in Eastern Africa and may even apply to those who have immigrated elsewhere. Research done in other African cultures such as the Masai (Gwako, 1997), Kisii (Silberschmidt, 1999), in Ethiopia and Guinea (Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000), and in South Africa (Varga, 2003) had many parallels to the results of this study. Findings from this study have implications for those who intend to travel to Kenya but also for those who may encounter Kenyans in other contexts. The specific themes from this study can be extrapolated on as needed to account for the unique components of other cultures and communities (i.e., economic, religious, educational differences).

Findings from this study have important implications for the field of counseling psychology. Counseling psychologists wear many hats; depending on the context, they are culturally sensitive clinicians, advocates, teachers, researchers, or evaluators. Understanding the themes from this study and incorporating them into their work is consistent with the goals for internationalizing counseling psychology as described by Leong and Ponterotto, 2003. In doing so, counseling psychologists will have an enhanced ability to incorporate varied worldviews and clinical lenses in work with all clients.   It is necessary for counseling psychologists and those in training to understand the implications for women who experience such extreme differences in gendered expectations that are found in Maai Mahiu as well as many other non-Western cultures. These themes can be incorporated into the coursework for students and should be considered when providing outreach to communities, particularly for

those who hold similar values about roles for men and women. When conducting assessment or evaluation of individuals from a Kenyan or similar background, it is important to be mindful of gendered concepts which may influence how they respond to items.

For the community of Maai Mahiu and those interested in helping the women, the findings from this study provide many important insights into possible pathways and mechanisms to promote positive change. The sixth research question specifically targeted areas on which the community of Maai Mahiu can improve. A full discussion of strategies and mechanisms behind change are provided earlier in this chapter, which include better access to education and jobs, and opportunities to learn and practice communication and assertiveness skills. Applying the findings from this study would allow outsiders and insiders to recognize the most important gaps of knowledge or resources that need to be filled to increase equality across sexes and enhance the lives of women in Maai Mahiu.

Future Directions for Research

This study was intentionally broad and set forth with the purpose of understanding the scope of sex role differences within the Kikuyu culture. It was exploratory because little work had been done in this area previously. However, now that the groundwork has been laid and current realities and experiences of women have been outlined, their insights can be used as building blocks for further research. The opportunities for future directions are endless, and should depend on researcher expertise as well as the needs for the community at the time.

Further research is needed to be able to generalize or differentiate Kikuyu women's experiences and perceptions to other Kenyan tribes or to more urban areas of the country. There is also a need for greater understanding of men's sex roles and the construction of male

identity in Kikuyu culture. Furthering our knowledge on this topic of sex roles in small tribal

villages may be done effectively through a mixed methods design which could provide a richer,

fuller, and more generalizable view of the phenomena. For any type of future research on

these topics, particularly cross-cultural or cross-language, several recommendations have been

made in this chapter for enhancing the strength and trustworthiness of projects. For example,

minimizing the need for translation is important, as well as being very intentional about the

recruitment and selection of participants that represent the community.   Because the current

study provides a deeper understanding of sex roles in a traditional, tribal context than many

previous studies, it can serve as a guide for interventions or other community programs

concerned with enhancing the lives and empowerment of women.

Final Conclusion

This qualitative study provides a strong basis for understanding the cultural and social

construction of sex roles in Maai Mahiu, Kenya. By collecting a very large amount of interview,

observational, and consultative data over the course of three weeks I worked tirelessly to put

together a coherent and accurate understanding of the current experiences and realities for

women living in Maai Mahiu. This was a long process which involved a dissection of my own

assumptions and biases to make sure the data were as pure as possible. I utilized many

qualitative strategies to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of data, including but not

limited to: triangulation, thick description, prolonged engagement, and management of biases.

Findings from this study indicate that women in Maai Mahiu are at a disadvantaged

position compared to men. They have more responsibilities expected of them, yet the

community views women overall to have less potential and therefore are afforded fewer

resources to succeed. Many of the findings were anticipated given prior research in other

Kenyan cultures. However, the specificity and urgency with which Kikuyu women described

their experiences in this study is quite convincing and provides strong evidence for areas in

which changes should be made. Women's narratives showed evidence that there may be more

empowerment for women than originally expected in the community. However, it may be a

function of recent changes within the government and community structures. The level of

empowerment may also be specific to a subsection of individuals interviewed who had not lost

hope but instead applied themselves and achieved their own form of success. This study

demonstrates that Kikuyu women who are given some hope and resources have the potential

to grow toward achieving their independent goals of optimal development. Further research is

needed to understand how these findings relate to other cultures and communities, as well as

how sex roles in Maai Mahiu have influenced the lives of men.

However, there are important implications for Western readers. Fascinating

complexities were discovered in this project that illustrate how different realities can be than

what is observed on the surface. For example, although their stories were riddled with

violence, disrespect from males, and unfair circumstances, the women of Maai Mahiu were not

completely disempowered, nor lacking in hope. These women have great resiliency, and many

have adopted effective strategies for completing their daily tasks while also gently pushing

toward equal rights. Additionally, it was surprising to recognize that for Kikuyus, FGM is not

seen as related to sexual pleasure in the way it is for many other African cultures. Lastly, the

church, which is generally perceived to be an empowering force in Maai Mahiu was revealed

through interviews to have activities that benefit the women through helpful education on one

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hand, but on the other hand, discourage their equality through practices of shaming. These

kinds of findings belie the common black and white Western thinking about Africa, and add

layers of complexity that are much needed.

Counseling psychologists and other mental health fields can play a key role in enhancing

the lives of Kikuyus and other individuals who are constricted by the expectations and

assumptions of their sex. This is consistent with many of the cross-cultural and

internationalization goals for psychologists. Advocacy, education, research, and counseling are

all needed to help the women of Maai Mahiu and other communities who are held back by the

bounds of their sex. To help facilitate these changes, the first step I will take is to provide a

summary of the study to the community leaders of Comfort the Children International in Maai

Mahiu to help facilitate progress and improve the programming provided to the community.

Through this study I learned as much about myself as I did about the women who were

my "research subjects". My personal interest and passion for this type of advocacy work was

continuously re-engaged each time I made a connection or interpretation of data. Moving

forward, I am excited to continue engaging with the topic of sex roles and enhancing the lives

of women in underprivileged communities as a researcher, advocate, and clinician. It is my

hope that other women across the world will have the ability to write freely about the

inequalities and injustices that they witness just as I have, without fear of repercussions.

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Appendix A: Outline of Semi-Structured Interview Questions
(main questions with some optional follow-up questions)

1) I'd like to ask you some background information before we get started.
   - How old are you?
   - What is your tribal background?
   - Do you have any spiritual affiliation or preference?
   - What is your marital status? (# children?)
   - How many years of education have you received?
   - Do you work outside of home? (type of job?)
   - How would you describe your family of origin makeup? (parents married? # siblings?)
   - What level of education did your parents receive? Siblings?
   - What were your parents' occupations?

Experiences in school (if received any formal education)
2) Next, I'd like to talk about your experiences in school growing up… Were there any problems you encountered in receiving education?
   - Did you notice any differences in experiences for boys and girls at school?
   - Did you ever have to miss school for reasons that your brothers didn't?

Experiences at home growing up
3) What were your mother's responsibilities at home? Your father's?
   - How was your parents' relationship with one another? With the children?

4) What were your responsibilities at home? Did these differ in any way from the responsibilities of your siblings?

5) Where do you remember hearing messages about what Kenyan women or girls are supposed to do, how they're supposed to act, or what they're supposed to wear?
   - How might your schooling have impacted your views of what women should do?
   - Has your spirituality influenced your views of women in any way?
   - Government or economy influences?

6) Many Kenyan cultures go through stages or processes prior to becoming a woman or getting married. Did you or your siblings participate in any of those?
   - What does circumcision mean to your culture or in your family? (What is the process supposed to help with? What does it mean for girls who go through it?)
   - Instead of going through circumcision, were there any other processes or stages to help you know when you were ready to become a woman?

Current daily life

7) What do you consider to be your current roles or responsibilities within your community? Family? Marriage? At home? At school? At work?
- Are your roles and responsibilities different in any way from those of other women in Maai Mahiu?
- What do you see that men do in the community? At home? In the family? (How do you feel about the differences?)

8) Do you notice any differences in how males and females are respected within your community or household? (adults and children)
- How do men/women get respect?

Marriage

9) How did you meet your husband? How did you decide to get married?
- Was there a dowry?
- How do you divide chores in your marriage? (How do you feel about that?)
- Has there ever been physical violence in your home?

Future goals and where you see yourself

10) What future (personal or professional) goals did you set for yourself as a child?
- Did any adults express goals or wishes they had for your future?

11) What goals or dreams do you currently have for yourself?
- Do you feel like you *can* achieve these goals?
- What personality trait, community resource, or other assistance will help you most in achieving your goals?
- What is most likely to be a barrier for you in pursuing the goals?

12) What does it mean for a woman in Maai Mahiu to set goals for herself? What about for a man?

13) Realistically speaking, where do you see yourself in five or ten years?

Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent

INTRODUCTION: The Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this researcher, Comfort the Children International, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: Research has documented the persistence of highly discrepant roles and responsibilities for men and women in developing countries, as well as significant negative implications for women because of the social inequality. Because little is known about the social and cultural construction of sex roles or the phenomenology of identity development in Kikuyu women in Maai Mahiu, Kenya, this study will examine such constructs from the perspectives of these women. The project purpose is to identify ways of improving the quality of life for Kikuyu women and identify barriers for them in reaching their maximum potential.

PROCEDURES: As a voluntary participant in this study, you will be asked to complete an in-depth interview with the primary researcher and a female Kikuyu interpreter. The interpreter will translate between English to Kikuyu as necessary. The interview will last approximately one hour, in which audio will be recorded via a digital voice recorder. The recording can be stopped at any time by your request. After the interview, the audio file will be downloaded onto a password-protected laptop and deleted from the recorder. The laptop will be stored in a locked room. After the recording has been transcribed by the researcher and all necessary data is analyzed, it will be deleted from the laptop.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY: Your responses within this study are completely confidential, except when mandated by law. Transcripts will be identified with a pseudonym and will be stored for up to one year in a secure, password protected electronic folder. Your name will never be associated with this study or the results.

RISKS: Your participation in this study may result in some risks.
1) The in-depth interview will ask sensitive questions about your family, spirituality, culture, and personal life which may make you feel uncomfortable. Some topics may be psychologically difficult or painful to discuss and may trigger feelings of shame, sadness, embarrassment, anger, etc. The primary researcher is a counselor who is trained to assist individuals in managing various emotional stressors or trauma. If need should arise, she will be immediately available for support if requested.
2) Despite measures taken by the researcher to ensure your anonymity, because Maai Mahiu will be listed as the research site in this published study, individual identities may be decipherable.
3) Although unlikely, it is possible that some community members may be resistant to the aims or outcomes of this study and may attempt to cause a backlash toward women in the community.

BENEFITS: By participating in the current project, you are contributing important perspectives which will help to develop education, leadership, and empowerment opportunities in the future to benefit the lives of Maai Mahiu women and children as well as those in similar developing communities. To compensate for your time and willingness to participate, you will receive one small bag of fresh fruit and vegetables from the local market.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION: I have read this Consent and Authorization form (or it has been read to me in Kikuyu). I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call 1-785-864-7429 or 1-785-864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, USA or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form

_____   _____

Type/Print Participant's Name   Date

_____

Participant's Signature

Researcher contact information for any questions regarding this study:

Abbey Campbell, M.S.	Barbara Kerr, Ph.D.
Primary Investigator	Faculty Supervisor
Psychology and Research in Education	Psychology and Research in Education
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Appendix C: Oral consent script for in-home observations

"As a graduate student in counseling psychology at the University of Kansas, I am conducting a research project about men and women's sex roles. I would like to learn by observing the relationships and duties for each person in your home for the next thirty minutes, or however long you would like to have me. I have a translator working with me to help me understand the language. I will be taking notes of what I observe, and we will not interact with your family, unless you request it. The notes I keep are confidential, and your actual name will never be associated with this study, unless you give written permission or it is required by United States law. If you would not like me to observe now or at any point while we're here, that is not a problem, and I will discontinue the observation at that point, and it won't hurt your relationship with me or CTC. Your participation is voluntary.

You won't be at risk because of your participation, other than potentially feeling discomfort because we are in your personal space and may interrupt your daily activities.   But by allowing me to observe your home, you could help me to gain a better understanding of women's roles and identity in Maai Mahiu. This information will then be used to provide education and seminars in the future to help women in your community.

In order for me to observe you in your home, you must indicate your willingness to participate and that you are at least 18 years old. Any questions you have now or in the future should be asked of me, or you can contact my faculty supervisor, Barbara Kerr at the University of Kansas, School of Education. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, CTC can help you contact the Human Subjects Protection Office in the U.S.

Do you wish to participate?"