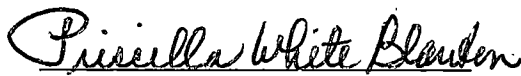


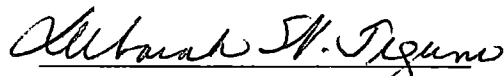
To the Graduate council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michael N. Mbiti entitled "The Transition from Boyhood to Manhood among Kikuyu Men Living in the United States: The Experience of the Male Circumcision Ritual in Sub-Sahara Africa." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Child and Family Studies.

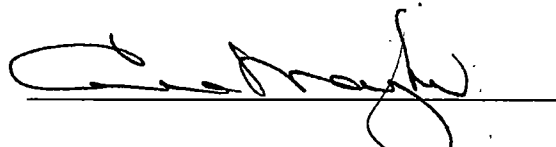

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**The Transition from Boyhood to Manhood among Kikuyu Men
Living in the United States:
The Experience of the Male Circumcision Ritual in Sub-Sahara Africa**

A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

MICHAEL NJOROGHE MBITO
December 2001

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to three great children: Kiguru Wanyoike Njoroge, whose passion for life and love is bigger than a dinosaur; Mbitu Nyanjui Njoroge, who fondly taught my wife and me the real meaning of life; and the late Lilly Catrell, whose friendship and smiles lit the skies for everyone. Sad news of my father's (Mbitu Njoroge) death reached me in time to remember him in this work. He loved life with a passion.

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My family deserves the best appreciation. They allowed me time for academic work while they most needed me. To Kiguru, Mbiti, and Wanjiku, thanks for your understanding; and to Wambui, my darling, you have been a wonderful companion and assistant during this project especially in our induction into a new culture. Thanks for assisting with the transcripts. To all of you I say, “Yukiai ngatho ciagicinga (thank you very much).”

ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of modern history, the male rite of passage from youth into adulthood has been a dominant theme in the social construction of many traditional cultures. Although in many contemporary cultures rites of passage are no longer widely practiced to guide men through adolescence or adult life today, these rites of passage hold meanings and serve purposes that can inform us in dealing with challenges of adolescence, especially pertaining to the adolescent's transition to adulthood.

The Kikuyu of Kenya in East Africa have practiced a unique circumcision ritual for initiating boys into adulthood since time immemorial. However, influences from Western religions, education, and media have created changes in the traditional ritual. Those Kikuyu who have moved to the U.S. have experienced even greater influence towards change. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to allow the participants to describe in their own words their experiences and the meaning of the Kikuyu initiation-into-manhood ritual.

Three major questions were addressed in this research study: (a) What is the meaning of the circumcision ritual practice to contemporary Kikuyu males living in America today? (b) How does the circumcision ritual play a transitional role, and in what ways does it influence subsequent self-redefinition among these males? (c) What is the core philosophy behind the practice at the present time?

Eighteen Kikuyu males who had been circumcised at puberty were interviewed. The findings of this study indicate that, although the practice has lost the public grandeur of traditional song and dance and community-wide participation, those participants who were found to be representative of a distinct cohort in post-British colonial Kenya have experienced change from the traditional ritual to an adjusted form in response to the modernizing forces of education and Christian religiosity. The participants in the study perceived initiation as still playing an important and functional role in their lives at the time of the study. The findings clustered around eight thematic categories: (a) preparation for the circumcision ritual, (b) circumcision procedure, (c) the period of seclusion, (d) conferral of privileges and new responsibilities, (e) meaning of the circumcision ritual, (f) transfer of the ritual to the future generations, (g) conflict between the traditional and the Christian meaning of what it means to be a man and sexual, and (h) generational and cultural differences between the U.S. and Kenya. It is clear from the findings of the current study that the Kikuyu circumcision rite of passage has served an identity redefinition role in the lives of the practitioners and that, despite changes in the manner of celebration and procedure, the ritual serves an important transitional and self-redefinational role for consolidating manhood among the Kikuyu of Kenya.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

My interest in conducting a phenomenological study of the role that ritual plays in life course transitions arose following a very interesting experience I had in a class in which we studied Carter and McGoldrick's (1999) work on the use of ritual in family therapy. When I shared my initial thoughts for the present study with my professor, she gave me a clear affirmation that the idea for such a study was viable. This marked the beginning of the intense and intriguing process of collaborating with my major professor in developing a research proposal, making application to the University Institutional Review Board for authorization to conduct research with human subjects, and finally interviewing 18 Kikuyu males regarding their circumcision ritual experiences.

In this research study, I have investigated the circumcision ritual experience among Kenyan Kikuyu men currently living in America. In particular, I inquired onto the perceived meaning, transitional role, and self-redefinition aspects of the ritual experience in the lives of the men whom I interviewed. The sample was comprised of men who had the Kikuyu fashion of circumcision ritual prior to immigrating to the United States.

Historical Perspective

The Kikuyu of Kenya (see Figures 1 and 2) practice circumcision of their boys at around the time they reach the age of puberty without exception. The practice is maintained in whatever region of the world they live and is highly

regarded by the Kikuyu males who must undergo the initiation process in order to earn manhood status and the right of inclusion in the normal social life of the community.

The Kikuyu circumcision ritual for boys is a clear demonstration of the importance of rituals in marking life cycle transitions in Africa. Of the few well-studied tribes' circumcision rituals in Kenya, both the cattle-herding Masai and the Samburu have been found to practice very elaborate manhood promotion rituals that span several calendar months (Beckwith & Fisher, 1999; Gilmore, 1990; Turner, 1906/60). Kamba males undergo initiation in three stages at different ages to become full adult members of the tribe: (a) nzaiko ila nini (the small circumcision), (b) nzaiko ila nene (the great circumcision), and (c) nzaiko ya aume (the circumcision of the men) (Mbiti, 1968; Middleton & Kershaw, 1965). The Kikuyu, on the other hand, have a comparatively brief ritual lasting 1 to 2 months that includes (a) preliminary ceremonies culminating in the Great Dance, (b) circumcision, (c) novice retirement, and (d) aggregation rites (Middleton & Kershaw, 1965). Despite tribal group-specific variations, the circumcision ritual is found in almost every part of the African continent (Kenyatta, 1938; Middleton & Kershaw, 1965).

Circumcision rituals were traditionally the most conspicuous of Kikuyu community events and gave families a great sense of pride at graduating sons into manhood. The ritual was a community event filled with celebrations that included a community-wide glamour of song and dance performed by different

community groups. During the circumcision dance (what Middleton and Kershaw, 1965, called the Great Dance) the people danced through the night accompanied by vocal music (matuumo), in the form of solo and chorus, blowing of whistles, ululations, and whistling with the lips--without any other form of musical instruments in accompaniment (Kenyatta, 1938; Leakey, 1977).

During my own time of experiencing the ritual, every young male anticipated the rite with a mixture of fear and excitement. To us, the adult world promised to unfold the real meaning of life, with the initiation rite as the only avenue to male adulthood. Many boys feared the rite and worried over their prospects of displaying fear during the operation while under community scrutiny. Even a wink at the time of operation would be viewed as a sign of cowardice. The whole community would stigmatize those who showed fear for the rest of their lives. Such individuals would never succeed in luring a girl into marriage and so usually would remain single to old age.

My first memory of the circumcision ritual dates back to my early childhood. I saw new novices, ciumiri, wearing loosely folded pieces of linen, clipped to the shoulders and sides with closely tacked and patterned safety pins. They walked with one hand inside the make-do garment to protect their genitalia from rubbing against the cloth. The other hand held a newly hewn ruthanju (stick) that uncircumcised ihii (boys) feared would be used to smack them. Wherever the ciumiri went, all the ihii hid from the new initiates as a sign of respect and reverence, and well as self preservation.

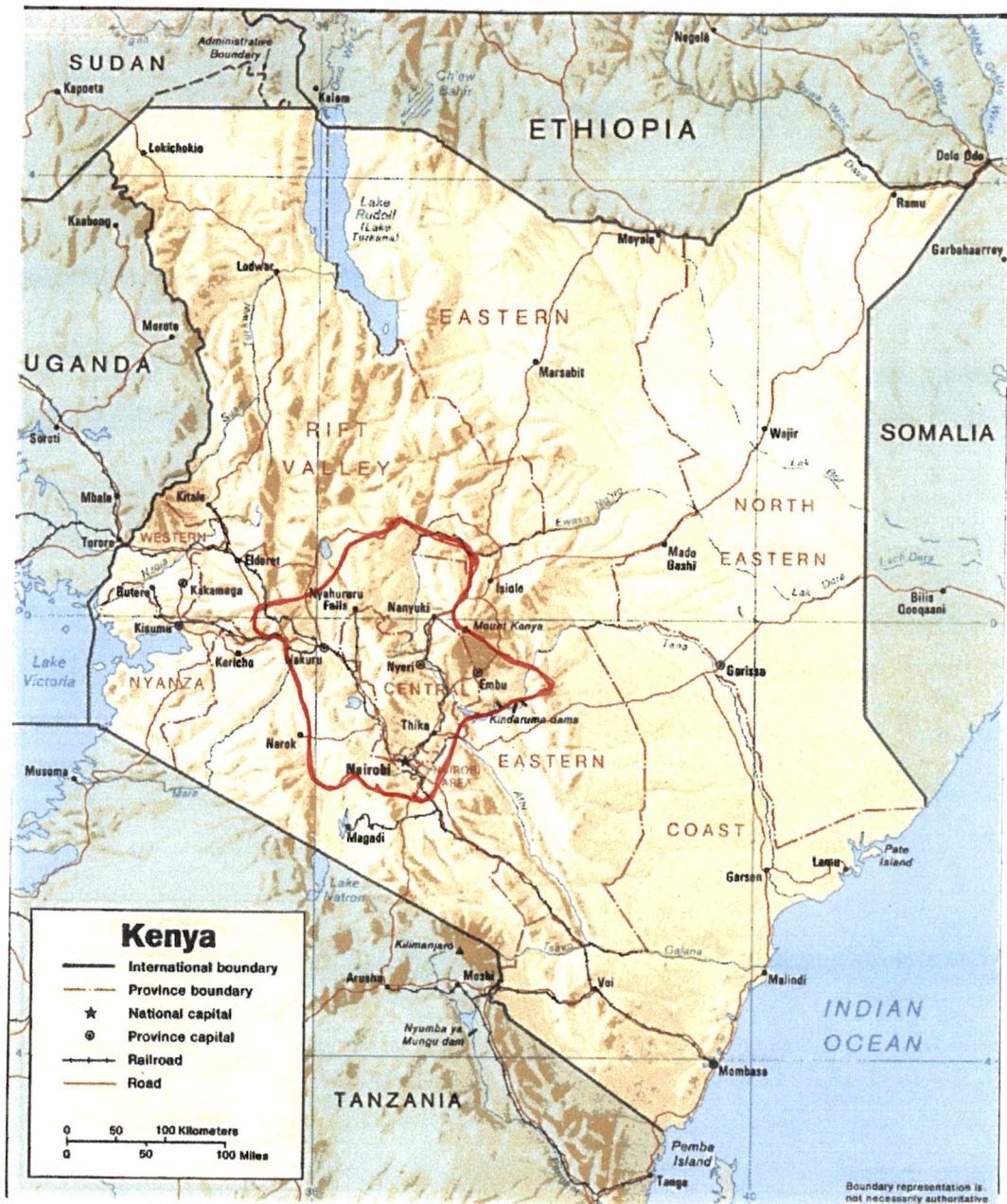


Figure 1. Map of Kenya showing the estimated Kikuyu ancestral region (Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/kenya_pol88).

Key: Kikuyu ancestral region



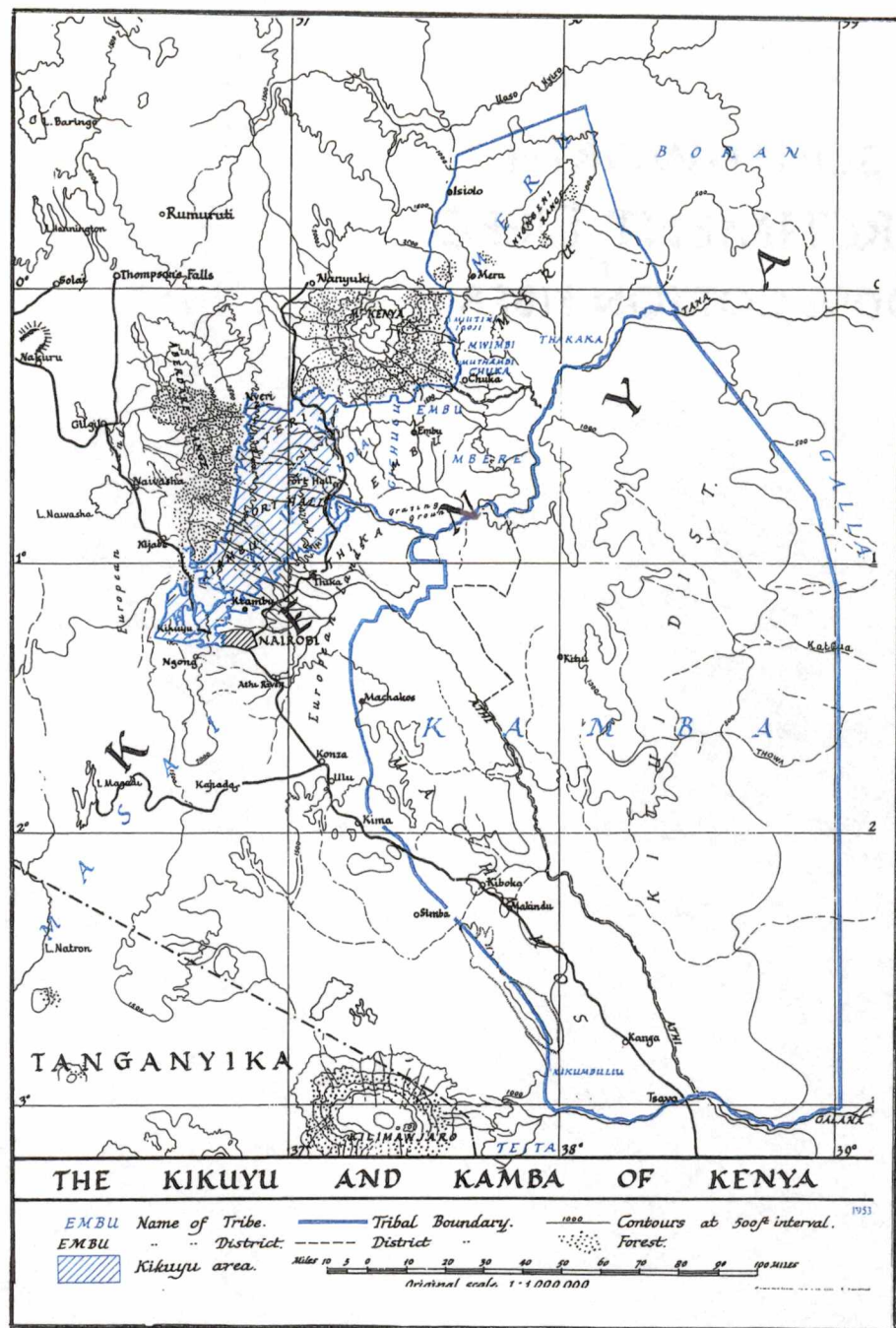


Figure 2. The Kikuyu and Kamba ancestral district (Source: Cavicchi, 1977).

Occasionally, there was discovered in the community an uncircumcised adult male who had evaded the circumcision ritual during his youth, and this revelation was usually a traumatic experience for the individual and a free theatrical episode for the community. The person was paraded before the crowd of men, women, and children and force-matched to the nearest health facility for an immediate operation without choice. The community considered such a person as an insult to the people and lacking in personal maturity, and he was subjected to immense shame. Individual rights usually were considered secondary at such a moment. The media always were keen to capture such episodes in the streets of the Kenyan capital of Nairobi.

Male Operator

The profession of the muruthia wa anake, or male operator (also male circumciser), was restricted to special families. Leakey (1977) identified three of the well-known past aruithia a anake families as those of Kirubi wa Minai, Kiguru wa Nguna, and Gacengeci. Other people who wished to enter the profession had to undergo a long preparation process, usually as apprentices to the masters for at least 7 years, and they also had to pay 30 goats and sheep and a number of stall-fattened animals before they would be entitled to start practicing on their own. The profession was a well-paying one. In one circumcision season, an operator would perform between 400 and 500 operations, and, for each case, he

would receive a piece of iron or a goatskin as a fee from the parent of the candidate. These items were later sold or bartered for sheep and goats. (Leakey, 1977)

Celebrations

The highlight of the circumcision celebrations was the public glamour of song and dance, known as the matuumo and marara nja dances, that Middleton and Kershaw (2000) referred to as the Great Dance. The dances marked the beginning of the initiation process and were seen as essential and significant part of the ceremony (Leakey, 1977). It is noteworthy that, during the circumcision dances, all taboos against language indecency were relaxed. In violation of the usual cultural expectation, during the singing, dancing, and jumping joyously with mocking and teasing, the use of profane language such as the mention of genitalia and lovemaking was allowed. Newly married women, with their hands and faces decorated with white earth and wearing reed skirts round their waists, danced and ran with abandon through the village streets on the eve of boys' initiation into manhood. I have used pictures from a variety of ethnic groups that illustrate aspects of the Kikuyu circumcision ritual celebration when photos of actual Kikuyu practices have not been available.

The singing and dancing (see Figure 3) were intended to give initiates an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the necessary rules and regulations governing social relationships between men and women (Cavicchi, 1977). On the eve of the initiation, the dancing went through the night, marara nja, during which



Figure 3: Example of a celebration dance (Source: Adamson, 1967)

time mumburo songs and dances were performed to build the initiation ceremonies to a climax. Immediately after the morning's initiation, the song and dance ceased, and the day turned into a quiet time of feasting on special ceremonial foods (njugu cia irua), including locally brewed beer (njohi ya miratina) and a choice of freshly slaughtered sheep or goat meat (nyama cia ndurume na thenge). Middleton and Kershaw (1965, p. 58) gave a precise picture of the events during the initiation ceremonies:

After the Great Dance the boys dance all night. . . . In the morning the boys divide into two or more parties for the circumcision itself: The boys bathe in the river while their mothers and other relatives watch. While bathing, they drop leaves collected during the Great Dance into the water as a sign of drowning their childhood behavior and forgetting about it forever. They then go to the itiri [see Figure 4], the site of the operation. The boys sit in a row on clean hides. Their sponsors, holding the leaves, which were taken from the sacred tree, support them. As soon as the operator has performed the operation the sponsor covers the boy with a cloak.

Method and Function of the Traditional Kikuyu Circumcision Ritual

The Kikuyu have a unique method of circumcision that requires special training or experience to perform. The operation was done while the boy was placed in a particular position: with his face turned up to the sky, legs apart, and fists

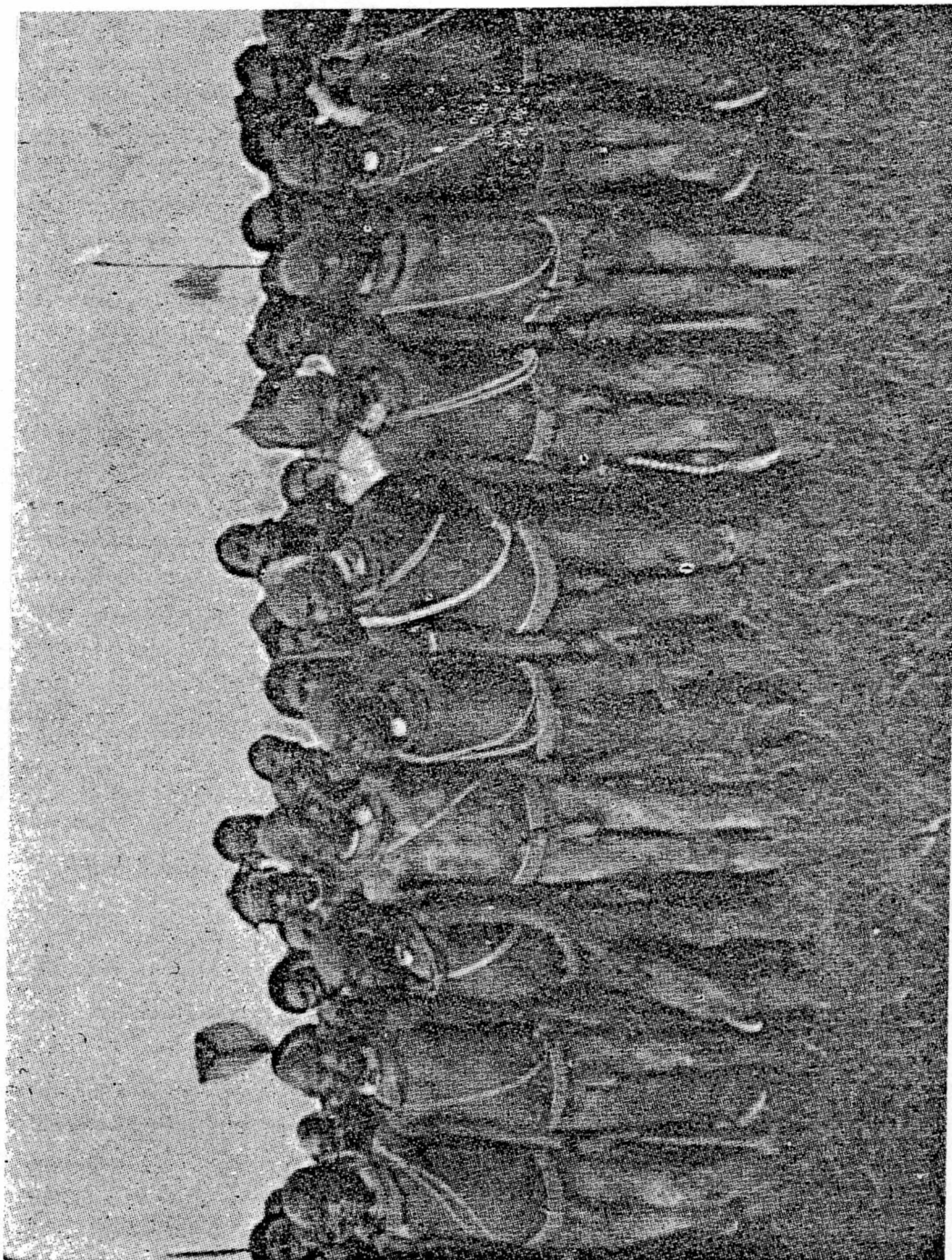


Figure 4. Kikuyu initiates in parade. (Source: Hobley, 1967).

clenched with the thumb stuck between the forefingers and third finger of each hand that constitutes kurumia thano (the ritual pose), and body pressed hard against his supporting mentor (see Figures 5 and 6) in order to be firm as the operator advances toward him with a special knife in his right hand. The operator would seize the boy's prepuce with his left hand and insert his forefinger into the opening of the foreskin, pulling it forward and stretching it to its limit (see Figure 7). He then would cut a slit across the back portion of the prepuce on the upper surface and at right angles to the length of the penis. With the slit in place, the glans penis was hooked up through the slit so that it was exposed. The foreskin was left bundled on the underside (see Figure 8) in what is known as a ngwati (exciter) and was left in place for the rest of the boy's life (Leakey, 1977).

Middleton and Kershaw (1965, p. 88) gave a varying view that missed this point when they stated that

the operation performed on boys differ slightly from one tribe to another; the Kikuyu cut off the prepuce entirely, the Meru and Mwimbi pierce it by a slit though which the glans penis is put, while the Chuka, Embu and Mbere remove the entire prepuce but in a different manner from the Kikuyu.

After circumcision, the boys were no longer ihii (uninitiated boys) but became irui (initiates), a title that was theirs until the end of the period of seclusion and training that lasted about 8 days, at which point they became novices, or ciumiri, literally meaning "those who are changing" (Kenyatta, 1938; Leakey, 1977). Circumcision marked the young man's commencement of



Figure 5: Example of the role of mentor (Source: Adamson, 1967).



Figure 6: Example of the role of mentor during the circumcision operation (Source: Beckwith & Fisher, 1999).



Figure 7. Example of the pulling of the foreskin during circumcision (Source: Beckwith & Fisher, 1999).



Figure 8. Example of the circumcision with a ngwati (exciter) left on the underside of a penis (Source: Beckwith & Fisher, 1999).

participation in various governing groups in the tribal administration. The age-group (rika) to which he belonged began from the day of the physical operation (see Figure 5). Rika were comprised of all those who were circumcised at the same time across the Kikuyu region. Members of the same rika enjoyed a deep sense of friendship and mutual sharing--sometimes even sharing spouses in polygamous unions. To emphasize this bonding aspect, the history and legends of the Kikuyu people were remembered according to the names given to various age groups at the time of the initiation ceremony (Kenyatta, 1938). Some of the best known rikas are Kihlu Mwiri, Ngaragu ya Mianga, and Ciringi, all of which were named according to key events such as the introduction of the Kenya shilling (ciringi) or a catastrophe such as the cassava famine (ngaragu ya mianga) occurring during the time of the ritual. This tendency among the Kikuyu to group individuals in age-classes through initiation is explained by Middleton and Kershaw (1965) as serving the purpose of uniting the tribe and providing mutual protection of the rights of the individual in each group in the absence of a central form of government among the ethnic group.

The Kikuyu circumcision ritual played both a transitional and an identity-redefinition role that promoted the boys to manhood and leadership status, thus according to them a constellation of privileges in the newly acquired junior adult role. All the boys went through the circumcision rite of passage in order to graduate from childhood to manhood and, hence, earn leadership status in the very strict cultural custom. For one to be uncircumcised among the Kikuyu was

considered improper and detestable. An uncircumcised man, or kihii, had no place in the community's social ranks and was devoid of all privileges, including marriage. The community did not allow marriage between women and the uncircumcised "boys," regardless of their chronological age. This is captured well by Cavicchi (1977, p. 16) when he stated that

initiation introduces a great division in Kikuyu society: the division between initiated and uninitiated. The former are considered "humans," "andu" in the full sense of the term; the latter are not considered as having attained the full "human" dignity and may sometimes be derogatively referred to as "animals," "nyamu." The uninitiated were not considered as responsible members of society, but were expected to behave such as if they were, and this they wanted, to be admitted to initiation, and more, they were responsible, not only each for his individual behavior, but jointly for each and all in the group due for initiation at the same time. One grave offence committed by one of them was enough cause to make the whole group forfeit the privilege of being initiated as a group and, consequently, of forming a separate age-unit in the "generation" or wider age-class riika, njiarua. The case is illustrated in the proverb, "Kihii kimue kiamia, ciamia ciothe njamura", that is, "If one uninitiated-young-man has defecated (where he should not), they all have defecated together (en masse, with him)."

The available descriptions of the traditional Kikuyu initiation rites vary and so are rather confusing. One explanation for this is that most information on these rites has been gathered mainly through observation of one or part of one ceremony (Middleton & Kershaw, 1965).

In the last 35 years or so, social and cultural changes brought about through the influence of religious forces, education, and the media have changed the character of the traditional circumcision ritual as seen in the previous historical records. In particular, the public glamour of song and dance, the Great Dance (matuumo and marara nja), that traditionally characterized the preparation of candidates for the initiation literally have ceased to exist. The events have lost community control and now are relegated to the status of individual family enterprises. Perhaps it was the profane nature of the language used in the songs during these dances that caused their eventual demise in a largely emergent Judeo-Christian culture.

Definition of Key Terms

To help the reader fully grasp the function of ritual in the process of transition to adulthood among males in the Kikuyu, a discussion of what is meant by some key terms such as ritual, rites of passage, initiation, and transition is required. Adolescence, adulthood, and manhood, which feature prominently in the discussion, are terms that need to be elaborated as well.

Ritual is defined as a "marking of any change from one state to another," as in the beginning or end of a transition (van Gennep, 1960, p. 11). It symbolically marks a birth, a death, and a rebirth. As stated by Turner (1960), a

rite of passage begins with an ending and ends with a beginning. Rituals differ from ceremonies in that a ritual has some form of spiritual component and is transformative while a ceremony is confirmatory. "The magical quality of rituals is embedded in their capacity not only to announce a change but to actually create the change" (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992, p. 32).

Turner (1987, p. 6) defined ritual as the prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine and "having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers." He defined ritual symbols as "the smallest units of ritual behavior" (p. 94). The experience of ritual gives initiation its power to effect transition whereby the ritual cannot be separated from its process (van Gennep, 1960). Heinze (2000) regarded ritual as a social encounter in which participants are rehearsed to play individual roles at a given time involving a schedule of events.

Rites of passage as used in this research study is a broader term that applies to recognition of an individual's transition between two states of being (for example, a change from boyhood to young adulthood through a ritual process). It was van Gennep (1906, 1960) who was the first to offer a clear definition of rites of passage (rites de passage) as rites that accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age. In discussing rites of passage, he categorized rites of passage into three groups: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. Further, the tripartite frame for rites of passage that he gave is considered the most solid foundation for considering any

definition of rites of passage (Blumenkrantz, 1996) According to van Gennep (1960), there are three essential ritual components of rites of passage: (a) separation that he also called severance; (b) transition, also referred to as threshold or liminality; and (c) incorporation or aggregation (see Figure 9). . Van Gennep suggested that, while a complete schema of rites of passage may include these three components, the rites might be developed according to the particular nature of the event and culture in which they occur. For instance, rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies; rites of incorporation are prominent at marriages; and those of transition are prominent in pregnancy, betrothal, or initiation (van Gennep, 1906/1960).

Initiation is a rite of entrance, a reward or acknowledgment upon completing a process of transition from one stage to another. Some part of our human self-experience changes forever through the initiatory experience. As Byers (1993) said, the initiatory world is a world that is separate from the “real” world because it is an experience that can occur only within the self. On the other hand, it is part of the real world because the real world is what defines our reality. Eliade (1958; cited in Byers 1993, p. 12) stated that “initiation is an inner change of awareness, a paradigm shift in consciousness that enables the individual to move to the next step on the hierarchical scale of human growth.”

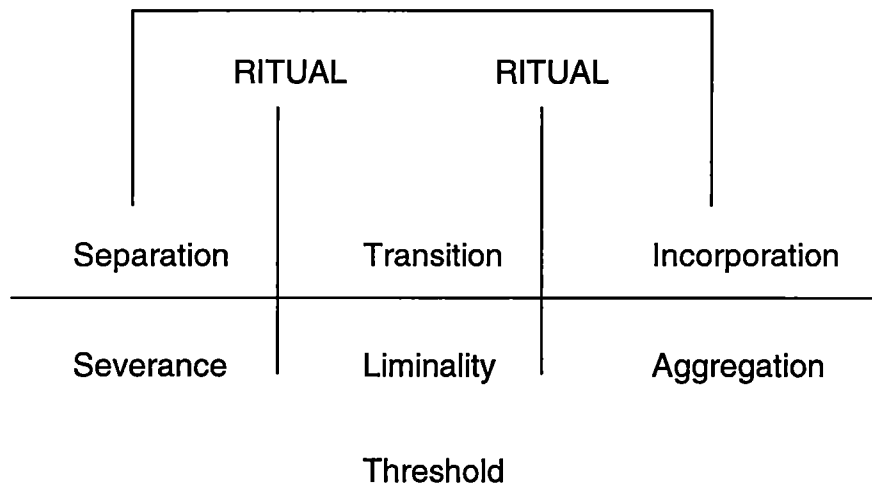


Figure 9. Individual Rites of Passage Model. The masculine life cycle requires a specific series of passages centering on the adolescent threshold, as identified by van Gennep (1960), and initiation into manhood. It can be either functional or dysfunctional.

Transition is defined as the process that leads from one major stage of life to another, usually ending in some form of acknowledgment that is ritual or ceremonial. The ritual ceremony, when accompanied by an inner life-changing experience, becomes initiatory. Transition spans the entire length of the initiation process, from the beginning to the end of the ritual (Byers, 1993; Blumenkrantz, 1996).

Adolescence, as used in this study, refers to the total period spent in the initiation process that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence can be construed as both initiatory and transitory.

Adult is a state of being of sufficient chronological age and emotional maturity to function as a healthy, independently responsible member of a social group (Byers, 1993).

Manhood is a state of being in which both chronological age and emotional maturity allow the individual to function independently and responsibly in society (Byers, 1993). It is an approved way of being an adult male in any given society. It is about why people in so many places regard the state of being a "real man" or "true man" as uncertain or precarious, a prize to be won or wrested through struggle, and why so many societies build up an elusive or exclusionary image of manhood through cultural sanctions, ritual, or trials of skill and endurance (Gilmore, 1990).

It is important to note that the terms rites and rituals are very close in meaning and often are used interchangeably, often incorrectly, in the literature.

According to the dictionary definition, rite is a solemn act, or observance, in accordance with prescribed rule or custom, and ritual is a set form or system of rites.

Research Questions

A majority of Kenyan Kikuyu males in the United States already have gone through the circumcision initiation ritual, thereby earning in their youth a clear mark of a unique transitional experience from childhood to manhood and an identity redefinition process into adult status. Adherence to this age-old tradition can be interpreted as portraying commitment to some persisting value in the custom that is attached to the ritual practice by the contemporary Kikuyu. It can be assumed that there exists, therefore, both overt and covert influences of the ritual practice on the individual male life cycle that generate harmony and impact family relationships. These influences have not been investigated among the Kikuyu. The current research study sought to unearth these influences and to discover the extent to which the Kikuyu perceive the meaning and function of the circumcision ritual in their lives in present times.

By identifying thematic elements pertaining to the circumcision ritual experience reported by the participating men, I expected to gain insight regarding answers to the following research questions pertaining to the circumcision ritual experience.

1. What is the meaning of the circumcision ritual practice to contemporary Kikuyu males living in America today?
2. How does the circumcision ritual play a transitional role, and in what ways does it influence the subsequent self-redefinition among these males?
3. What is the core philosophy behind the practice at the present time?

I proposed these questions while recognizing that qualitative research is emergent in character and changes usually are instituted when deemed necessary during the research process. Answers to the questions were derived through in-depth interviewing during the research study (McCracken, 1988).

During the interviews, the following questions (and/or their derivatives) were my main focus. I also utilized relevant probes and follow-up questions leading to more direct questions. The answers given by the participants determined the flow and direction of the interview for each participant, as I conscientiously maintained the main research objectives. The basic questions that I asked were the following:

1. Tell me about events that marked major changes for you in your family as you grew up.
2. Describe the organization of your circumcision as you remember it.
3. Describe the process of initiation to manhood that you experienced as you remember it.
4. What role did circumcision play to change you from a boy to a man?

5. What are the major changes that happened to you after your circumcision?
6. Describe the role circumcision played in your eventual choice of a marriage partner or friend.
7. In what ways do you consider your circumcision useful to you while living in America?
8. What plans do you have for the circumcision of your children? of your grandchildren?

Importance of the Topic

The purpose of this research study is to stimulate appreciation of the importance and value of ritual as it relates to positive male experience of life. Further, the study is aimed at informing the broader academic community of the potential for the utilization of ritual in the contemporary family setup, to manage transitions from childhood to adulthood more effectively. Current interests among family therapists regarding the function and use of ritual in solving family-related issues dictate a deeper understanding of the function of ritual. According to Imber-Black and Roberts (1988, p. 12), "Rituals define family and group membership; heal losses; maintain and/or change individual, family, and cultural identity; express core beliefs; and facilitate the celebration of life."

Although indigenous African cultures have been influenced by the Western way of life affecting indigenous African traditions such as the Kikuyu circumcision ritual, these rituals have not been completely eradicated. They

rather have survived in new forms in which we can observe “a creative mix of old and new symbols, texts, and performances” (Schroter, 2000, p. 132)

The Kenyan Education System

The Kenyan education system is structured with 8 years of primary education (elementary), at the end of which is conducted a national exam leading to the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Successful candidates are admitted to high school, which lasts for 4 years beginning at Form One in the first year and ending with Form Four. At the end of Form Four, another national exam, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), is given to aspiring University entrants. There have been questions regarding the quality of education in Kenya in its current form. The structure of the education system that the British established in Kenya began as a cultural imposition intended to meet the immediate needs of the British Colonial authorities. Its main aim was to produce clerical officers and laborers to support the Colonial system. The structure was shortsighted and unrelated to the population factor and the long-term manpower needs of the country (Ominde, 1966). For an in-depth discussion of this issue, see Mbiti (1989).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The search for existing literature on the Kikuyu and their circumcision ritual practices generated only a minimal number of historical narratives from authors such as Kenyatta (1938), Adamsons (1967), Cavicchi (1977), Hobley (1967), Leakey (1977), and Middleton and Kershaw (1965). I did not come across many theoretical insights on the function of the circumcision ritual in transforming adolescents from children to adults. Apparently there has not been another study along lines of the structure and objectives of the current research study. I therefore shall address the role of ritual in varying aspects of human transformations during adolescence as I draw from the available examples among a variety of ethnic groups who have been investigated. I also shall deal with circumcision phenomena within ritual study as seen by past and contemporary scholars examining rites de passage.

The Nature of Rituals

In discussing the circumcision ritual, van Gennep (1960), one of the most renowned theorists on rituals and transitions, said that circumcision is akin to one of the numerous simple excisions that the human body has been subjected to over time with the intent to attract females. He equated circumcision to simple excisions such as pulling a tooth, cutting off the little finger, cutting or perforating the ear lobe, tattooing, and cutting of the hair, practices that have been used to promote the initiate from childhood to adulthood in the community. According

to van Gennep, the mutilated individuals were removed from other people by a rite of separation, which he said is the main reason behind the cutting or piercing that automatically incorporates the individual into a defined group, such as married women. The permanent traces that the excisions leave behind make the incorporation to the new grouping permanent and are thus an irreversible encounter (van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep said, "Semicivilized peoples . . . cut those organs which, like the nose or the ear, attract the eye because they project and which can, because of their histological constitution, undergo all sorts of treatment without harming an individual's life or activity" (p. 73). Van Gennep indicated that such mutilations serve a purpose of differentiation among individuals in a community. Temporary differentiations, such as the wearing of special dress or mask or body painting, he said, play an important role in the rites of passage because they can be repeated at every change in an individual's life.

Turner (1977), in his study of the Ndembu tribe in Africa, stressed the integrative function of ritual: its capacity to resolve conflicts and restore equilibrium. Turner emphasized the transformative qualities of ritual, its capacity to change not only individuals but also social structures--a view that is shared also by Heimbrock and Boudewijnse (1990). In Turner's study with the Ndembu, he used the examples of village life to show how the ritual system of the Ndembu functions as the central social mechanism that is used to resolve conflict, restore social equilibrium, and enhance group solidarity.

Turner (1977) argued that ritual is best examined in its actual historical field-setting because that is a temporal structure of social life that bears a direct relationship between ritual and the social processes. Rituals, he stated, mobilize emotions in support of the social order in the community. A similar view was advanced by Heimbrock and Boudewijnse (1990), who said that rituals enhance social cohesion by conveying collective values of society to the ritual participants.

Perhaps the most comprehensive account on the role of ritual is that given by Imber-Black (1999), who highlighted the multidimensional character of rituals. She pointed out that rituals contain symbols, metaphors, and actions. They contain different meanings for different situations. Such meanings of life cycle rituals in particular serve the function of reducing anxiety about change. Imber-Black gave interesting cues about the nature and function of ritual in life cycle transitions. She has dichotomized the function of rituals as transition markers that (a) demand preparation before enacting and reflection after they occur; (b) rely on symbols, metaphors, and actions with multiple meanings; (c) make change manageable as members experience change as part of their system rather than a threat; (d) contribute to a family's identity by facilitating the corroboration of boundaries and rules; (e) define family and group membership; (f) heal losses; (g) maintain and/or change individuals; (h) create cultural identity; (i) express core beliefs; and finally (j) constitute a visible and condensed drama of life that facilitates the celebration of life.

As a demonstration of the critical role of ritual, Carter and McGoldrick (1999) gave examples of suppressed people who, they said, created their own fashion of ritual under difficult circumstances. Jumping the broom by African-American slaves was a symbol of a marriage ceremony that was legally unavailable to them. Another example was conversations that exchanged recipes for rich and delicious foods that kept starving women going in Nazi concentration camps.

Different cultures have varying rituals designed to (a) mark and deal with life episodes such as grief and (b) facilitate continuation of normal life after loss. Imber-Black and Roberts (1992) provided some examples of contemporary cultural healing rituals: (a) the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, DC, which is visited annually by those who suffered loss in the war; (b) the AIDS quilt; and (c) the Cloth Shine project, which is a woman's ritual to cope with sexual abuse.

Meaning of Ritual

With reference to the developmental theory proposed by Erikson (1959, 1968), Heimbrock and Boudewijnse (1990) affirmed that human beings are born with a need for regular and mutual affirmation and certification in life. Rituals therefore are "periodic reassurances of familiarity and mutuality" (p. 49). According to Turner (1977), rituals function to remove labels and stigma from individuals and also realign relationships between the family and larger social systems. New relationship options, previously unavailable because of the constraints of labels, become available. Driver (1991) compared animal rituals

(e.g., peacock mating dances; male turkeys calling to attract females, male pigeons' humming to attract females for mating) to those of human society and explained that rituals give stability to human behavior while serving also as vehicles for communication.

Rituals are bound by time and space and are a safe, manageable context for the expression of strong emotions. Rituals define family and group membership; heal losses; maintain and/or change individual, family, and cultural identity; express core beliefs; and facilitate the celebrations of life. Rituals enable us to hold and express contradictions. A wedding, for instance, marks the couple's loss of particular roles in their respective families of origin while at the same time marking the beginning of being a new couple and having in-law relationships. (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992)

Rituals that mark life cycle transitions function at many levels, enabling change in varying aspects of life, such as relationships, family systems, community, and societies. Rituals also may connect individuals and families with previous generations, providing a sense of history and rootedness, while simultaneously implying future relationships. The performance of and participation in rituals link a family to the wider community through the repetition of familiar rites. (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992)

The Role of Circumcision in Creating Separation from the Mother

In many societies, a little boy's sense of self as an independent person includes a sense of self as different from his mother, as separate from her, both in ego-identity and in social role (Rosen, 1999). On this aspect, Gilmore (1990, p. 24) stated that

while it is true the boy's first love object is heterosexual (the mother), he must perform a great deed to make this so: he must first separate his identity from hers. Thus the whole process of becoming masculine is at risk in the little boy from the day of birth on; his still-to-be-created masculinity is endangered by the primary, profound, primeval oneness with mother, a blissful experience that serves, buried but active in the core of one's identity, as a focus which, throughout life, can attract one to regress back to that primitive oneness. That is the threat latent in masculinity.

Gilmore referred to the comforting sense of "omnipotence that the symbiotic unity with the mother affords" (p. 29), and the sense of "omnipotence, of narcissistic completeness, sense and retained in fantasy as a blissful experience of oneness with the mother" (p. 29), he argued, draws the boy back toward childhood and very powerfully away from the challenge of an autonomous manhood. Thus, he stated, the struggle for masculinity is a battle against strong regressive wishes and fantasies. The manhood equation as seen by Schafer (1986, cited in Gilmore, 1990, p. 29) is a "revolt against boyishness."

Liminality

Van Gennep (1960) represented the rites of passage into adulthood as the death of childhood. He explained this passage as a death-rebirth scheme played out in three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. During the first stage, the boy severs relations with childhood, often literally renouncing his mother or being forcibly taken away from her. In the transition stage, he is sent to a new place in the bush or is otherwise isolated, where he remains in limbo (a liminal or threshold, state when he is neither boy nor man but something in-between). Finally, he emerges a man through vigorous exit ceremonies.

According to Turner (1965, p. 95), liminal entities are undefined:

They are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus liminality is . . . likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.

Liminal entities, such as neophytes in initiation or puberty rites, may be represented as possessing nothing.

Ritual in Society

Vizedom (1976), when analyzing available writings (among them, those of van Gennep, 1960; Radcliffe-Brown, 1948; Wilson, 1959; and Turner, 1975) on

the rites of passage and the functions of ritual in different cultures, presented the following principles of the meaning of ritual within a society:

1. A society depends for its existence on the presence in the minds of its members of a certain system of sentiments by which the conduct of the individual is regulated in conformity with the needs of the society.
2. Every feature of the social system itself and every event or object that in any way affects the well-being or the cohesion of society becomes an object of the system of sentiments.
3. In human society, sentiments are not innate but are developed in the individual by the action of the society upon him.
4. The ceremonial customs of a society are the means by which sentiments are given a collective expression on appropriate occasions.
5. The ceremonial collective expression of any sentiment serves both to maintain it in the mind of the individual and to transmit it from one generation to another.

Radcliffe-Brown (1948; cited in Vizedom, 1976) said the social function of rituals is to maintain and transmit from one generation to another the emotional dispositions on which their society depends for its survival. Wilson's (1959; also cited in Vizedom, 1976) pointed out the role of initiation rites as expressive of values of the group, such as solidarity in overcoming death, the importance of reproduction for the continuity of society, and the public acceptance of change of status and change of obligations for the members.

The traditional view of the role of ritual in society is that initiation rites operate to preserve the social order and to ensure the continuity of the culture (Vizedom,1976). On the role of ritual, Turner (1972) said that symbols make social order acceptable to individuals. According to Turner, powerful drives and emotions associated with human physiology, especially with the physiology of reproduction, are divested of their antisocial quality in ritual process and attached to components of the normative order.

Psychosocial Development

Erikson (1959, cited in Berk, 1997), in his psychosocial theory of human development, pointed out that the ego is a positive force at each stage of development and that individuals acquire attitudes and skills that make them active members of society. Erikson stated that key developmental tasks occur throughout life (see Table 1) and pointed out that normal development must be understood in relation to the particular culture's unique life situations. According to Erikson, the voyage to manhood follows the epigenetic stages of psychosocial development, a step-by-step sequence of growth that confers upon the individual an ego-identity, or a sense of self, and cultural identity appropriate to his or her time and place. Erikson gave a comparison of a variety of cultures, demonstrating that each society provides its own unique materials and rewards by which subsequent steps towards a desired goal are encouraged. These processes, although similar among different societies and serving the same

Table 1
Erikson's Psychosocial Stages (Adapted from Berk, 1997, p. 17)

PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGE	PERIOD OF DEVELOPMENT	DESCRIPTION	CORRESPONDING PSYCHOSEXUAL-STAGE
Basic trust versus mistrust	Birth-1 year	From warm, responsive care, infants gain a sense of trust, or confidence, that the world is good. Mistrust occurs when infants have to wait too long for comfort and are handled harshly.	Oral
Autonomy versus shame and doubt.	1-3 years	Using new mental and motor skills, children want to choose and decide for themselves. Autonomy is fostered when parents permit reasonable free choice and do not force or shame the child.	Anal
Initiative versus guilt	3-6 years	Through make-believe play, children experiment with the kind of person they can become, initiative—a sense of ambition and responsibility—develops when parents support their child's new sense of purpose and direction. The danger is that parents will demand too much self-control, which leads to over-control or too much guilt.	
Industry versus inferiority	6-11 years	Inferiority develops when negative experiences at home, at school, or with peers lead to feelings of incompetence and inferiority.	Latency
Identity versus identity diffusion	Adolescence	The adolescent tries to answer the questions: that "who am I, and what is my place in society?" Self-chosen values and vocational goals lead to a lasting personal identity. The negative outcome is confusion about future adult roles.	Genital
Intimacy versus isolation	Young adulthood	Young people work on establishing intimate ties. Because of earlier disappointments, some individuals cannot form close relationships and remain isolated from others.	
Generativity versus stagnation	Middle adulthood	Generativity means giving to the next generation through child rearing, caring for other people, or productive work. The person who fails in these ways feels an absence of meaningful accomplishment.	
Ego integrity versus despair	Old age	In this final stage, individuals reflect on the kind of person they have been. Integrity results from feeling that life was worth living as it happened. People in old age who are dissatisfied with their lives fear death.	

purpose, have varying details of the rite of passage from society to society (Gilmore, 1990; Erikson, 1959). Traditional societies are adequately structured to acknowledge and confer adulthood status to males and females and to provide "rigid chronological watersheds, as for example, ceremonies or investments, complete with magical incantations and sacred paraphernalia" (Gilmore, 1990, p. 124), which I have referred to as ritual in the current study.

According to van Gennep (1960), moments of change are demarcated more by social than biological factors. He sternly disagreed with the notion of calling circumcision initiation puberty rite because this rite of passage had no real relationship with physical puberty. Thus, physical puberty does not necessarily coincide with this rite of passage for the people who undergo it.

Examples of Transition Rituals

The bar mitzvah ceremony confers to a Jewish boy an official manhood status, usually at age 13. This is a ritual of religious and ethnic identity, a chronological age marker, as well as an initiation into adulthood. Turner (1965) referred to bar mitzvah as a public drama. The test to the Jewish boy is one of memory and comprehension as well as mastery of sacred texts. Also measured are his intellectual abilities and scholarly potential.

The Samburu and other cattle-herding societies of East Africa earn the status of morán-hood (warrior status) by a circumcision procedure, a separation process. A Samburu boy must pass an elaborate test of skill, endurance, and competence. As Gilmore (1990, p. 135) described it,

Each youth who is placed on view before his male relatives and prospective in-laws must remain motionless and silent during the cutting, which may last four minutes or more. Even an involuntary twitch would be interpreted as a sign of fear. . . . If the boy makes the slightest movement or sound, there is a collective gasp of shock and dismay; he is forever shamed as coward and will be excluded from joining his age-set in the march toward adulthood status. No other initiate would want to form an age mate relationship with a boy who "runs," for this boy will bear a stigma of inferiority for the rest of his life. . . . He brings ruin upon his entire lineage forever.

Like the Samburu, manhood for the Masai boy in East Africa is a status that does not come naturally but rather through an elaborate series of tests and confirmations during the moran (warrior) period. The circumcision duration is close to that among the Samburu (van Gennep, 1975; Gilmore, 1990). A Masai moran learns the art of war and how to be autonomous as a herdsman who can create disposable wealth. The masculine potential for the Masai man is based on the accrual of wealth, its control and distribution, and military prowess--a process, by which propertyless boys becomes men by gaining rights to property ownership. (Gilmore, 1990)

A Psychoanalytic Approach to Men's Initiation Rites

While ceremonies by which a male is considered to be a man in his culture focus on circumcision and the associated operations, their meanings are

interpreted in terms of emotions generated in the course of events to both performers and novices. These can be clustered into three categories:

1. Punitive ritual related to castration. An example is when Moses sanctified his people by introducing the custom of circumcision as a symbolic substitute of castration.
2. The boy's separation from his mother. This argument is based on the perception that an adolescent boy's penis, whatever his culture, is not the same to him as his nose, his fingernail, or his tooth. Roheim (1945; cited in Vizedom, 1976) said that the Aranda boy uses genitalization (i.e., attachment to his penis) to counter the anxiety of separation from his mother when the foreskin is cut off.
3. Another viewpoint is that given by Bettelheim (1954; cited in Vizedom, 1976), explaining circumcision as males' attempt to make them resemble women, whose reproductive powers they envy. In New Guinea, the initiators take on female identities of nurturing the children during circumcision rituals in order to symbolically give birth to men.

Bettelheim (1954; quoted in Vizedom, 1976, p. 229) summed views on circumcision, describing these three categories, when he said,

It seems impossible to say to what degree the acting out in initiation is due to any of the following causes: the necessity for giving up in adolescence the close attachment to the mother, which may lead to the wish to retain the mother in some measure; the wish to be as certain of sexual maturity

as the girl is through the growing breasts and through menstruation; the desire to bring children into the world; the need to give up feminine desires and accept the male adult role; or any combination of these or others.

It would seem there exist major discrepancies in the available literature that would create understanding of and lend support to the practice of circumcision in general. Perhaps similarities in the circumcision ritual practice are discernable in regions such as Sub-Sahara Africa. However, each community may ascribe to one or a combination of conscious and unconscious reasons that require maintaining of circumcision ritual practice in order to sustain their culture.

Mechanisms of Identification

According to Erikson (1959, 1968), children at different stages of their development identify with the people by whom they are most immediately affected in reality or fantasy. Adolescents identify with their parents and center on ill-understood body parts, capacities, and role appearances. On identity formation among adolescents, Erikson (p. 113) said,

[Identity formation] arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications, and their absorption in a new configuration, which in turn, is dependent on the process by which a society identifies the young individual, recognizing him as somebody who had to become the way he is, and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted. The community gives such recognition with display of surprise and pleasure in making the acquaintance of a newly emerging individual.

For the community, in turn, feel 'recognized' by the individual who cares to ask for recognition; it can, by the same token, feel deeply--and vengefully--rejected by the individual who does not seem to care.

Giving a generic point of view, Erikson (p. 116) said,

The process of identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration--a configuration which is gradually established by successive ego syntheses and re-syntheses throughout childhood; it is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, affective defenses, successful sublimation, and consistent roles.

Erikson further stated that, while adolescence is a stage of overt identity crisis, identity formation does not begin or end with it. He suggested that it is a lifelong developmental process that is unconscious to the individual and to his society. Identity to Erikson is one concept within a wider conceptualization of the human life cycle that considers childhood as a gradual unfolding of the personality through phase-specific psychosocial crises (see Table 2).

The sequence of stages in Erikson's (1959, 1968) theory represents successive developmental components as parts of the psychosocial personality. Each part exists in some form (the verticals in Table 2) before the time when it becomes phase specific (for instance, when its psychosocial crisis is precipitated both by the individual's readiness and by society's pressure). Each component

Table 2
Psychosocial Development as a Gradual Unfolding of the Personality Through Phase-Specific Psychosocial Crises
(Erikson, 1959, 1968)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I INFANCY	Trust Vs. Mistrust				Unipolarity Vs. Premature Self-differentiation			
II EARLY CHILDHOOD		Autonomy Vs. Shame, Doubt			Bipolarity Vs. Autism			
III PLAY AGE			Initiative Vs. Guilt		Play Identification Vs. (Oedipal) Fantasy Identities Work Identification Vs. Identity fore closer			
IV SCHOOL AGE				Industry Vs. Inferiority				
V ADOLESCENCE	Time perspec tive Vs. Time Diffusio n	Self-certainty Vs. Identity Consciousness	Role Experimentation Vs. Negative Identity	Anticipation of Achievement Vs. Work Paralysis	Work Identification Vs. Identity Diffusion	Sexual Identity Vs. Bisexual Diffusion	Leadership Polarization Vs. Authority Diffusion	Ideological Polarization Vs. Diffusion of Ideals
VI YOUNG ADULTHOOD					Solidarity Vs. Social Isolation	Intimacy Vs. Isolation		
VII ADULTHOOD							Generativity Vs. Self-absorption	
VIII MATURE AGE								Integrity Vs. Disgust, Despair

comes to ascendance and finds its more or less lasting solution at the conclusion of its stage. Thus, each component is systematically related to the others, and all depend on the proper development at the proper time of each, although individual make-up and the nature of society determine the rate of development of each component. It is at the end of adolescence that identity becomes phase-specific (Table 2, vertical line 5).

Erikson (1959, 1968) suggested that, where conditions of economic, ethnic, and religious marginality provide poor bases for positive identities, negative group identities are sought in spontaneous clique formations ranging from neighborhood gangs and jazz mobs to dope rings, homosexual circles, and criminal gangs. He expected clinical interventions to be able to make significant contributions to this problem. Further, while suggesting the nature of the problem to be public, Erikson intimated the need for creating a rite of passage for adolescents, suggesting that it is the job of teachers, judges, and psychiatrists who deal with youth to come to a strategic act of recognition, an act through which, as he explained, society will identify its eligible young members and contribute effectively to the development of their identity.

According to Luckmann (1978), reality is socially constructed. Primary socialization creates in a child's consciousness a progressive abstraction from the roles and attitudes of specific others to roles and attitudes in general (p.122). Luckmann distinguished between two general types of reality maintenance

routines: those that provide (a) ordinary maintenance and (b) crisis maintenance. The former are designed to maintain the internalized reality in everyday life, while the latter are used during crisis times. Both types of mechanisms entail fundamentally the same social processes. To Luckmann, the reality of everyday life maintains itself by being embodied in routines, which are the essence of institutionalization. Beyond them, however, the reality of everyday life receives ongoing reaffirmation in the individual's interaction with others. Just as a social process originally internalizes reality, the reality of everyday life is maintained in consciousness by social processes. Furthermore, the most important vehicle of reality maintenance is conversation between people speaking with one another. One may view the individual's apparatus as continuously maintaining, modifying, and reconstructing subjective reality.

Summary of Psychosocial Development

The home environment and the community hold the mandate to induct individuals into the value system prescribed within a given society. Socialization mechanisms play an important role in maintaining the hierarchical character of psychosocial development in a traditional society. The rite of passage creates new members of a community, and the accompanying rewards system for the new members serve to maintain the custom within the practicing community. For the adolescent, an elaborate rite of passage such as that of the Samburu or the Masai clearly facilitates a smooth transition to adulthood status for the youth and

also serve to furnish and replenish the community with human resources necessary for the sustenance of the group.

Literature Review Summary

The discussion of literature on rituals is a foundation exercise as I delve into the investigation of the perceptions of a representative group of Kikuyu circumcision ritual practitioners of over centuries. This section is a backdrop of the otherwise not so well understood phenomenon of rite of passage rituals among different communities. I have discussed the functions of ritual by past and contemporary authors to accord a clearer picture (focus) to the Kikuyu circumcision ritual, a rite of passage in its own right.

Chapter III

Method

A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences about a concept or phenomenon for several individuals with an aim to exploring the structures of consciousness in human life experiences (Creswell, 1989). It describes the meaning of the individual's experiences about the concept or phenomenon and explores the structures of consciousness in human experiences. According to Luckmann (1966, p. 9), the goal of phenomenology is to describe the "universal structures of subjective orientation in the world, not to explain the general features of the objective world." The researcher is an instrument of data collection in phenomenological study. He or she gathers words or pictures; analyzes them inductively, focusing on their meaning to the participants; and "describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language" (Creswell, 1998, p. 14). Thus the phenomenologist examines how the world is experienced. For him or her, important reality is what people imagine it to be (Bogdan, 1975).

The current study, while exploring the central underlying meanings of the circumcision ritual experience for the participants, at the same time has checked the "intentionality of consciousness where experiences [contain] both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning" (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of circumcised Kikuyu men in America who

have undergone the Kikuyu circumcision ritual while still living in Kenya. The general goal was to obtain a first-person description of the circumcision ritual experience. Using in-depth interviews lasting 1 to 1½ hours (McCracken, 1988), the study inquired into the historical, reflective, and subjective meanings of the participants' experiences regarding the Kikuyu circumcision ritual process.

Methodological considerations for this research design are drawn from basic assumptions commonly agreed upon by qualitative researchers, such as (a) respect for participants' perspectives and (b) recognition of context and language as interactive with meanings of experiences (Denzin, 1989).

Phenomenologists believe that, for human beings, multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available through each person interacting with others and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality. Reality, consequently, is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The researcher in a phenomenological study attempts to grasp the meaning of events and interactions for ordinary people in particular situations. The researcher attempts to enter the conceptual world of the subjects of study (Bogdan, 1992).

The underlying assumptions in this study include the notion that the circumcision ritual phenomenon can best be understood as viewed by those who have experienced it. In this regard, I have sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants as part of the circumcision phenomenon. The choice of phenomenology as the perspective for the study considered its strength

in allowing the participants to speak in their own words, which in effect helps minimize the interviewer's biases.

The Principal Investigator

Successful completion of this thesis project marks the final fulfillment of the stipulated requirements for my M.S. degree within the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee. In anticipation of the current project, I have taken the necessary course preparation in qualitative research methodology. Further, I have had a past experience in conducting a qualitative study when I participated as a researcher in an ethnographic study for 18 months (in two 9-month blocks) in East Africa under the sponsorship of the Sir David Owen Population Center at the University of Wales, Cardiff.

In addition to my past experience in qualitative study, my relevant experience as a member of the Kikuyu African tribal group was a crucial strength I brought to the present research project. The Kikuyu language is laden with metaphors, riddles, and soliloquies that are not easily rendered into obvious interpretations in English. As a Kikuyu-speaking researcher, I was careful to take full advantage of this added knowledge. Participants were free to express themselves in the Kikuyu language when they chose.

A bracketing interview was considered necessary at the initial stage of this project to help me identify and deal with the issue of potential personal bias in such a study because of my similar ritual experience and membership in the age cohort of the participants. The purpose of the interview was to help me to

suspend any prejudgments I have had as a member of the Kikuyu ethnic group about what I may personally consider to be the meaning of the circumcision ritual experience. During the research project, I had the privilege of participating in Dr. Pollio's phenomenological study group at the University of Tennessee's School of Nursing. The group analyzed transcripts each member brought in turn by giving feedback to presenters on their interpretations of identified issues and themes. A Ph.D. student in the School of Nursing who was participating in the group at that time gave me a bracketing interview. The interview was analyzed during one of the sessions, thereby according me opportunity to better learn first-hand where I was coming from as the researcher on my chosen topic and to become aware of personal biases and perceptions I hold regarding the subject of the study. Potential problems that I identified through the bracketing interview included the likelihood for me to (a) lead interviews and subsequent discussions with participants along areas akin to my own experiences and (b) anticipate participants' responses would bear semblance to my own notions of the circumcision ritual experience. I recognized the fact that my own initiation experience was less than ideal and did not match that of any of the 18 participants that I interviewed in the research study (see Appendix A for a description of my personal initiation experience).

Data Collection Procedures

In phenomenology, data collection is primarily conducted through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 1998; McCracken 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1975; Luckmann, 1966). According to these authors, in-depth interviewing is a powerful tool in qualitative research studies. The method avails to the researcher insights into the mental world of the subjects. The current study, therefore, employed the in-depth interview process.

Participants

The participant group was selected purposefully through convenience and criterion sampling following an initial contact with a few qualifying individuals identified through the Kenya Christian Fellowship in America (KCFA) data base. KCFA is a non-denominational organization with a national membership of Kenyans in chapters spanning the United States (see Appendix E). Criterion sampling is known to work well when all the individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998), in my case, the Kikuyu circumcision. My initial intention was to get a homogeneous sample of Kikuyu men who had a first-hand personal experience in the Kikuyu circumcision ritual during or after puberty, prior to their immigration to the United States, from the KCFA organization's Southern chapters in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Later, I realized that strict boundary considerations served no direct purpose to this research project because the specific location where Kikuyu men have

settled or are visiting in the U.S. has no bearing on their circumcision ritual experience.

I was aware of the fact that, in a phenomenological study such as this, recruitment of participants usually is limited to finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and subsequently gaining from them written or verbal consent to participate in the study. There was no initial inquiry into whether participants had undertaken the circumcision ritual, as this would have been considered impolite within the Kikuyu culture. I was aware of the personal nature and the sensitivity of the circumcision ritual experience for the subjects of my study. Because of my insider's knowledge of my native culture, I assumed that any Kikuyu male would have gone through the ritual as a youth. The individuals finally recruited all had had their circumcision ritual experience as teenagers and were willing and able to participate in the interview. The majority of them were married and either had administered or planned to organize a circumcision ritual for their male children.

I chose this particular group on the basis of the unique experience of their age cohort. I estimated that it is in this cohort that the ritual has lost the traditional community character and become a mere family affair. Having come into contact with the American culture, the participants possessed varying life choices such that they could either shun or encourage the traditional practice for their children without fear of social censorship--or even do away with it altogether. Their own perceived meaning of the circumcision ritual, therefore, was considered

potentially informative and an important contribution to the knowledge base about the use of ritual in life course transitions.

The particular number of the participants chosen did not bear much significance in this study. I was in concert with Taylor and Bogdan's (1975) notion that it is not important for qualitative researchers to specify the number of participants they will interview beforehand. I therefore started out with a general idea--in this case, 8 to 12 individuals to interview and how to find them--but at the same time I was aware of a possible need to change course after completing the initial interviews if I deemed it necessary, as indicated by Taylor and Bogdan (1975). The size of the sample, therefore, was determined through attaining redundancy and saturation of data during the interviewing, coupled with recognizing reliability among the patterns and themes that emerged. Ultimately, I interviewed 18 participants drawn from Birmingham, Alabama ($n = 9$); Knoxville, Tennessee ($n = 4$); Washington, DC ($n = 2$); Cleveland, Tennessee ($n = 1$); Pasadena, California ($n = 1$); and Memphis, Tennessee ($n = 1$). See Table 3 for summary information about them.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Information as a Group

Age	Number of participants	Mean age at the time of ritual
Under 30 years	1	19.0 years
30-39	2	15.0 years
40-49	9	15.4 years
50 and older	6	15.3 years

Participants from Birmingham, Knoxville, and Cleveland ($n = 14$) were recruited through an initial telephone call to their homes. Following this initial conversation in which the participant was requested to participate, an appointment was made for the day and time of the interview. To recruit the other 4 participants, I enrolled as a participant in the KCFA conference, which was held at James Madison University in Virginia in June of 2001, during the time of my research. When I had discovered that the conference was taking place and being well aware also of the cost implications of multiple interviews with dispersed participants, I was only too glad to take advantage of this opportunity. I recruited these individuals due to their easy accessibility. Interviews during the conference were held at a time of the participants' choice. Two were held during a lunch break and two at other times that did not interfere with a conference session.

I was keen to weight the role of each participant during the sampling process on the basis of the potential of each participant as an aid to my role of researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The success of the first two interviews that I completed in Knoxville in May 2001 proved to be a tremendous morale booster. My subsequent experiences in Birmingham and Cleveland were equally successful, with a total of 10 interviews accomplished altogether within 1 week. I later interviewed two more participants in Knoxville before proceeding to the

KCFA conference in June, which generated the final four further interviews. All in all, I settled on a sample size of 18 as I started to notice redundancy and saturation of data and as patterns and themes began to clearly emerge.

In-depth Interview Process

I conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews lasting between 1 and 1½ hours with the participants. Interview venues ranged from the participants' own homes in a separate room from the other members of the family, to rooms in an institution separate from potentially obstructive activities.

To generate conversation and elicit responses, I used an interview guide containing 8 open-ended questions on issues related to the participants' experiences with the circumcision ritual (see Appendix B). Questions were memorized beforehand (Creswell, 1998), a factor that contributed to making the participants feel at ease during the interview. I was able to maintain eye contact because I did not have to read the questions. The open-ended interview format was selected to allow both the interviewer and interviewee flexibility in steering the direction of the interview.

To put the participants at ease, I began each session with a short warm-up time. I opened the interview with a brief introduction of the research study and explained the essence of the consent form, putting particular emphasis on the issue of confidentiality. I then requested the participants to sign the consent form (see Appendices D & E), which they all obliged to do without difficulties. In this regard, all participants gave both their verbal (word of mouth) and written consent

through the signing of the consent form. After signing the consent form, all participants filled out a biographical data questionnaire comprised of questions intended to provide specific demographic information relating to their (a) age; (b) employment; (c) education; (d) marital status; (e) siblings, including whether their male siblings had experienced circumcision; and (f) children, including whether their male children had experienced circumcision (see Appendix C).

I then proceeded on with my first question, which asked each participant to tell me about major events and experiences that marked key changes while they were growing up. Then, based upon the interviewee's response to this initial question, I asked follow-up probes of appropriate, subsequent questions. To ensure coverage of key aspects of the ritual experience, I used the interview protocol guide (see Appendix B), which helped me ensure that I asked every necessary question during the interview (Weiss, 1994).

I audiotaped each interview with a hand-held recorder and later transcribed the tapes and checked the transcriptions for accuracy. I made reflective notes on each participant within 24 hours of the interview. It was clear from both my initial impressions and my review of the tapes during the transcription process that usually the participants seemed to relax after the introductory stages of their interview. They opened up and became cordial throughout the rest of the interview process. The nature of the topic generated hearty smiles and laughter during all interviews, as the memory of their circumcision experiences unfolded.

Chapter IV

Results

According to Bogdan (1992), data analysis in phenomenological research is the searching and arranging of information from interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that is accumulated to increase understanding of the phenomena and to allow explanation of discoveries to others. On my part, I derived and organized themes that I identified from synthesizing data from the 18 transcribed interviews and written questionnaires, coupled with the results of the two separate group processes.

Data analysis for this research study was on-going, beginning when the first interview was completed. After each interview, I wrote reflective notes about the interview process within the subsequent 24 hours. I wrote these notes by drawing from my intuitions, thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and any subjective speculations that I had made observe during the interview sessions. These reflective notes therefore provided to me subjective influences that allowed me to form a more complete picture of the interview process. All participants had filled out a one-page questionnaire (see Appendix B) providing sociodemographic information about themselves and their families. Their responses to the questionnaire provided additional information about their lived experiences.

Another source of input came from my major professor, who, through collaborative efforts, helped create a small Child and Family Studies (CFS) phenomenological study group comprised of two faculty members and myself.

This group met on several occasions to determine pertinent themes from the transcripts. The process embraced McCracken's (1988) suggestion of data analysis that begins with identifying deeply embedded details of the interview transcript and moving to general observations. Weekly group meetings allowed us to compare notes on the issues identified during individual reading of the transcripts as they were completed. Each of us analyzed the data by scanning the 18 transcripts line by line for themes and categories and developing a working schema from the examination of the cases (Haley, 1996). Members' tasks included a thorough reading and re-reading of all the transcripts word by word and identifying themes and pertinent pointers to the research questions. During group sessions, members made presentations on the identified themes, followed by a group synthesis of the information presented to identify final themes that ran across the board. Emerging themes and concepts that developed were then noted. Subtle feelings and individual notions were discussed and recorded. All other emerging issues from the study were given appropriate attention and reflected on by comparing or contrasting them within the prior established theoretical framework.

Since ancient times, the Kikuyu circumcision process has produced men from boys. Each of the 18 participants that I interviewed had gone through the process, and it is clear from their narratives that, as a group, they possessed a diversity of circumcision ritual experiences. All of them had experienced the circumcision ritual prior to entering the United States. The data generated from

interviewing the 18 participants in this study were bountiful and uniquely laden with ideas that contribute to a better understanding of the transitional role that the circumcision ritual experience plays in the life of a Kikuyu boy moving into adulthood. Table 4 provides a biographical description of each of the 18 participants.

Biographical Sketches of the 18 Participants

Each of the Kikuyu men who participated in the study had a unique story to tell about his initiation experiences (see Table 4). To understand the context of the participants' experiences, I have provided below a biographical description for each, including highlights of his ritual experience. All the participants had the Kikuyu circumcision ritual experience for their transition to adulthood. All but three of the participants have become permanent residents in the United States. The three nonresidents of the U.S. were here on short-term visitation to their children who were pursuing college education in the U.S. Participants were either (a) in college and/or working ($n = 8$), (b) in full-time employment ($n = 7$), or (c) owned a private business ($n = 3$).

Case #1 (C1)

C1 was 39 years old at the time of the interview. He had just finalized plans for the circumcision of his son. During his own ritual, his dad had played the role of the mentor. He could remember the traditional style of the ritual (going

Table 3
Biographical Sketch of each Participant and Summary of His Story

CASE	AGE AT INTERV	AGE AT RITUAL	TYPE OF INITIATION	TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT
C 1	39	15	Modern; dad played mentor; scanty influence from others or the community	Business, was waiting entry to Ph. D. program at a University
C 2	49	15	Modern; dad had abandoned him; cared for by uncle	University Professor
C 3	53	15	Modern; dad played mentor; reared in town	An accountant presently in U.S. for business.
C 4	19	10	Modern; dad (a pastor) played mentor. Kamba influence	Student
C 5	42	15	Modern; experienced the cleansing sex	Student
C 6	41	14	Modern/Christian; pastor passive mentor; parented by single mother; no seclusion	Chaplain
C 7	41	17	Modern/Kikuyu "ngwati" type; young uncle as mentor; Played role of mentor to son	Accountant/student
C 8	40	18	Modern/traditional; visited with gifts, no song and dance	Pastor of a Kenyan church and student
C 9	40	15	Modern/Christian; father as mentor but distant to son	Family therapist
C 10	45	15	Modern; traditional song and dance; celebrations	Marketing specialist
C 11	53	15	Modern; traditional; faced seclusion; wife mentor to their sons	Administrator
C 12	51	16	Modern/Christian; experienced cleansing sex	Student
C 13	37	15	Modern/Christian; his son circumcised in infancy.	Residential instructor in assisted living work
C 14	51	17	Modern/traditional; song and dance celebrations	Banker
C 15	59	14	Modern/traditional; experienced kirugo feast	Church administrator and businessman
C 16	49	13	Modern/traditional; some song and dance; goat slaughtered	Behavioral specialist
C 17	53	15	Modern/Christian; opposed community to adopt Christian ways	Pastor and student
C 18	48	17	Modern/Christian; no ceremonies; adopted by elder brother	Accountant

to the river) but did not experience it himself. He had lived with his family on a farm far from the influence of village life. He was initiated into adulthood at age 15. His father initially refused to give him permission for circumcision, but C1 ultimately managed to convince him to agree. He described seeking permission by saying that

I approached my father . . . [who] thought I was too young to be a man, but I knew I was not going to high school without being circumcised. I told my father that if he does not allow me to go, I was going to go on my own accord and eventually he agreed to take me to the hospital.

C1 said that, although his father played mentor and shielded him from peer and other community influences, he did not give him proper training during initiation. What C1 as an initiate learned about dating and life in general was learned vicariously through his own efforts and by forcibly breaking from his father's influence. He learned about adult life haphazardly through interactions with close siblings and hired workers at home. When asked about his experience of the process of education about adulthood, he said,

I have older brothers so I had most of the talk from them. . . . There were guys who were working on the farm who were very close to me just, like my brothers. Most of the things, I would hear being discussed . . . growing up among brothers. . . . We were extremely free to be able to discuss some very personal things that people cannot be able to talk in the presence of the parents.

C1 was not given separate room from the main house following his circumcision, but a separate access to his room was purposely improvised. He was among the first individuals in his area to go through the hospital route of circumcision rather than the traditional ruj (river) method. When asked to comment on the style of his circumcision, he said,

I did not go through the traditional way, but I went to the hospital. We were probably the first generation of people because . . . [the] operation could be done at the hospital . . . in a more sanitary way than did the traditional method.

His relationship with his parents changed for him too:

Before circumcision, my father looked at me like a woman, but now his acceptance had increased. . . . Earlier on, he was just commanding me and disciplining me by using force, but I realized that now we came to a place where we could speak and discuss issues.

When asked how circumcision helped him to become a man, C1 said,

Before circumcision, I was thinking like a child, but now I found overnight my thinking was beginning to change. The goals that I was setting for myself were different from the goals that I had with me before. After the circumcision, things changed.

He said that he thinks circumcision has had a functional purpose and that it influences his lifestyle today in the U.S. He also said that he recognizes the prevailing impact of the circumcision ritual experience on his life while living in

America and that he is determined to propagate the custom to the future generations. At the time of my visit, plans were underway for the circumcision of his 15-year-old son within the following week.

Case #2 (C2)

C2 was 49 years old and had immigrated to U.S. 19 years earlier with his family of four: his wife and three boys. Both he and his wife have spent most of their time in the U.S. pursuing education, which has recently earned him an associate professor position at a community college. He was brought up by a single mother with the support of uncles who played a father role for him after being abandoned by his dad at an early age. Education was emphasized by C1's mother before granting him consent for circumcision.

The interview was conducted while C2 was visiting a newly circumcised nephew in Knoxville, Tennessee. He said that he had a Christian background and that therefore a traditional type of circumcision for him had been out of the question. Permission for initiation into adulthood was collaborated between his mother and one of his maternal uncles, both of whom stringently placed his succeeding in the high school entrance exams as a prerequisite for granting permission for him to be initiated into adulthood. His excitement on earning this

permission and eventually accomplishing initiation is captured by his statement that

I did not sleep that night. I was sort of excited and did not know what to expect. It was a big day for me . . . to transit from childhood to manhood. I think it was anticipation and daydreaming on the kind of gains that I will gain after circumcision, especially as it comes to girls. I did not sleep at all throughout the night. I was just looking forward to getting over with it.

C2 recognized that phenomenal changes occurred to him following his circumcision. When asked about the character of his new status as a young adult, he said,

I earned more independence now that I am a man. . . .They respected me more than before. . . . I could settle some disputes between my brothers and my little sisters, who could now listen to me because they were told, "He is a man now. Do not touch him. Whatever he says, it is okay." So that boosted my self-esteem.

C2 said he is keen to see the ritual adopted by the future generations. He said he believes that the ritual can be maintained as a community affair. He conducted his three boys' circumcision rituals simultaneously through the help of a nearby medical doctor who performed the operations. He said,

There was quite a battle between me and my boys, but I finally won. . . . I was able to persuade them. I did not have a flurry of preparation. . . . I went to another countryman from Kenya who was a medical doctor, and I told him what I was about to do. This friend said, "I will do it free of charge."

He advocated infant circumcision among the Kikuyu and predicted that circumcision for the Kikuyu will not pass to third generation Kikuyu in the U.S. He said he is determined to ensure circumcision for his grandsons when they are born. He expressed his view that it is wrong to keep boys uncircumcised into adulthood because, without it, they cannot mature fully. He said,

We are trained that you are an adult, others are kids, and you got to respect yourself. I see in the Wellness Center [a fitness center] fathers going naked in front of their kids. So I am different from them, and so I do not feel free going naked . . . even if we are adults. In my mind, these are still boys. . . . They are not mature. . . . They are my peers when they are 40 years, 50 years, but to me in my mind they are still kids. They are not circumcised; they are not like me.

Case # 3 (C3)

C3 was 53 years old at the time of his interview. He had been brought up in an urban setting by parents who were in the medical profession. He therefore did not earn the village (going to the river) experience of the ritual. His father, as both a medical assistant and a Christian, held that the traditional circumcision ritual practice was not right for his son. C3 therefore was not given a separate room or the services of a mentor. Although, as a town boy, he had had girlfriends prior to his initiation, he did not get intimate with them. C3's adult social skills were earned through self-motivation and through observing peers and others in the community. He had his father for a mentor after his initiation. His

training and general counseling on dating and other matters of life after circumcision was scanty because his father did not fully embrace the customary role of a mentor. He was circumcised while in the primary school at age 15, and he considered that to have been a serious problem for him because others were initiated upon going to high school and he already had been but without the benefit of having been mentored. Therefore, he had no peer group and no peer support.

For C3, adult status that would follow circumcision was tied to the freedom to manage money. His father, who did not consider circumcision a big deal and who gave more regard to educational accomplishments, did not give permission for him to access money until he went to high school. The father therefore considered him to be incomplete even after he had been circumcised. On this matter, C3 said,

At that time, most of the people who joined high school had just been circumcised, and so they were handling money for the first time. . . .

Handling money started when I went to the secondary school on my own.

So we were not being prepared like the former groups. . . . Here we were emphasizing education.

His wife played mentor to their sons, the second of only two cases of such a digression of the circumcision ritual found among the participants in this study. On the question about mentors for his children, he said, "I did not have any

sponsor for the boys. In fact, . . . my wife is also a medic. She played a big role in taking care of the boys.”

Regarding the future of the ritual, C3 had had his two sons circumcised prior to coming to America and followed a pattern similar to his own experience. He indicated that he expects that his sons will repeat the same process with their own sons.

Case #4 (C4)

C4 was 19 years of age, the youngest participant in the research study. He was circumcised at the age of 10 due to the influence of the Kamba community, where his parents were studying when he was a child. Pressure from peers and friends from this different tribe evoked in him the need to seek early permission for his initiation. He said that he regrets staying in the main family house during the seclusion time and losing opportunities for learning about adulthood during the healing time. He said he is well aware that his style of circumcision was the modern one.

C4 remembered problems of incorporation into the community after returning to the Kikuyu land as a small circumcised boy. He remembers slight changes within the family setup that his circumcision brought to him. About this he said,

I can't say much changed because, at that age, most people who were my fellow age-mates were not circumcised. It was not much of a change. That

was the only age group I could associate myself with. [Circumcised boys] were too old for me. By then I was too young to associate with them.

Although C4 had his dad for a mentor, his maternal uncle provided most of the counseling and instructions that he got during the healing period. Gifts of money were brought to him from members of the community at the time of healing. He was introduced to money ownership through these gifts from friends. C4 held the view that his presence in America has been influenced by his earlier participation in the ritual and the counseling that followed the ritual. He said,

Coming to America is a long process that one has to go through. It takes a man to make it. After my circumcision, I was prepared to cope with such ordeals as a man. To come through, knowing. . . . I am going to a foreign country without any relative to rely on, . . . was a big step, but I was willing to take it, now that you are entitled. Circumcision gives you an inner strength that keeps you going through the struggle that you get.

Case #5 (C5)

C5 was 42 years old, married, with three children. He was a physical therapist in his country and had migrated to the U.S. at the influence of his sister in order to take further studies 8 years prior to participating in this research project. C5 came from a single-parent family after being abandoned by his father at an early age. At the time of his circumcision, C5 was an active member of the Christian church, a factor that influenced his social interactions and the method chosen for celebrating his initiation ritual. During the interview, he disclosed that

he had had difficulties relating with girls at a personal level due to the high Christian standards of behavior for boys in his community. C5's peer group experienced the ritual sex (kurura mbiro) fully after circumcision, but C5's Christian principles prohibited such a practice for him. However, he faced a dilemma in college, where he felt the need to experience sexual intimacy despite his Christian leadership position. He talked about his first intimate experience.

My first time was, okay, it's funny. I was asked to, like, by a girl, to go out. We went and talked. We went and visited the hospital, just like brethren. That is the time . . . I had some things developing between this girl and me. That is the first time I really learned about real intimacy. I was a man. I had authority to do that [laughter].

Circumcision for C5 meant acquiring the role of his absent father. His mother made this very clear to him following his circumcision. He said,

"Because you are a man, you need to get to the situations, face them, and you will see." She used to tell me, "Since you got circumcised, you know what, you are the father of this family." And that one gave me a lot of confidence.

The influence of the ritual in his life while in a foreign country is unmistakable. He said that the memory of being educated by his mother in the absence of his father keeps him going from day to day. He gave the example of the challenge of coming to America without ample support:

When I came in here, I didn't have money to go to school. I entered in this place with \$250, . . . and what happened is that I could hear that voice of my mother—that, "Don't run away from the situation, confront it. You are a man." And I remember very well this thing came to me. . . . I felt to ask God, "What am I doing here?" But I remembered those words when I got circumcised and said, "Don't run away from the situation, face it the way it is." So the tenacity was there. . . . I got to remember I was a man.

C5 conducted the circumcision ritual for his own son in Kenya as one of the preparations before his family could come over to the U.S. while he studied here. The son was nursed by his mother, a health professional as well, and did not make use of a mentor. Both C5 and his wife collaborated through phone and mail on the counseling of their son following the ritual.

Case #6 (C6)

C6 was 41 years old when interviewed and had been brought up by a single mother after the death of his father when C6 was 7 years old. He now was a clinical psychologist working for a university hospital in a major U.S. city. He lived with his wife and two boys, ages 6 and 9 at the time of the interview. C6 had come to America 15 years earlier to earn an education but had earned permanent resident status since then. Of the major events in his life as he grew up, he noted the death of his father ranked high as a remarkable event that changed his life at a tender age. C6 got his circumcision at age 15, during his second year in high school. His mother single-handedly organized the ritual for

him. He did not get a separate room but stayed in the same family house after circumcision. C6 did not receive any sexuality education and expressed disappointment for that particular omission in his life.

Pressure from friends played a big role in determining the choice of going for circumcision during his time. He said, "Circumcision influence from friends, the expectation from society for me to be a man, I had to go through a rite of passage."

Another important event that happened to C6 was his conversion to Christianity. His pastor, who played a key role in this conversion, later became his mentor--of course, giving him little or no adult preparation counseling as known in the customary Kikuyu ritual. He equated his conversion to Christianity as being equal to a Kikuyu boy's circumcision in its life-changing influence. According to him, his effort to relate circumcision and Christian conversion failed to meet his need to learn more about dating and other real life issues. He said that he regrets having missed the opportunity to learn about dating in particular. About the first sexual experience following the healing, he said,

That is what for me I lack. It is a pastor who was my mentor. So there was no way he could have come to me and tell me, "Hey, this is the way to do it." But I wish he did it. Nobody taught me about dating, but I just found myself doing it.

On the topic of ensuring continuity of the ritual to future generations, he stated he is keen that his two boys will get the ritual's full measure with a near-

traditional ritual back in Kenya. He said he anticipates traveling to Kenya to have his boys' ritual performed in the home country. C6 expressed being somewhat displeased with the passivity of the Christian church, which presently ignores the near demise of the circumcision ritual. On this, he said,

I see the need of circumcision being taught and discussed as a rite of passage rather than just making it like a doctor's visit. The whole idea will evaporate. I agree with such kind of research as you are doing.

Case #7 (C7)

C7 was 41 years old at the time of the interview and worked for a bank as an accounts manager. He lived in his own house with his family of three children. He is a permanent resident of the U.S., having come here in search of educational opportunity. His spouse works in the health sector.

He said he would have preferred to do the traditional river ritual to prove his manhood, but it was not available. Instead he went for the operation at the hospital around the same time of day as those who would take part in the traditional river ritual: 5:00 a.m. He was circumcised during his first year in high school and participated in a healing first sexual intercourse. He had an elaborate post-event celebration.

C7 faced a dilemma in acquiring permission for the ritual from his father and had to go through his mother for assistance, even though she was reluctant to assist him. He said,

My dad was not often at home. He was working away, and when he came home, he came at night. Maybe we had a short time together, and so I went through my mom. I told my mom, "I want you to let dad know that I am almost becoming a man; I want to become a man." And he knew exactly what it was, what I meant. And he said, "Choose who will go with you." In Kikuyu we say gutira, that is "who will mentor you."

C7 remembered vividly events of the actual day of his circumcision and recounted the details:

[I said,] "I am ready for this, and I want it to be done," and we went to . . . the surgical room. And he looked at my thing, my penis and, eh, cleaned it. . . . And after that, he set me on the bed and started cutting. I lay down facing upwards. The only thing I felt, the first thing I felt was the prick of a needle as he tried to make the place numb.

Immediately after circumcision, the rewards were many for C7, heralded first by his father, who opened the door to closer interaction. Describing his experience with his dad and the immediate family, C7 said,

He [Dad] started telling me things that I did not know, . . . things like, "When I die, you are going to be the father of this home. If now I die, I know that I now have a father who will take care of my family." He started treating [me] more like one who was closer to him in age than one who is a child. My mother . . . could not send me [on errands] or rebuke me or try to challenge me if I did anything wrong.

C7 reported that he was well instructed by his mentor and subsequently absorbed the excellent teaching that he got from him on how to become a man. On the linkage between the endurance of pain and the changing of his attitude, C7 said,

"If you can endure the pain," they used to tell us, "if they can cut that prepuce and you do not shed a tear, then you are a man. If they can cut that prepuce and you do not wink." They used to say that, when they went to the river, winking was an indication of weakness. I felt the pain, I knew. I knew I felt the knife going around, . . . and I think being able to endure that pain, to persevere that pain, and being able to persevere the healing process without crying or regretting, changed my personality.

C7's keen interest in sustaining the ritual for the future generations is demonstrated by the arrangement that he made for his son's ritual. He transported him to Kenya to get a first-hand experience of a Kikuyu-type modern circumcision ritual while at the same time interacting with the family elders. C7 was determined to give his son an impactful transitional experience. He wanted the whole family to celebrate the occasion and to share in the joy. When asked to comment on the matter, he said,

I wanted him to feel like he belongs to Kenya. He belongs to the culture that he has come from. I started preparing him 3 or 4 years before his circumcision that "You will get circumcised" and that "When you get circumcised, you become an adult."

C7 already has taken the initiative to address the issue of his future grandsons' ritual with his teenage boy. On this issue, he said,

I have actually spoken to him about it. He is of the idea that when he . . . gets married and gets a boy, at the same age that he got circumcised he will take him back to Kenya [laughter]. Actually he was circumcised when he was 13 years old.

He further reminisced,

I wish Kenyans would retain it, and not only retain it but also carry all the best instructions that they can. It used to be, when a man got to that age, he was advised and trained and taught and shown what life is in the future.

Case #8 (C8)

When interviewed, C8 was 40 years old, married, with three children. He doubled as a full-time pastor of a Kenyan church and a college student. We held the interview in the quiet setting of his living room. He informed the family members that we needed to talk without interruption during our interview. He was cordial but confessed at the close of the interview to have felt somewhat shy due to the sensitive nature of the content of the interview. Although C8 had already earned a green card by virtue of his church work, he emphasized his intent to return to Kenya after a couple of years in the U.S.

It had been difficult for C8 to approach his father directly for a blessing and support to go through the ritual. He recruited his mother to assist in getting the permission from his father.

It was not easy for me to approach my dad. Of course it is an issue of a man, so I could not be able to talk to my dad straight. . . . So I had to go to my mom and ask her, "Can you approach Dad? I want to tell him something." She knew exactly what I was expecting. It was not easy because I knew this is a female and men matters are for men. I am not a man because I am looking forward to be so.

Request to the father for C8's initiation was not a surprise as he also covertly anticipated it. C8 reported,

Well, he really wanted, he was looking forward to it because it was a prestige to him and a pride that his handsome man was getting responsible. So to him it was even easy, and he wanted that. He prompted even my mom to tell him exactly what it was, and therefore somehow he responded, "Do you want money to go to do this?" . . . And that is what I was looking forward to, and then it happened. He gave the money, and everything was done.

On the issue of a mentor, C8 said,

There is another elderly person, a gentleman from my area, so I thought it was good to get him to be my sponsor. He can be my leader, he can be my elder, and he can lead me to understanding what this life means

because you cannot make a change straight from childhood to manhood. It is a gradual change and needs somebody to guide towards the end. And he was good. . . . We went down, of course, to the hospital, and he took me through the whole process, and then we came back home. The man really guided me how to respond, how to behave, how to behave like a man now that I am a man.

Case #9 (C9)

C9 was 40 years of age at the time of the interview, which was held in his house. At the time of my visit, he was painting the basement of his house but was very willing to give me time for the interview. C9 had settled in the U.S. and said he does not intend to return to his home country. He holds a Master's degree in clinical psychology that has earned him a good job. His hobby is kitchen gardening. At the time of my visit, he had a beautiful assortment of vegetables in his garden. He used rudimentary tools imported from Kenya for his garden work. C9 has been in the U.S. for the last 9 years. He went to Kenya to get a bride and returned to the U.S. with her. Their two sons were born in the U.S. and were circumcised during infancy. He had been circumcised at the age of 16 years, together with his elder brother. Both remained in the same family house in a special room but using the same exit as other members of the family. His voice never broke as a boy, and he had to suffer a girl's nickname from his peers, which bothered him a great deal.

As an uncircumcised boy, he disguised himself successfully for 1 year in high school before he was circumcised. On this experience, he said,

I can remember the first year in high school was very bad because I was afraid of anybody seeing me being uncircumcised. I would have probably got into a lot of trouble with those boys, so I kept it a big secret till I went back home to ask for permission.

He used the services of his mother to solicit permission from his absent father for his circumcision. He said it was struggle for him

because we had never had a relationship with my father . . . to be able to approach him. It was such a major thing. . . . He was my dad, but he was distant. . . . I think she [Mom] told my dad.

C9 did not have adequate counseling prior to his circumcision for lack of mentor. The only help that came his way was from the hospital clinic staff, who, in a brief chat prior to the actual circumcision, consoled him on the anticipated changes after the operation. He had the opportunity for a first sexual experience to complete the healing process. On this experience, he said,

I was circumcised when I was, I think, 16 so the hormones were kicking. I started growing a beard. I started having more attraction to girls. . . .

Before long I had my first sexual experience. It just happened. . . . I just felt more confident now that I was a man. I felt like I could approach that area without fear of being talked about as a boy.

While in high school, he became a Christian but did not adhere strictly to the teachings that he got. He suffered conflicts of feelings, torn between the expected Christian standards and full expression of his sexuality as a young Kikuyu initiate.

Case #10 (C10)

C10 was 42 years and working as an administrator in the oil industry in Kenya when interviewed. He was on an extended business trip to the U.S., coupled with a visit to his son who was at that time in college at an American university. We met the night of my arrival in Birmingham, Alabama, at the home where I was hosted in during the field work there. After initial informal interactions, we made arrangements to meet early in the morning of the following day for the interview.

According to C10, the main motivation for his initiation came from peer pressure in high school and his own keen interest that he felt as a boy. When he made up his mind to seek the initiation, he used his brother to initiate the permission-seeking process, and he recruited a mentor for himself. When I asked him about the preparation that he went through prior to his circumcision, he said,

It is in high school that you find that those questions are asked. . . . In actual fact there are a lot of beatings, bullying, because you are expected to be a man. "We wi kihii uka! [You are a boy, come over!]". . . . Even before you go very far, you are already looking forwards to it [circumcision] because you want to enter into it.

C10 received thorough pre-circumcision counseling, especially on the attitude he was to maintain after circumcision. On this issue, he reported,

When you go through the ritual, it is permanent. It is not reversible, you cannot reverse it. . . . You will appreciate that there is a lot of pain that goes with it to mark the event. It is an implant [impact]. . . . There is a definite implant [impact] on your behavior.

C10 seemed somewhat shy about admitting he was circumcised the modern way through the hospital without a ngwati (exciter) and having gone through the hospital.

C10 stated he had been brought up with a Christian background, but this aspect reflected parents' view exclusively. He had experienced coitus prior to his circumcision, contrary the standards of his community. His circumcision mates formed and still maintained a social grouping after their circumcision. One of his mates however went through the traditional process. Talking about the change that took place in the relationship with his mother, he said that, after his initiation,

I had become more of the Daddy's son more than Mummy's son [laughter]. . . . In the absence of my father, I would say that my mother considered me as a security. She would see me on a different perspective.

C10 was very proud of his own son and his role in preparing his son to cope with life in America. His son used a friend to solicit for permission and as

support during his circumcision ritual, which had been done in Kenya before the son came to the U.S. for further studies.

C10 stated that he strongly believes that life would be impossible had he not gone through the circumcision ritual during his time. On this, he said,

Would I even know myself first of all [laughter]? I do not think I would know myself [more laughter]. Interesting [more and more laughter] because I have no experience on the other side of life. I simply wouldn't know myself. What would I be? A kihii, uncircumcised boy? [Quiet exhalation of a sigh] That is right. . . . And living and having a beard and probably a family? I don't know. I would have lost everything. . . . I would still take my education, get my Ph.D., but there are those values put in me . . . okay, that I do not know what really I can do without. That is why I am saying I don't know what I would be.

Case #11 (C11)

C11 was 53 years old when interviewed and working as an accounts manager for the world Bank in Kenya. He was on a 3-month-long holiday, visiting his wife and son, who were on long-term studying in America at the time of the interview. C11 had been visiting America for 3 months and had become somewhat familiar with the American lifestyle. The interview was held in a specially prepared room of his wife's house.

C11 identified circumcision as a major landmark in his life. When asked to recount the factors that contributed to his seeking circumcision, he said that he had not negotiated his initiation but instead was prompted by his parents.

It is the parents who came up with the issue--yes. They approached it through my older brothers by telling them, "It is a high time you go for circumcision, and-so-and-so is also going for circumcision and he is of your age, and therefore you should really go." And then, of course, I embraced the whole thing.

C11 went through a circumcision process that borrowed heavily from the traditional initiation style. He did not get any local anesthesia and was keen to receive the traditional method himself. Celebrations for him came only in the form of good food with no accompanying dancing. However, during the time of healing, there was much counseling and education for responsible adulthood provided for C11's group on matters of respect for the elders, sex education, and premarital pregnancies. Regarding education and the transition experience as he understood it, he said,

I do not think it is much more of the pain that really would have changed my character. . . . It is that which was put into our minds. . . . One had to go through that ritual, one had to go through the cutting and all that.

C11 experienced separation from ordinary life at the time of healing. A traditional hut was built purposely for him and his brother, who was initiated at

the same time, and they slept on make-do beds. When I asked him to elaborate on this arrangement, he said,

Five or six of you or ten of you are put together. . . [from] different homes, . . . and there would be about two or three men in charge of the whole group, taking care of you, doing dressing, and helping you with all kinds of activities to help you heal quickly. . . . During the period, we stayed there for about 8 days to 10 days, Then we were told about all the do's and don'ts as a grown-up and as a man.

C11 collaborated closely with his wife in organizing the circumcision ritual for their sons. He emphasized the need for parents' involvement in the whole initiation and to adapt it to fit contemporary developmental needs for the adolescents. They did not see the need for the involvement of an outsider as a mentor. His wife nursed their boys within their home, akin to the way she would have done in an ordinary surgical experience. Their boys were not separated from the girls as they went through the healing process. Both the father and the mother provided the necessary education and counseling.

Although C11 recommended continuation of the ritual, he suggested changing some aspects of it, such as disregarding an age requirement and including education about HIV/AIDS and other important adolescent health issues. He said,

So, after discussing with their mother, we came up with the idea [of getting our sons circumcised], and we knew of a doctor who was doing

circumcision in our town. So we just took the boys in the morning, . . . and the mother put them in their bedroom and took care of them. . . . They were there even with the girls. . . . The mother took care of them. . . . She took care of the counseling and did the dressing and the washing and all that.

Case#12 (C12)

C12 was 51 years old at the time of the interview and had been a senior headmaster of an primary (elementary) school in Kenya prior to immigrating to the U.S. He came in pursuit of higher education. The interview was conducted in a private bedroom inside his house that he had prepared for the purpose. His wife was present during the interview but was invisible all the time as she did house chores. The interview was cordial and flowed smoothly. He volunteered information readily and in a humorous manner.

C12 said that, before he became a Christian, he led a life of permissive morals, a factor that influenced his decision to marry later in life. The motivation to seek circumcision arose from pressure emanating from his peers during his first year in high school. His dad was initially hesitant to accord him permission on the grounds that circumcision did not encourage those initiated to proceed with higher education. With the assistance of his mother, he convinced his dad acceded to accord him permission after his first year in high school was completed. On this initial struggle to earn the ritual, C12 disclosed,

When I joined high school, in my first year I stayed as a boy, but when I joined my Form Two, I had to tell my dad, "Now I have to" because he [Dad] had said, "No," and I faced the knife. It was a bit hard for my dad. . . . The reason is because he had seen so many big boys who, after initiation, were refusing to go back to school, so he thought I might do the same. My mom told him . . . he had to give me permission, and he said, "Okay."

C12 had to seek further permission from an elderly grandfather in addition to his father to ward off a superstitious belief from his mother that healing would be difficult without such permission. He said,

I was hearing Mom saying that "if you do not go and tell your grandfather, something bad might happen to you. You might not get healed." And so my grandfather had to give consent, just to give a blessing. . . . When I went to my grandfather, I had also to tell my maternal uncle, although by then they were still young.

C12 did not know whether he received the traditional or the new style of circumcision. His experience at the hospital did not allow him opportunity to suggest his preferred method. Although he was older than most of the other respondents in the sample, it is interesting that he went to the hospital for the modern style of circumcision. He lamented that his mentor played a passive role during the circumcision process, although the mentor became more actively involved during the healing process.

C12 did not have any celebrations following his circumcision. He expressed support for continuing song and dance, the eating of special foods, and community support during circumcision processes for Kikuyu boys. During the interview, C12 reminisced about his own circumcision, remembering that, despite the lack of song and dance, there had been the ceremonial foods served. Touching on the omission of song and dance, he said,

No matiakiinire gitiro [But they did not do the women dance].

Matiainire gitiro no kwari ucuru [They did not dance, but there was the traditional gruel]. Ni kwanyuirwo ucuru, ni kwariirwo njugu. Ndwanyuiruo na ciuga no nikwanyuiruo ucuru wa kuonania undu ucio nigether ukoruo uri hinya. Na njugu and all that. Nigetha blessings citike weega. [They did not use calabashes, but the drinking of locally-produced fermented porridge added strength to the celebrations. The eating of the njugu or cowpeas added blessings. There was no dance because we are Christians.]

C12 had difficulties during his seclusion time due to his prior conduct as a boy. He was tortured as was the custom for those boys who had had sexual relationships with girls before circumcision:

Because I was playing with them [girls], now they were coming, telling me, "Now come. . . . Now you see." Some could even have removed clothes in front of me to see what I am going to do. It was very stressful. . . . At least you could not fight. They could even catch you and all that. . . .

When they catch you and all that, you just keep quiet, ho ho! That was the work of the mutiri [mentor], to be near you and to tell them, "Now, don't do that," you know.

Life changed drastically for C12 after circumcision, particularly with his father who saw C12 as someone to dictate to prior to his circumcision. Now C12 could interact with his father freely. He earned respect from his mother, his siblings, and the wider community.

C12 reported having taken the initiative to warn prospective emigrants from Kenya to circumcise their children prior to entering America. He stated that he intended to transport his boys to Kenya in a year for the ritual, having failed to access such information in time to circumcise his own sons before leaving for the U.S. On this, he said,

We are telling their parents in Kenya, even if they are 2 years or 1 year [old], they get circumcised in Kenya, to come here circumcised. But mine, I wish I knew they could have been circumcised in Kenya instead of now being taken back to Kenya. So all the children who have come from the year 1997, they are circumcised before they come.

Case #13 (C13)

C13 was 37 years old at the time of the interview and had only married 2 years before. He was excited to have recently become father to a son. He cited this event as a landmark, like his marriage and his circumcision initiation to adulthood had been. He had sought the initiation ritual after facing pressure from

his peers. He used his elder brother to solicit permission from his father and used his best friend for a mentor.

I approached my brother—I needed him to give me advice. And then after that, I had to tell my dad I needed to do it--so my dad was the one who gave me the money and gave me all the blessings that I needed.

C13 expressed a wish to have had the river ritual but had to go for the hospital circumcision because the former was not available at the time. He got a modern style of circumcision with care taken to avoid pain. He was given local anesthesia and was stitched and bandaged to aid the healing process. He also received strict counseling from his mentor on how to behave as a man. Although his friends put pressure on him to have an initial sexual intercourse after healing, he declined it on account of his Christian faith.

C13 said that he does not think that the ritual will continue in the future. His own son was circumcised during infancy. He stated a strong belief that the ritual process gave him ample confidence to cope with life in general, which has been very useful for him during his time in the U.S. On this, he said,

You see, when you go across . . . and that is a process that is agreed upon by the community, you know, in that if you go through that initiation, that kind of pain, you know if you finish the whole process, you will always be remembering that there was somewhere that you came from. . . . That is what is bringing that idea that you have changed from a boy to a man because of the pain that you had and the healing process.

Case #14 (C14)

At the time of C14's interview, he was 51 years old and a recent immigrant to the U.S. after winning the green card lottery. His elder son had earned a college education in the U.S., having preceded the family a couple of years before. C14 has four adolescent children, two sons and two daughters, three of whom are pursuing college educations. The interview was conducted outside his house under the shade of a tree. This spot was chosen to avoid family interference that would have been inevitable in the three-room house in which they lived.

C14 was circumcised at the age of 16 during his second year in high school. His father was strict about the importance of education and did not allow any custom that might interfere with his children's academic progress. He considered his sons reaching Form Two to be a good enough standard of achievement for earning his blessing for circumcision. C14 said,

There was a belief in many people that, once somebody is initiated, he outgrew the authority of the father because now he [became] a man and he was really being seen as a man.

C14 recruited his own mutiri (mentor) who took care of all his interests during the period of healing and seclusion. His mentor interacted with the doctor to ensure that C14 received both the traditional style of circumcision and instruction on the procedure for care during the healing process. His initiation was celebrated with a free-for-all traditional song and dance both on the eve of and after his circumcision. On this aspect of his ritual, he said,

It was a big occasion, and everybody was there. My father and his age-mates were taking liquor . . . immediately [after] we got in, and everybody was overjoyed. The young ladies had really to dance around, trying to usher us in. Oh yes, the traditional songs, the ones related to circumcision. We call it mararanja [singing outside] . . . cia irua [for circumcision]. It is an open thing, and so everybody was dancing.

Neighbors and everybody would come and dance the whole night, . . . only one day . . . the whole night. I was also excited. Moving from boyhood to manhood, it was a big thing.

Getting circumcised for C12 was like getting a whole new lease on life. The family accorded him full liberty to lead his life as he wished. His mother respected him as a man and stopped involving him in the domestic chores.

Mom started respecting me, and the chores I used to do changed. Like before I went through the initiation, I could fetch water and get firewood for her. After that, the task was delegated downwards [to] the younger ones [siblings]. For Dad, he started giving me advice.

In talking about dating, C14 recounted that he adopted a new attitude for his life, particularly emphasizing the care he employed in choosing a life partner. He said,

After circumcision, that is the time I started looking for a serious girlfriend, and I was a bit selective when looking for a girlfriend because eventually it had to lead to a lifetime partner.

Case #15 (C15)

C15 was 59 years old and has children living in the U.S. He was on a 3-month holiday in the U.S. when I interviewed him at the KCFA conference in June 2001. His father keenly emphasized the importance of education over all other aspects of adulthood. However, C15 emphasized how important his experiencing a unique traditional circumcision program was for his learning about adulthood. One aspect of this program was a rather unique pre-initiation experience called kirugu (a special feast for men). His role in the kirugu was to attend to chores for the elders as they feasted on meat in the bush for 10 to 30 days, away from the ordinary cares of home life. He participated in two of these occasions prior to his initiation and strongly believed that these incidences contained an educational element that prepared him for adulthood. He also recounted taking part in the community exercise of ithinga (making and placing dirt clay in pre-prepared fixtures of sapling trees tied around poles to make walls for huts in the fashion of mud-and-wattle construction, where boys gathered to participate corporately in a community labor contribution phenomenon. This, as C15 said, had a learning angle for the boys who, along with a group of potential mentors, worked together to finish building a dirt house within a day's time, thereby earning the satisfaction that comes from accomplishing projects.

Preparation for C15 was elaborate and direct to the anticipated new character that was to evolve from the transformation wrought by the initiation process. About this, he said,

Everybody talks about you being different and expects you to be different. That kind of gets the change in your thinking. Your mind is transformed. And you start thinking like an adult, at least like a young adult. Your brain may not change much, but your outlook in life changes. Even your emotions change. . . . Somehow the preparation conditions you to think that, after this physical event take place, it kind of changes your emotions, your thinking, your everything.

C15 went for his circumcision with a team of 15 other initiates who had six mentors caring for them during the healing period. He declined to disclose the style of his circumcision, although he went for the modern hospital circumcision at this early historic time. His family had embraced Christian teachings, which contributed a great deal to the choice of going to a hospital in contrast to the river initiation. The season of circumcision for his time was a community affair in which all the boys who belonged to the same age group were circumcised at the same time. He had a mentor who competently handled matters pertaining to his feeding and nursing during the healing time.

There was no song and dance at C15's homestead, although other non-Christian clans allowed that manner of celebrations. He remembered the night as being exciting despite the absence of drama and song.

C15 said that, for him and his age-mates, real life began after the circumcision ritual. He said,

For a Kikuyu man, that is when life begins. The rest of the time you are still a child to be sent [on errands] and to be ordered about. But after initiation, you kind of take on great responsibilities, and you may . . . have something to say for yourself among other members of the family and for the clan.

C15 said that there was much satisfaction for him and his peers following the circumcision event. He emphasized the essence of the display of courage during circumcision as one of the contributing factors. In talking about the functionality of circumcision while living in a different culture, C15 extended a personal philosophy of life into which he had incorporated the circumcision experience. He said,

I started thinking the way I think now from that time when I got initiated. . . . I realized after the initiation that I did not really lose much out of what I thought—guthaka na ndoro (playing in the mud). And you know, once you are a young boy, you can do all that, but, once you are initiated, you cannot play in the mud now, so you will lose that, and then you move into a stage that has got its own excitements and its own joys and its own challenges.

Regarding the perpetuation of the initiation custom for the future generations, C15 contended that he has done his best to give his sons the same ritual that he received from his own father. He said he expects, therefore, that the same flow will continue into the future generations. He also proposed

institutionalization of alternatives to the current ritual practices that will accommodate the life-course transitional aspect of the circumcision ritual. On this matter, he said,

You cannot just allow the young boys to grow from age 1 to age 21 just as if nothing is happening. . . . But if it [initiation] were not to be done, then the actual educative and the gaining of knowledge and the revelation of the requirements of young people, when they are growing to adulthood, has to be provided somehow. So if there was someone to come with an alternative that was different from the initiation event as we do or present as we know it today, it has to take care of the psychological, emotional, and whatever leads a young person growing from boyhood to adulthood, [so] that he becomes the young man that he ought to be.

Case # 16 (C16)

C16 was keen to give me an interview after my initial contact with him at the KCFA conference. He was 49 years old and had been in the U.S. for the prior 14 years. He was working and attending college at the same time in anticipation of earning a Ph.D. degree soon.

Circumcision for C16 was a key landmark in his life, and the timing of it was family driven. The family chose a mentor for him, and the preparation took 2 weeks to finalize. He received the traditional method of circumcision, which he freely described during the interview as the ngwati (exciter) method at a hospital. His mentor had a well stipulated scheme of responsibility in which he prepared

C16 on all matters pertaining to the experience both before and after circumcision. Cleanliness was particularly emphasized as crucial immediately before circumcision. The community, to serve their interests, had recruited the circumciser who attended to C16 and his peers.

The initiation occasion was marked with feasting on special foods provided and prepared by the women friends of his mother to honor the important occurrence. Circumcision song and dance, however, was conspicuously absent except for a few women who danced to welcome C16 home from the hospital. The family considered itself quite progressive and that meant embracing Christian standards that traditional vulgar circumcision songs could not feature. C16 wore the traditional cuka (dress with pins on the side) as a kiumiri (novice) during the last few days of seclusion.

C16 explained the change that followed his initiation experience.

He said,

I started getting lots of respect from even older people than me, boys of the same age. Boys who went through the same circumcision and I started . . . receiving more attention from men, I mean my dad, my brothers who had gone through it, community in the neighborhood, you know. Men would consider me somehow a different being from what I was. . . . My mom would now slow down in giving me assignments. It seems like I was handed over from my mom to men, my father and so on, for instruction.

When talking about dating, C16 alluded to the traditional kuhura mbiro (ritual cleaning sex), but he said he got caught up in a deception in which a pregnant girl was his partner and later charged him as fathering a pre-marital pregnancy.

C16 took his sons for circumcision as toddlers prior to coming to the U.S., having been forewarned of problems with circumcising boys here. He said he intends to revisit the issue in a bar mitzvah-style event when they reach age 16 so they can experience the essence of the initiation-into-manhood ritual. C16 attributed his own personal qualities to the influence of the circumcision ritual that he experienced.

C16 said that he does not see the circumcision ritual of having a future but wishes that it would continue on for the Kikuyu people to retain their identity and culture. On this, he said,

I wish that the ritual can continue in our . . . set-up because it is very important. I don't care whether it is done medically or traditionally as long as it is helping. . . . Losing it, we are losing our culture, and my belief is that, if I have no culture, then I am nobody.

Case # 17 (C17)

C17 was 53 years old and living with his family of four (his wife and their three boy) at the time of the interview. He had immigrated to the U.S. only recently, in 1998. C17 graciously granted me an interview during the KCFA annual conference. He is a former director of an international Christian

organization that supports children who are in difficult circumstances. He is a member of the clergy, managing a church and at the same time pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Christian ministries. His children were at the threshold of launching into the world but still living within the supportive family home.

During C17's initiation, most boys went through the traditional river type of circumcision, which was considered a more fashionable style within his community at the time. The Christians, whom he referred to as athomi, had been few but displayed a more progressive lifestyle that C17 desired to emulate in his life. Although his family belonged to what he called acenji (pagans, non-Christians), he decided on his own, after much contemplation, to adopt the less popular Christian faith. By going to the hospital for his initiation, he was declaring himself different from the others and challenging the ways of his family, peers, and the community at large. In choosing the modern style of circumcision, C17 was evoking a change in status for his family from the less progressive people (acenji) to the more modern and progressive athomi (Christians). C17 received modern circumcision by going to a mission hospital for the operation instead of to the river. He said,

I came from the pagan world, so to speak. We called ourselves acenji [pagan] as opposed to athomi [religious]. [There] was a mission station near where I lived, and coming from the acenji to become one of the athomi, that was really a major transition, and it was not necessarily viewed [positively].

Despite C17's choice of going through modern way of circumcision in a hospital and without song and dance or an initial ritual cleaning through first sexual intercourse experience, his circumcision matched the traditional style in format and structure. He had a separate room apart from the main house, as well as a mutiri (mentor) to nurse and care for him and to educate him during the 8 days of seclusion, and finally, he wore the traditional outfit, cuka wa ciumiri (novices' dress) during the last days of seclusion. He remembered his 8 days of seclusion vividly and recounted much of what went on during the time.

I had to be in a room by myself, so my mutiri as well as my parents would ensure that nobody is disturbing me, so to speak. And so it was perhaps a period of isolation, . . . is it? I wouldn't call it isolation as such, but that is what basically it is really. You are put aside there. And so, it was a moment of reflection and a moment of really thinking through what this is [that is] happening and the implications and the consciousness that this [event] is marking a major step and a major transition in my life.

C17 regarded the Kikuyu circumcision experience as playing a strongly transformational role upon the initiates who went through the whole process of Kikuyu initiation ceremonies. He recalled a drastic change in attitudes of all the significant people in his life: his peers, siblings, mother, and the community.

[My mom] felt that I was more prepared and more capable of taking care of my brothers and my sisters than I would have been before, and so there was a measure there for a lot of respect and a positive attitude, as well as

an expectation of my handling the situation now that I had gone through circumcision.

C17 stated that he strongly believes that his Christian conversion and the Kikuyu circumcision experience complemented each other to produce his character. To this, he said,

I see initiation and my becoming a Christian and subsequent baptism as playing--what do I say?--complementally roles. The fact of being circumcised placed me in a sense of responsibility and maturity and wanting to display such. Similarly, as a Christian, . . . marked by baptism, it was required of me living a certain lifestyle consistent with . . . the calling in my life. So I see both contributing to whom [I became].

C17 strongly recommended institutionalization of a rite of passage for males within the Christian church as a channel of education for responsible adulthood.

I think the church has to seriously think about what is right, what the rituals, our traditions, and our cultures had, and . . . what their equivalent are in Bible, in the church, in Christianity, and bring them back alive. . . . We need to awake to the realization that there is a lot [in the ritual] that could be used for teaching, for modeling, and for helping [future] generations.

Case # 18 (C18)

C18 received his circumcision at age 17. At the time of the interview, he was 48 years old, a career person who was presently a chartered accountant enjoying lucrative employment in an international pharmaceutical firm. He and his family had become permanent residents in the U.S. where they had lived as a family with two sons and a daughter for the last 13 years. Prior to coming to the U.S., C18 had sponsored his wife's 5-year pursuit of a college education here, and he later joined her with the children to make a family home in the U.S.

C18 was adopted by his older brother as a boy and lived in the city as part of his brother's family. Due to the diversity he experienced in the city, he did not interact with a homogeneous Kikuyu community during his youth.

During the initial stage of the interview, C18 seemed somewhat nervous, a condition perhaps evoked by recalling unpleasant memories of being an adolescent. At the beginning of the interview, C18 requested a temporary cessation of the recording in order to recollect his thoughts, which I granted him accordingly. He, for instance, could not remember vividly the permission-seeking process, about which he said,

I used to live with my older brother, and most likely this was discussed with him because I could not have gone to this operation without consulting with him. I believe it must have been a consultation between him and me. I cannot recall exactly how it was discussed, what was said, and who actually made the decision. But I believe it must have been a

consultation between me and my brother who was acting as my father at that time.

As I said, C18 seemed hesitant at the beginning of the interview but later warmed up to me. He stated that he had forgotten most of the details of his initiation at age 17 years because very little emphasis was placed on it when he acquired it. He did it as a matter of routine with no celebrations or activities to mark the occasion. C18 received the modern (hospital) style of circumcision, for which he had to travel to a town within the Kikuyu-dominated area. He shared a mentor with a friend, and he said he does not remember the events that took place during the healing period. Although the ritual served as an indicator of making the transition from boyhood to adulthood for him, he could not identify any direct benefit emanating from his circumcision regarding interaction with either his immediate family or the wider community.

To C18, circumcision was a mere fulfillment of a tribal custom without many tangible benefits attached to it. However, he did identify areas of difficulties that would have been insurmountable had he remained uncircumcised. For instance, he would have found it difficult to marry and to live a full life as a Kikuyu male because no potential partner would have acceded to his proposal for marriage as an uncircumcised man.

C18 held the view that the ritual did not confer privileges to the individual initiates but rather assisted the individuals to conform to a necessary ethnic

requirement for all males. About the future of the circumcision ritual among the Kikuyu, he said,

It is unlikely that you will find an uncircumcised Kikuyu man, not because of the world culture or anything, [but] because [of] the mere fact that his society is not going to accept, is expecting every male in the community to be circumcised--there is that force of being, conforming. So anyone who will want to identify and to belong and continue to belong within that community will be required to be circumcised.

Themes

The transcripts of the interviews I conducted with the 18 participants were rich sources of information. Reading them word by word several times and meeting with the CFS study group, followed by the discussion sessions with the School of Nursing Phenomenological study group, generated a wide range of concepts and themes, including many that are beyond the scope of the current thesis work. I scrutinized further the CFS group's record of themes against the background of my private listing of themes and reviewed relevant transcripts as often as necessary to arrive at the final themes and subthemes that are treated in this section. I then cut and clustered together ideas and concepts that were related to each other from all the participants in the study. I subsequently organized the data around eight major themes relating to the circumcision ritual as a means for Kikuyu males to make the transition to adulthood. The themes are presented according to the chronology of the phenomenon of initiation: (a)

preparation for the circumcision ritual, (b) circumcision procedure, (c) the period of seclusion, (d) conferral of privileges and new responsibilities, (e) meaning of the circumcision ritual, (f) transfer of the ritual to the future generations, (g) conflict between the traditional and the Christian meaning of what it means to be man and sexual, and (h) general and cultural differences between the U.S. and Kenya.

Preparation for the Circumcision Ritual

Although the parents of a Kikuyu boy who approaches the age of circumcision subtly observe the boy for signs of readiness for the circumcision ritual, the matter of initiating the ritual process is left to the boy. The exception to this rule is when the community organized the ritual collectively, in which case elders determine candidates ($n = 1$ in this study) for the ritual or where the boy seems insensitive to the need for his circumcision ($n = 3$ in this study). The parents in such cases prompted the boy to consider going for his circumcision.

Fear of being left out. Preparation for the circumcision ritual begins with the boy experiencing feelings of readiness, which, according to a majority ($n = 15$) of the participants, arise out of pressure from three fronts: their peers, their community, and their parents. Peers who have gone through the ritual ahead of the boy assume an air of superiority that subjugates the uninitiated boy, thus undermining any former relationships with him. Participants in the study experienced this pressure prior to the commencement of their own rituals to varying degrees. This is illustrated well by the following excerpts. C7 said,

On my decision to get circumcised, I think it is partly from my parents and partly from my peers. These were the two main reference points. The guys that were my age or my size or my height who looked to be my age-mates who had gone through the circumcision ritual thought they were adults and I was not because they were circumcised. The threats came in unpronounced prohibitions such as, "You can't come where we are; you can't play with us; you can't walk with us; you can't visit with us; you can't do what we do; you can't have girlfriends" . . . and that was peer pressure then. And wanting to be like the other men who were men when you were being considered a boy, I decided this was the time.

Parents who were aware of the value of education, according to most of the participants, hinged their giving permission for their sons' circumcision on successful completion of the primary education. To reiterate, the Kenyan education system is structured with 8 years of primary education (elementary), at the end of which is conducted a national exam leading to the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Successful candidates are admitted to high school, which lasted for 4 years beginning at Form One in the first year and ending with Form Four. At the end of Form Four, another national exam, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), is given to University aspirants.

Participants reported that entry into high school before one was circumcised was often a painful experience. C12 said,

When I went to high school, the first year was a lot of struggle. The boys who were not initiated in Form One, those who were in Form Two were “monorizing [hazing]” us. . . . I was young, . . . but in my first year I stayed as a boy, but when I joined form two, I had to tell my dad, “Now I have to” because he had said “No,” and I faced the knife.

C10 said,

What you find in my community is that in Form One you enter into high school. And eh, it is in high school that you find that those questions are asked: “Have you undergone this ritual?” And in actual fact there are a lot of beatings, bullying because you are expected to be a man. “We wi kihii uka! (You boy come over here!)” . . . Even before you go very far, you are already looking forwards to it because you want it. What they expect of you is to be a man. You have got to be a man, and be among men.

C13 said,

What happened in my case, because of peer pressure, I initiated it because I did not want to be left behind. All my age-mates were going in a particular time, so I decided also I needed to join them in doing that. I approached my brother; I needed him to give me advice. And then after that, I had to tell my dad I needed to do it, so my dad was the one who gave me the money and gave me all the blessings that I needed. There was no struggle at all. It was something that was fully approved by the family and the community too.

C1 said,

After I graduated from what you call primary education, which probably is middle or junior high here in America, most of my age-mates were talking about it because we knew we were going to be the next on the list about becoming men, and so we discussed days that we planned to go for this.

. . . What I did, we kept our communication with my fellow age-mates, people that were born around the same time as I was, and also we were in school, at the same time, the same class, and we were ready to go to high school and so this is how I looked at it. And I approached my father. You know, initially, the boy is supposed to decide for himself whether he is ready to become a man or not, and he is supposed to approach his father or his uncle.

On attaining the age for circumcision, the community repeatedly reminded the boy of his impropriety in remaining uncircumcised at an advanced age in order to trigger his interest in joining others who now were circumcised. However, the participants provided varying information on their experiences in this regard, ranging from direct community involvement, as illustrated by C15 below, to interacting with the boy's parents and close relatives (also illustrated). C15 said,

The elders determined the time of year for the boys who participated. A messenger would go round, and a word of mouth would be passed around, and all the young uninitiated men would know. It usually happened in the month of December, and boys of different ages gathered

for circumcision. I was 14 years, but there were other boys who were 12 years of age, while others were as 16 years. The elders will decide muru wa ngania [son of So-and-So], and of course nobody would dare not to be there.

C6 said,

More than anything else, it is the expectation of the community that leads one to seek permission. . . . The community likes it when a boy who gets to this age is circumcised. There was no teaching and no mentoring for my case, it just happened.

Parents and members of the extended family in some cases were reported to covertly impose pressure in some cases for the boy to voluntarily initiate the process. C17 said, "It's from my parents. And partly it is from my peers. I think those are the two kinds of reference points."

C11 said,

They [parents] approached it through my older brothers by telling them, "It is a high time you go for circumcision. So-and-So is also going. . . . He is of your age--therefore you should really go." . . . I was ready, so when they told me that I was ready to go with the others and my age-mates and my uncles and all the boys of my age, . . . we all went together.

C17 said,

From the parents, "Would you consider now going through the ceremony because you are of age?" And sure, why not? And of course, not my peers

but other older men, so to speak, who would also place the same challenge, in a sense inviting me into where they were, kind of recruiting me into their group. So I got that, and of course from the peers there is always a desire to go to the next level.

For C9, it was an inner motivation after experiencing changes within his body that prompted his readiness for initiation. He therefore was self-driven in seeking permission to become circumcised. To this point, he said,

When I started developing male sexual feelings, I had a lot of questions about myself. I was looking forward to circumcision so that I feel like I have become a man. . . . I can remember the first year in high school was very bad because I was afraid, if anybody saw me being uncircumcised, I would probably get in a lot of trouble with those boys, so I kept it a big secret till when I went back home.

Parental consent. According to the majority of the participants, their father had the prerogative to accord them permission and a blessing to go through the circumcision ritual. When the father was deceased, uncles played the role of the boy's father in consonance with his mother.

Boys experienced seeking permission and informing the significant players in their circumcision ritual as an awesome process. For a few participants, the process went smoothly. C13 said,

I approached my brother; I needed him to give me advice. After that, I had to tell Dad. My dad was the one who gave me the money and gave me all

the blessings that I needed. There was no struggle in getting permission. It was something that was fully approved.

For most of the participants ($n = 12$), however, this permission-seeking process was a long, often odious experience. Riddled with pressure from many fronts to get circumcised, an initiation prospector had to make up his mind and conscientiously decide the time was right for his circumcision. The most crucial factor at this time was to determine the best strategy to tackle approaching his father. The move had to be tactfully engineered to avoid a backfire. As demonstrated by many participants, there was no guarantee that the boy's request would be granted even though the fathers themselves would derive some degree of pride at having circumcised a son. C7 said,

My dad was not often at home. . . . We had a short time, and so I went through my mom. "I want you to let Dad know that I am almost becoming a man, I want to become a man." She insisted that I go and tell him, so one morning, I got to the bedroom and told Dad, "I want to become a man." And he knew exactly what it was, and he said, "Choose who will go with you."

C1 said,

I asked whether I could go ahead and have the circumcision done on me, but he refused the second time. . . . I told my father that, if he does not allow me to go, I was going to go on my own accord, and eventually he agreed to take me to the hospital.

The majority of the participants said that, prior to the anticipated dialogue that led to their circumcision, they did not possess the privilege to interact freely with their father or to address their father directly on any issue. Girls actually interacted more easily with their fathers than did uncircumcised boys. According to the participants, as uncircumcised boys, they had no rights of expression. Faced with the dilemma of needing to obtain his approval, most of them sought permission from their father by proxy, using either their mother, respected youths in the community, or a prospective mentor as their go-between. In the current study, participants used a junior uncle, a prospective mentor, or their mother to tackle a difficult dad on behalf of the boy. The exercise is the first test of the boy's wit and courage, as the following excerpts demonstrated below. C9 said,

I told my mom . . . because we [Dad and I] had never had this relationship since when I was growing up to where I could approach him. It was such a major thing. He was my dad, but he was distant . . . And so, my dad and me, we did not relate that well, and so I could not approach him about that. . . . She told my dad. And we were in the village, so my dad came and took us to the city.

C10 said,

I didn't approach him [Dad] just like that. . . . I talked to one of my older brothers. And when I went for vacation, then he had already talked to my father about it. . . . [He] had already undergone through the ritual, and of course he knew the problems I was encountering on the other side, and,

eh, of course he knew about the values in respect to that. He was the closest friend to me.

Another challenge regarded the use of language. According to the participants, it was impolite to speak explicitly to their seniors about such matters. Names for the genitalia were never to be uttered in conversations. Participants reported that prospective initiates could not approach their fathers using the direct term "Nindirenda kurua riu (I want to get circumcised now)." Instead, metaphors, such as "Ndiraigua ndi mukinyu wa kugimara (I feel ready to be an adult)" were used in conversations. C6 said,

Of course you know, in the African culture, if you are talking in Kikuyu, you don't talk in words. Either you have to look for other words, "kugimara [become adult]" or "niguthii rui [going to the river]" because in the earlier times circumcision was performed early in the morning in the river. The other thing also to say is "to face the knife."

The mentor in the presence of the boy or the mother handling the issue privately with her husband conducted the permission-seeking interview in proxy. The following excerpt illustrates this. C8 said,

It was not easy, especially because it was to approach my dad of course, an issue of a man. So I could not be able to talk to my dad straight. It is like you feel that he is too senior. He has undergone the whole process, and he is so senior, and you are a boy. And of course you want to attack this issue; he has got to provide . . . money to move around, and of course

dads were respected in a way that you don't just tell them things. There must be ways. So I had to go to my mom and ask her, "Can you approach Dad? I want to tell him something."

Education and age as factors. Level of education and chronological age combined to determine readiness for the initiation for a many participants. For the majority of the participants, the age of circumcision and completion of the elementary level of schooling were considered. For some participants, fulfilling an academic goal was a strict requirement to earn permission for circumcision. For instance, C15 said,

My dad had a policy of circumcising us when we were in Form Two in high school. When you are in Form Two, you are more or less gone through the rebellious period so you were almost ready. I was almost mature, and again when the mutiri (mentor) gave me an encouragement of being a bit serious and responsible and indicating the expectations almost was expecting, so it gave me more courage to approach all my goals.

Parents were wary of the potential for their sons to lose interest in education following their initiation. C14 said,

He [Dad] had a belief that once somebody is initiated very early, he might not be very serious in his education. There was a belief in many people that once somebody is initiated, he outgrew the authority of the father because now he was a man and he was really being seen as a man.

This wariness is understandable because circumcision brought freedom and independence to the boy. Concern about the boy continuing with his education was a determining factor cited by 13 out of the 18 participants. Four participants were refused permission to enter the ritual despite acquiring the right age on the grounds that they might drop out of school if permission were given. They therefore were required to prove themselves by either passing their elementary level final exams very well or by completing their first year in high school. For example, C2 could not get permission until he proved himself through a good grade in his finals at the primary (elementary) school. He said,

It was something that I really anticipated to get, and my parents [mother and uncles] knew of course I wanted to do it earlier, before I graduated from the elementary school. But they refused; they said, "No," because, if I got circumcised before I finished elementary school, the chances were that I was not going to finish elementary school. . . . So although the social clock says that I am still a small boy, but psychologically you felt like this is maturity. So my parents said, "Until you finish up your elementary school, that is when you are going to get circumcised." . . . When I finished elementary school, it was automatic. I told my mum that since-- incidentally, I was raised by my mum--I told my mum and, of course, my other significant others, my uncles who were acting as my dad, that, "I think it is time for me to get circumcised." Oh! They were [hesitation] you know. To crown it all, I had already passed to go to high school, so they

did not have any reason why I shouldn't. They knew that it was going to be very tough when I go to high school and I am not circumcised.

C14 struggled with his dad to earn his blessing until he reached the second year in high school. He said,

My father was a very strict guy because he could not really circumcise young boys. . . . He could not allow a boy to get circumcised unless he was going through a secondary school course--that was the main criteria. All my brothers, they were initiated when they were in Form Two. . . . So, when I was around 16, I was in Form One, and I requested [him to give me permission]. He denied, and I had to go to my uncle. . . . I had really to coerce him into agreeing. He promised me, immediately [when] I go to Form Two, he would be able to get me through the initiation.

C1 had problems convincing his father to allow him to do the ritual before joining high school. He said,

This was done before I went to high school, and I was probably at the age of 14 or 15 years, thereabout. As I can remember, I asked my father whether I could go ahead and have the circumcision, but my father at the first time refused . . . after I graduated from what you call primary education, which probably is middle or junior school. And so, what I did, we kept our communication with my fellow age-mates, . . . the same class, and we were ready to go to high school, and so this is how I looked at it,

and I approached my father. . . . I knew I was not going to go to high school uncircumcised.

Choosing a mentor. Choosing a mentor is perhaps the simplest task in the circumcision ritual process. The choice is made after the boy makes the decision to participate in the ritual and obtains permission to do so. The candidates who were considered by the participants in this study were wide ranging. Older unmarried friends of the initiate were particularly popular. Others were close associates within the community whose credentials in conduct were acclaimed by both the family and community. Three (C1, C3, and C4) out of the 18 participants were supposedly nursed through the healing process by their own dads, but the three respondents all reported that their dads did a poor job as mentors. C6 reported that his mentor, a long time friend and pastor, did a dismal job in counseling and training him on matters of sexuality.

C7 chose his maternal uncle for a mentor. He said,
I am the first-born. So I had to look for a mentor. I had to go and talk to one of my younger uncles. He was about 7 to 10 years older than me, and he had gone through the process. I told him, "I want to become a man, and I have chosen you to be my mentor." From the time I told him about being my mentor, [he] advised me [and] took a lot of time with me. It was like a period of about a month or so since, from since I had decided to be [circumcised]. . . . He would spend the night in our house, in my cubicle. He had just finished high school and . . . was a policeman.

Mentors were people of exemplary character within the community who interacted freely with the initiates. The majority of the participants reported that the choice of a mentor by an initiate had to be approved by their parents and community. C8 said,

Immediately after I got the answer [consent], [I looked for a mentor]. There is another elder person, a gentleman from my area, so I thought it was good to get him to be my sponsor. He can be my leader, he can be my elder, and he can lead me to understanding what this life means because you cannot make a change straight from childhood to manhood. So it is a gradual change and needs somebody to guide towards the end. And he was good. The man just responded, and he took me. We went down, of course, to the hospital, and he took me through the whole process. And then we came back home. The man really guided me how to respond, how to behave, how to behave like a man now that I am a man.

Five of the participants (C2, C8, C15, C16, and C18) reported that their mentors were shared among the initiates in their age group. On being chosen as a mentor, the person was immediately incorporated as an honored player among the boy's family members and was fed very specially. C2 said that he and five other initiates shared one mentor among themselves. On this, he said,

I remember very well, when I was given that permission, my parents did not have much to do/tell me, but they initiated the matter. I was told I need

to look for a mentor, somebody who has gone through the process who will give me advice what to do and who will teach me how to behave like a mature person. I had one guy close to my family who was almost close to my age, but he was circumcised a couple of years earlier. So he gave me all the details of what to expect and how I should behave after I come from the ritual. By default he had acted as a mentor for someone else before. And so I did not have to go . . . out and look for somebody else. And to make the matters good, we were a couple of boys . . . within the same village who we graduated together, and we were all ready, so we decided to go as a team.

C16 did not choose his mentor. The community determined the credentials for an appropriate mentor and grouped the boys to be nursed together. C16 said,

I did not choose my mentor because it is more or less given by the age group. So my parents already knew those that were my buddies. It is also somebody who has a place in the society, respected by the other bigger boys, and it has to be a boy who has gone through the process himself because he is going to bring me into that level where any other younger person cannot take me through.

The Circumcision Procedure

Majority of the participants had a ritual arrangement that did not match the traditional format. Each family and/or community employed its own model of ritual arrangement but maintained the hospital adaptation of the actual circumcision for all the participants. Findings on the participant's experiences regarding the style of circumcision revealed that there was a big shift from the traditional to a new format. The majority of the participants experienced the new method. These participants referred it using English, Christian, or modern as descriptive terms.

Facing the Knife. When I inquired about what the participants experienced during the eve of and the material day of circumcision, none of them indicated they had gone through the traditional Kikuyu river ritual, although they were aware of the style. All the participants in this study without exception indicated they had gone through the less demanding hospital operation. There were only a conservative number of hospitals that apparently had the community mandate to perform the operation. In addition, only a few selected doctors in these health facilities could perform the operation.

Waiting for circumcision evoked mixed feelings for the potential initiate. Many participants stated that, even when there was no song and dance on the eve of the operation, they did not sleep. They experienced fear and anticipation.

The timing of the respondents' circumcision procedures borrowed heavily from the traditional form. Virtually all the circumcisions (17 out of 18) were

performed early in the morning except when candidates were delayed by lack of transportation to hospital. A majority occurred in the morning hours before dawn. C8 said he did not have his own transport to tackle the 20-mile trip to the health facility, so he faced difficulties getting an early morning operation.

I wanted to make it the earliest I could, but, because of the transportation problem, it took hours, and by noon we were there. . . . That time I met several other boys in the line, and the line was long. While I was waiting, I was torn ("Do I get it, do I not get it?") because of the fear if it is something that is affecting my body and it was going to be done to my flesh. I thought, "I still need to become a man," so on the other hand, I had to take some courage.

C7 went at the same time of day that he would have gone for the traditional operation. He said,

I can remember that morning we were three boys who I did know. . . . I had been given an appointment for that early morning. So we were at the hospital actually almost the same time we would have been at the river, around 5:00 a.m. We left home pretty early because we wanted to have it done, and I would be back home before everybody wakes up and is walking around. Filling the forms and the assistant talking to me and asking whether I am doing it on my own concept, whether I want it done or how things were. I said, "I am ready for this, and I want it to be done," and we went to the surgical place where they consider surgical room. And he

looked at my thing, my penis and, eh, cleaned it . . . and after that, he set me on the bed and started cutting. I lay down facing upwards. The only thing I felt was the prick of a needle as he tried to make the place numb.

C17 had the privilege of chatting with the doctor before the operation. He said,

Well, I woke up early, normally, for those who were going to go to the river. . . . They were taken to the river very early in the morning before 6:00 o'clock so you don't sleep soundly on such a day. I woke up early, and the one who was to take me to the hospital went with me very early so that it was done and I came back. The doctor's point of view was just to welcome me into it and to say, "Well, this is a small operation that we will perform, and you shouldn't be anxious or worry about it. It will work out just fine." And then, of course, what I needed to do after going home.

For C6, the operation was just like any other medical procedure, not warranting any special preparation. He said,

I just woke in the morning. And the interesting thing, I had a close friend of mine whom we had agreed we would go through the rite together. So we rented a taxi to one of the local hospitals very early in the morning. Within 10 to 15 minutes it was over. . . . It was just like any other medical procedure. It was not that they were waiting specifically for us. It was whoever showed up. There was no talking--that was his job. Only the medical preparation, no conversation at all. It was done lying down on what would be an operation table. . . . I guess, since it was, in quote, "a

normal surgical procedure” through a hospital, within a few days it had healed.

For C2, however, it was the most painful experience he had ever known.

When we got in there, there were so many other people from other villages that, of course, came to be circumcised the same time. There was nothing like appointment. It was first come first serve. So, in fact, we lined up, and I still remember we were 50 or 60. . . . There was one door that, of course, leads to the guy who was doing the ritual of circumcision. And in front of you, there was an open bed like a twin bed. Actually it was a metal bed, the ones you see in a hospital with a little thin padding. And when we were in the line, you could see the person who was actually being circumcised in front of you. They did not have any shades, no nothing. No curtains. You see the whole process while you are watching. . . . I think they did it so that, if you are scared, you leave. And in fact there were people who left. . . . I was determined. . . . I saw the other guy, how they were doing on him. I thought they were going to give me a couple of minutes to get ready, but when that other guy was done, I was told, “Put your pants down,” and I put my pants down. . . . By the time I put them down, I thought they were going to give me time to sleep on that little bed, but by the time I hit the bed, I heard the knife. I mean the guy had the knife on my things [penis]. It was a little scaring. The process was like cutting through a cabbage. Actually, that is the only way I can describe it. . . . I

could not look, but I felt blood oozing all over. I mean spilling all over, when he did the first cut. I looked up and took a deep breath. And within a couple of minutes he was through. And then he put on a bandage on me. I was glad it was all over. It was very excruciating. It was very painful. I mean you are cutting one of the most delicate parts of the body without any anesthesia. It's almost like cutting yourself, cutting your finger with a knife or a razor blade. You feel the pain by cutting the whole skin off. But it took about two to three minutes. . . . After that was over, then he put a bandage on me, and I was to come back after 2 weeks.

Unlike other participants, C11 went for his circumcision in the afternoon. He experienced anxiety as he waited for the operation. He said,

That [the circumcision] was in the afternoon. It was early in the morning. We boarded a taxi, which is public transport, and we were taken to hospital, and then all of us would go in turn. It wasn't the best experience as you wait for circumcision. You really don't know the kind of pain, and by then there were no anesthesia. . . . I think there was some kind of numbing, and furthermore the job was taking a short period. Within minutes you are over, and the moment you are over, one felt very great indeed because you have come out of it, and the most important thing is that you did not fear. . . . If you feared and run away, then you are counted as a coward. It was a bridge that every man had to cross.

In summary, experiences after facing the knife varied. Some experienced much pain that they still can remember. Others were fully numbed with local anesthesia and therefore did not experience much pain.

Circumcision methods. Three participants, although they did not go through the early morning river ritual, reported having had the traditional method of operation where the prepuce is bundled up to form a ngwati (exciter) on the underside of the penis. All the other participants received the modern/Christian method, derogatorily labeled hururu (complete removal of the foreskin) without much choice.

The participants portrayed the traditional method as a backward, unhygienic, and risky affair. According to a few participants, peers in the neighborhood who chose the traditional method took a retrogressive course in life and did not advance in education. At the same time, the participants viewed the traditional method, although not available for all them, as superior because it constituted a classic display of courage. Such a successful demonstration of courage was perceived as removing the need for further preparation for life such as education and training. The initiates would regard themselves as having all the necessary apparati for managing life affairs such as marriage, business, and ownership of property following this type of circumcision.

The hospital method, on the other hand, was seen by proponents of the traditional method as cowardly, an easy route to manhood when compared to the former. Yet this is the same group who attached much value to education and

training for a more progressive future life. C7, who sought to have the traditional method and dared to go the river ritual, failed because it was not available during his time. C15 categorically refused to disclose to me the method that was used during his operation. When I asked him about the choice of method by his age group, he said the choices were different for each individual. He said,

There are those who chose the traditional and those who chose the clinical method. It depends on what one had been brought up to believe. . . . In the actual physical initiation in the Kikuyu custom, there is what we say kurua hururu [getting complete removal of the foreskin], . . . to remove it completely so that you are all evenly done. And there is, kurua na gutigwo na nguati [circumcision leaving an exciter beneath]. It is kind of folded together at the bottom of the organ, and when you are healed, there will be a kind of a knob . . . left there. They actually used to believe that it increased the pleasure during sexual intercourse to the woman. . . . There are also those who believe it makes no difference. So a person is given a choice. And do not ask me which one I got [laughter].

C7 said,

I would have liked to do the real Kikuyu thing because it made people think that you are more man than the others. The Kikuyu thing, . . . I read in books that in the olden days they would gather the young men that are ready for circumcision. They would talk to them, advise them, set them aside to give them a lot of advice on how to behave after circumcision. . . .

The ritual itself would involve being prepared for a very early morning [operation]. . . . They would be taken to the river about 3:00, 4:00, or 5:00 in the morning when the dew is down and it is cold and numbing. You jump into the river, and you then come out to face the knife. I would have wanted to do that, but mine was different because, eh, with modern changes, we were forced to go to the hospital.

C16 was not shy about disclosing the type of circumcision that he got and the purpose it served. He said,

I didn't have stitches. Everything went, and it was pushed underneath, and how they tied it I do not know. It is supposed to heal that way with no stitches and no bandage. . . . He [my mentor] said it had something to do with the sexual excitement for my partner. So it has something to do with sexuality. And so that is what I chose because I wanted to be a Kikuyu and I wanted to enjoy that part when that time comes, to enjoy the full benefit of sex.

C13 was content with a normal medical procedure for his circumcision. He readily disclosed his method as the modern one. He said,

Before I went there, my friends sat me down and told me all the things to expect. There was the modern circumcision and the traditional one where they did not remove the whole prepuce. They did the modern thing, . . . and it was so good. There wasn't a lot of bleeding. . . . They gave me local anesthesia.

C17 was keen to adopt the Christian lifestyle. He got circumcised in a mission hospital without the option of a traditional method. He said,

I went to . . . a Christian medical facility, and so they weren't doing it the traditional way. I guess it was simply a straightforward, a Western kind of an operation. Those who went to the river were done traditionally. . . . My stand as a Christian is what . . . prevented me from going to the river. The practice that was there was not anything that I condoned.

The term mutiri, or mentor, derives from gutira, the act of holding and supporting at the back of the boy as he underwent the operation (see Figures 5 and 6). However, mentors reportedly played a very small role during the actual operation for this group. The majority of participants ($n = 17$) said that the hospital environment did not accommodate the participation of the mentors inside the operating room. In all the cases, the mentors were left outside of the operating room, inside the hospital where the circumcision took place, and did not get opportunity to interact with either the doctor or the boy at the operating table.

Celebrations. According to the participants, the Christian religion imposed pressure against traditional circumcision song and dance celebrations while providing no celebration alternatives. Both the respondents who were strict adherents to Christianity and those not so usually did not accept the traditional song and dance as a means to celebrate the ritual because discarding of song and dance had been accepted as a measure of progress and being somewhat

modern. According to the participants, there was no replacement to the traditional song and dance. As C17 said, the Christian proponents had branded the singing as pagan, and those who condoned it were derogatorily referred to as acenji (pagans). He said,

From a Christian point of view, most of these festivities that were going on around circumcision were not Christian. As a Christian, I couldn't take part into them because, firstly, the kind of songs that was sang I would say were un-Christian. . . . However, in me, I was very much aware of the fact that the following day I was going to face this situation and, in a sense, [felt] apprehension: How is it going to be done? What am I going to experience?. . . I came from the pagan world, so to speak. We called ourselves acenji [pagan] as opposed to athomi [religious].

C12 said,

There was no dance because we are Christians. My dad was a Christian, and my paternal grandfather was a minister of the Gospel. The maternal one was not a Christian, and that is why I had to go and tell him. If it were for my grandfather, the father of my father, he could not have worried about all those things. So there was no ceremony like singing, dancing, and so forth. But people came and ate and slaughtered at home.

When I asked C14 how his occasion was celebrated, he said,

The young ladies had really to dance around . . . to usher us in . . . [singing] the traditional songs, the ones related to circumcision, cia irua

[for circumcision]. This was done the night before we went. It is an open thing, and so everybody was dancing. Neighbors and everybody would come and dance . . . the whole night. I was also excited, moving from boyhood to manhood--it was a big thing.

Eating of special foods was the dominant means cited by the participants to have been used to celebrate their circumcision ritual. Guests and family ate and drank as a way of celebrating the occasion. When I asked C15 to comment on the song and dance, he emphasized the food feasting as the more important celebration that took place. He said,

I think, more than dancing, the thing that really made a difference was the feasting. . . . So there is special food . . . and lots of meat. There would be a lot of ucuru, gruel. There will be a lot of njenga [husked corn prepared with mortar and pestle from corn and cooked like rice]. The things that you rarely eat will be included. Just before initiation and especially after initiation, you are actually treated special for several days after initiation.

C 10 talked of his case and that of a fellow neighbor. He said,

I want to talk about myself and maybe give you a little bit of one or two other boys that underwent the same rituals with me. With me, there was singing, . . . fellowshiping in a Christian sense. But . . . on the other side, . . . with one of my very good friends, there was a lot of singing. There was a lot of singing throughout the night, and it was a big, big, big thing. . . . That one went to the river.

C 8 said,

My dad would not allow dancing. It was associated with pagans, and my dad was a Christian. So the other people could do dancing and some girls would come around to celebrate with them. But my dad was rather strict, so he could not allow that in my family. Dancing was associated with non-Christians. In my family there was no dancing. There was just eating and just relaxing.

The Period of Seclusion

After the day of circumcision, the newly circumcised male was secluded and put in a special room separate from the main house. Participants' experiences of being secluded ranged from 4 days or 8 days to 2 weeks. Except for a few participants, the special place in which they were secluded was either a traditional hut or a unit detached from the main house structure.

Separation and healing. Fifteen respondents reported that, as a new initiate, they were put in seclusion and shielded from the mainstream activities of the family. During this time, their mentor was the only connection between them and the rest of the family and the world. The mentor was a security, a teacher, and an emissary for the new initiate. He ensured that the initiate was well nourished with what participants identified as good food, and he kept the initiate clean and protected from wayward, illicit girls. The mentor was regarded highly by both the initiate and his family because of his unique role in the boy's ritual.

According to C11, this separation included not only being secluded from the outside world but also excluded from the comforts and luxuries of ordinary life. On this, he said,

You were not supposed to stay in your mother's house after circumcision. What they normally would look for is a house where about five or six of you or ten are put together, and there would be about two or three men in charge of the whole group and taking care of you, doing dressing and helping you with all kinds of activities to help you heal quickly. And that is what happened to me. It is quite a long time ago, but I remember we were about six, but it was very interesting because we were not sleeping on mattresses or beds and we would get some weeds--peas that have been chaffed and all that were put together and formed a very good mattress, and then blankets are put on, and we would sleep there with some fire in one corner, and throughout the night somebody would be taking care of us and that was very interesting. And during the period, we stayed there for about 8 days to 10 days, then we were told about all the do's and don'ts as a grown up, as a man who has already been initiated.

C6 did not have a separate room set apart from the main house. He rationalized the event as follows:

We had a big house, so one was my room. . . . Not a special access as such, it was the same house. I think it is my family understands that, even after circumcision, you are still not on your own. It was not a key to just go

out, that now you are big you have gone through the circumcision; you can do whatever you want. For my family, "you are still answerable to this house."

The aspect of isolation was emphasized by C15 when he said,

For us there was one hut. . . . You live there for the period of healing, and, even after initiation, that becomes your house. Immediately after the initiation, you are isolated. Of course, there is the physical part of it, and you don't want to be among especially the women folk at that time. You want to be removed from them. Some suffer really, some young men after initiation, they do suffer a lot of physical pain, and although they will grind their teeth and not show [it], the pain will be there. So young initiates will be removed for the first few days, up to a time when they can actually walk normally and behave normally, after the pain of the initial stage of initiation. There had to be a hut for the young men and even the [initiates] can no longer live the way they had been living. After initiation they now become people to live on their own.

To C18, the healing process was not a major concern. He said,

The healing did not take a long time, 2 to 3 weeks I think was all. In terms of timing, it is about 2 to 3 weeks the healing went. It was good healing. The actual cutting was not painful because of, as I said, the surgeon applied local anesthetic, so there was not really what you would call pain,

it is just sensation. Of course, during the healing process, there is a little pain just like any other wound, but being a wound which is done in the hospital, one cannot talk of real pain as such. Eh, and therefore I cannot say that I got any pain from which I learned skills of endurance or [any thing] of that nature--no, I would not say that.

Transformation within the family. Circumcision ushered the boy into the wider community while according him freedom to associate with his father. It also inevitably separated the boy from his mother. Mothers, however, took pride in having a circumcised boy in her home for added security and to gain respect from the younger women of the community.

C10 said that upon being circumcised, he became more of the father's boy and less of his mother's helper.

I became more of his father's boy more than Mummy's son. In actual fact, in the absence of my father, I would say that my mother considered me as a security. She would see me on a different perspective--that now I can stand and defend also the environment. It was, I must say, it is a marked change because all are full of respect. You are seen from a different perspective.

C1 described experiencing of a distinctive difference in the relationship that he now had with his mother.

When I was a boy, if I had some problem, I would go crying to my mother. But I came to realize now I do not run to my mother anymore, I run to my

fellow men. . . . This is where now my separation or that very close attachment to my mother was taking place. When I was a boy, I was that close to my mother, . . . being pestered by her, . . . feeling very close to her. But now this process was supposed to detach me, [the] weaning of a young boy . . . to manhood whereby now I take care of myself; I take care of my responsibility; I take care of the things that are pertaining to me; and even when trouble comes, I do not just run to where the women are, but if I have to run, I run to where the men are.

C7 experienced some phenomenal changes with his mother immediately following his circumcision. He said,

My mother started treating me like a different person. She could not send [for] me or rebuke me or try to challenge me if I did something wrong. She would talk to me and, . . . in most occasions if I did something wrong, she would send somebody to me. She would actually send my mentor and tell him, "Go tell him that, eh, he did this and I was not happy with it." My sisters started treating me differently. They started looking at me like I am somebody they can ask questions. And I felt like I could answer those questions.

For C16, circumcision ushered him into the wider community. He described this experience as follows:

I knew that small children had to sleep with their parents, and in my tribe the mother owns the children. But, after circumcision, the children were

owned by more of the society, and society now determines our girls went with women and my mother was not qualified enough, according to the society, to take care of me. I had now to be taken care of by uncles and grandparents, even my father really had very little in the play of my initiation because he was not considered an elder in the community to be able to teach me. His older brothers and his father, my grandfather, were the ones who were teaching us because they had to teach you the right way.

C7 identified some seniority hierarchy among women within the community that had to do with circumcision of their boys as the determining factor. When I asked him to clarify, he said,

To the mother, it meant "My son is a man now, and he can get married . . . and bear children." I really do not know why they very much were looking forward to that. . . . There was that respect that a mother was given if she had a boy that had become a man. They would go to a gathering, and all the other ladies, mothers to young boys who were not circumcised, . . . would want to hear from her. . . . They were respected when they had sons who were circumcised.

Conferral of Privileges and New Responsibilities

In addition to the earned freedom to initiate relationships with girls following circumcision, a whole constellation of privileges and new responsibilities were accorded the new initiate. His management of time ceased

being under the supervision of his parents, and he could move in and out of the home at will. His relationships with his father became cordial, and both held conversations together as equals. He could now sit at important family council meetings and was given opportunity to air his views as a fully recognized member. He was freed from ordinary domestic chores. He was served during meals by junior siblings as they would any other respected adult in the family, and he was provided laundry services. In the absence of his father, he held the responsibilities of the father. Mothers were happy to have circumcised sons in the absence of their husbands because the role of the man in the house was filled.

What it means to be a man and sexual. Above anything else, initiates became men immediately after circumcision, thereby earning the full rights to initiate associations with women at will. All the participants saw circumcision as the gateway to full male privileges, the foremost being freedom to exercise full sexuality. According to the participants, a Kikuyu girl would not accept an uncircumcised Kikuyu boy as a marriage partner. All the participants acknowledged this benefit of initiation. C14 said,

Once you get circumcised, there was not much rigidity from the parents. One got a free hand on doing your own things, thinking your own ways. It was just like getting a new lease of life with a lot of freedom. And again this was also giving an opening to moving around with the ladies and everybody.

On being circumcised, the initiates went through a private process of counseling and training on the Kikuyu adult male's code of conduct, to which they were expected to strictly adhere. This training in anticipated new behavior was subtly delivered during the 8 days or so of seclusion by carefully chosen individuals who included the mentor, their fathers (through informal interactions), uncles, and immediate senior peers who had been circumcised shortly before.

All the participants in the study singled out freedom to associate with girls as the most important motivation for seeking circumcision, although other motivating factors included full membership in the Kikuyu tribe and the right to marry, gain inheritance, and own property. For C2, dating was limited until he got circumcised. He said,

Before circumcision, we usually had two classes: circumcised boys and uncircumcised boys. And most of beautiful girls and responsible girls could not even talk to uncircumcised boys. And at the same time also, if the circumcised group of guys saw that you are interested with a certain girl, they usually came in and demoralized you. So they demoralized me and the other uncircumcised boys. So, really dating experience was a little limited. . . . We became excited the first time, the first month, the first 6 months or so on. The first 6 months to 8 months you are talking about it. . . . That is the time of your enjoyment, especially as [an] adolescent, because you are exposed to a world with no limit to the girls. . . . In my part, it depended on after graduating. In high school, I had some

friendship with some girls, but it was not that deep enough because I still felt that I wanted to pursue further studies.

C13 had to disclose to his girlfriend that he was a man and ready for her upon being circumcised. He said,

So my girlfriend really had to know. I had to tell her, and so she had a lot of confidence with me, and she knew, yes, I am a real man. It had a lot of influence in our marriage because I do not think she would have married me if I were not circumcised. . . . I guess what happened, we were just joking, and she asked me, . . . "Are you circumcised?"

About 33% ($n = 6$) of the participants had their first sexual intercourse experience through kuhura mbiro, a kind of ritual sex that occurred immediately after healing. However, the rest ($n = 12$, or 67%) did not experience it on account of their Christian faith. When I asked C13 about the cleansing sexual experience, he said,

I think I was a committed Christian at that particular time. And some religious folks were telling me I could not do that. Though my friends were telling me I can, I guess the religious forces were against that. And I respected them.

C8 said,

When boys get to manhood, they must get a girl. The first sexual intercourse is very important. You must do it [have sex]. If you do not do it, you will not really be clean. It was like a process of purification. Having

been initiated, now you must go [through] purification, and purification is the sexual intercourse that I did not [do] because of the fear of my parents. That is very good because our family was totally associated with Christianity. I could not have married without that, . . . but, of course, if you are a boy, even 30 years old or 40, in our culture . . . you are still a boy. It is like initiation and intelligence go together. Each determines the other. . . . If I approach a girl that I did with the present wife, it never bothered me. I am a man. I knew I went through the initiation. I had no doubt about it. It also gives somebody room that you can confidently approach a girl, and, if she accepts to date you or to be with you, that is good.

C7 had his ritual sex immediately after circumcision with a childhood friend. He said,

I dated, but I did not have sex with the ones that I dated. They were actually waiting for the day [I would get healed]. It was a special relationship. This was a girl that I really loved, but I did not get further than kuhura mbiro.

For C15, ritual sex was out of the question. He had been advised against it. He said that the mainstream Kikuyu community did not condone the practice.

This is the way I understood it [circumcision]. [It] is supposed to mean that you are given an okay to have a sexual relationship after initiation. This is the way I understood it, but I think it is not official. As far as the Kikuyu custom is concerned, you do not get into a sexual relationship with a girl

until the proper marriage ceremony and rites are performed. It is an acceptable truth In the Kikuyu community [that] sexual intercourse out of marriage is not acceptable. This issue of an initiation, there being a follow-up of a sexual experience with a girl to kind of complete the initiation, . . . was just of individual making. Because there was no family planning device, . . . pregnancies out of wedlock were unacceptable totally. To make a girl pregnant in Kikuyu community was something very highly frowned at. . . . There could have been some rebels in the community that would talk about this kuhura mbiro, and maybe even arranged clandestinely, but it was not something that was part of the initiation ceremony or initiation process.

C1 did not wait to heal completely before his first sexual experience as a man. He said,

That one [cleansing sexual intercourse] I did not wait from the sponsor I was waiting from. . . . We just talked among ourselves with the boys of my age-mates. We were very active. We looked for opportunities, especially where there was a wedding, where there were funeral, where girls would be around in the evenings, and go all the way and have intercourse with them. Let me put it this way: When I realized that the physical pain had already left, the skin was now beginning to peel off (that is what we call mbiro). . . . Normally the girls at that time know that these men are also going to be very hard-pressed in terms of wanting to have the sexual

affairs with them, so they also go to hiding. . . . It took me more than 15 days before I could be able to get somebody to do that. At that particular time, I was not very worried about anything—well, infection and things like those. And by the way, by that time there were very few people who were talking about having infection, and I was not worried about that at all.

Uncircumcised boys who had dared to woo girls into sexual relationships prior to their circumcision were punished severely during the healing period. The punishment was inflicted through teasing and invitation for sex by girls who found their way to the special huts. On this, C8 said,

Every girl wants to go with this new man. They intended it to punish. Some had the mentality of winning, others had the mentality of punishing by the fact that you cannot do it. You cannot have the act. So, however they would meet you, you will not have sexual intercourse with them. So they know that you are helpless. Because you are helpless, you are like a ball they can kick you from one side to the other. But rather it is like a play. Like a dating process. Like a time of leisure between the people. Not leisure to the person-victim. . . . I had that kind of a problem, but it was not so bad because, as I told you, they feared the surrounding [lack of privacy]. And because we were still living with our parents, they could fear. Any time they could hear footsteps outside, they would think my dad is coming, so they would go.

For C14, circumcision marked the beginning of a search for a lifetime partner. He said,

After circumcision, that is the time I started looking for a serious girlfriend. I was a bit selective when looking for a girlfriend because eventually it had to lead to a lifetime partner. The background of a girl, the educational background and so on, were the main considerations. . . . Immediately [after] we were circumcised like . . . somebody was to lead a serious life, and it was more or less paving way for the future life, and this is why we were advised to be a bit selective on whoever we were relating with because, at the end of the day, whatever we did, we were responsible for it.

Freedom and privileges. After circumcision, the boy earned a prominent place in the family home with seniority role over all his uncircumcised siblings. Where there were other older brothers, he fit within both the chronological age and circumcision rank hierarchies. He immediately was set free from the burden of simple domestic chores that were usually delegated by the mother. He was the father's assistant, taking charge over family matters in the father's absence. He was qualified to run important errands for his father on matters related to family social and economic well-being. He could now be allowed to sit among elders without a question. He had earned the traditional Kikuyu male privileges such as service from both his mother and sisters, who washed his laundry and provided him with meals. The young initiate was free to plan his life as he wished, to

come and go at will and relate with any individuals of his choice. He was accorded the privilege of entering into relationships with girls, an attribute seen as a sign of propriety by family and community following his circumcision. He was free to accumulate wealth own and dispose of property. He was supposed to completely abandon the childish behavior of boyhood, mitugo ya uhii, and to adopt the Kikuyu adult male code of behavior that was closely monitored by his age-mates. C1 said,

When I became a man, now the issue of coming back when the chickens are being locked back at 6 o'clock [being when] you have to be home, but now when I became a man, that rule was no longer effective to me. They would be concerned if I was not home by 11 p.m., but that was not a major concern for them any more. Their major concern is when I would disappear for 2 or 3 days. But 11 p.m. was not a big issue. In fact, my mother, if you said "[C1] has not come back home," she would say, "Leave him. He is a man now." When I was a boy, I would be washing and taking care of my clothes, but now I could give my clothes to my sisters for them to wash, and they accepted readily because they were told that "Now this is a man, and you have got to treat him like a man." They were instructed not to argue with me again.

C14 said,

Mom started respecting me, and the chores I used to do changed. . . . Before I went through the initiation, I could fetch water and get firewood for her. After

that, the task was delegated downwards to the younger ones. From Dad, he started giving me advice. . . . I was now being given more taxing roles like fencing.

C13 said,

It [My initiation] had a lot of influence especially to my mom and to the young folks around because now . . . anything that I said was taken as something that somebody has said. . . . I was considered as somebody that can make some decision that I could not do before. . . . I really enjoyed that privilege because, like when there was slaughtering of goats, I was supposed now to start accompanying my father. My father started teaching me how to slaughter a goat by myself so that I could be a man of independence. When there was a ceremony whereby land was being demarcated, my dad had to carry me to those meetings so I had to be a man who can do that when I get older. So I think my dad had a lot of influence in training me to be like him because of the initiation that I had done.

For C15, becoming a man was the point at which his life really began because, as a boy, he did not have a voice in any debate.

For a Kikuyu man, that is when life begins, the rest of the time you are still a child to be sent and to be ordered about. But after initiation, you kind of take on great responsibilities, and you, you may even have something to say for yourself among other members of the family and for the clan. For

me, that was a great, eh, that is all about, that is what really makes really, in most of the emotions of young men, eh, going through initiation, this is really what makes them not even consider the physical pain on the event.

C7 said,

He [Dad] started treating me more like one who was closer to him in age than one who is a child. . . . My sisters started treating me differently. They started looking at me like I am somebody they can ask questions. And I felt like I could answer those questions. And the neighbors, we lived in an area where we had a neighborhood, and we had people on both sides of the common land. They started also treating me differently. And the girls in the neighborhood started looking at me and talking to me, like "Now you are a different person." And the men around there and the young boys that were circumcised ahead of me or were circumcised the same time with me started treating me like I am a responsible person. There is no clear-cut line, but it really tells you that you are different from what you were.

C10 said,

The communication between me and my father was more not of a child but of a person, a man in the making, and you would find him giving me a lot of advices that "You need to do this." He would tell me, "Can you take me to such and such a place?" And definitely when you are there, he is with other old men, other wazees [elders]. You would sit together, and they entertain you to listen to what they are saying. Before that, you would

get a ball and go out there playing ball, but this time they will allow you to sit near them, and when they are discussing, you are hearing what they are saying.

C17 said,

Well, those who are older than me were welcoming me to the newly found life. I would see them now taking the time to listen to me and showed there is something I can contribute as a result of going through that. They felt I could handle certain challenges as a result of that. So it is respect, it is giving me challenge. . . . In the home situation, my parents demanded a lot more from me. I am also being responsible taking care of the others. As far as the peers were concerned, if I did anything, it was going to be viewed with seriousness because of what I had gone through, unlike those who had not gone through that. And so the perception, the attitude, the expectation was more as a result of this. The extended family members, because of this, they also had an expectations and an attitude [change] towards me.

Kikuyu women, male circumcision, and marriage. It is a strict cultural requirement that all Kikuyu males be made proper men through the circumcision process. In the mind of all the males, there is the urgency to get the requirement over with as soon as possible, to clear the way for the marriage eventuality. Marriage is therefore a major motivation for acquiring the right age and seeking circumcision. According to the participants in the study, no Kikuyu woman will

enter marriage unions with an uncircumcised man. Where such union is inevitable, the men are required by the women to go through circumcision when they are most vulnerable, usually during the courtship period. As reported by the participants in this study, these men get circumcised as a prerequisite for the marriage union. This strict requirement poses a huge challenge for men from other, non-circumcising ethnic groups who decide to enter marriage with a Kikuyu woman. When a man is found to have married secretly as a kihii (uncircumcised male), this becomes a community matter, and such a person is stripped of all dignity and forcibly circumcised. C3 said,

Well, I think you are aware that most of the Kikuyu women who have gotten married outside the Kikuyu tribe to people who don't get circumcised actually have forced their men to get circumcised, and normally this is done very early days when they are still in love because, after marriage, then the man will not accept. But women somehow convince these men to get circumcised even before they get married. I know there are some . . . who do not have circumcised men . . . where they got married outside Kikuyu tribe, but they are few. . . . But if her man is not circumcised, . . . she will tend to hide that information because it is also a challenge to other women.

C1 said,

The confidence any woman has is the confidence that she has got a man who has gone through the initiation, especially if she marries from our

society. That is a primary thing for any woman. If somebody marries from those men who do not get circumcised, . . . we have seen cases where they say, "You have to go and get circumcised." The women would like those men to be circumcised. So here, the whole idea is that the girls value such a person. They see him as a man. They see an undeveloped man, a man who is not capable of meeting his obligations in life if he is not circumcised. But when they see a circumcised man, that is stable and secure to have. If you look at a good number of girls who have married men who do not normally get circumcised, they insist on having those men get circumcised.

C2 told the story of a neighbor who suffered for cheating by remaining a boy. He said,

Whether you are 30 or 40 years old, no matter whether you will be able to deceive any girl and marry and you while still [are] not circumcised, you are still regarded as an uncircumcised man . . . and still be a boy. I remember there was a guy who was circumcised publicly. He was able to deceive some girl, and he got married, and this girl, of course, felt ashamed. She did not want to expose her husband. But people were skeptical, and they were suspecting this guy because he never had any ritual practice; they never heard when this guy got circumcised. So at age 65, he was forced to go to be circumcised.

Meaning of the Circumcision Ritual

Circumcision served the function of transforming the life of a Kikuyu boy from that of a child to that of a man over a short period of time. Such transformation meant that there was a radical change in both his thinking and his behavior, including learning to withstand pain and hardship for the sake of his family and community.

Changes in self-perception in the context of family and community. Participants were emphatic about the role played by the circumcision ritual in changing their character and demeanor. The perception of experiencing a major change from boyhood to manhood was expressed by 17 of the 18 participants. They held the view that circumcision had changed their lives and still was impacting them up to the time of their interview. Most of the participants said they were no longer the same person after circumcision. The change was manifested in varying ways, with some similarities running across the board among the participants: the ability to associate with women friends freely; open association with their father and the adult world of men; the right of association and free expression on matters of family interest; the right to inheritance and ownership of property. C1, for instance, remembered that he changed immediately from being a child to being an adult after his circumcision. He said,

Before [circumcision], I was thinking like a child, but now I found, overnight, my thinking was beginning to change. The goals that I was

setting for myself were different from the goals that I had before. Before, I could not be a creative person. In doing certain things, I would have to depend on what I have been instructed to do.

C11 said he was elevated to a higher rank through the ritual and compared the change to that of Christian conversion. He said,

One felt as though one has been elevated to a bigger position, and that called for a lot of respect. The other people who were initiated earlier, the older ones and also those ones that you left behind, respected one. So I got those kind of qualities, and I also felt like they were part of me, and therefore I had to behave and act and do things the way I was required to do after the initiation. And so my way of doing things before I was initiated and the way of doing things after I was initiated was completely different. So I started behaving differently and took things much more seriously. . . . It is just like salvation . . . [where] one felt, yes, he has become a new creature. Initiation in itself helps somebody to . . . become a new person and different person. It is the qualities of becoming a different person that helped me to grow up and molded my character.

C16 also made the analogy of the Christian conversion that changes a person's life. He said,

They put a sheet around me with pins on the sides, and they called me a Kiumiri, meaning I am in transition; I have come out of the river, so I am a different person. I think for me as a Christian, it looks like it was more like

being baptized, that is the connotation I got. I have been baptized as a man now, you know, by my tribe, and so it was an exciting moment. Then after that, around 7th day, by a week's time, I had started feeling like I am normal.

C15 explained his perception and experiences with the change wrought by the circumcision ritual. He said,

You are told you are going through an event that is going to make you different. And this is something that is said time and again, even during and after the initiation event. Everybody talks about you being different and expects you to be different. That kind of gets the change in your thinking. Your mind is transformed. And you start thinking like an adult--at least like a young adult. Your brain may not change much, but your outlook on life changes. Even your emotions change. You might have been apt to cry when you are uninitiated, but after initiation, there is no way you can carry on. Somehow the preparation conditions you to thinking that, after [these] physical . . . events take place, it kind of changes your emotions, your thinking, your everything. And it does happen. I remember very clearly it is [that] you become a different person.

Circumcision is the point of reference where the life of a boy ceases to exist and a new character is acquired. C1 used the analogy of cutting off and shedding to depict the role circumcision played in his life. He said,

The whole change in my life was not in just one area. . . . I can say this was the point of reference; this was the point of cutting off and shedding also. The moment that skin was being cut, it was also cutting some things from my physical, even emotional and spiritual, point of view. . . . Life would be seen as stratified into two phases: before you are circumcised that lies in the past . . . and afterwards. I was able to receive the changes very smoothly, [circumcision] being my point of reference--that being my point that from this point now these things are different, and I begun pursuing things that I realized were going to be profitable. . . . The moment you get circumcised, . . . the whole society looks at you, and there is expectation from the whole society to you.

C14 said,

Once you got circumcised, there was not much rigidity from the parents. One got a free hand on doing your own things, thinking your own ways. It was just like getting a new lease of life with a lot of freedom. And again this was also giving an opening to moving around with the ladies and everybody.

C8 said,

I think many things happen out of psychological aspects in a way that most things happen because it is psychological, and the people, generally, it is thought that today I am a boy; tomorrow I go for circumcision; the following day, I am thinking like a man. So it is like I am already set that,

by today, say if I am thinking like a boy, it is 4:00 p.m. If tomorrow I go for circumcision, and I get circumcised by 6:00 a.m., my mind should think in that way. And because of that psychological influence, you also think before you talk; you think twice because people expect you to speak not like how you spoke 3 days ago. You were initiated yesterday, so you should [speak carefully] like somebody, so through that training and through that struggle of talking like a grown up, it also moved somebody to think like a grown-up.

C3 said,

One thing that you will do is that you will not associate yourself with anything that is related to childish behavior. . . . So I had to change; I was not expected to associate myself with the youth who had not gone under the same kind of a ceremony. . . . I was expected to improve in all my behavior, that is, cleanliness, behavior, the way I talk, and the way I present myself to the people, had to show that I had changed from youth to a grown-up. . . . Those who were circumcised before me and those who were elderly people now accepted me in their groups, and, by accepting me, all that continued was advising me on how I should continue behaving. Any time I went wrong, he [Dad] would just caution me and tell me that "This is not the way you are supposed to behave after you get circumcised." And the caution does not stop just immediately after getting circumcised." It is a continuous process whereby you continue to get

advice on how you should continue to behave because we have got age groups. Age groups are also based on circumcision, and, therefore, you find an age group behaving slightly different from the other in either style or maybe because of the environment and so forth. And so, you would find that every age group will try to tell you something that will improve your whatever knowledge you are getting from them.

Finally, C13 said,

You see, when you go across, . . . that is a process that is agreed upon by the community, in that if you go through that initiation, that kind of pain, you know if you finish the whole process, you will always be remembering that there was somewhere that you came from. There was a place that something happened to you, and that is what is marking that initiation. That is what is bringing that idea that now you are, now from a boy to a man because of the pain that you had and the healing process.

Enduring pain and hardship. For the participants in this study, pain endurance during circumcision was a very significant aspect of the ritual. Eliminating pain would defeat a central purpose of the ritual. Pain symbolizes hardships that confront everyone in ordinary life. It was recognized that soon the novice would commence the process of forming a family that he would have to protect and provide for. The courage displayed during circumcision demonstrated the potential for the initiate to tackle any pain-inflicting experiences as a man. On the other hand, cowardice was seen as detestable. A Kikuyu woman did not

accept as a husband a person who displayed cowardice during circumcision. It was explained that such a man cannot adequately fend for the family. Cowards were a public laughing stock who could not be relied upon for important matters.

Most participants in this study did not experience pain at the same level as that inflicted through the early morning traditional river circumcision. All the participants were circumcised in a hospital and had the advantage of modern medicine at their disposal. In almost all the cases, local anesthesia was used during the operation to minimize the pain. They therefore usually did not experience the full extent of a public display of courage through endurance of pain as the traditional circumcision accorded the initiates. Two of the participants, C7 and C10, sought but lacked the opportunity to display their courage through a river type circumcision and had no choice but to go through the hospital ritual.

What the participants stated they did encounter was a painful experience during the initial period following the operation. Mornings were singled out as having been particularly hard due to full bladders and intermittent penis erections. C17 was apprehensive about the demanding requirement that he endure the pain without a wink. He said,

I was very much aware of the fact that the following day I was going to face this situation and, in a sense, apprehensive [about] how it was going to be done. What am I going to experience? So those kind of fears and, of course, wanting to seek clarification, especially from the one who was going to lead me in through this process. I woke up early, and the one who

was to take me to the hospital went with me very early so that it was done and I came back.

Participants in the current study summed up their circumcision experiences as painful and yielding the anticipated result of effecting the transition from childhood to adulthood. For instance, C16 expressed the essence of endurance seen in his own case. He explained,

The way to indicate that you are not afraid; they call it kuruma thano. And that meant I had to fold my fist with the thumbs coming underneath the pointing fingers both ways and that, once I do that during the operation, any slight movement will cause that to open and you face whatever and be stiff. No movements, even those thumbs, the grips still remained, and once that is done you pass the test. So I wanted to make sure that that is done so it gave me some kind of anxiety. I passed the test very well, and I enjoyed it after that because, even after I came, was the healing process that he had also explained that it was going to take sometime, and I had medication to apply.

C5 did not have models in his life but drew resilience and purpose from the initiation. He said,

I did not have mentors in my life. I didn't have my father most of my life. But this one [circumcision] reminded me of responsibility, and let me tell you, this thing has, it is the one that has built me. It reminded me of one day that I become a man. And I became a man; I got to take responsibility

for whatever comes on my way. It is not a matter of being a coward, coming back, trying to run away. . . . I got to face it, the situations when they come. Because I remember my mum telling me one thing when I got circumcised: "Today you become a man. There are things that are going to come your way. Don't be a coward; face them as they come." So I think what this thing taught me is, when situations come, the best positive thing is let me confront those particular situations as they come. Then I will be able to deal with them.

For C2, persistent reminders of the transformation effect of circumcision caused the changes in him. He said,

I think, from that day, I took pride that I was able to go to the ritual. And that now I was a man. If I could take that pain during the circumcision day, I could take on anything else. I was proud to say that "I never cried. I am now a man. I have gone through the process, through the pain of the ritual." And psychologically, I felt I have changed. I was proud that I was going to be able to go through the process. And, of course, they normally preach to people; I am talking about those guys who have gone through the same ritual, those who have gone before you. They preach to you all the time until you become a part of what they preach. They preach, saying that "You are now a man. A man ought to behave this way. A man does not need to cut ties with those guys who are not circumcised. A man is supposed to have this and this kind of friends."

For C10, circumcision was an indelible mark that imparted a permanent transformation in his life. He said,

First of all, it is permanent and irreversible as I told you. It inculcates values. These values are permanent and irreversible. Now the behavioral change has to be permanent and irreversible. . . . So, what is happening here is that manhood is got and has got its own way of doing things. . . . My father is dead down the line 10 years. In his absence--and don't forget I am the last-born--I take care of my mama. I stand tall, I am there. Believe me, in all these, I take care of her securitywise, clothe her, feed her. . . . I am a man, you see.

Life without circumcision. Participants concurred that the essence of the ritual was a means to effect the individual's incorporation into the Kikuyu ethnic group and to earn full tribal identity and the accompanying privileges. When I inquired into the participants' perception of the life of an uncircumcised adult male Kikuyu, all the participants compassionately stated that life would have been impossible without it. It was difficult for the majority of the participants to conceive of themselves without the ritual experience. For instance, they would not have married into the group; they would not have developed successfully into adulthood without the training and counseling that was stringently delivered during the time of seclusion and healing; they would not have been trained in skills that every Kikuyu male should possess in order to maintain a healthy family and social relationships; they would not have earned the right to inherit or own

property in society. If it were found out in adulthood that an adult Kikuyu male had not been circumcised, the experience would have been a possible threat to his life. Indeed, failure to get circumcised has led to death for some individuals.

C2 expressed the gravity of cheating on this in the following example:

I think, of course, the first thing [is] you would be ostracized. Nobody would want to talk to you, whether you are 40 years old or not. No matter how old you are, people would be looking to you still as a boy. You will be voted as a boy. Whether you are 30 or 40 years old, no matter whether you will be able to deceive any girl and marry, and you are not circumcised, and you are still regarded as an uncircumcised man; you will still be a boy. I remember there was a guy who was circumcised publicly. He was able to deceive some girl, and he got married, and this girl, of course, felt ashamed. She did not want to expose her husband. But people were skeptical, and they were suspecting this guy because he never had any ritual practice; they never heard when this guy got circumcised. So at about age 65 is when people knew; he was forced to go to be circumcised. The other men took on this guy. They never took him to the [qualified circumciser] . . . and, guess what, he died.

For C17, he would not know himself without circumcision. The ritual shaped his character. He said,

It [being uncircumcised] won't have impressed upon me the enduring process, the maturing process, the aspect of realizing that is the manhood

aspect that wouldn't be there, and so I do not know it, I don't know who I would be without it today because it is that that contributed to what I am. It is an abnormal thing not to be circumcised.

C3 said,

Well, the challenge is that you will not be accepted by the society as a grown-up. And [if] you are not a grown-up within the Kikuyu society, you cannot access to so many things. Like, you cannot get married. . . . No woman will accept you. . . . Mentally there must be a problem if you don't get circumcised. Somebody will look at you as very abnormal if you do not get circumcised as you just grow. It is very, very abnormal in Kikuyu custom.

Circumcision played a role in boosting self-esteem in the individuals. C13 said,

I think, first of all, if I knew that this ceremony was never done to me, and then, of course, I would be having low self-esteem. You know like when people are making decisions, I would be lying behind and not coming in front. So that would have a lot of major repercussions and negatives towards my life.

Marriage within the Kikuyu community was a major challenge to uncircumcised persons. C18 said,

It [remaining uncircumcised] would certainly have brought problems about getting married because, if I wanted to get married from the community in

which I come, there would be a problem if the girl knew or if the parents knew that I was not circumcised, or the extended family of the girl. So that certainly would be a problem. . . . I believe there is no other anything else that would have happened to me apart from that. I believe that would be the only major thing that would have happened to me.

Any discussion about remaining uncircumcised had not occurred for many participants. They perceived my question, therefore, as amusing. C10 was short of words as he contemplated the possibility of remaining a kihii (uncircumcised boy). He said,

Would I even know myself first of all? [Laughter] I do not think I would know myself. . . . [more laughter] Interesting. . . . [more and more laughter] Because I have no experience on the other side of life. I simply wouldn't know myself. . . . What would I be? A kihii? . . . [quiet sigh] Yah, certainly you would have a family, but [silence] . . . I would have lost everything. I would still take my education, get my Ph.D., but there are those values input in me . . . that I do not know really what I can do without. That is why I am saying I don't know what I would be. . . . I can't really relate.

For the participants, life would be perceived to be incomplete without an alternative to circumcision. C15 said,

I would be incomplete. I will be missing something. I will be a missing a link in my life unless somebody did provide an alternative to the initiation.

. . . You can't just leave this gap unoccupied [by] the initiation gap. It has to be filled.

Their course of life would have been different for most of the participants without their initiation experience. C11 said,

I would have been left out like an outcast. It would have actually changed the course of my life if I did not go through it. So one can escape, but the moment it is known in your society, then you will have a problem. So what I am trying to say [is], if I was not circumcised, things would have taken a different course, and even maybe coming to America or even going for further studies, it would not have been easy because one getting to the position I am in, [working] in the bank today, would not have been there.

Things would have been completely different.

Transfer of the Ritual to the Future Generations

Of all the 18 participants, 17 were already in marriage unions at the time of the interview. A further 13 had already taken their children through the circumcision ritual. Two individuals had taken their sons through infant circumcision. Of all those who have taken their sons for circumcision, none had involved a mentor in their sons' circumcisions. The traditional method of circumcision was completely ignored by all of these participants when it came to the circumcision of their own sons. Many participants expressed a desire to take their sons to Kenya as a moderately expensive option when compared to a hospital surgery in the U.S. One participant in this study reported that he had

traveled to Kenya for the purpose of his son's initiation. So it is likely that a small segment of individual Kikuyu Kenyan families living in the U.S. will take their sons back to Kenya for the circumcision procedure, but this aspect will become diminished as the economic status of the families improves enough to be able to afford the procedure in the U.S. Infant circumcision was expressed as a viable compromise for those Kikuyu families who will settle in the U.S., while, on the other hand, some participants stated that some future generation Kikuyu families may opt not to circumcise their boys after being assimilated into American culture.

From the responses of the participants when asked about (a) their perceived need for circumcision for their sons, (b) the experience of the ritual for those with teenage sons, and (c) their anticipation of future grandsons' ritual experience, I derived an assessment of the potential for the propagation of the ritual to third- and fourth-generation Kikuyu Kenyans living in America. The participants indicated no sense of certainty that the ritual will bear the same meaning for future generations. If it does hold meaning enough to be continued, it probably will be performed on the boys during their infancy and done solely for health-related reasons. C9 had circumcised his children as infants because he did not see any meaning for a later circumcision ritual while in America. He said,

My kids grew up in this country, so I did not feel a need for them to wait until they are 17 years, so I decided they should be circumcised when they are young. That is something I had thought about even before they were

born, and I said to myself, "When I get boys, they will be circumcised when they are young." Especially thinking of them being circumcised at that age, I think it is something I would not want them to go through because it would have no meaning if they were born here. If they were back home, I would not let them be circumcised when they are [too] young because it would have a different meaning.

C13 also organized circumcision for his children during their infancy. He reckoned it would have no meaning for them at a later age. He said,

Unfortunately, well, I don't regret this thing because I am in this country, I think it was done here—anyway, sure it was done here [he appeared to be a bit shy to admit this information]. I guess 3 days old. I think this was something that came between my wife and I. We had to agree. And we just did it because . . . the system here is like that. You know, if we were in Kenya, I would have waited, but it was done here. It will not have a meaning; I do not think it will. . . . I will mention stories to him, you know, but it will have no meaning to him. I think it [transition to adulthood] will be looked [considered] with age [as a basis]. I will tell him, "Now, from this year, you are now a man because now you can start making decisions like, after 15 years, now you are a man. I want you to know that you are a man now."

A key indicator of the ritual's loss of meaning is the expressed diminished regard given to how essential is the modeling, care, and counseling provided

during the period of seclusion. Four participants' boys were under the care of their mothers during the healing process. Just as was true for some of the participants themselves, the majority of the circumcised children of the participants stayed in the main family house without any consideration for providing the boys with seclusion and special counseling during their healing time.

C 17 predicted that in the future the transition to adulthood would hinge more or less on acquisition of a particular age rather than an operation. He said,

I have told you at 18, they want to remind me that they are Kenyan citizens because they are 18. And so the focus has moved much more from initiation to the age, so I would see a shift by the others too, and this is ahead. We must admit that culture is dynamic and it changes. And so we are losing some of these vital areas, unfortunately. And that is one of the areas I would see us, I think we have lost.

C5 suggested that the father's role would be the most crucial one in the modeling process when the role of circumcision is diminished. He said,

During that circumcision, I think they [mentors] were able to impart so many values. And this is the priority of the father now because we may not have uncles and other people. The father should be able to talk with the boy and [be] a role model for this particular boy, and then he can be able to get the same values but in a different situation and circumstances.

When asked about future generations' initiations, C14 proposed taking a somewhat passive stance. He said that he would insist that his sons circumcise their sons to follow his example if the environment will be conducive. He said,

You know we are in multicultural society now. I might not be able to predict right because we are very new in America, and I do not know whether they go through the initiation period, but if, let us say, they have to bring up a child in our traditional way, it is more or less mandatory for the Kikuyu son to be circumcised, and so I might have to insist if I am given the chance to. If . . . the son is brought up in this multicultural society, we have really to respect the prevailing circumstances.

Having taken his children for the operation as infants, C16 was grappling with the idea of a bar mitzvah-like occasion to announce the boys' emergence into adulthood to the family and friends. He said,

I did it earlier. My reasons were that we were going to United States. I didn't think that in the United States there would be a possibility of having that celemony. . . . My plans are at the age of 16 because it was approximately around that age when kids can now even get married, I intend to have a ceremony, and they will have to go through there [with] my buddies who will teach them the same kind of things, and then I will have family gathering to mark the period where my boys have moved. So it will be imaginary, but it has been done, but I want them to know "From now on let's assume you have been circumcised and that is why I called

these people,” and the people’s pressure and that teaching will impress on them a new thinking that now they are no longer babies, they are adults.

C2 said he would be very observant and take over the initiation of his grandchildren to assist in the perpetuation of the ritual among his descendants. He said,

My wife was asking me now, [our son’s] girlfriend is a white girl. Do you really think if they have a boy, they will circumcise the boy?” I told my wife that there is no debating on that. I mean, that will be my grandchild, and I will put all the muscle on that; they will be circumcised. If I am alive, they will be circumcised. If they think ambivalent about it, I shall just take my grandson, make my own preparation, and then take my grandson to the doctor. . . . I hope I will be able to influence them because there is nothing wrong with it. I will recommend that they go very early. We will teach them later on. It is a compromise. . . . I do not feel very strongly to take them for circumcision when they are 14 years. I will advocate that they go when they are still young.

C1 was emphatic that the ritual should continue. He said he was conscious that the Kikuyu community already was imposing pressure for his son’s circumcision. He said,

There are some virtues in our society . . . whether we have come to the United States that will live with us and will continue living with us because that is part of our inheritance, and I have been talking to my son about this

issue. He has accepted, and he has realized the importance of being circumcised because there are times when he is around people from his own tribe who want to know how he is.

However, C18 could not give any guarantees that the ritual will continue into the future. He said,

They [my sons] might want their children to do it, but I cannot guarantee that they are going to do it because, if they got intermarried, they got intermarried with people from different community, maybe it will not become necessary unless they do it for health and hygiene reasons.

Will the ritual endure? The respondents' opinion on the possibility that the circumcision ritual will continue to be practiced by the future Kikuyu in America was divided. There are those like C2 who stated he is determined to enforce the ritual for his future grandsons even if his sons enter into interracial unions. C2 intimated that he would use his privileged elder Kikuyu authority over his sons to ensure that the ritual is not discarded. Many others explained that they were putting a concentrated effort into ensuring that their sons understand the meaning and the purpose of the ritual and expect that, since they learned the same way from their parents and community, the same process will continue into the future family lineage. There were a few who were more pragmatic about accepting the reality, although difficult for them to imagine, that there will be adult Kikuyu males who will be assimilated into mainstream American culture and subsequently subscribe to the contemporary American culture's outlook in which

male circumcision is not considered an essential requirement for holding full adult identity and expression. These participants indicated that such an eventuality would be reluctantly acceptable to them. C11 said,

We believe they will take the same [view on circumcision], but I can see in the next 10, 15 years or 20 years, things will be taking a different shape in terms of this initiation process. It will still be there and will have the same meaning. What people are doing nowadays is that they take children when they are young and they deal with that problem.

C16 said,

I wish that that ritual in our today's set-up can continue because it is a very important ritual, very important, but I don't care whether it is done medically or traditionally as long as it is helping. Losing it, we are losing our culture, and my belief is that, if I have no culture, then I am nobody because who am I? It does not give me the meaning of being me because being me is in relation to a culture that I have grown with. Even when I am here, I still see an American culture because they are able to trace themselves, so we also are in need of that even though I am a foreigner.

C7 said,

I wish people would be able to retain this kind of a ritual in their cultures. I wish Kenyans would retain it, and not only retain it, but also carry all the best instruction that they can. It used to be, when a man got to that age,

he was advised and trained and taught and shown what life is in the future. So it is like mental preparation for what he will find in 2 years' time or 3 years' time, as the body starts changing and as relationships with other people, especially the women, begin to kick in.

C8 said,

Well, I would say that I think that this ritual should continue because of the values that we have learned and others like me who have gone through the same experience. I think it is a good ritual. Although there are so many things that are dying and cultural practices that are dying, I think this is one of the practices I would advocate continuing because of the benefits that you reap from it. Regardless of where people live or where they are, I think it should be continued, especially for people who are Kikuyu, and those who have experienced this tradition throughout the years, I think no matter where we are, whether we are in America or in Japan, Europe, any part of the world, that is one of the rituals that I think should not die. We should continue to teach our kids to do that.

Alternatives to circumcision. There were those participants who did find it difficult to accept the two ends of the continuum: circumcision and lack of it. The participants suggested that the ritual's influence, particularly its role in shaping individual character in the adolescent development process, be explored to create a symbolic form of ritual free of body cutting but containing separation, training, and counseling dimensions. C11 said,

It is taking a different shape, and within the next 20 years, that ritual will be there, it will not go, but what I am sure of is that the methods of doing it may change in terms of where to do it and where one stays after that is done. I remember a case of a young boy, and the boy had not even gone to Standard One, and he was climbing a certain fence and he was hurt in his private part [and immediately circumcised].

C8 said,

Somehow we need to know that change does not [have to] take place as drastic as that. We were tortured mentally. I was personally tortured mentally because I do not know how I could think east when I was thinking west. You know, it would take me somehow to think east, and it drifted slowly towards the direction I should reason about. . . . So, it is good thing to know and to train our people that you can still become somebody even before you undergo circumcision. However, in the African concept because you cannot tradition in a day or a week, we better tell them that initiation is good for maybe cleanliness, maybe for your own health, but not for teaching you to [change from] a boy to a man.

C15 said,

If it were not to be done, then the actual educative and the gaining of knowledge and the revelation of the requirements of young people when they are growing to adulthood, it has to be provided somehow. So if there was someone to come with an alternative that was different from the

initiation event as we do or present as we know it today, it has to take care of those psychological, emotional, and whatever, whatever leads for a young person growing from boyhood to adulthood, that he becomes the young man that he ought to be.

C17 said:

From a Christian standpoint, I think it is important to begin to see the equivalence of circumcision in the traditional sense. Conversion and baptism from a Christian perspective, . . . there are some similarities in terms of transition from one stage to the other. So the implications of that for the Christian and for the church are enormous.

Conflict Between the Traditional and the Christian Meaning of What it Means to be a Man and Sexual

All the participants described themselves either as Christians or coming from a family that identifies itself with the Christian faith. While they reported that traditional circumcision was accepted by their families with some adjustments, they indicated no effort being made to replace the traditional song and dance. Participants were shy to delve into the details of the particular content of the songs sung during the traditional fashion of the ritual. Except for two participants in the study who said some form of traditional song and dance were present during their initiations, there was consensus that the traditional song and dance did not fit within the kind of ritual that they experienced. C15 said,

Before Christianity came into our land, the singing and the dancing and some of the things that used to happen, after Christianity came they were frowned at, so they are the things that you will not participate [in]. So, there are things that Christians will not do. Singing is one of them, singing and dancing. But our neighbors who were not in the Christian faith [did these things]. I think, more than dancing, the thing that really made a difference was, eh, the feasting. There would be special food. And where people--at that age, young people never have enough food--so they always look forward to a lot of eating. So there is some special food that may be lots of meat.

C8 said,

My dad would not allow dancing. It was associated with pagans and my dad was a Christian. So the other people could do dancing, and some girls would come around to celebrate with them, but my dad was rather strict. So he could not allow that in my family. . . . Any other non-Christian family would have celebrated in other fashions like dancing. Dancing was associated with non-Christians. In my family there was no dancing. What there is was there was just eating and just relaxing, but I did not participate in any dancing.

The need for seclusion during the time of healing was undermined in those cases where participants were strict adherents to the Christian faith. C6's family rationalized that there was no major difference between him and other

members of the family, including girls, thus he stayed in the main house with everybody after his circumcision. He chose his local pastor as a mentor, a choice he came to regret because it denied him opportunity to acquire knowledge that could have been useful during his search for a marriage partner.

Four of the participants reported not having the services usually given by mentors during the seclusion period. Two participants (C1 and C3) reported that their dads had played the role of mentors in an innovative Christian scheme that in essence defied the essential traditional requirement for sexuality training. Both these participants said they regretted the loss of opportunity to learn during their circumcision what would be appropriate years later. C3 said,

I didn't have really a sponsor, and that is where really, maybe, where you will miss most of the information because, as I told you, one thing you will realize is that, although circumcision has been there with Kikuyu for quite a long time, Christianity has also interfered a lot with what used to be there before. My father is a Christian. My father is, as a medical person, thought all those things were not important, and, therefore, there was nothing like somebody like a sponsor as you are asking or somebody who was supposed to be with me throughout. My father was there, and all that happened is that I got my uncles, my aunts visiting me during that particular time and just advising me on what it means to get circumcised.

The issue of a man's first sexual experience to culminate healing following initiation was controversial among the participants: There are those who

perceived it as acceptable according to the teaching by peers and mentors and those who, on the basis of their Christian faith, did not consider it as an option. There are still others like C16 who said that sex between unmarried people was never allowable under any circumstances during his time. For C17, the Christian way was a pathway to progress in life. In preparation for his initiation, he had interviewed two individuals with varying experiences in order to determine his own course in life, and what he learned led him to reject his community's mode of circumcision. He was quick to suggest during the interview with me that the Christian church should amend the loopholes of yesteryears.

He said,

Being a Christian at that particular point was considered giving into, if you like, a Western religion to a muzungu-brought [white man-brought] religion and, therefore, being considered perhaps a sell-out from a community stand-point. Being a Christian those days wasn't anything that people felt that this is a great thing you are doing. It was really sticking out on your own and saying, "I am prepared to pay whatever price it is for whatever I believe in." So, that is what I mean. It wasn't necessarily a sign of strength. I came from the pagan world, so to speak. We called ourselves acengi [pagan], as opposed to athomi [religious]. [There] was a mission station near where I lived, and coming from the acengi to become one of the athomi that was really a major, [laughter] a major transition, and it was not necessarily viewed [positively]. . . . It is only perhaps later on in life that

I felt God had called me to also win my brothers and sisters into the same: becoming Christians. It started getting roots. I was just the first within the family.

Similarly, C6 said,

The traditional culture is that "Hey, now you are a man, you are circumcised, you are old enough to have a woman in your house." . . . But then the Christian culture, of course, . . . we do not have what is called dating as such. Rather it is a lot of chances of being with your friend so long and decides, "Hey, now we have been together for so long, 3 years, I will go ahead and get married." My circumcision . . . it is a pastor who was my mentor. So there was no way he could come to me and tell me, "Hey, this is the way to do it." But I wish he did it. That is a whole problem, I mean it is not only me, but, . . . you know, those are the things in our culture that are not talked about and people expect that they solve themselves. I mean, it is a hard thing to do because down the road even for you to realize that you want to get married, you are in love with a girl. It is a hustle to wrestle within you and say, "Hey, I have to do it." Nobody taught me to do that. Nobody taught me about it, but I just found myself doing it. I wish there is a purposefulness training that is being given. This is the way to go about it. I know it would have been an impact in my life if somebody shared with me.

C7 said,

I did not experience that part of the tradition. I was brought up pretty much in a Christian environment. It is only that young people violate all these [parents' wishes]. Friends, and girlfriends were just a violation of what I was taught. My parents were also brought up in a Christian environment. So there was not those traditional dances and those traditional night dances where I hear that in the olden times they would dance and abuse each other and say bad words to each other. I did not have that.

C 18 said,

The Christian religious tradition I came from would say that you only get involved with members of the opposite sex when you are just about to get married or when you are just going right to kind of prepare for marriage, but not dating as a way of building relationships between young boys and girls. At that time, at the age of 17 there was no question that I was not about to get married, and, therefore, I would not have been expected to get involved with dating.

Despite the strictness implied in the Christian family for their faith, three participants were sexually active both before and after their circumcision.

Drawing from the perceptions of the participants, I would conclude that they generally see Christian influence on the initiation ritual as having impacted major public manifestations of the traditional ritual such as the eradication of the river ritual, song and dance, and the method of circumcision, while failing to address individual personal needs such as that of sexuality.

Generational and Cultural Differences Between the U.S. and Kenya

The most daunting task that the study participants said they faced when arranging circumcision for their own sons was to give them a convincing reason for the operation. Unlike their fathers, the Kikuyu children wondered why they had to undergo the ritual while their American friends did not bother about it. The views of the participants were that the boys did not wish to care about circumcision in any way. C1's son's circumcision failed the first time when the doctor required the boy to explain his stand on the operation. The notion that it was not his idea but his father's did not amuse the doctor. When the father rehearsed the boy in a more acceptable answer, the boy got the operation. C6 said he has started already to talk to his 9-and 11-year-old boys with an aim to courting them to circumcision when they reach the right age of 14 or 15. C5 is relying on his son's peers who have already been circumcised to inculcate the need for circumcision in him.

The cost of the operation in a U.S. hospital presently stands at about \$3,000, which was portrayed by participants as prohibitive. Circumcision for C2's two boys would have cost \$6,000 if a friendly Kenyan doctor had not done it for free. Other than this case, participants identified no Kenyan doctor willing to assist in circumcision ritual operations in the U.S. C12 suggested tackling this problem by advising all prospective Kikuyu immigrants to the U.S. to circumcise their children prior to entering the country. He had learned this bitter truth

because, at the time of the interview, he was struggling with the impending circumcision of his 12-year-old boy. He said,

With \$2000, I can take them [back to Kenya to be circumcised]; we kill two birds with one stone. They go home, they visit their grandpa. They see the ranches. And again they taste the tea while they [are] at their ancestral home. Then I bring them here as new people, people who are circumcised. They are very eager. If I tell them, "Let us go tomorrow," . . . I have convinced them. They are mentally aware of what will happen, and they want it. You know, they are almost the only ones who are not circumcised because, from those children who came, who started coming here in the year 1997, a new thing started happening to them: We are telling their parents in Kenya, "Even if they are 2 years or 1 year, they get circumcised in Kenya to come here circumcised." But mine, I wish I knew they could have been circumcised in Kenya. "instead of now being taken back to Kenya. So all the children who have come from the year 1997, they are circumcised before they come. We tell them, "If you are coming with boys, let them get circumcised in Kenya." But mine, that I was not told by anyone. So they also feel Kenyan boys are circumcised, so they want it.

C6 said,

My Kenyan community, . . . though in America, . . . live still like in Kenya. If you live in an area where we have close to 50 families, that is a

community by itself. Of course, they may not know about your private life, but down the road, as you would talk . . . when you meet together, you may feel uncomfortable, especially if you know their tribal expectation.

C2 lamented the lack of respect for the human body between parents and their children, which he saw as a root cause of a missing dimension in parent-child respect for each other. He gave his experience at a fitness center as an example. He said,

I can see a father and a son with their penis out totally naked, and they do not feel as if there is anything wrong. To me that is an abomination. For a son to see my nakedness, I do not think that is right. And we are trained that "You are an adult, the others are kids, and you got to respect yourself," and I do think that is a part of respecting yourself: Being able to conduct yourself different from your kids. And I see, in the wellness center, you go to the swimming pool, you go to whatever dressing room, and you find fathers going naked in front of their kids. I mean, those are the values that we are taught, that generally you got to respect yourself. You are an adult now, you are circumcised. You are a mature person. Now you got to respect your body and make sure that others respect you. So I am different from them because I still do not feel free going naked before-- even if we are adults, why should I be naked? In my mind, these are still boys. They are not mature! Well, they are my peers while they are 40

years 50 years, but to me, in my mind, they are still kids. And I do not think I can go with my penis hanging around with them.

The circumcision ritual experience has a long-term effect on the initiates that the participants saw as impacting their lives not only as adults but also as individuals learning to cope with challenges of living in the new American culture. The training they received on endurance at the time of their circumcision and the education they received during their period of seclusion left indelible marks that still continue to reflect in their lives to the present times. In particular, the training in endurance was seen as the one key contributing factor in a life changed into that of a real man who knows that life is never a bed of roses. For instance, no coward could perceive of immigrating to America, a huge task that participants had to overcome. To many participants, circumcision earned in them a state of resilience that could not otherwise be accomplished. C17 said,

The aspect of pain and enduring pain, that is actually, really what makes a man--that you can go through pain and endure it. It is an enduring process--not only enduring, but a maturing process. It helps [you] to mature for the stage you have gotten into. It also gets [you] to reflect what it is that has happened because that is the reason you are here feeling the pain. . . . Circumcision helped [one] to be ready for life issues and challenges and phases and feelings that I can handle the issue of establishing a home, the issue of being responsible as a young man in

terms of my academic work, as well as at home. So it played a critical role in bringing my awareness to the situation.

C10 proposed that the Kikuyu are well prepared to tackle any nature of challenge and to advance to levels of high excellence. Referring to the disparities in levels of development between Kenya and the U.S. despite the lack of the ritual in the latter, he said,

Yah! The brains are there, but what about the values? What about, eh, the values? Believe me, every society has got its own weaknesses, but when we come to morality--oh! I would call them all the evils: Lesbianism, homosexuality, drug abuse, addiction--where is it, where do we have the highest records? . . . What I believe what makes a man is not measurable by the amount of wealth that he has. What makes a man is the values in him. A man is not measurable by the size of the bank account. I think personally, I see it different. I would have it measured by the height, that is how high can he stand among the others and say, "This is the way forward." Here [in the U.S.] they are so individualistic. . . . It is the environment that has allowed them [Americans], it is the environment that has allowed them [laughter]. . . . Let us change over . . . and let them go there [more laughter]. You will be surprised, Mr. Mbiti. Eey! . . . [laughter] They will be extinct [more laughter]. . . . Let us change over and see how they will be. That is why you find them [members of the Kikuyu tribe] all

over in all the continents of the world. They are able go in and go out, stand tall and be leaders everywhere in their own right because of those rites.

Summary

Pertinent issues pertaining to circumcision as a means of transition to adulthood among the Kikuyu have emerged from this study. Eight themes that capture the current thought and perceptions of the 18 participants have been identified. Although the sample size in this study was too small to accord the results any degree of generalizability, the study has generated findings that inform and add to the scholarship on the role of ritual in completing life-course transitions, especially regarding current trends of change and the anticipated future of the Kikuyu circumcision ritual. I shall highlight some key points and issues that have arisen in the study.

Participants' fathers were the authority figures consulted to accord a blessing and give permission for their circumcision. Negotiations with the father, or the uncles in his absence, constituted the first exercise in a series of events that required the boy to prove himself before the final test during his circumcision. Parental consent was an important aspect of the ritual since the boy's parents' recognition and blessing was a crucial facet of his transformation into an adult. That is, the family first facilitated and recognized his transition to adulthood at home before then ushering him into the wider community as a legitimate adult member in society. Within this cohort of participants, the value of education

played a big role in when the fathers determined it to be appropriate timing for their sons to participate in the circumcision ritual. Peer pressure served to facilitate the decision to seek circumcision for each eligible individual within a generation of youths.

The roles of mentors were reported to have been usurped by fathers to some degree, and this has led to expressed dissatisfaction with the amount and quality of counseling the participants had received as compared to their expectations. The participants sensed that a shift in the circumcision tradition is imminent. This trend was demonstrated when participants organized their own sons' circumcisions themselves and when they omitted outsiders as mentors to their sons altogether and disregarded community involvement in the event.

The sample in this study represent a cohort caught within an ill-defined emergent form of Kikuyu circumcision. No participant reported having gone through a river circumcision, although all of them could remember examples of neighbors who went to the river. All participants reported that traditional song and dance during their initiations was minimal or eliminated altogether. Further, the style of circumcision procedure had changed drastically, influenced by the shift from the specially recruited traditional circumcisers to passive and happenstance hospital personnel. The operation was done as a routine procedure within the hospitals without any regard to the traditional grandeur of the male circumciser. All but two of the participants received the new form of operation in which the whole prepuce was severed.

Celebrations during the rituals experienced by the participants had been reduced to a mere eating of special foods without the former traditional glamour of song and dance. Change in the initiation process is further demonstrated by the fact that some of the participants' fathers ignored the importance of the mentor and chose to double as both dad and mentor to their sons, a dual role that the participants gained little benefit from. While a period of seclusion was provided for most of the participants, some experienced a lack of seclusion.

In general, when the participants described changes in areas such as the method of organization, manner of celebration, and style of operation from the traditional initiation format, the changes seem to have interfered with the final effects of the circumcision ritual for the participants. However, the participants did report clearly distinctive changes in their perspective on life as a result of going through the initiation ritual: a redefined sense of selfhood consisting of a higher self-esteem, resilience, and full acceptance into adulthood in their family and community following their circumcision. All the participants singled out the right to marry as a major goal in their circumcision. For most of them, it was impossible to imagine a life as a Kikuyu male without circumcision.

Participants in this study wondered how males in other cultures function without circumcision and went further to refer to them as mere boys even when in old age. They emphatically attributed a functional role to the circumcision experience that facilitated management of life challenges and accomplishments even when they are living in a different culture.

Circumcision among the participants was utilized to demarcate the difference between their childhood and adulthood as Kikuyu men. The distinction between these two phases are exemplified by the invisibility of the uncircumcised boy in contrast to the recognition gained and position of power and respect enjoyed by the new initiate. The change is reported to be sudden and magical. The overarching issue here is the immediate transformation of the formerly unrecognized person of the boy into a celebrated young adult within the community, fully acknowledged by the family and the community at large. Thus, without the ritual, the individual has no place or identity. As demonstrated by the participants, there are no options availed to Kikuyu males.

In traditional societies, rites of passage frequently are utilized to signify life transitions. In contemporary Western society, there is a marked absence of ceremonial rites of passage for marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Markstrom et al., 1998). The Kikuyu of Kenya, following exposure to the Western influences, are struggling with the circumcision tradition, a custom under considerable pressure. The challenge seems to be to decide between either total eradication or total overhaul of the tradition in order to fit it into contemporary Kikuyu elitist thought.

Chapter V

Discussion

While river circumcision, song and dance, and community-wide organization of the circumcision ritual may have diminished among the Kikuyu, in the last 30 years or so, as found in this study, a new construct of a loosely knit circumcision ritual has evolved to fit with post-Independence lifestyles in modern Kenya following political independence from Great Britain in 1963. In the last 38 years or so, aspects of the ritual have evolved in response to modernizing forces such as education, religion, and new value systems imparted by the media. These forces, however, have evoked only innovative means of practicing the ritual (Cox, 1998). The circumcision ritual has become a closely guarded family affair with little or no community involvement. The family unit has adopted the burden of determining the appropriate time and organizational structure of the ritual for their sons upon their acquiring the right age. These changes have eroded the traditional mechanisms that guarded the ritual and maintained its communal character in the past. The type of ritual demonstrated by the participants is probably a good example of the circumcision form that has been practiced by quasi-religious urban Kenyan elites, who have modeled the emergent Kikuyu culture in recent times.

I have noted in this study that remnants of the traditional ritual characteristics have been retained. Participants in this study reported, for example, that a mentor was recruited, a period of seclusion was instituted,

teaching was done, privileges and new responsibilities were conferred, and the novice was set free from the family hold to explore and establish social relationships. The family celebrated the occasion by feasting on special foods shared with family members and friends. Neighbors made friendly voluntary visits to the home to honor the occasion. Gifts were given to the family as tokens of congratulation. And, in fact, the circumcision ritual has remained the only gateway to giving a boy the status of manhood and accompanying privileges and responsibilities. It marked for the participants the cessation of dependency on parents and adoption as a member of the leadership ranks within the social hierarchy. However, I have noted as well that there has been a glaring lack of fit for the ritual beyond the family organization in the emergent, largely quasi-Judeo-Christian-dominated Kenyan culture that seem to have taken over as a preferred fashionable lifestyle to replace the traditional Kikuyu lifestyle. Hospital personnel have taken over the role of the traditional circumcisers, although participants in this study reported only doctors from the Kikuyu ethnic group being chosen to perform the operation.

Within the U.S., specific doctors sympathetic to this Kikuyu custom carry out the operation for visiting and transplanted Kikuyu families, sometimes providing their services free of charge. Adherence to the strict Kikuyu operation has diminished among these families, according to the reports of this study's participants. However, some families do choose to travel back to Africa for a traditional type of initiation ritual for their sons out of preference for a wider

participation of family and kin in the ritual. Perhaps these Kikuyu who have preferred to take their children back to the ancestral homes have more preference for the traditional fashion of operation.

Circumcision and Symbols

A basic tenet of symbolic interaction theory is that human behavior is constructed from a definition of objects and events in a given environment. According to Winton (1995), the definitions and interpretations of objects and events in a person's environment come to be learned and acquired through interaction in the socialization process. Seen through the lens of symbolic interactionism, the value of the circumcision ritual to the Kikuyu boy is a product of his thought processes. Adherence to the circumcision ritual over the years by the Kikuyu is, thus, a function of people's ability to think critically and analytically, to make indications to themselves regarding the benefits of the ritual to the individual and society in general. This process is, according to Winton, a crucial step before individuals can freely accept the otherwise traumatic operation. When seen from this perspective, circumcision is therefore a meaningful custom that is preceded by a cognitive and interpretive process. Its presence or absence bears meaning to the Kikuyu boy/man, as well as the community.

The lack of social status and recognition for the uncircumcised boy generated a longing in the his mind for circumcision. His cognitive struggle prior to seeking permission and his odious experience when going through the circumcision process put his mind to the immense task of constructing meaning

for the rite. Circumcision as a benefit was constructed in the mind of the person before it could be seen as a beneficial and yet painful endeavor. One could regard circumcision as constituting a huge increase in the individual's capital. One participant said, "If I were to go again, I would go all over again." As Winton (1995, p.133) stated, "Making indication to oneself is a precursor to action." In this case, the thought process adds to a sum total of high value for the circumcision rite for the Kikuyu boy who is aspiring to it. Alternatives, consequences, and possible outcomes are all taken to account before action (Winton, 1995).

Eliade (1965) offered a different view to explain circumcision through the use of history and a time concept. To him, the traditional man is what he is because, at the dawn of Time, mythical things happened to him that ordered his course. Traditional societies are seen therefore as a product of mythical history in a series of events that took place at the beginning of Time. Eliade said, "Traditional societies tend to project every new acquisition into primordial Time, to telescope all events in the same atemporal horizon of the mythical beginning . . . It is to this traditional knowledge that the novices gain access [to new life]" (p. xii). He further says,

[Novices] receive protracted instructions from their teachers, witness secret ceremonies, and undergo a series of ordeals. And it is primarily these ordeals that constitute the religious experience of initiation—the encounter with the sacred. Initiatory ordeals imply a ritual death followed

by resurrection or a new birth. The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. . . . Initiatory death signifies the end at once of childhood, of ignorance, and of the profane condition. (p. xii)

For the traditional man, every significant, creative, and powerful thing that happened took place in the beginning, in the time of the myths. Innovations are to him revelations that have superhuman origins. "The objects or weapons that were borrowed, the behavior patterns and institutions that were initiated, the myths or beliefs that were assimilated, were believed to be charged with magico-religious power; indeed, it was for this reason that they . . . acquired them" (Eliade, 1965, p. xi).

In contrast, says Eliade (1965), modern man draws from historical events and human action to bring about what he has become. Modern man considers himself a historical being, "constituted by the whole history of humanity" (p. xi). He sees in the history that precedes him pure human work and believes he has the power to continue perfecting it indefinitely.

According to Mbiti (1969), circumcision contains many symbolic meanings besides the physical drama and its impact. The novices' period of seclusion from the community has a religious character that is evoked by giving them secret instructions before they rejoin ordinary life. Mbiti pointed out that this is a symbolic experience signifying the process of dying, living in the spirit world, and being reborn. The rebirth, he said, emphasizes and dramatizes that the young

person is now new; he possesses new personalities and has lost his childhood. Regarding the content of the teachings during the seclusion period, the novices are taught to endure hardships, to live with one another, and to obey, and they are introduced to the secrets and the mysteries of sexuality. (Mbiti, 1969)

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1975, p. 14),

People are constantly in a process of interpretation and definition as they move from one situation to another. . . . All situations consist of the actor, others, and their actions, and physical objects. . . . A situation has meaning only through people's interpretations and definitions of it. Their actions, in turn, stem from this meaning. Thus, this process of interpretation acts as the intermediary between any predisposition to act and the action itself.

Drawing from Taylor and Bogdan's thought, I would say that the Kikuyu circumcision experience demonstrated by the participants in this study is the end result of an intricate cognitive process that the individual initiate experienced on reaching the appropriate age. In this context, definition of objects and events are always subject to change over time. The definition of the circumcision event and its accompanying status-change object within traditional Kikuyu society was acknowledged to have changed gradually over time. I deduce, on the basis of the findings in this study, that the second and third generation Kikuyu immigrants in America will have a different definition of objects and events surrounding the circumcision ritual as a means of transition from childhood to adulthood and as a

status-earning symbol. The impression given by the participants in the study that the circumcision ritual may not continue in its present form has support within symbolic interaction interpretation of the ritual.

Use of Findings

The findings of this study shed light on the use of circumcision as an instrument of transformation from boyhood to manhood in the life of a Kikuyu male. The Rites of Transition Model proposed by Byers (1993) (See Figure 10) formed a conceptual framework for considering the findings and implications of my project. Byers demonstrated that individuals can understand and self-acknowledge their growth process from boyhood to manhood through a ritual process. The model suggests that participation in an initiation ritual process accords such individuals greater emotional freedom and stability and less dependence on what he calls "synthetic imagery and pseudo-initiations" (e.g., material acquisition, living beyond one's means, chemical dependencies, codependent relationships, other self-abusive behavior). He explained in this model the place of ritual as a socially appropriate change agent in contemporary masculine behavior (Byers, 1993, p. 66).

The Rites of Transition Model (see Figure 10) demonstrates the importance of completed rituals in preparing individuals for the next stage of life. In contrast, the Dysfunctional Transition Model (see Figure 11) contains a hierarchical structure that shows that, if the ritual is not completed at each stage, subsequent stages do not fully develop in a healthy manner. Each incompleteness

creates a violation of natural growth and retards its evolved counterpart at a higher level (Byers, 1993). The essence of the model is the need for individuals to possess means to generate positive acknowledgment of self-definition from their point of view. For example, to define self in response to a phrase such as those made in one of Byers' seminars with men: "I need to know who I am;" "I don't care about what others see, I need to see me;" "I want to look in the mirror and like what I see;" and "How can I love anyone else when I don't know who I am?" (Byers, 1993, p. 66). In proposing the model, Byers intended to give to his subjects some reference point on rituals. To illustrate the void he intended to block, he gave the following statement by a man without ritual:

I've been sitting here for two hours hearing you talk about rites of passage and getting madder and madder all that time. I'm in my late forties and the closest thing I ever had to a rite of passage was killing a couple thousand faceless human beings in Nam. I'm the result of no ritual and no initiations and no rites of passage and what I'm feeling is that I've really been cheated and it's pissing me off! My life has been full of the crap we talked about and I don't like it and I don't like myself very much, but my question is what can I do about it now? It is fine and wonderful to talk about how it should have been but what the hell do I do with all the shit I'm carrying around in my bag? How do I tell my belly to stop hurting and my nightmares to go away? I want someone to tell me what I can do to make

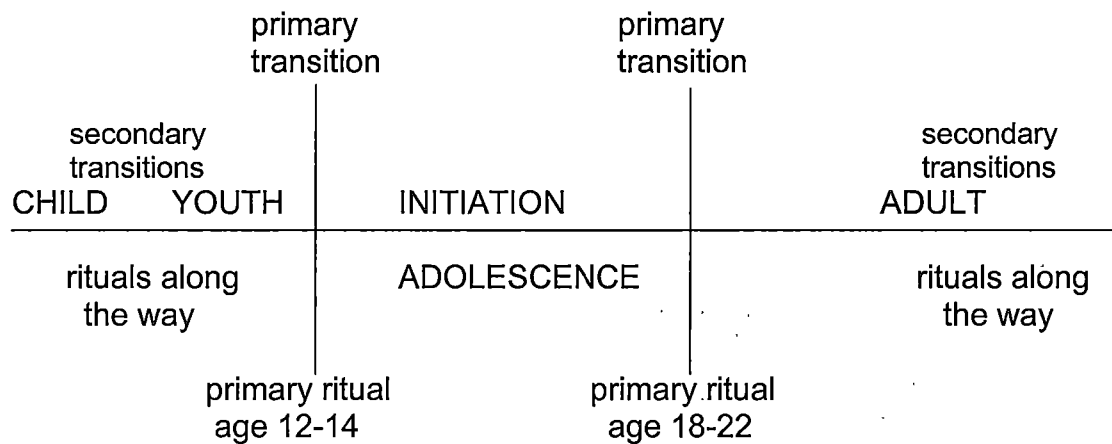


Figure 10. The Rites of Transition Model. Functional transitions--changes marked by presence of ritual--as rites of human passage (adapted from Byers, 1993).

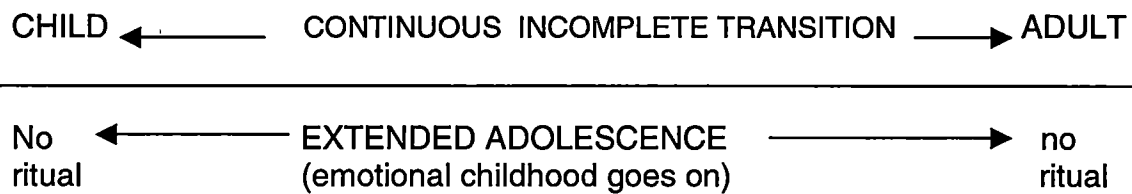


Figure 11. The Dysfunctional Transition Model, showing a lack of initiation and incomplete initiation that lead to personal and social problems such as gang membership (adapted from Byers, 1993).

being a man feel like something that is worth while getting up to in the morning. . . . The rest of it is all bullshit!" (David, a participant in one of Byers' workshops, Byers, 1993, p. 66)

According to the Rites of Transition Model, such effects are seen when adults use negative behaviors to unconsciously cater to unmet childhood needs. In proposing this model, Byers intended to give men an opportunity to realize the importance of ritual initiation and intergenerational transitions in their lives. This same view is advanced by Blumenkrantz (1996), who stated that young people revert to driving, drinking, smoking, and involvement in gangs in the absence of ritual to mark for themselves and their peer group their entry into adulthood.

The traditional Kikuyu male had a very effective means for self-redefinition. Whenever challenged to re-define self along these lines, Kikuyu men were known to proudly cite their age set, their initiation venue, and key participants in the ritual to affirm their status. They may made statements like (a) "Nii ndimuruu ngathira (I am fully circumcised);" (b) "Niukumenya ndiri kihii (I am not a mere boy);" (c) "Ndi wa rika ria Kihiu mwiri nguire, na ndaruiire itiri ria mbari ya Mbogo (I belong to Kihiu Mwiri age set, circumcised at the grounds of Mbogo clan);" (d) "Tuaruiire itiri rimwe na Kinyatta wa Muigai (I was circumcised on the same ground with Kinyatta son of Muigai [usually a successful member of the age group;" and (e) "Nii ndi wa mbari ya Iregi na ndiguaga rukihacika (I belong to the clan of Iregi and can fend for myself)."

Theoretical Implications

In an attempt to give some theoretical explanation of the Kikuyu circumcision for the boys, many authors (Kenyatta, 1938; Leakey, 1972; Mbiti, 1969; Middleton & Kershaw, 1965; Hobley, 1967; Eliade, 1956; van Gennep, 1960; Vizedom, 1976; Turner, 1977) agree that the cutting of skin from the sexual organ symbolizes and dramatizes separation from childhood and that it is parallel to the cutting of the umbilical cord when the child is born. The intact sexual organ attaches the child to the state of ignorance, inactivity, and potential impotence (asexuality). Once that link is severed, the young person is freed from that state of ignorance and inactivity. He is born into another state, which is the state of knowledge, activity, and reproduction. So long as a person is not initiated, he cannot get married and is not supposed to reproduce or bear children.

The boy's initial struggle is to reconcile himself with the shift from the secure domain of his mother's world and to join the challenging free world of men and responsibility. Before circumcision, the boy runs errands for his mother and earns identity from her. Circumcision breaks this relationship and ushers the boy into the challenges of adult life. Luckmann and Berger (1966) in discussing this separation stated,

The separation of the novices from their mothers takes place more or less dramatically, in accordance with the customs of different tribes. . . . The meaning of this first part of the ceremony, the separation of the neophytes from their mothers, seems quite a violent break with the world of child-

hood--which is at once the maternal and female world and the child's sense of irresponsibility and happiness, of ignorance and asexuality.

(p. 121)

Being trained to endure physical pain is the beginning of the initiates' training for difficulties and sufferings in later life. Endurance of physical and emotional pain is seen as a great virtue among the Kikuyu, since much pain from varying sources surrounds life in Africa. Presents that are given by family and friends symbolize welcome to the adult world and community. Circumcision symbolizes liberty to marry and make a family, to inherit and own property for the newly circumcised. Dancing and rejoicing--currently transformed to feasts--strengthen community solidarity and emphasize the corporate nature of the whole group.

Van Gennep (1960) was able to show that in many instances rites of passage can be seen in terms of separation, transition, and incorporation. He also suggested a frequent relationship of the rites of passage to supernatural realms and powers, which Vizedom (1976) has referred to as conformity of human life to cosmic rhythms.

Cavicchi (1977) suggested the general purpose of the grouping of the initiates in age-classes through initiation was a means to ensure that tribal unity and mutual protection of the rights of the individuals in each group is maintained, in the absence of centralized governments in traditional African communities. This notion concurs with Cox's (1998) explanation that suggests recent changes

in the circumcision ritual practice to have been influenced by modernizing forces that discourage community life by emphasizing the importance of the nuclear family and its role in the notion of producing competent adult citizens.

Limitations of the Study

It should be noted that the sample in this study consisted of a small number of Kikuyu male immigrants living in the United States, a majority of whom were pursuing college education at middle age. Further, 14 of them were members of the Kenya Christian Fellowship in America (KCFA), a Christian organization that draws membership from Christian faith-professing Kenyan immigrants in the U.S. Caution, therefore, should be exercised in generalizing the findings of the current study to the wider Kikuyu population.

Strengths of the Study

The qualitative research method employed helped generate depth of data not possible with quantitative inquiry. The involvement of two mutually-exclusive study committees aided this research project during the data analysis phase, one at the UT's School of Nursing under the chairmanship of Dr. Howard Pollio, and the other in the department of Child and Family Study under the chairmanship of Dr. Julia Malia. Both groups possessed a wide range of experiences in qualitative study analysis and made a tremendous contribution to this research study. The leadership and composition of the two research committees who assisted me

were highly competent and appropriately endowed in qualitative research expertise, and there is no doubt that they influenced and very efficiently guided the conduct of this project from beginning to end.

Having come from the Kikuyu African tribal group myself, my own experience in a similar initiation rite and my ability to speak the respondents' native language were taken into account from the beginning of the research study. I considered the process of bracketing my own experience to be a crucial aspect of this study in order to limit my inherent biases as much as possible during the project. On the other hand, the Kikuyu language is laden with metaphors and riddles that do not render themselves easily to obvious interpretations. As a Kikuyu-speaking researcher, this ability greatly benefited the present study. Such a thorough inquiry as has been accomplished ordinarily would not have been possible.

Finally, my past experience in a qualitative research project entitled Cultural Constraints to the Adoption of Modern Contraceptives (Mbiti & Price, 1992) was an added advantage to the current research study.

Implications for Practice

In a study examining the concepts of rites of passage and sense of community as it exists in literature and life, Blumenkrantz (1997) made a compelling argument for the use of rites of passage as a primary method of promoting positive youth development and building a psychological sense of community. Blumenkrantz contended that psychological sense of community

focuses on the quality of human relationships contained in the feelings of members regarding (a) sense of belonging, (b) feelings that members matter to one another and to the group, and (c) a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. Rites of passage, he said, are powerful encounters within the community context that provide opportunities for initiates in the rite to have transformative experience on their way to wholeness.

Hargrove's (1997) study of African rites of passage (ROP) programs for African-American communities found that, although there were no differences between two comparison groups in terms of personality development and spiritual maturity, there were significantly higher scores on racial pride among the ROP initiates.

Kessler's (2000) study of two school programs, (a) the Senior Passage course and (b) ROPE (Rites of Passage Experience), demonstrates how educators can address the need for the rite of passage as a source of guidance for students as they experience their life course from adolescence to adulthood. Addressing the principles and practices common to initiations in different cultures, she suggested the role of the rites of passage as (a) making the adolescents conscious of the irrevocable transition that they are undergoing; (b) providing them with tools for making transitions and separations; (c) initiating them into new capacities required for the next stage in life; and (d) giving them acknowledgment by the adult community, as well as by their peers, for their courage and strength in taking the step.

In the current study, I found evidence of transformation perceived by the participants to have taken place in their parent-child relationship, including impact upon the participants' psychosocial maturity, emotional autonomy, psychological separation, and separation/individuation (Bjornsen, 2000). Bos (1985) suggested that an important aspect of the maturation process during adolescence is the blessing from the father to the son. The blessing is the father's acknowledgment and acceptance of the son's adult status and masculinity. According to Bos, conferring of the father's blessing has the effect of making the son able to make the necessary transition to adulthood. The current research study found similar implications in the participants' perception of the role of the circumcision ritual process to facilitate transition to adulthood.

A strong case for the adoption of some form of rite of passage as a means to facilitating smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood for contemporary youth can be deduced from the current study. Since most institutions in the wider society interact with youth in varying but significant degrees, it is the prerogative of any such institutions to embrace the crucial role that is played by a rite of passage and to innovatively establish institution-specific rites of passage for the adolescents. Instituting such rites would create the opportunity to impart to the youths some code of behavior and community-specific and national values for a productive future citizenry.

Blumenkrantz (1997) has suggested that contemporary social service paradigms that advocate for the youth programs designed to "fix" people must be

challenged. Blumenkrantz maintained that a new paradigm, one that will focus on a process for community development within a structure of rites of passage, is necessary. He asserted that the basic tenets of such rites of passage should include van Gennep's (1960) scheme, which includes the model of separation, transition, and reincorporation within the context of a sense of community. This sense of community is defined within the parameters of membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection. Other constructs related to modern day applications of rites of passage, such as spirituality, service, mentoring, parent involvement, and cultural relevance, should be explored.

Suggestions for Future Research

The scope of the current research study did not allow a full treatment of all issues that arose. Further investigation is necessary, particularly regarding the dynamics of Christianity and its interaction with the traditional belief systems as a force that has eradicated such practices as the Great Dance, the river ritual, and unsterile methods of circumcision, as well as the impact of the diminished mentoring process among contemporary Kikuyu. Perceptions of the current circumcision ritual style for eligible Kikuyu children in the U.S. need further investigation. Further, perceptions and beliefs systems that make circumcision still a universally acceptable ritual to the majority of the Kikuyu merit further work. An extension of the current study to the sons of the participants is recommended.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

My Experience in the Circumcision Ritual

At the time I became of age for circumcision, my father had deserted my family and moved to a different province far from home. To earn the ritual, I had to deal with a formidable dilemma to avoid being left out by peers with whom I had grown up in the community.

When I expressed my wish to get circumcised to my mother, she acknowledged the complexity of the matter and avowed to give me necessary support to facilitate my request. However, as a woman, she was curtailed in the extent to which she could organize the ritual single-handedly in the absence of my father, who was still alive. It was therefore my prerogative to design a viable strategy of participating in the ritual under this difficult circumstance.

To resolve the dilemma, I set out on a daring 200-mile train expedition as a boy of 15 to find my father in a distant town, in search of manhood. My father has always been a cobbler. I therefore anticipated finding him in an open-air location mending shoes within the main shopping area of the town. It took me 5 hours of searching but finally I located him, a shocking experience for him.

The joy of the reunion was short lived when he learned the purpose of my mission, and although he was not enthused, seeing the financial demand that my mission entailed, he acceded to my request but on condition that I took the operation in the town and remained under his care until complete healing.

One early morning, he took me to the local hospital for the operation without regard either for the immediate family, extended family, or the community where I had spent my youth. A member of a different ethnicity performed my circumcision with no prior counseling or preparation from him or my father. I had four days of seclusion with absolutely no attention given. There were no celebrations, visitors, gifts given, or special foods provided on account of the ritual. With my mom absent, my own ritual lost a great deal of the community thrills. My father did not adjust his work program on its account either. He bought hotel food, which we shared together in the evenings, when he could not fix a quick meal himself. During the day, I prepared my own snacks and lay on my temporary bed, which was laid on a dirt floor.

I did not have a mentor to accord me care, and my father did not bother to give advice of any sort either. On the other hand, he made attempts to distract me from the normal course of life for a teenager by conjuring me to work for him in his shoe shop, attempts I vehemently rejected. On my part, I wished to join high school and stay on with him while I pursued education, which he subtly declined. Subsequently, I left him and rejoined my family--at that time, a fully legitimized Kikuyu circumcised young man.

On return, it took me a couple of weeks to earn acceptance with my peers through participation in social activities, some of which included group bathing in riverbanks which helped display evidence of my circumcision, which was noted and recognized. It was within this peer group that I learnt, albeit by proxy, all I needed to know about life as a circumcised Kikuyu young man.

The unusual organization of my circumcision served to give my father the honor of presiding over the initiation of an elder son. On my part, it accorded me a legitimate form of circumcision ritual arrangement that served to give me the status of manhood.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

(Answers to the questions determined the flow and direction of the interview while maintaining the main research objectives.)

1. Tell me about events that marked major changes for you in your family as you grew up.
2. Describe the organization of your circumcision as you remember it.
3. Describe the process of initiation to manhood that you experienced as you remember it.
4. What role did circumcision play to change you from a boy to a man?
5. What are the major changes that happened to you after your circumcision?
6. Describe the role circumcision played in your eventual choice of a marriage partner or friend.
7. In what ways do you consider your circumcision useful to you while living in America?
8. What plans do you have for the circumcision of your children? of your grandchildren?

Appendix C

Biographical Data Form

Please check or fill in the following information about yourself:

Marital Status:

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Never married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Widowed

Age: _____

Educational Level (check the one that describes you best):

- ☐ some high school
- ☐ high school degree
- ☐ some college work
- ☐ bachelor's degree
- ☐ some graduate work
- ☐ master's degree
- ☐ doctoral degree

Occupation: _____

Number of hours you work on your job each week: _____

Number of children: _____

For each child, please provide their age, gender, and, if a boy, circumcision ritual experience if any:

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	Has the child had a circumcision ritual experience?
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___

Please list the gender and age of each of your siblings.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	Has this sibling, if a brother, had a circumcision ritual experience?
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____
M_____ F_____	_____	Yes ___ No ___ Year _____

APPENDIX D
Authorization Letter: University of Tennessee Institutional Research Board

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE



05/22/2001

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
404 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-0140
865-974-3466
Fax: 865-974-2805

IRB#: 6043 B

TITLE: A Retrospective Study of the Transition from Boyhood to Manhood among Kikuyu College Students Living in the US: An Investigation of the Contemporary...

Mbito, Michael N.
Child & Family Studies
3000 Hazelwood Rd.
Knoxville, TN 37921

Malia, Dr. Julia
Child & Family Studies
419 Jessie Harris Bldg.
Campus

Your project listed above was reviewed. It qualified for expedited review and has been approved.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. To retain signed consent forms from subjects for at least three years following completion of the project.
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) on the anniversary of your approval date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Brenda Lawson'.

Brenda Lawson
Compliances

APPENDIX E

Letter from the Kenya Christian Fellowship

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

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1st Vice President
Dr. Jeremiah Karanja
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Director of Singles Ministries
Rev. Jackson Karuki

LOCAL CHAPTER CONTACTS:

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Mr. Macharia Njau
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Mr. Francis Mbogo
253-859-5647
South Carolina Chapter
Dr. Sam Nagi
803-749-3433
California Chapter
Mr. George Waweru
510-783-6411

**KENYA
CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP IN
AMERICA**



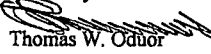
Thomas W. Oduor
MBA, ASQ-Certified Quality Auditor
Nashville Chapter President

April 22, 2001

Michael Mbitio
Admin. G A
UT - Child Development Labs
Phone: (865) 974-4576 (CDL)
(865) 947-7339 (Other)
Fax: (865) 974-2742
E-mail: mmbito@utk.edu

Following your request to us in KCFA to use our members in the Cities of: Knoxville, Atlanta and Birmingham, for the purpose of your research, I am glad to let you know that the KCFA President has endorsed your request and subsequently advised me to give you all the assistance that you may require. In this regard, I will in due course enclose for your attention, our membership listing for the area of your interest. Feel free to contact me for any further help that you may require to facilitate the success of your project. We wish you every success in your studies and the research endeavor in the area of your interest. Feel free to contact me for any further help that you may require facilitating the success of your project. We wish you every success in your studies and the research endeavor.

Sincerely


Thomas W. Oduor
MBA, ASQ-Certified Quality Auditor
118 Webster Street, Lot 19
Lebanon TN, 37087-2060

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Statement

The Transition from Boyhood to Manhood among Kikuyu Men Living in the United States: The experience of the Male Circumcision Ritual in Sub-Sahara Africa.

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the influences of the circumcision transitional ritual through interviewing participants like you who have gone through the ritual in their youth.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

As a participant, you will be interviewed at a time and in a private location of your choosing. The interview is expected to last approximately 1½ - 2 hours and will be audiotape and later transcribed. After transcription and analysis, the tapes and any notes will be destroyed. The transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet in a locked office and kept for 3 years, at which time they will be destroyed.

Your identity will be kept totally confidential through the use of pseudonyms. This signed consent form will be stored in a different locked cabinet separate from the interview transcription in a locked office for 3 years and then destroyed.

RISKS

There are few possible risks involved in your participation in this study. If the interview were to elicit any negative emotions that are troubling to you, Mr. Michael Mbiti will provide information about how you can talk to a trained mental health professional if you wish.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for the interviewees attached to your participation in this research project. Participants will not be compensated in any way as a result of presentation or publication of findings. Your only benefit may be an enhanced awareness of the circumcision ritual as it affects the lives of individuals, including yourself, as they mature.

The results of the study will be used to help develop a better understanding of the impact of the circumcision ritual and its function in helping young people to adopt healthy tendencies as they earn adult roles.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be store securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

_____ Participant's initials.
The interviewer will carefully guard the confidentiality of each participant's completed survey questionnaires and audiotapes and of any information contained within them, including assuring confidentiality within the participant's environment. No person other than those you yourself

may choose to tell will ever know that you participated in this research project. All other information collected from you will be kept confidential from the other participants, and theirs from you as well. All identifying information from you as a participant in this study will be held in strict confidence. All information obtained from your participation will be used for research purposes only. Results will be prepared in manuscript format and may be published in professional journals and books and also may be presented at professional meetings.

COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no direct compensation for participation in this research study. If you decide not to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before the interview is completed, your completed forms will be returned to you or destroyed, per your request, and the tape of your interview erased in your presence if you so desire.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Mr. Michael N. Mbitto, at 1215 West Cumberland Ave. Rm. 115, Knoxville, TN., 37996 and phone (865) 974-4576. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Research Compliance Services Section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (Print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

_____ Participant's initials.

VITA

Michael Mbiti was born in Tanganyika (present day Tanzania) while his parents were in exile during the Mau Mau war in Kenya. His childhood was influenced by the lifestyle dictates of British colonial rule in Kenya that infiltrated every social fiber of Kenyan social life. He spent his childhood like any ordinary Kikuyu boy within a rural village setting that availed minimal support for a livelihood as perceived in contemporary terms. His earlier career preparation culminated with an S.1. Science Teaching diploma from the Kenya Science Teacher's College in Nairobi followed by a 7-year stint of high school teaching in math and physics. He later joined the nongovernmental health service sector and participated in a variety of capacities in community service programs working with poor communities for 13 years (10 years in Kenya and 3 years in four east African countries, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda). Mr. Mbiti holds a M.Sc. degree in Economics and Social Sciences from the University of Wales with specialization in Population Policies and Programs. His thesis title in this Master's work was High Fertility in Kenya: The Need for Population Education in the Context of Recent Social and Cultural Changes. Mr. Mbiti is now at the threshold of completing his M.S. program in Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee. Following graduation, Mr. Mbiti intends to pursue Ph.D. study and later to continue his career working with the international community that supports the developing world to tackle poverty among vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.