

CHAPTER 1

Families in Kenya

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1. BACKGROUND

The Republic of Kenya is situated on the upraised part of the eastern portion of the African continent, astride the Equatorial latitude. The northernmost part of Kenya (i.e., the Ilemi Triangle) is just above 5° north latitude, while the southernmost land (i.e., the small islands including Ras Jimbo to the south of Shimoni village, in Kwale District) is at 4°40' south latitude. Longitudinally, Kenya extends from 33°83' east longitude (i.e., from Sumba, Mfangano, Ilemba, and the Pyramid Islands on Lake Victoria) to 41°75.5' east longitude (i.e., the location of Mandera Town). Currently, Kenya has an estimated population of 32.2 million, which is projected to increase to 33.4 million by 2005 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2002, pp. 30–31). It covers an area of 582,646 square kilometers, of which only 2.3% is water: part of Lake Victoria and Lakes Turkana (6,405 sq km), Baringo (129 sq km), Magadi (104 sq km), and other smaller lakes.

Kenya is bordered on the south by Tanzania (the length of the international

boundary being approximately 760 km), on the west by Uganda (approximately 720 km), on the northwest by Sudan (approximately 310 km), and on the north and east by Ethiopia (approximately 760 km) and Somalia (approximately 660 km). Kenya's southeastern extremity forms part of the Indian Ocean seaboard, which is approximately 495 kilometers long. On this coast is situated the magnificent seaport of Mombasa.

Geography

Kenya can be subdivided into six natural geographical-economic regions as follows: Coastal Belt and Plains; Duruma–Wajir Low Belt; Foreland Plateau; the Highlands—comprising Eastern and Western Highlands; Nyanza Low Plateau (part of the Lake Victoria Basin); and the Northern Plainlands. We will describe each of these.

The Coastal Belt and Plains

This is a narrow belt, generally below 152 meters (approximately 500 feet) above

sea level. The land along this belt is famous for its tree crops, which include coconut palms, mangoes, oranges, cashew nuts, and sisal.

Duruma–Wajir Low Belt

This is an intermediate belt between the more humid coastal plain and the foreland plateau. It is a dry land that is now in use for group ranching. Along the Tana River valley, there is scope for more permanent agriculture through irrigation. Already irrigation has been initiated around Bura area. The main problem in land use is that the soils tend to be generally sandy, but in the higher parts such as Shimba Hills, cashew nuts, coconuts, and cassava are grown successfully, as has been demonstrated by the Shimba Hills settlement scheme.

The Foreland Plateau

This plateau has an altitude of 304 to 915 meters (approximately 997–3,002 feet) above sea level. It is a relatively narrow belt from the Mount Kilimanjaro foothills through the Taita Hills northward via Kitui to beyond Garba Tula. Settlement is confined to places where water can be obtained. Wildlife dominates the greater part of this region. The famous Amboseli Game Reserve and Tsavo National Parks are situated here.

The Highlands

This region forms the heartland of the Republic of Kenya. It is cool and, on the whole, malaria-free, and is the agriculturally rich part of the country. It is bisected by the Rift Valley into the eastern and western highlands. The central (or eastern) highlands and Mau escarpment to the west are the “breadbasket” of the country, growing food crops such as corn, wheat, potatoes, pulses, and many varieties of vegetables. Along with this, there is large-scale farming and export

farming, comprising the now famous tea, coffee, pyrethrum, dairy, and ranching for which Kenya is known. The modified tropical climate is healthy and energizing, and pleasant almost the year round.

The Nyanza Low Plateau

This is part of the Victoria Basin, dominated by the Kano Rift Valley, which runs west-to-east, with its western part (Winam Gulf) still part of the lake. The Kano Plain is suited for irrigation work. To the north are richly well-watered Kakamega, Vihiga, and parts of Siaya Districts, with their remarkably high rural population density. The higher parts of South Nyanza, like its northern counterpart, form equally rich agricultural land that has yet to be fully developed.

The Northern Plainlands

This region covers practically the whole of northern Kenya. It is united by its endless aridity, which has kept its human population low. Nomadic pastoralism is the normal mode of land use. The quality of the range has not been properly assessed, although efforts toward this realization have been made by the Integrated Project in Arid Lands (IPAL), a project supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) since 1976. Northern Kenya is still suffering from the colonial neglect. Organized marketing and provision of facilities for the mobile pastoralists is urgently needed, as one way of reducing overstocking in a nonresilient and essentially fragile environment. This is necessary to arrest desertification, which is already threatening many parts of the region. Provision of modern infrastructure has begun in the region. The Kapenguria–Lodwar–Sudan, Isiolo–Marsabit–Moyale, and Isiolo–Wajir–Mandera roads have made the region much more accessible. The

assistance being given to Kenya through development aid by a number of foreign agencies, in regions such as Turkana, Marsabit, and Samburu, should be encouraged and made part of national development goals.

The People of Kenya

It is often said that Kenya is a land of contrasts. This is not only true of the physical, geographical, and climatic conditions of the land, but also of the social, economic, and cultural character of its people. One of the most striking characteristics of the population of Kenya is its ethnic diversity, although 98.9% of the total population is of African origin and 99.7% of the total African population is of Kenyan origin, according to the 1999 census.

The various national population censuses have divided the African population on a linguistic basis. Interestingly, the social and cultural organization of the various ethnic groups is closely associated with the linguistic classifications. This is particularly the case when we consider variations in age and sex divisions of labor, as well as in cultural taboos and *rites of passage* to be observed by these linguistics groups. The largest of these is the Bantu-speaking group, which belongs to the Niger-Congo linguistic family. The Bantu in Kenya form about 65% of the total population. The present concentration of the group is largely south of an imaginary line from Mount Elgon on the west, southeast to Lamu on the Indian Ocean. In this part of the country the Bantu are found in varying concentrations in three main geographical regions: the Lake Victoria Basin, the East Rift Highlands, and the coastal belt. The central group, which is the largest, includes the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, Mbere, Kamba, and Tharaka. The majority occupy the fertile Central Highlands extending from Nyambeni Hills in Meru and Mount Kenya

in the north to the slopes of Nyandarua. The coastal belt is dominated by Mijikenda people, who include Giriama, Digo, Duruma, Ribe, Chonyi, and Kauma.

The remainder of Kenya's Africans fall broadly into two other linguistic groupings: the Nilotic and Cushitic. The Nilotic is represented by Luo, Kalenjin, Maasai, and related peoples such as Samburu, Turkana, and Teso. The Luo occupy the Lake Victoria Basin, with the rural Luo concentrating in the lower parts of the western plateau draining into Lake Victoria. Away from the rural areas, the group is now well represented in main Kenyan towns. The Kalenjin-speaking and the related Maasai groups have historically been pastoral people, although farming now constitutes a major occupation of the groups.

The Cushitic group of languages represents only 3.4% of the total population of Kenya. The group falls into two distinct subdivisions. The larger subdivision includes the Somali-speaking group occupying most of the eastern portions of the arid and semi-arid northeastern areas of Kenya. The second subdivision is to be found in the western portion of the arid and semi-arid region, and includes mainly the Rendille and Orma-speaking peoples. The Cushitic-speaking people occupy a region that suffers from a serious moisture deficit with conditions unsuitable for agricultural activities.

The normative social structure of Kenya's societies includes patriliney, patriarchy, and polygyny, though Edmondo Cavicchi argues that in precolonial times the Kikuyu may have been matriarchal (Cavicchi, 1977). Kenya has a parliamentary government. Since independence in 1963, there have been three presidents: Jomo Kenyatta until 1979, Daniel T. arap Moi from 1979 to 2002, and Mwai Kibaki from 2002 to the present.

Much of the present chapter will draw on a study of kinship and families carried out by the two authors during the 1990s. Interviews were completed with 620 adult

men and 644 women—84% of them being between 25 and 45 years of age, and two-thirds between 30 and 40. The study involved 300+ interviews with each of the following ethnic groups: the Mijikenda of the south coast, the Akamba of east-central Kenya, the Embu on the eastern slopes of Mount Kenya, and the Kikuyu of Nairobi and the central highlands. Some 63% of the respondents were rural, with only the Kikuyu being divided equally between rural and urban environments. It would be inaccurate to generalize about Kenya from these four societies, since the cattle herders (Samburu, Maasai) and the lake people (Luhya, Luo) are omitted. However, we will draw on other literature in speaking about Kenya as a whole.

2. PAIRING UP/MATE SELECTION

Courtship among the Luo is discussed by Ocholla-Ayayo:

A girl is likely to have but one lover in a clan, thus reducing jealousy and conflict over a girl by counter claims. When a girl had a lover there was no interference, and it was known in the whole clan that such a girl is so-and-so's lover. But this did not prevent the girl from becoming married to others rather than to the lovers she had. (1976, p. 83)

A part of courtship is sexual experience. Both Kenyan men and women are likely to have first experience of intercourse prior to marriage. Prior to Kenyan independence, among the Nandi of Western Kenya, a communal dormitory accommodated six young couples (Snell, 1954, p. 67). Twenty years later, Goldschmidt reported that it was unusual, at least among the Sebei (on the Kenya-Uganda border) for a normal person to reach pubertal circumcision a virgin (1976, p. 203). If a girl becomes pregnant, the boy is

named, and the child is his, that is, part of his lineage—though he is not forced to marry the girl (1976, p. 204).

For women in the 1994 *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey* (KDHS), median age at first intercourse was 16.6 years, and 18.8 years for marriage. In the same survey, 64% of the men reported that they had had intercourse by age 18, but only 4% were married by that age. There are two regional differences worth noting. First, women in the Nyanza (Lake) region are younger than those of other regions both at first intercourse and at first marriage. Second, the coastal (Mijikenda) region, which is predominantly Muslim, is the only one in which age at first intercourse and at first marriage are virtually identical—an apparent indication of sexual and religious conservatism (KDHS, 1993, pp. 65–67, 156).

An important aspect of pairing continues to be *bridewealth* (once called bride-price), that is, money that passes from the groom's family to the bride's. Of our married respondents, 90% said that bridewealth has been, is being, or will be paid. Items included were very similar to Goldschmidt's list for the Sebei of Western Kenya: money, cows, goats, sheep, a water tank, clothing, millet, sugar, beer, honey, milk, bread, and salt (1976). More than a quarter indicated that the bride-wealth consisted entirely of money, ranging from Sh 700 to Sh 70,000 (about U.S.\$20 to \$2,000 when the data were collected). Bridewealth amounts are often discussed in livestock equivalence. For example, one man said, "I was supposed to pay eight goats and two cows, but these were converted into Sh 10,000." The average value was approximately Sh 14,000, or U.S.\$400. Thus, bridewealth seems to still be of significant economic value, rather than having become merely tokenistic or symbolic.

Neither urban residence nor education has thus far reduced either the prevalence or the amount of bridewealth. In fact, *all* our Kikuyu respondents who grew up in

Nairobi stated that bridewealth had been paid at their marriage. In fact, two of the largest bridewealths reported were paid by university-educated, lifelong Nairobians. In these and other urban instances, livestock was paid as well as money—indicating the continuing rural connections of the bride's family, the groom's family, or both.

Bridewealth, therefore, is an important indicator of marriage. Two other important aspects of bridewealth emerged from the authors' data: (1) continuing payment, and (2) "wives don't know." David Parkin notes that payment may continue for many years (1972), and J. L. Comaroff reported that it may be paid early on or over a period of years (1980, p. 217). Some of our respondents stated that either it had not yet been paid or was still being paid. On the second issue, quite a few of our women respondents said it was paid, but they had no idea how much. One woman stated that this was, in fact, the norm: "Normally the woman never knows the bridewealth amount."

It is important to note that the concept of *bridewealth* in African marriages fundamentally symbolizes a contract or a covenant between not only the bridegroom and the bride, but even more important between the clans of the two parties in marriage. No commercial interests were involved in bridewealth. Traditionally, there were standardized amounts of bridewealth payable in the form of a combination of goods such as cows, goats, sheep, honey, beer, millet, and milk, depending on the customary (i.e., "legal") requirements of the bride's ethnic group. Today, as we have noted, these goods are increasingly transformed into money equivalents. However, payments had to be made in installments approved by clan elders of the bride and the bridegroom.

Full payment of bridewealth was highly discouraged, although it was desirable to pay most of it (say 80%) before marriage. The remaining debt of bridewealth symbolized

a continuing bond or social commitment between the relatives and clans of the two parties. Such a debt could outlast the lives of marriage partners to be paid by their children (often the eldest son) long after death of the father. Therefore, full settlement of bridewealth was ruled out by both parties, because it would imply an end to the relationship or covenant between the wife's and husband's clans and relatives with all the social, economic, and political benefits that were attached to the covenant.

A *wedding* may involve a traditional ritual ceremony or a modern church/mosque ceremony, both, or neither. Said one man: "There was no ceremony, but we are married because I paid the bridewealth." Bridewealth and polygyny are traditional patrilineal practices that indicate the value of a woman's productivity and reproductive capacity.

The vast majority of Kenyans marry at least once, but the normative history of Kenyan societies involves *polygyny*, or multiple wives. This, however, is a diminishing phenomenon. One-third of the fathers of our Kikuyu respondents were polygynous, while only 16% of the 30 to 40-year-old men have (or expect to have) more than one wife (Adams & Mburugu, 1994). According to the KDHS, the differences in polygyny are dramatic between regions. As recently as 1984, the percentages of Kikuyu, Kamba, and Meru/Embu women in polygynous unions were 11, 15, and 14, respectively. In contrast, 41% of Luo women (near the Lake) and 40% of coastal Mijikenda women were polygynous (KDHS, 1994).

Polygyny is observed to be declining in Kenya. According to the 1977–1978 Kenya Fertility Survey (KFS), 30% of the currently married women were in polygynous unions. In the 1998 KDHS report it was shown that the incidence of polygyny had declined to 16% among the currently married women. The proportions of married women in polygynous unions in 1998 ranged from

29% among women with no education to 11% among women with at least some secondary education. This shows that education is a strong deterrent to polygynous marriages. Data for currently married men in 1998 show that 10% of them were in polygynous unions, but this varied widely according to the age of the man. For ages below 30, around 2% to 3% of men are in polygamous union compared with around 15% of men aged 40 and above (CBS, 1999, pp. 68–69).

According to the Kilbrides, writing in 1990, the advantages of polygyny are the following: (1) Economically, it provides a large pool of laborers, so that wage labor can be avoided; (2) it enhances the personal and political power provided to men, though Remi Clignet argues that it may also increase a woman's power (Clignet, 1970); and (3) men mentioned an emotional advantage, while women spoke of protection. The major disadvantages, according to both genders, include the following: (1) jealousy, envy, and/or hatred among cowives and their children, the result of the husband not sharing love and resources equally; and (2) disadvantages concerning religious and ceremonial activity (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990, pp. 203–204).

Our polygyny-inclined Kikuyu respondents give several reasons for wanting multiple wives. "My wife and I do not have children, and they are the ones that make life a success—so a second wife may be necessary." Another man said, "When my wife grows old, I'll need a younger wife." The traditional norm was affirmed by another man: "I don't see anything wrong with many wives if one is capable of supporting them." Still another said "maybe," noting the tension between tradition and cost: "I don't think I have enough money, but with money it would be quite commendable." In rare instances, as Kayongo-Male and Onyango point out, a wife may ask her husband to get another wife if her work is too much (1984, p. 25).

According to the 1998 KDHS, older women are more likely to be in polygynous unions than younger women, and rural women are more likely than their urban counterparts. Substantial provincial variations in the practice of polygamy (polygyny) exist, with Central Province (dominated by Kikuyu people) having the lowest level of polygyny (4%) and Nyanza Province (dominated by Luo people) along with Coast Province (dominated by Mijikenda people) having the highest levels of polygyny (24% and 21%, respectively).

This leads to the reasons for monogamy. Several referred to Christian beliefs, saying "I have been saved." One man expressed the unwillingness of a woman to agree to polygyny: "I have a girlfriend I love so much I would like to take her as a second wife. However, she doesn't want to be a second wife." The vast majority of comments echo those of Michael O'Leary speaking of the Akamba: "With the rise both in the levels of acceptable standard of living and its cost, polygyny has become prohibitive even for the large cattle owner unless he also has substantial off-farm income" (1984, p. 123). It is not just cost in objective terms, but also rising expectations, that limit polygyny. (On this and other issues among the Akamba, see Ndeti, 1972.)

Not only is the prevalence of polygyny diminishing, but it is becoming less localized, so that kin and community control over the pairing process is reduced. For example, one wife may be in the rural area and another in the city—especially when the male is a city dweller. However, urban life itself reduces the prevalence of polygyny. Some authors, such as O'Leary, simply say cost is the primary problem (1984). Others, as noted previously, mention the Christian emphasis on monogamy. Helen Ware states that education works against polygyny, especially increasing the opposition of educated women (1979). Alfred Ukaegbo, writing about Nigeria, says

that men still approve of it, but only the old and uneducated actually do it (1977). As we noted, however, such changes are taking place much more slowly among the Luo and Mijikenda than in the central highlands.

Another issue in partner selection is *hypergamy*—or the woman marrying a higher-status man. Little has been written about this, but in rural Kenya the bridewealth helps to balance the status of the parties and their kin. If the woman is of higher status, a marriage will require a larger bridewealth on the part of the man's family. In urban Kenya, however, hypergamy is likely. Educated urban males often express the desire for a rural wife (usually from their home region), because the educated urban woman is “too hard to control.” Likewise, the high-status urban female may find it difficult to marry at all—though this is hardly unique to Kenya.

Besides being shunned by the educated urban male, the high-status urban female finds it difficult to marry due to three major reasons: First, she may desire to be free from control by a man and voluntarily choose to remain single and independent. In particular, she may desire freedom in reproductive choices and in the use of resources she generates. Second, she may fear losing face and esteem (both self-esteem and the esteem of others) if she marries the easily accessible low-status man. The societal expectation is that a woman should marry a man at least of equal status to herself, if not a man of higher status. To marry downward in status would lower the dignity and respect accorded to the woman. Third, the high-status urban female may be “too old” to compete with younger women in the prime years of marriage. At best, she can marry older men within her status group, but because these men are already married, she can only opt to marry as a second or third wife—an option she may find difficult to accept.

Although educated men avoid marrying high-status women, these men prefer strong

friendship ties with the women to whom they secretly extend the rights of married women. In most cases, these men are already married but secretly maintain intimate relationships with high-status single women, by whom they proceed to have children without the knowledge of the wife. These forms of relationships have resulted in what is commonly known as “informal polygamy” or having “secret wives.”

3. FERTILITY AND SOCIALIZATION: HAVING AND RAISING CHILDREN

Fertility Trends

The important measures of fertility are total fertility rate (TFR), children ever born (CEB), and fertility preferences and expectations. For each of these measures, it would be interesting to examine differentials by age, residence, province/region, and education—depending on the available data. In the 1970s, Kenya had the highest fertility level in the world. Since then, the country has undergone what could be considered one of the most dramatic fertility transitions in human history. The total fertility rate declined by 20% from about eight children per woman in 1977 to 6.6 children per woman in 1989. A further decline of 17% was recorded between 1989 and 1993, when the total fertility rate was estimated at 5.4 children per woman (Brass & Jolly, 1993; CBS, 1999). It is further shown that total fertility declined by 13% from 5.4 in 1993 to 4.7 in 1998 (CBS, 1999).

Provincial/regional differences show that Nairobi, with a TFR of 3.4 in 1993 and 2.6 in 1998, had the lowest fertility of any region, followed closely by Central Province, where the TFR was 3.9 and 3.7 in the respective years. On the other hand, Western Province, with a TFR of 6.4 and 5.6 in the respective years, had the highest fertility. The other provinces, namely Coast, Eastern, Nyanza, and Rift

Table 1.1 Mean Number of Children Ever Born by Kenyan Women by Data Source (1989–1999)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>1989 Census</i>	<i>1993 KDHS</i>	<i>1999 Census</i>
15–19	0.27	0.20	0.28
20–24	1.56	1.36	1.35
25–29	3.25	3.13	2.61
30–34	4.89	4.53	4.15
35–39	6.05	6.13	5.39
40–44	6.87	6.95	6.38
45–49	7.21	7.87	6.95

Valley, with TFRs of 5.1, 4.7, 5.0, and 5.3 respectively in 1998, fall between the two extremes of Nairobi and Western Provinces.

A major determinant of variations in fertility is education, a factor that largely explains fertility differentials by residence (urban vs. rural areas) and region. Regions such as Nairobi and Central Province are also regions dominated by the Kikuyu people, in which group women's education is considerably higher than in other groups. The central role of education in fertility differentials is shown in the 1993 KDHS and 1998 KDHS, where it is observed that women with no education had a TFR of 6.0 and 5.8, respectively, whereas women with secondary education or above had a TFR of 4.0 and 3.5 in the respective periods.

Children Ever Born

The average number of CEB, or lifetime fertility at the time of the census or survey, largely varies by age of woman. Age-determined variations can further be differentiated by ethnicity or region, and education. Age differentials in children ever born also indicate the momentum of

childbearing. Table 1.1 shows mean number of children ever born according to age of woman during the 1989–1999 period.

The mean number of children ever born from the 1999 census shows a consistent decline compared with the 1989 census for all age-groups except 15 to 19 years. The decline is greatest among women aged 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 years, while the rise in age-group 15 to 19 is insignificant. Indeed, age-groups 20 to 39 years experienced a significant decline as follows: 13.5% for age-group 20 to 24 years, 19.7% for age-group 25 to 29 years, 15.1% for age-group 30 to 34, and 10.9% for age-group 35 to 39 years. On average, women in their late twenties, according to the 1999 census, have given birth to almost three children, women in their late thirties have had over five children, and women currently at the end of their childbearing years have had nearly seven children.

The average number of children ever born also varies by education, ethnicity, and type of residence. A general belief exists that education makes for lower fertility. Analysis of data from selected regions of Kenya show significant effects of education on CEB for both women and men (Mburugu & Adams,

Table 1.2 Mean Number of Children Ever Born by Women and Men Aged 39–45 Years From Selected Regions of Kenya by Levels of Education

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>Mean Children Ever Born</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
No education	4.7	5.6
Some primary	4.2	4.3
Completed primary	3.7	3.3
Secondary and above	2.6	2.6

2001). This is clearly shown in Table 1.2, where analysis is restricted to women and men aged 39 to 45 years.

A difference of slightly more than two children exists between women with no education and women with at least some secondary education. For men, the differences by education are even greater than for women, in part because of the greater likelihood of polygyny on the part of the less-educated men.

Ethnically, available data show that the mean numbers of children ever born among the Kikuyu of Nairobi and Central Province, the Akamba of Eastern Province, and the Mijikenda of Coast Province are 2.9, 3.5, and 3.6 respectively.

Concerning the type of residence, the median numbers of children ever born in urban and rural areas are 3.8 and 4.5, respectively. Yet, when education is controlled, most of the rural-urban difference disappears. Overall, it is not surprising that age accounts for most of the difference in fertility, but within age categories, the key factor is education.

Fertility Preferences and Expectations

The decline in fertility over the past 20 years is a consequence of declining desire for many children. An increasing number of

married women no longer desire to have large families of six or more children and use contraceptives to avoid excess fertility. The ideal number of children has consistently declined from 6.2 in 1977, to 5.8 in 1984, 4.4 in 1989, and 3.8 in 1999 (CBS, 1999). It has been argued that the emerging concept of the “small family norm” is a product of severe social and economic strains as well as a product of the Kenya mass media, which has actively highlighted the many benefits of a small family vis-à-vis the problems of a large family in modern Kenyan society (Dow & Linda, 1983; Brass & Jolly, 1993; Westoff & Rodriguez, 1995).

Although the overall ideal family size has remained close to four children over the past decade, it increases with the actual number of living children. The mean ideal number of children increases from 3.3 among childless women to 5.1 among women with six or more children (CBS, 1999, pp. 85–86). (Of course, 5.1 is still fewer than they have!) There are several possible explanations for the relationship between ideal and actual number of children. First, to the extent that women are able to implement their preferences, those who want smaller families will tend to actually have them, and vice versa. Second, those who have large families may simply rationalize their family size. Third,

older women with larger families may indeed have large ideal family sizes, as a consequence of the norm they acquired when growing up in the traditional social and cultural setting.

A most interesting expectation by women is based on the gender of the children they already have. Women with one boy at present expect to have 2.4 children; and if they have one girl they expect to have 2.7 children at completed fertility. For women with two boys or two girls, the expectations are 2.8 and 3.4 children, respectively. If they have three boys, they expect 3.3 children when fertility is completed, and with three girls and no boys, they expect four children—meaning that they will try once more to have a boy. This clearly shows a preference for boy children. However, by the time they reach four boys and no girls or four girls and no boys, women expect to have 4.5 children in either case. What this means is that the birth of a second or third girl, with no boys, results in their expectation of trying at least once more to have a boy. But a fourth girl results in many parents giving up the attempt to produce a male offspring.

Infertility

Infertility, whether primary or secondary, is not expected by couples who decide to marry in Kenya. Indeed the major reason for marriage, not only in Kenya but in other African societies, is to have children. A woman who cannot or decides not to have children is an object of pity in the family and the society at large. The percentage of women aged 45 to 49 who have never had children provides an indicator of the level of primary infertility, that is, the proportion of women who are unable to have children at all. It is estimated that primary infertility in Kenya is low—about 1%.

Infertility in Kenyan societies does not always result in divorce, though in some

cases it does, while in others it results in seeking a second wife. Among the Nandi of western Kenya, “Childlessness in itself was not considered adequate grounds for divorce; there had to be indications of irretrievable breakdown or evidence of exceptional circumstances” (Langley, 1979). In our study of four societies in Kenya, one of the rural women respondents stated, “We divorced after two years because I was incapable of giving birth.” Another woman said, “Since I can’t give birth and people in my village know it, no man wants to be associated with me” (Mburugu & Adams, 2001).

The male response may be divorce, or it may be to seek a second wife. One rural man had this to say: “My relatives keep telling me to get a second wife, since mine is barren.” Another man stated clearly: “I might marry another wife because we cannot have children and they are the ones that make life a success. Without them, life is useless.” All these comments were made by rural respondents. These types of comments are much less likely to come from urban dwellers, especially the educated ones.

On Raising Children

Childcare is a challenging task for the increasing number of working women with young children, particularly in urban areas. A national survey of women in the reproductive years (i.e., aged 15–49) shows that slightly over one-half (52%) of employed women have a child under age 6 (CBS, 1999, p. 27).

On being asked to indicate the person who takes care of the child, 42% of the employed women who have a child under 6 said they look after their own child(ren) while at work, and 17% said they have relatives (other than husband) to look after their children. In 15% of the cases, another older child (usually female) minds the young child. Women with more education and who reside in urban areas (especially Nairobi) use a hired worker to take

care of the young child, and are less likely to use some other child (male or female).

A study on childcare arrangements for children under 3 years of age in five Kenyan districts showed that different childcare arrangements were used in different environments. In Siaya and Kilifi Districts, mothers were the main caregivers. In Kericho District, mothers utilized institutional childcare services, since they could not simultaneously combine work with childcare. In Narok District, grandmothers were the main caregivers, while in the Nairobi slums siblings and child-minders were used (National Center for Early Childhood and Education [NACECE], 1992). In Laikipia District, it was found that 71% of the families with children aged below 6 years indicated maternal care to be the predominant childcare arrangement. This came in the form of maternal care at home (31%), maternal care at the farm (29%), maternal care at the business premises (9%), and maternal care at the employer's premises (2%). Childcare in nursery schools involved 17% of the families with children under age 6. Other types of childcare arrangements such as support by extended family (5%), support by siblings (4%), and house help (1%) were insignificant. The findings imply that as families become nuclear and schooling undercuts availability of siblings, only maternal care arrangements and the nursery school gain preeminence as childcare arrangements (Mwakera, 2003, pp. 28–30).

The options available for childcare are quickly changing from traditional forms of care to modern forms that entail social and economic costs. Traditionally, the rural mother is still to be seen carrying her baby to all manner of places including the marketplace, the river, the farm plot (*shamba*), village meetings, and so on, an example that is sometimes emulated by the mother in urban areas. If there is no reliable person to leave the child with at home, this trend remains the most

attractive option for both baby and mother despite the extra “load/weight” the mother has to bear. This way, the baby is wrapped in security and can feed on demand.

The urban environment, with its thick morning and evening traffic and long distances to cover to the marketplace or workplace, is not convenient for the mother carrying a baby. The urban society is also not tolerant of the inconvenience of baby/child company. In the words of a woman educator in Kenya: “A mother is almost always made to feel guilty that she brought her baby to church or meetings. It is as if the only outing a baby should have is to the MHC clinic” (Gachukia, 1989, p. 91).

Though diminishing in importance, the care of children through the extended family is widely practiced in rural areas. It is common to find a grandmother tending a compound and overseeing the welfare of young children while their mothers are attending other duties—a practice that is of mutual benefit to all parties involved. The elderly feel wanted and needed; they have something to offer. They command experience and have loving care to offer to the young and are experts in the socialization process. Furthermore, grandmothers, even the elderly, are good supervisors (Gachukia, 1989, p. 92). A few of our urban respondents indicated that their children are being raised by rural grandparents.

An important question we asked was whether parents see child raising as easier, harder, or about the same as when they were children. About 75% see raising children as more difficult, with the perception being even greater for rural respondents. Only 10% report that it is easier, with the rest believing it to be about the same. The primary complaint of those who find it harder has to do with expense. Expenses fall into three categories. First, there is the cost of education. Even the rural parents believe that their children need an education. School

tuition is part of the cost, and another is school supplies, including uniforms. This brings us to a second expense factor: clothing. Not just school uniforms, but other clothing is costly today. The third expense factor concerns children's demands for the toys and treats related to modern urban life.

The second parental complaint is that children do not respect or listen to their parents as they once did. This concern, again, is not unique to Kenya. A general feeling on the part of parents is that lack of control over children is coupled with a lack of respect from the children. Several respondents noted that, when they were young, they entered a room on their knees when a parent or grandparent was present. Of course, any of the factors that make children more independent and self-reliant—such as education—are also related to a lessening of expressed respect.

Those few who indicated that child-rearing is easier today are almost all well-to-do urbanites, who can afford to pay for someone—usually a housegirl—to help with their children. This lessens the amount of time and energy the parent (primarily the mother) has to spend caring for children (Mburugu & Adams, 2001, pp. 30–31).

Another issue concerns discipline. On the physical disciplining of children, Kayongo-Male and Onyango note that

[p]arents are more likely than other agents to use physical punishment. Beatings were usually given by fathers, though in polygamous households the mothers were more involved in physically disciplining children. (1984, p. 22)

4 & 5. MALES AND FEMALES: GENDER AND MARITAL RELATIONS

Traditionally, the patrilineal Kenyan male has had authority and power, yet this is not

a simple issue. Niara Sudarkasa says that a certain amount of gender equality preceded colonialism and gave way to expatriate or colonial preference for dealing with males (Sudarkasa, 1994). One of our rural women said, "I am always under my husband's authority, but I have to make good decisions on how to run my shop." For polygyny, as the number of wives increases, the husband spends less time with each wife, and thus each gains more influence over her life and children. In addition, each subsequent wife tends to have less power than the previous one (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984, p. 30).

According to the 2001 report, among the Mijikenda and Akamba, either the husband makes household decisions or a couple makes them together. When the respondents' comments about their decisions are compared with their perception of their own parents' decision making, it is obvious that there has been a change toward, but not to, equalitarianism. However, when couples decide together, it often means that they actually make decisions in separate domains, with the wife making child-rearing and a few household decisions.

When the husband is away, the wife becomes used to making decisions regarding property, finances, disciplining children, and the like. This makes it difficult to accept the husband's authority when he returns home (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984, p. 63). These authors continue: While the urban woman may be the boss of her office, at home she is expected to be a "good African woman," defined as "one who keeps her household together, runs it efficiently, brings up the children, and welcomes anybody home with a wide smile on her face, and produces sons and daughters as God may allow" (1984, p. 69).

This point brings us to the fact that the gender division of labor, as noted by Kabwegyere (1982) and others is traditionally

quite clearly demarcated. Iona Mayer describes the traditional separation of labor and activity among the Gusii:

Men and women . . . were seldom if ever allowed to play the same parts, or play them in the same ways. Some roles and activities were reserved for one sex; only men could make ropes, or work with iron, only women could cook, tend the household fire, or brew beer. . . . Some were joint activities but the sexes had clearly articulated roles; in hut-building, men put up the framework, women plastered it. Many things were done by both sexes but done with a difference. . . . They routinely received different meat portions from the same animals. Their spheres were also divided in the literal sense of physical space. (1975, p. 266)

The particularly heavy duties that custom lays upon women are raising the children, providing food from the garden, doing most of the farm work, getting water and firewood, thatching and plastering huts, and carrying loads to market (Cavicchi, 1977). One of our rural male respondents made the power/division of labor distinction very clear: "Even if milk is boiling on the fire, I cannot remove it." The wife wakes up early to make sure "warm water is available for the husband's bath, and that the children are prepared for school" (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984, p. 69).

The Kenyan research carried out by Mburugu and Adams shows that wives spend three times as many hours doing housework, and twice as much time caring for the children, as the husbands do. The differences in housework and childcare by gender are greater among the Mijikenda than among the Akamba. However, this is not accounted for by Akamba men being more likely to help, but by the fact that a substantial minority of Akamba households have paid help (Mburugu & Adams, 2001, p. 24).

The complexity of gender relations was made plain by Margarethe Silberschmidt in 1992. Writing about the Kisii of western Kenya, she questioned whether perhaps men had become the weaker sex. In 1900, she says, men's influence was due to control over women, herds, bridewealth, and heirs. But as men became migrant workers, their wage work was less important than women's agricultural productivity. In fact, says Silberschmidt, men's identity crisis often results in alcohol problems. Women produce *changaa*, men buy and drink it, and children's school fees are thus paid for by the women. Dignity, self-control, and wealth are unattainable for most men (1992, p. 247). Women may call men "heads" and "owners," but they believe that only women can plan. And while some women wish their men would die, without a man, the woman still has no status. "Even an alcoholic husband is better than none since, at least, the wife has access to his land" (1992, p. 253). While both genders have changed, women's changes have been emancipatory.

Land Use

Kenyan land is owned or controlled by the patrilineage. The rural woman joins the husband on his land. An important part of marital relations concerns the use of this land. Until independence, women did most of the cultivating, while men cleared land and boys looked after the livestock. As men move to the city, the women and boys have even more responsibility for the land. But if land use changes from subsistence to cash cropping or commercial farming, the man is likely to control both the land and the income derived therefrom. Beth Brockland says it simply: "Cash cropping was, and remains, largely seen as a 'male' activity in African societies" (2000, p. 19). Likewise, land previously available to women for subsistence agriculture has been gradually

taken away and used for cash cropping. But, despite the distinction in land use by gender for subsistence and cash cropping, it is not as rigidly defined as it once was (Brockland, 2000, p. 25).

Satisfaction

Studies from many societies show that women are likely to be satisfied with their role in the family division of labor, despite the fact that they ordinarily do more work than men. This is due to a division of labor ideology. In the Mburugu-Adams research, more than one-half of the Akamba and Mijikenda women and men say they are satisfied with the division of labor (though not completely so). However, the Mijikenda women are less content than the Akamba with both their contribution and that of their husbands, though more than one-half are satisfied (Brockland, 2000, p. 34).

6. FAMILY STRESSES AND PROBLEMS

Other than occasional features on family issues (often concerning domestic violence) in newspapers and magazines, few major studies have been carried out on family problems in Kenya. However, Population Communications Africa (PCA) undertook a major study in 2000–2001 focusing on violence and abuse of women in Kenya. The survey covered some 1,664 women and girls aged between 17 and 77 years, together with two smaller matching samples totaling 445 men and boys in six of the eight provinces of Kenya (Johnston, 2002). The emphasis in the study was on the more overt and violent forms of abuse—physical and sexual abuse—without obscuring the fact that these types of bodily assault also carry an associated verbal (insult) component, which invariably combine to generate emotional abuse.

In general, the proportion of women who reported abuse in adulthood varied as follows according to type of abuse: physical abuse (52%), sexual abuse (41%), verbal abuse (64%), and emotional abuse (54%). On being asked to indicate whether the most recent physical and/or sexual abuse experiences was/were still continuing, 43% claimed the abuse to be currently ongoing, 52% claiming the abuse occurred with increasing frequency. Indeed, a telling example of physical abuse was reported in a newspaper article with the title “Battered for the Pill,” which told of a wife who was terrorized by her knife-wielding husband, and for 4 hours was constantly bashed and beaten. The crime she had committed was to take (oral) contraceptives without his knowledge (“Battered for the Pill,” 2001).

The patterns of abuse among married women show that 37% are abused daily, 21% on Christmas Day, 17% on payday (mostly end of month), 12% on weekends, and 8% on New Year’s Day. Contrary to expectation, it seems that Christmas day is not always a day of peace and goodwill (Johnston, 2002, p. 20).

In Kenya, marriage brings young women into new extended family relationships. This is typically the case in rural areas. In doing so, marriage introduces a new set of potential and, too often, actual abusers. The predominant abusers reported by married women are husbands or partners, and mothers- and fathers-in-law. These three categories of within-family physical abusers are responsible for 62% of reported domestic violence. Second, the young wife’s life is made physically uncomfortable by her own parents, cousins, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Within the family, sexual abusers (often through unwanted sexual touch/rape) are husbands/partners, fathers-in-law, cousins (male, both sides), fathers, stepfathers, brothers-in-law, grandfathers (both sides) and uncles (both sides). It is to be noted here

that the gender abuse of married women is a two-sided process. The abusers are males from the wife's family and from her husband's family-in-law. Also worth noting is that mothers-in-law are the leaders in verbal sexual insults and innuendos (Johnston, 2002, pp. 28–30).

The causes of abuse can be grouped into gender-role prescriptions and gender perceptions on culture and tradition. Kenyan married couples tend to have both similar and different perceptions of their ideal roles as husbands and wives. It is shown that Kenyan married men's perceptions of their role as an ideal husband were to protect the well-being of the family and household, to produce and provide for the family, to respond to the sexual desires of their wife/partner, and to provide their wife or partner with company and comradeship. On the other hand, their perceptions of the roles of an ideal wife were to produce and care for children, to prepare food for the family, to respond to the sexual desires of the husband, to provide marital/relational comradeship, to fetch water, food, and firewood, to keep the household compound tidy, and to buy and sell farm (*shamba*) products.

Kenyan women largely agree with their husbands that wives should be obedient—mindful and careful of their duties. The woman's perceptions of the role of an ideal wife were that she should be loyal and obedient to her husband (and his family elders), able to bear and raise children, careful of the welfare of children, mindful of her duties about the home and farm plot (*shamba*), and willing and able to care for family members who are sick (or disabled).

Thus the Kenyan men see themselves as the masters, protectors, and providers for the family. They perceive their wives to be their sexual and household servants. On the other hand, the Kenyan wives appear to want their husbands to be responsible. In return, they would be loyal and obedient subjects of their master, who they hope would treat them

well. It is worth noting that the women are focusing on values, feelings, and emotions.

Concerning culture and tradition, there are very significant differences in physical and sexual abuse and violence rates from different provinces. In Kenya, the provinces are largely coterminous with cultural (ethnic) groups. For example, Central Province consists of the Kikuyu people, Nyanza Province consists of the Luo people, Western Province consists of the Luhya people, and Coast Province consists of the Mijikenda people (though residential movement has made this somewhat less so). It is thought that differences in physical and sexual abuse are due in major part to varying cultural and traditional practices, which affect the social and economic status of women. The percentage of Kenyan women surveyed who reported physical and sexual abuse is shown in Table 1.3.

The traditions with a known impact on of women include the following: female genital mutilation, arranged marriage, dowry (bride-price), polygyny, wife inheritance, exclusion of women from decision making councils, and obedience/submissiveness.

About 55% of our married respondents indicated that they have at least one major marital problem. The most prevalent ones mentioned are decision making, finances, drinking, and beating (Mburugu & Adams, 2001, p. 27). Quite a few women indicated that their husbands drank heavily. This, in many cases, led to violence against the wife and children. Goldschmidt says that beating and quarreling are common, and the wife is expected to accept beating without complaint. However, the woman can use both her tongue and, traditionally, magic against her husband (1976, p. 227). Routine beatings are not grounds for divorce, but in our study one man, looking at it today, stated, "My wife left me because I beat her; I believe a woman should be beaten once in a while."¹

A final issue noted by a few rural women was that their husband had a mistress in the

Table 1.3 Percentage Distribution

<i>Province</i>	<i>Physical Abuse</i>	<i>Sexual Abuse</i>
Central	71.5	67.4
Nyanza	58.2	51.4
Coast	47.8	38.7
Rift Valley	30.4	29.5
Nairobi	23.1	14.5
Western	21.8	12.6

city. This was also mentioned by some urban men—but as a fact, not as a problem.

7. DIVORCE, SEPARATION, AND REMARRIAGE

Divorce and separation are not as prevalent in patrilineal societies as they are in matrilineal, since in the latter the woman does not lose much in divorce (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984, pp. 28–29). In Kenya the percentage divorced, according to the KDHS, is slightly over 4 for those ever married. Our study of the Kikuyu shows the percentage of those ever married who are either separated or divorced to be just over 7 (KDHS, 1994, p. 61; Mburugu & Adams, 2001, p. 28). As the Kilbrides note, divorce is a growing phenomenon in East Africa, especially in Nairobi (1990, p. 222).

Earlier we noted that infertility sometimes leads to taking a second wife. In some cases even a separation results in a new marriage: “If my wife refuses to come back, I might marry another one.” However, instead of a second wife, infertility may bring a divorce. One of our rural female respondents said: “We divorced after two years because I was incapable of giving birth.” Another woman

argued similarly: “My in-laws feel I should be divorced because I can’t have a baby.” A third stated: “Since I can’t give birth and people in my village know it, no man wants to be associated with me.”

While infertility is sometimes a reason given for the husband divorcing the wife, among the Nandi of western Kenya, it was not considered adequate grounds (Langley, 1979, p. 96). And, while customary divorce is exceptional today, modern court-sanctioned divorce occurs in cases of “repeated acts of adultery, refusal of conjugal rights, continuous quarrelsomeness, incompatibility of husband and wife, and conviction of the wife for sorcery” (Langley, 1979, p. 96).

As for reasons given by the wife, first, she may be unwilling to be beaten. As one man said, “My wife left me because I beat her; I believe a woman should be beaten once in a while.” A second reason for the wife separating is her success and desire for equality. A rural Kikuyu stated, “Equality broke my marriage. My educated wife expected me to cook and wash clothes. This is unheard of in this society.” Traditionally, as already noted, power was in the hands of the husband and his male relatives. However, today educated Kenyan women are less willing to tolerate this situation. They may separate from either

an authoritarian *or* a dependent man. By a dependent man we mean one who has either no job or a poor job, and who is willing to live off of his wife's income. A woman with a good job simply does not need to put up with an unsatisfactory marriage. So the reasons for divorce in Kenya include the following: (1) childlessness, (2) family violence, (3) wife's economic independence and desire for equality, and (4) husband's economic dependence. Not surprisingly, the rate of divorce is lowest among Kenyan Muslims and is the next lowest for Catholics.

While divorce is more prevalent today than in the recent past, desertion is an alternative. Writing about the Kwaya of Tanzania, Huber says that it is "not very easy to meet an elderly man in Bukwaya who has not been deserted by one or more of his spouses, the same as elderly women staying with their first husbands are relatively rare" (1973, p. 167).

The taking of a second wife is more prevalent in Kenya than is a divorce and remarriage, though the latter does occur. One of our male respondents tried several marriages, and described the experience thus: "I have married three times. The first wife—the mother of my children—died. The second divorced me, and the third left me. Now I am alone; I have two relationships, but will never marry again." Thus, in many cases a divorce is followed by singlehood. One woman said, "I am so much happier than when I was married. I never used to have any freedom, and now I do."

8. KINSHIP

Kinship is an issue that has arisen from time to time in the preceding discussions, for example, in discussing child-rearing and land use. Kinship, says Jane Guyer, is "as important at the top of the social scale for maintaining privilege as it is at the bottom for

determining forms of poverty" and aid for survival (1981, p. 112).

Let us begin by saying more about the patrilineage, or the passing of property and privilege through the male line (see Lambert, 1956, on the Kikuyu). In an insightful discussion, Ivan Karp argues that "the fact that people hold to an articulated patrilineal ideology may not imply that groups are exclusively organized by this" (1978, p. 92). The key issue in patriliney is *inheritance*. Snell's discussion of the Nandi and Ocholla-Ayayo's of the Luo are particularly helpful. We will not try to cover all the issues raised by Snell, but here are some: (1) Property stays in the patrilineal clan; (2) cattle are inherited only by males; (3) the principal heir is the senior son, who is the executor; (4) if the beneficiary is a child, the property is held in trust; (5) in cases of polygyny, wives acquire seniority in order of marriage to their husband; (6) male personal items are inherited by sons, and female personal items by daughters; and, finally, (7) distribution takes place at the man's house with witnesses (1954, pp. 51–52).

Ocholla-Ayayo describes Luo land inheritance as follows:

The senior son takes the centre portion of all the land of the homestead. (However) a youngest son may remain in the village of the father to care for him in his old age. His inheritance is the last property, called Mondo, and the remaining gardens of his mother. (1976, p. 129)

Ocholla-Ayayo goes on to discuss court cases in which land is disputed within the lineage. He also describes the *levirate* among the Luo. If a man dies without a male heir, the land reverts to his father's line. The wife may then produce an heir through her dead husband's brother, or she may call on "a close agnatic kinsman of her dead husband to cohabit and serve as genitor" (1976, p. 131).

The Mburugu-Adams data on the four Kenyan societies show that today there is substantial deviation from the patrilineal principle of land inheritance. In these data, 55% of the property belongs to the male, 30% to the adult female, and about 15% is owned jointly (2001, p. 19). Thus, the patrilineal principle, while still at work, is not as strong as it once was ideologically.

Besides inheritance, other kin issues exist. One is assistance—monetary and otherwise. O’Leary, speaking of the Akamba, says very simply, “one must assist kin and kin are expected to pull their weight in the relationship” (1984, p. 106). Poor kin and neighbors have their land ploughed for free, says O’Leary. A son-in-law “organized a *mwethya* of 34 people for his parents-in-law. . . . In so doing he was fulfilling affinal obligations as well as courting favors of his father-in-law who was an influential local leader” (O’Leary, 1984, p. 105).

Ferraro distinguishes between old-time Nairobians, new arrivals, and rural Kikuyu. Monetary assistance is greatest from the new arrivals, followed by the old-timers, and then the ruralites. Ferraro’s plausible explanation is “the relative affluence (as well as the extent of participation in the urban market economy) of each of the three samples” (1973, p. 223). The new arrivals are likely to provide subsidies to their rural kin, making the economic disparity between urban and rural kin less than it would otherwise be. Most of the economic assistance to kin goes either to elder kinsmen or to school-age relatives who need help with school fees.

Another form of aid to school-age kin is housing. The authors know a coastal Kenyan who raised 29 teenagers during their secondary school years, because he was much better off financially than their parents.

The third issue in kinship, also discussed by Ferraro, is what he calls the “Kinship-Recreational Role Overlap” (1973, pp. 224, 226). Recreational activities include both

prearranged visiting, either in town or in the village, and “the more fortuitous meetings of individuals in tea kiosks, beer bars, or on the street” (1973, p. 224). Prearranged visits are more frequent as “stopping-in” becomes less so—both in Kenya and in other parts of the world. Ferraro notes that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish the recreational component in actual situations. “For example, the man who goes . . . in search of employment will be interacting on two distinct, yet interrelated, levels, the economic and the recreational” (1973, p. 224).

One further factor that increases urban kin visiting is unemployment. Kin simply lack the opportunity to visit with coworkers. In addition, the unemployed are more dependent on kin for survival, as we noted earlier. Arguing with other writers, Ferraro concludes that urbanization has not truncated or substantially weakened kin ties. However, he was writing in 1973, and it is doubtful that the past 30 years have seen no weakening effect on lineage and kin ties in general.

What are the results of kin assistance? Kayongo-Male and Onyango summarize these well:

The ethic of sharing resources within the extended family unit reduces the amount of accumulation of wealth and partially limits the formation of rigid class groupings. The wealthier family members are still expected to assist the poorer members by paying for school fees, providing accommodation for relatives who are at school or seeking work, or by offering small loans for various emergencies. (1984, p. 41)

9. AGING AND DEATH

In the previous section we noted the ways in which the elderly may be helped by their kin. Maria Cattell, writing about the Samia (part of the Luyia), describes the way in which sons and daughters care for and feed parents too

old to work (1990, p. 382). Most often it is the last-born son who cares for the elderly or widowed mother, and sometimes the father.

The elderly give advice, though they are less likely to be listened to today than a generation ago. At death they are likely to be honored. However, recently disputes over burial location have gone to court, with the wife of a different ethnic group fighting to have her husband buried in her home area, instead of on the ancestral land.

10. FAMILY AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Economics

We have spoken of the economics of the patrilineage. However, Guyer notes that “land and labor are too narrow an interpretation of resources for African societies” (1981, p. 124). Commoditization and relations of production are hardly under the control of the patriline. As Guyer says, “The very difficult problem of understanding patterns of commoditization is particularly challenging to methodologies built around lineage or household or models of market penetration . . . or demand” (1981, p. 116).

Urban work gives young adults the financial capability to escape the power of the elderly. On the other hand, “large numbers of urbanites sell goods and services in a highly competitive situation with a minimum of capital investment and a narrow margin of profit” (Ferraro, 1973, p. 222). This means that the entrepreneur will often employ kin to work in their enterprises for a minimum of wages, but with housing and other services provided by the employer.

Another issue in the relationship between economics and family in Kenya is that “the family, through the husband, tends to limit the scale at which women can trade by altering responsibilities in response to women’s trading income” (Kayongo-Male & Onyango,

1984, p. 43). The fact that female enterprises are limited, and that the husband may expect to control a wife’s income, are reasons why an educated or successful Kenyan woman may be unwilling to stay in such a relationship, as we noted in the discussion of divorce.

Education

The three issues we will refer to in this section are gender differences, types of education, and university training. The presupposition in postcolonial Kenya has been that boys will receive more formal education than girls. This is, however, an oversimplification. Jean Davison reports that a minority of Kenyan mothers prefer to educate their daughters so they will not forget their families (1993, p. 333). Daughters, says Davison, will assist younger siblings and old parents, while educated sons become urban and forget family. But the majority still favor education for males. In fact, the 1994 KDHS reports that there is little difference by gender in the percentage of 6 to 15-year-olds in school, but for 16 to 20-year-olds the percentages are 52.2 for boys and 35.6 for girls (KDHS, 1994, p. 13).

While attitudes toward education for girls have improved, the preferred curriculum choices are still nursing or teaching (Davison, 1993, p. 336), and African education in general may be less than appropriate. School emphasis on the liberal arts does not prepare children for the technical skills needed today. But even a technical education “has not been useful to most children since the market for the skills acquired has not been growing at a similar pace.” This also applies to commercial education (Kayongo-Male & Onyango, 1984, p. 92).

In fact, the relationship between education and the occupational marketplace is a well-known problem. Not only may the type of education be inappropriate, but education has outrun opportunity. Rees Hughes points

out that for the decades of 1967 to 1987 “the University of Nairobi has grown in excess of 15% annually. Concurrently, private-sector employment has grown at 2.5% annually” (1987, p. 583). University graduates from high-status families are more likely to find high-status jobs than those from low socio-economic statuses (SES) backgrounds. The authors know of many university graduates who accepted temporary work as interviewers on their family research project, simply because full-time employment was unavailable. Thus, if education outruns opportunity, the result will be dissatisfied educated adults.

So while families see education as the “way up” for their offspring, it is not necessarily so.

Religion and Family

According to the KDHS, the Kenyan population is divided as follows in terms of religious affiliation: 31% Catholic, 60% Protestant,

5% Muslim, and 4% all others (KDHS, 1994, p. 17). Because the authors’ research included the coastal Muslims, our percentages were 22% Catholic, 47.5% Protestant, and 27.5% Muslim (Mburugu & Adams, 2001, pp. 7–8).

In general, our respondents consider themselves to be religious, and while they may attend modern religious services, they are likely to engage in both traditional and modern rituals on special occasions, such as marriage, birth, and death.

11. SPECIAL TOPIC: AIDS

Though it is not unique to Kenya, AIDS is an important issue affecting families in east, south, and other parts of Africa. It is, of course, a heterosexual problem in Africa, and has left many children being raised by their grandparents. Africa is in great need of medical breakthroughs that will curb this scourge.

NOTE

1. The issue of wife-beating is hardly unique to Kenya. At a conference in India, a professional male was heard to say, “The problem is uppity women; the solution is beating them.” He was, of course, criticized severely by the professional women at the conference. In the United States, a writer was commenting on the cutting off of funds for centers for battered women. She said, “There are some who favor a broken woman and an intact family over an intact woman and a broken family.” So this issue is not unique to Kenya.

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